

ION

Translated by RONALD FREDERICK WILLETTS

ION: INTRODUCTION

The Play: Date and Composition

It is not certain when *Ion* was first produced, but various metrical considerations, the rather experimental way in which Euripides makes use of the three actors, and perhaps also a couple of (rather doubtful) allusions to contemporary events combine to suggest a date of around 413 BCE (though a date as early as 418 or 417 has also been proposed). Presumably Euripides wrote *Ion* for the annual competition at the Great Dionysian Festival in Athens. We do not know what the other three plays were in his tetralogy that year, or how they fared in the competition.

The Myth

Despite the play's title, its central character is really Creusa, the daughter of Erechtheus, legendary early king of Athens. As a teenager, Creusa was raped by the god Apollo. She became pregnant and abandoned the baby boy to death, but he was rescued by the god and brought to his shrine at Delphi, where he was named Ion and, ignorant of his own identity, was raised by the priestess as a temple servant. In the meantime, Creusa has married the foreigner Xuthus in recompense for his military service to Athens, but their marriage has been childless. As the play begins, Xuthus and Creusa have come to Delphi to find out if they will have children (and so that Creusa can learn the fate of her child). Apollo, wishing to help his son by establishing him as eventual ruler in Athens, has his oracle declare to Xuthus that Ion is Xuthus' son. But when Creusa finds out that Xuthus apparently has a son by a different woman while she herself seems fated to remain childless, she decides to murder Ion. Her plot goes awry, and Ion and the Delphians seek vengeance on her. At the last minute, Apollo prompts the Delphian priestess to show Ion the birth tokens that had accompanied him as a baby; Creusa,

who had given them to him when she abandoned him, recognizes them, and so mother and son are joyously reconciled with one another and Creusa reveals to Ion that Apollo is his father. But Ion is not yet satisfied: he is about to rush into the temple and question Apollo directly—when suddenly Athena appears and foretells a glorious future for Ion in Athens and for his descendants, the “Ionians,” in Europe and Asia.

Euripides’ *Ion* is one of the very few surviving Greek tragedies—along with Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus in Colonus*—to be concerned especially with the local legends of Athens. Ion, Creusa, and Xuthus are all important and interconnected figures in Athenian mythology and political ideology of the fifth century, though their exact family relations with one another were reported differently by different sources. They have in common that they belong to an intermediate period after such primeval and rather monstrous figures as Erechtheus, Cecrops, and Erichthonius, and before the members of later royal dynasties, the Erechthids and the Melanthids, who, though doubtless not much more real historically, at least were thought of as being more thoroughly human. In different ways, Creusa (a member of the legitimate royal line who marries a foreigner) and Xuthus (a foreigner who is brought into the dynasty because of his military service to Athens) both help mediate between the autochthony of which the Athenians were so proud and the external elements to which their culture owed so much. In some versions, Ion is the son of Xuthus, but in Euripides’ play (perhaps by the playwright’s innovation) he is in fact the son of Apollo and only putatively that of Xuthus. His cultural importance to the Athenians is especially that, as the namesake and founder of the Ionian race, he justifies the Athenian claim to preeminence among the Ionians.

For the Athenian spectators of *Ion*, the main characters were surely all familiar, though perhaps rather shadowy. Euripides has invented a play in which these characters are intimately involved with one another in a plot full of sudden surprises and unforeseeable twists on the way to a largely happy ending. Sophocles is known also to have written an *Ion* and a *Creusa*; but these plays have been lost except for a few fragments, and it is unknown whether they presented any of the same mythic material as Euripides’ *Ion*, whether they preceded or followed this play, whether there

was any influence from the one tragedian on the other—and indeed even whether the two Sophoclean titles refer to one tragedy or to two.

Transmission and Reception

Ion has an exciting plot based upon an abandoned infant, parents without a child and a child without parents, concealment and disclosure, misidentification and recognition. After a series of confusing, astonishing, and emotionally wrenching turns, it ends happily with a joyous mutual recognition. Thus the play points ahead to the plot structures of such New Comedy playwrights as Menander and to the prose romances of later Greek literature.

But if the kind of play *Ion* represents seems to have been successful with later Greek audiences and readers, the same cannot apparently be said about the specific play itself. For this very locally focused story was surely of greatest interest only to the Athenians, and was not likely to remain so popular in later centuries and in other parts of the Greek-speaking world. So the play survived antiquity only by the accident of being among the so-called alphabetic plays (see “Introduction to Euripides,” p. 3), and it is transmitted only by a single manuscript (and its copies) and is not accompanied by the ancient commentaries (scholia) that explain various kinds of interpretative difficulties. Further evidence of its limited popularity in antiquity is that not even one papyrus bearing any part of its text has been discovered and that only a few passages are ever quoted by later Greek authors.

In modern times, too, *Ion* has not been as popular as it deserves to be. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, August Wilhelm von Schlegel wrote a tragedy, *Ion*, based on Euripides’ play, which Goethe directed at its premiere in Weimar in 1803. At the end of the century, Leconte de Lisle composed a French verse drama on the subject, *L’Apollonide* (“The Son of Apollo”). In the past century, the play drew the attention of two important English poets: H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), who began a translation of it in 1927; and especially T.S. Eliot, who wrote a remarkable verse drama based on it (*The Confidential Clerk*, 1953). And in 1983–84 the French philosopher Michel Foucault devoted a substantial part of his penultimate set of lectures at the Collège de France, on freedom of speech, to *Ion*.

ION

Characters

HERMES

ION, son of Creusa and Apollo

CHORUS (of Creusa's young female attendants)

CREUSA, mother of Ion, and wife of Xuthus

XUTHUS, king of Athens and husband of Creusa

OLD MAN, a servant of Creusa

A SERVANT of Creusa

PRIESTESS of Apollo at Delphi

ATHENA

Scene: In front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, just before sunrise.

(Enter Hermes.)

HERMES

Atlas, who wears on back of bronze^o the ancient
abode of gods in heaven, had a daughter
whose name was Maia, born of a goddess:
she lay with Zeus and bore me, Hermes, servant
of the immortals. I have come here to Delphi
5 where Phoebus sits at earth's midcenter, gives
his prophecies to men, and makes pronouncement
of what is happening now and what will come.

For in the famous city of the Greeks
called after Pallas of the golden spear,

10 Phoebeus compelled Erechtheus' daughter Creusa
to accept his violent embrace—at that site
below Athena's hill whose northern scarp
the Attic lords have named the Long Rocks.
Her father, by the god's own wish, did not
15 suspect, and so she carried the child in secret.
And when the time had come, her son was born,
inside the palace. Then she took the child
to the same cave where she had lain with Phoebeus,
and in a wicker cradle there exposed
20 him to his death. But she maintained a custom
begun a long time ago, when Athena placed
beside Erichthonius, son of Earth, two snakes
as guardians, when the daughters of Aglauros
were given charge of him. And ever since
Erechtheus' descendants have the custom there
of placing by their babies when they raise them
snakes made of beaten gold.

25 So Creusa tied
to him whatever girlish ornaments
she had, before she left him to his death.
My brother Phoebus made me this request:
“You know Athena’s city well,” he said.
30 “Now will you journey to the earth-born people
of glorious Athens? There, inside a cave
a newborn child is hidden. Take the child,
his cradle, and his swaddling clothes and bring
them to my oracle at Delphi, then
35 set them near the shrine’s door. Just so you know,
the child is mine. I will arrange the rest.”

I did as Loxias my brother wished,

took up the wicker cradle, brought it here,
setting it on the temple steps, and then
I opened up the basket, so the child
40 could be seen. Now when the sun began to ride
in heaven, a priestess was just entering
the oracular shrine. Her eyes were drawn toward
the helpless child. Astonished that a girl
of Delphi should dare to cast her secret child
45 before Apollo's temple, she would have taken it
outside the sacred precinct, but her pity
expelled the cruel impulse—and the god
helped too, to keep his son within his house.
And so she took the child and reared him,
50 not knowing who his mother was, or that
Apollo was his father, while the child
has never known his parents. His childhood home
has been about the altars where he played
and ate his meals. But when he was fully grown,
55 the Delphians appointed him their steward,
the trusted guardian of Apollo's gold.
And he has lived a holy life until
this day, within the shrine.

Creusa, whose son
he is, has married Xuthus. This is how
the marriage occurred. A war arose between
60 Athens and Chalcodon's people in Euboea;
Xuthus as an ally helped to end the strife,
and though he was not a native, but Achaean,
son of Aeolus, son of Zeus, the prize
he won was marriage to Creusa. But

in all these years no children have been born.
Desire for children is now bringing them
to Apollo's shrine. Though Apollo seems unaware,
it's he controls their fate and guides them here.
When Xuthus comes before the shrine, the god
70 will give him his own son, declaring Xuthus
the father. Thus the boy shall be received
into his mother's house and made known to her.
And while Apollo's love affair stays secret,
his son will have what is his due. Moreover,
Apollo will bestow on him the name
75 of Ion, make that name renowned through Greece
as founder of cities in Asia.

Now, because
I wish to see this young boy's destiny
complete, I shall conceal myself within
these laurel groves. Here is Apollo's son,
who comes out now, with branches of bay, to make
the portals bright before the temple. And I
80 will be the first of all the gods to call
him by his future name of—Ion.

*(Exit to the side. Enter Ion from the temple, carrying a bow
and arrows and accompanied by Delphian servants.)*

ION [*chanting*]

*Look, now the sun's burning chariot comes
casting his light on the earth.
Banned by his flame, the stars flee
85 to the sacred darkness of space.
The untrodden peaks of Parnassus,*

*kindling to brightness, receive for mankind
the disk of the day.*

90 *The smoke of unwatered myrrh drifts
to the top of the temple.*

*The Delphian priestess sits on the
sacred tripod chanting to the Greeks
echoes of Apollo's voice.*

95 *You Delphians, attendants of Phoebus,
go down to Castalia's silvery eddies:
when you have bathed in its holy dew,
return to the temple.*

*Let your lips utter no words
of ill omen; may your tongues
100 be gracious and gentle to those who
come to the oracle.*

(Exit the attendants to the side.)

*As for myself, mine is the task
I have always done since my childhood.
With these branches of bay and these sacred
garlands I will brighten Apollo's
105 portals, cleanse the floor with
sprinklings of water,
put to flight with my arrows the birds
that foul the offerings.
Since I have neither mother nor father,
110 I revere the temple of Phoebus
that has nursed me.*

[singing]

STROPHE

*Come, fresh-blooming branch
of lovely laurel,
with which I sweep clean
115 the precinct below the shrine,
sprung from the eternal garden
where the sacred spring sends
a gushing, never failing stream
from the myrtle grove
120 to water the sacred leaves,
leaves I brush over his temple,
all day long serving with my daily task
when the sun's swift wing appears.*

125 *O Healer! O Healer!
My blessing! My blessing!
O Leto's son!*

ANTISTROPHE

Fair, fair is the labor,

*O Phoebus, which
I am doing for you,
130 honoring the prophetic place.
I have a glorious task:
to set my hands to serve
not a man but the immortals.
I will never weary
135 over my pious tasks.
I praise him who feeds me, Phoebus
my father—his love deserves the name,
140 Phoebus, lord of the temple.*

*O Healer! O Healer!
My blessing! My blessing!
O Leto's son!*

*Now I shall finish my sweeping
145 with my broom of bay,
I shall pour from golden bowls
water risen from the earth,
drawn from the spring
of Castalia.
Myself holy and chaste, I can
150 sprinkle the lustral water.
Always thus may I serve Phoebus,
service without end—
or an end that comes with good luck.*

*Look! Look!
Here come the birds already,
155 leaving their nests on Parnassus.
Keep away from the cornices
and the gold-decked abode.
I will strike you too with my arrows,
you herald of Zeus,
though your beak is strong,
160 surpassing the other birds.
Here sails another to the temple steps,
a swan.—Take to another place
your red shining feet.
You may have your music,
but Apollo's lyre will not save you
165 at all from my bow;*

*turn your wings,
speed on to the lake of Delos.
If you do not obey,
you will scream laments,^o
not that clear-toned song.*

170 *Look! Look!*
*What is this other bird here on its way?
Is it going to build in the cornice
a nest of dry twigs for its young?
The twang of my bow will prevent you.
Go, I tell you, and rear*
175 *your young in the eddies of Alpheus
or the Isthmian grove,
without fouling the offerings
and Apollo's shrine.^o
Yet I scruple to kill you
who announce to mankind*
180 *the will of the gods.
But I will bend to the labors
of my devotion to Phoebus,
never ceasing to honor him
who gives me nurture.*

*(Exit Ion into the temple. Enter the Chorus, young girl servants
of Creusa, from the side. They admire the temple.)*

CHORUS^o [*singing*]

STROPHE A

185 *Not only in holy Athens after all
are there courts of the gods
with fair columns, and homage paid*

*to Apollo who protects the streets.
Here too on this temple
of Leto's son shows
the bright-eyed beauty of twin façades.*

190 *Look, look at this: Zeus's son
is killing the Lernaean Hydra
with a golden sickle,
look there, my dear.*

ANTISTROPHE A

*Yes—and near him another is raising
195 on high a flaming torch.
Can it be he whose story I hear
as I sit at my weaving,
Iolaus the shield-bearer,
companion of Heracles,
200 whom he helped to endure his labors?*

*And look at this one
on a horse with wings.
He is killing the mighty three-bodied
fire-breathing monster.*

STROPHE B

205 *My eyes dart every where.
See! The battle of the Giants
on the marble walls.*

Yes we are looking.

Can you see her, brandishing

210 *her Gorgon shield against Enceladus—?*
I can see my goddess Pallas Athena.

Oh! The terrible thunderbolt
with fire at each end which Zeus holds
ready to throw.

Yes I see. Raging Mimas
215 *is burnt up in the flames.*

And Bacchus, the boisterous god,
with unwarlike wand of ivy is killing
another of Earth's giant sons.

(Enter Ion from the temple.)

CHORUS [*singing in this lyric interchange with Ion, who chants in reply*]

ANTISTROPHE B

You there by the temple,
220 *may we with pale feet*
pass into this sanctuary^o?

ION

You may not, strangers.

CHORUS

Perhaps you would tell me?

ION

Tell me, what do you want?

CHORUS

Is it true that Apollo's temple

really contains the world's center?

ION

Yes, wreathed in garlands, flanked by Gorgons.

CHORUS

225 *That is the story we have heard.*

ION

*If you have offered sacrificial
cake
in front of the temple, and you
have a question*

*for Apollo to answer, come to
the altar steps.*

*But do not pass into the inner
shrine
unless you have slaughtered a
sheep.*

CHORUS

I understand.

230 *We are not for transgressing Apollo's law.
The outside charms us enough.*

ION

Look where you please at what is lawful.

CHORUS

*Our masters have allowed us
to look over this sanctuary of Apollo.*

ION

In whose house do you serve?

CHORUS

235 *The dwelling place of Pallas
is the house of our masters.
But the person you ask about is here.*

(Enter Creusa from the side.)

ION [*now speaking*]

Whoever you may be, you are noble,^o
your looks reveal your character: by looks
240 nobility is often to be judged.
But?—you surprise me—why, your eyes are closed,
that noble face is wet with tears—and now!
when you have seen Apollo's holy temple.
What reason can there be you're so upset?
245 Where others are glad to see the sanctuary,
your eyes are filled with tears.

CREUSA

That you should be surprised about my tears
is not ill-bred. But when I saw this temple,
250 I measured an old memory again;
my mind was elsewhere, although I'm standing here.

Unhappy women! What things the gods dare! And where
shall we turn for justice when we are being destroyed
by the unjust actions of those who are much stronger?

ION

255 What is the cause of this strange melancholy?

CREUSA

Nothing. Now I have shot my arrow I shall
be silent, and you should not think of it.

ION

But tell me who you are, your family,
your fatherland. And say what is your name?

CREUSA

260 Creusa is my name, from Erechtheus
I was born, and Athens is my land.

ION

A famous city and a noble family!
How fortunate you are!

CREUSA

Yes, fortunate in that—but nothing else.

ION

265 There is a story told—can it be true...

CREUSA

But tell me what it is you want to know.

ION

...your father's ancestor sprang from the earth?

CREUSA

Yes, Erichthonius—but ancestry is no help.

ION

Athena really took him from the earth?

CREUSA

270 Into her virgin arms, though she was not his mother.

ION

And then she gave him, as we see in paintings...

CREUSA

To Cecrops' daughters, to keep without looking at him.

ION

I have been told they opened up the cradle.

CREUSA

And died for it. The rocks were stained with blood.

ION

275 Oh. The other story? Is that true or not?

CREUSA

Which one is that? I have time to answer.

ION

Well, did your father sacrifice your sisters?

CREUSA

He had the courage. They were killed for Athens.

ION

How was it you were saved, the only one?

CREUSA

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

ION

And it's true your father was buried in a chasm?

CREUSA

Yes; the sea god's trident blows destroyed him.

ION

There is a place there which is called Long Rocks?

CREUSA

Oh, why ask that? You've stirred my memory.

ION

285 Phoebus^o with his lightning honors it.

CREUSA

Honor? What honor?^o I wish I'd never seen it.

ION

Why do you hate a place the god so loves?

CREUSA

No matter. But I know its secret shame.

ION

And what Athenian became your husband?

CREUSA

290 My husband is no citizen of Athens.

ION

Who then? He must have been of noble birth.

CREUSA

Xuthus, the son of Aeolus and Zeus.

ION

A foreigner! How could he marry an Athenian?

CREUSA

A neighboring land of Athens is Euboea.

ION

295 Which has a sea for boundary, they say.

CREUSA

Athens conquered it with the help of Xuthus.

ION

He came as ally? You were his reward?

CREUSA

Dowry of war, the prize won with his spear.

ION

And have you come alone or with your husband?

CREUSA

300 With him. But he's still at Trophonius' shrine.

ION

To see it or consult the oracle?

CREUSA

To ask the same as he will ask of Phoebus.

ION

Is it about your country's crops? Or children?

CREUSA

Though married long ago, we have no children.

ION

305 No children? You have never had a child?

CREUSA

Apollo knows about my childlessness.

ION

Ah! That misfortune cancels all your blessings.

CREUSA

And who are you? Your mother must be happy!

ION

I am what I am called, Apollo's slave.

CREUSA

310 A city's votive gift or sold by someone?

ION

I only know that I am called Apollo's.

CREUSA

So now it is my turn to pity you!

ION

Because my parents are unknown to me.

CREUSA

You live inside the temple? Or at home?

ION

315 Apollo's home is mine, wherever I sleep.

CREUSA

And did you come here as a child, or youth?

ION

An infant is what they say who seem to know.

CREUSA

What Delphian woman was it who suckled you?

ION

No breast fed me. But she who reared me up...

CREUSA

320 Yes, who, poor child? Both of us have sorrows!

ION

...was Phoebus' prophetess, for me a mother.

CREUSA

But what gave nurture to you as you grew up?

ION

The altars and the visitors who came.

CREUSA

And your unhappy mother! Who was she then?

ION

325 Perhaps I was born from an injustice that she suffered.

CREUSA

You are not poor. Your robes are fine enough.

ION

These robes belong to him, the god I serve.

CREUSA

But have you never tried to find your parents?

ION

How can I when I have no clues to guide me?

CREUSA

Ah yes.

330 Another woman suffered, just as your mother did.

ION

Who was she? If she could only share my grief!

CREUSA

On her behalf I came before my husband.

ION

Why did you come? Tell me and I will help.

CREUSA

I need a secret prophecy from Phoebus.

ION

335 Just tell me. All the rest I'll do for you.

CREUSA

Then hear this story. But I am ashamed!

ION

Then you'll get nothing done. Shame's unassertive.

CREUSA

I have a friend who says she lay with Phoebus.

ION

Not Phoebus and a mortal woman! No!

CREUSA

340 And had a child unknown to her own father.

ION

She is ashamed to admit some man's misdeed.

CREUSA

But she says not. Her life has been most wretched.

ION

Why, if it was a god who was her lover?

CREUSA

She put from out the house the child she bore.

ION

345 Where is the child? Is it still alive?

CREUSA

I have come here to ask, for no one knows.

ION

If he is dead now, how then did he die?

CREUSA

Killed by wild beasts, is what she thinks.

ION

What reason could she have for thinking so?

CREUSA

350 She could not find him when she went again.

ION

But were there drops of blood upon the ground?

CREUSA

She says there were not, though her search was careful.

ION

And how long is it since the child was done for?

CREUSA

If he still lived, he would have been your age.

ION

355 Apollo is unjust. She has my pity.

CREUSA

And she has never had another child.

ION

Supposing Phoebus has reared him up in secret?

CREUSA

To keep that pleasure for himself is wrong.

ION

Ah! This misfortune echoes my own grief.

CREUSA

360 And some unhappy mother misses you?°

ION

Do not revive the grief I had forgotten.

CREUSA

I'm sorry. But you'll do as I request?

ION

But do you know where that request is faulty?

CREUSA

What is not faulty for that wretched woman?

ION

365 Will Phoebus tell the secret he wants to hide?

CREUSA

Yes, if his oracles are open to all Greeks.

ION

He feels ashamed. Do not embarrass him.

CREUSA

But the one who suffered from it is in pain!

ION

No one will speak the truth on your behalf.

370 Convicted of evil inside his own temple,
Apollo quite justly would take vengeance on
the one who told you. Think no more of it:
avoid a question which the god himself opposes.

Such foolishness we would commit in trying^o
375 to force reluctant answers from the gods,
whether by slaying sheep before the altar
or taking omens from the flight of birds.

The benefits we seek by force against
the gods' will are no use. We only profit
380 by what they give us of their own free will.

CHORUS LEADER

Humans are many, and their woes are many,
the forms of woe diverse. One life of happiness
is seldom to be found in humankind.

CREUSA

Apollo! Then and now unjust to her,
385 the absent woman whose complaints are here.
You did not save the child you should have saved.
A prophet, you have no answer for his mother,
so if he's dead, at least he could be buried,
or, if alive, come to his mother's gaze.
390 But now that hope must die,^o because the god
prevents me learning what I wish to know.

But I can see my noble husband, Xuthus,
arriving from Trophonius' cave. He is
quite near; I beg you, stranger, tell him nothing
395 of what we have been saying. Or I may
be suspect, meddling in these secret matters,
and then this story will not have the end
we have designed. For trouble is very easy
when women deal with men. And since good women
are mixed with bad ones, all of us are hated.
400 To this misfortune we women are all born.

(Enter Xuthus from the side.)

XUTHUS

My greeting first of all is to the god,
and then to you my wife.

But can it be
that my delay has caused you some alarm?

CREUSA

No. Your arrival has prevented that.
405 What oracle did Trophonius give about
our hopes of having children?

XUTHUS

He was unwilling to anticipate
Apollo's answer. But he has told me this,
that neither you nor I shall go from here
without a child.

CREUSA

410 O holy mother of Apollo, may

our journey here end well, our dealings with
your son have a happier outcome than before!

XUTHUS

So it will be! But who speaks here for Phoebus?

ION

Sir, that is my duty here outside the temple—
415 inside are others, near the tripod, nobles
of Delphi, who have been chosen by lot.

XUTHUS

Ah! Good. I now know all I need to know,
and shall go in. They say the victim, which
is offered on behalf of visitors, has
420 already fallen before the altar. Omens
today are good, and I would like to have
my answer from the oracle. Will you,
Creusa, with laurel branches in your hand,
go round the altars praying to the gods
that I may bring an oracle with promise
of children for us from Apollo's house.

(Exit Xuthus into the temple.)

CREUSA

So it will be! So it will be!
425 And now
if Phoebus at last amends his former wrongs,
although he'll never be a friend for me,
I will accept, because he is a god,
whatever it is he chooses to bestow.

(Exit to the side.)

ION

Why does this stranger always speak in riddles,
430 reproach the god with covert blasphemy?
Is it through love of her on whose behalf
she comes before the oracle? Or does
she hide a secret which she cannot tell?

But what concern have I with Erechtheus' daughter?
No, that is not my business.—I will pour
435 the holy water out of golden pitchers
into the lustral bowls. I must confront
Apollo with his wrongs. To force a girl
against her will and then abandon her!
To leave a child to die that has been born
in secret! No! Do not act thus. No, since
440 you have the power, seek the virtuous path.
All evil men are punished by the gods.
How then can it be just for you gods to stand
convicted of breaking laws you have yourselves
laid down for men? But if—here I suppose
what could not be—you gave account on earth
445 for wrongs which you have done to women, you,
Apollo, and Poseidon and Zeus who rules
in heaven, payment of your penalties
would see your temples empty, since you are
unjust to others in pursuing your pleasure
without forethought. And justice now demands
450 that we should say not men are wicked if
they imitate what the gods approve, but those
who teach men these things by their own example.

(Exit to the side.)

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

*O my Athena, born
without birth pains,
brought forth from the head of Zeus
455 by Prometheus, the Titan,
blessed Goddess of Victory,
take wing from the golden halls
of Olympus, come, I entreat you,
460 here to the Pythian temple,
where at earth's center Apollo's shrine
proclaims unfailing prophecy,
at the tripod where they dance and sing.
465 Come with Artemis, Leto's daughter,
virgin goddesses both,
holy sisters of Phoebus.°
Beseech him, O maidens,
that the ancient family of Erechtheus may
470 at last be sure by a clear response
of the blessing of children.*

ANTISTROPHE

*Wherever gleams bright the flame
and strength of youth,
a promise to the house of growth,
475 there a man has a fund
of joy overflowing;
from the fathers the children will
gather*

*hereditary wealth, and in turn
pass it on to their own.*

480

*They are a defense in
adversity,*

*in happiness a delight,
and in war their country's shield of
safety.*

485

*For myself I would choose, rather than
wealth*

or a palace of kings, to rear^o

and love my own children:

shame to him who prefers

a childless life, hateful to me.

490

*May I cling to the life of modest
possessions,*

enriched by children.

EPODE

O haunts of Pan,

the rock flanking

the caves of the Long Rocks,

495

where the three daughters of Aglaurus

dance, and their feet tread

the green levels before the shrines

of Pallas, in time to the changing

500

music of the pipes you play,

O Pan, in your sunless caves,

where a girl in misery

bore a child to Phoebus

and exposed it, a prey for birds,

food for wild beasts to rend, shame

505 *of a cruel love.*
 Our legends, our tales at the loom,
 never tell of good fortune to children
 born of a god and a mortal.

(Enter Ion from the side.)

ION

510 Serving women who are keeping watch here at the steps
 of the house of sacrifice, awaiting your master,
 tell me, has Xuthus already left the sacred tripod
 and the oracle, or does he still remain within,
 waiting for an answer to his childlessness?

CHORUS LEADER

 He is still inside. He has not passed this threshold yet.
515 But the noise the door has made shows someone is now there.
 Look, it is my master coming out to us.

(Enter Xuthus from the temple. He runs excitedly up to Ion.)

XUTHUS

 Son, my blessing.—It is right to greet you in this way.

ION

 Sir, my thanks. We are both well—if you've not gone mad.

XUTHUS

 Let me kiss your hand, allow me to embrace you.

ION

520 Are you sane? Or has the god made you mad somehow?

XUTHUS

Mad, when I've found my dearest love and want to touch him?

ION

Stop!—If you touch Apollo's garland, you may break it.

XUTHUS

I will touch you. And I am no robber. You are mine.

ION

Must I shoot this arrow first, or will you let me go?

XUTHUS

525 Why must you avoid me just when you have found your dearest?

ION

Mad and boorish strangers are no pleasure to instruct.

XUTHUS

Kill me, and then burn me. For you'll have killed your father.

ION

You my father! This is fool's talk.—How can that be? No!

XUTHUS

Yes.—The story which I have to tell will make it clear.

ION

What have you to say?

XUTHUS

530 I am your father. You are my son.

ION

Who has told you this?

XUTHUS

Apollo, he who reared my son.

ION

You are your own witness.

XUTHUS

Yes, I know what the oracle said.

ION

You mistook a riddle.

XUTHUS

Then my hearing must have failed.

ION

And what is Apollo's prophecy?

XUTHUS

That he whom I met...

ION

Oh! A meeting? Where?

XUTHUS

535

...as I came out of the temple here...

ION

Yes, and what would happen to him?

XUTHUS

...would be my son.

ION

Your own son or just a gift?

XUTHUS

A gift, but my own son.

ION

I was then the first you met?

XUTHUS

Yes, no one else, my son.

ION

But how strange this is!

XUTHUS

I am just as amazed as you.

ION

Well?—Who is my mother?

XUTHUS

540

That I cannot say.

ION

And Apollo?

XUTHUS

Happy with this news, I did not ask.

ION

Earth then was my mother!

XUTHUS

Children do not spring up from there.

ION

How could I be yours?

XUTHUS

Apollo, not I, has the answer.

ION

Let us try another tack.

XUTHUS

Yes, that will help us more.

ION

Did you have an affair outside marriage?

XUTHUS

545

Yes, in the folly of youth.

ION

Before you were married?

XUTHUS

Yes, but never afterward.

ION

So that could be my origin?

XUTHUS

The time at least agrees.

ION

Then what am I doing here...

XUTHUS

I cannot tell you that.

ION

...here, so far away?

XUTHUS

That is my puzzle too.

ION

Have you been before to Delphi?

XUTHUS

550

To the wine god's torch feast.

ION

You stayed with a temple steward?

XUTHUS

He—there were girls of Delphi...

ION

He introduced you to their rites?

XUTHUS

Yes, Bacchus' maenads.

ION

You had drunk much?

XUTHUS

I was reveling in the wine god's feast.

ION

Then that was the time.

XUTHUS

And fate has found it out, my son.

ION

How did I get here?

XUTHUS

555

The girl perhaps exposed her child.

ION

I am not a slave then.

XUTHUS

And now accept your father.

ION

We surely must believe the god.

XUTHUS

That makes good sense.

ION

Could I wish for better...

XUTHUS

Well, now you see things rightly.

ION

...than descent from Zeus's son?

XUTHUS

This is indeed your birthright.

ION

Shall I touch my father then?

XUTHUS

560

Yes, have faith in the god.

ION

Father!

XUTHUS

How dear is the sound of the name you
have spoken!

ION

We should both bless this day.

XUTHUS

It has brought me happiness.

ION

My dear mother! Shall I ever see your face as well?

Now, whoever you may be, I long to see you even

565

more. But you are dead perhaps, and I can have no hope.

CHORUS LEADER

We also share this house's happiness.
Yet I could wish my mistress too might have
the joy of children, and Erechtheus' race.

XUTHUS

My son, Apollo rightly prophesied
570 that I should find you, and united us.
You found a father whom you never knew.
Your natural desire I share myself
that you will find your mother, I, in her
the woman who gave a son to me. And if
575 we leave all that to time, perhaps we shall
succeed. But end your waif's life in the temple.
Let me persuade you, come with me to Athens,
for there your father's prosperous power awaits^o
you, and great wealth. You shall not have the name
580 of bastard and of beggar, but highborn
and well endowed with wealth. But why so silent?
Why hold your eyes downcast? Now you have changed
your father's joy to fear.

ION

585 Things have a different face as they appear
close to the eyes or far away. I bless
my fortune now that I have found a father.
But, father, listen to what is in my mind:
the earth-born people of glorious Athens are said
590 to be no immigrant race. I would intrude
there marked by two defects, a foreigner's son,
and myself a bastard. So if I remain

obscure, with this disgrace they will account
me nothing, nobody's son.^o But if I aspire
595 to the city's helm, ambitious for a name,
I shall be hated by the powerless.
Superiority is always hated.
And those good men who can attain to wisdom
and keep their silence, since they are not eager
600 for public life, will mock my folly, in blindly
giving up peace and quiet for the risks of power.
And then if I invade positions which
are filled, I shall be countered by the votes
of those with knowledge who control affairs.
For so it always happens, father: men
605 who hold the cities and their dignities
above all are the enemies of their rivals.

Then, coming to another's house as an immigrant,
to live with her who has no children, who
before had you to share the sorrow—now,
610 abandoned to a private grief, she will
have cause for bitterness and cause enough
to hate me when I take my place as heir:
without a child herself, she will not kindly
regard your own. Then you must either turn
615 to her, betraying me, or honor me
and throw your house into turmoil: for there is
no other way. How many wives have brought
their men to death with poison or the knife!
Then, childless, growing old, she has my pity.
620 For this affliction does not suit her birth.

The praise of royalty itself is false—
a fair façade to hide the pain within.

What happiness or blessing has the man
who looks all around for violence, and fear
625 draws out his days? I would prefer to live
a happy citizen than be a king,
who must choose to have the evil as his friends,
and must abhor the good for fear of death.
You might reply that gold outweighs all this,
630 the joys of wealth—no joy for me to guard
a fortune, hear reproaches, suffer its pains.
Let me avoid distress, seek moderation.

But father, hear the good points of my life
in Delphi: leisure first of all, most dear
635 to any man; the friendly people, no one
to thrust me rudely from my path—to yield,
give elbow room to those beneath me is
intolerable. Then I have been busy
with prayers to gods or talk with men,
serving the happy, not the discontented.
640 I've been receiving guests or sending them
off again, a fresh face always smiling
on fresh faces. I had what men should pray,
even against their will, to have: duty
and inclination both contrived to make
645 me righteous to god. When I compare the two,
father, I think I am more happy here.
Let me live here. Delight in magnificence
is not better than being content with little.

CHORUS LEADER

Well have you spoken, since indeed your words
mean happiness for her whom I do love.

XUTHUS

650 No more of this! Learn to enjoy success.
Let us inaugurate our life together
by holding here, where I have found my son,
a public banquet, and make the sacrifices
omitted at your birth. I will pretend
to bring you to my house as guest, and give
655 a feast for you; and then take you along
with me to Athens, not as my son but as
a visitor. I do not want to hurt
my childless wife with my own happiness.
But when I think the time is ripe, I will
persuade my wife to give consent to your
660 assumption of my rule over the land.

Your name shall be Ion, a name that fits
your destiny; you were the first to meet
me as I came from Apollo's shrine. But now
collect your friends together, say farewell
665 with feast and sacrifice, before you leave
this town of Delphi. And, you women slaves,
I order you, say nothing of our plans.
To tell my wife anything will mean your death.

ION

Yes, I will go. But one piece of good luck
eludes me still: unless I find my mother,
670 my life is worthless. If I may do so,
I pray my mother is Athenian,
so that through her I may have rights of speech.
For when a foreigner comes into a city

of pure blood, though in name a citizen,
675 his mouth's a slave: he has no right of speech.

(They exit to the side.)

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

*I see tears and mourning
triumphant, the beginning of sorrows,
when the queen hears of the son,
the blessing bestowed on her husband
680 alone, still childless herself.
O Leto's prophetic son, what reply have you chanted?
From where came this child, reared
in your temple, and who is his mother?
This oracle does not please me.
685 There may be a fraud.
I fear the issue
of this encounter.
690 For these are strange prophecies,
telling me strange things.
Treachery and chance combine
in this boy of an alien blood.
Who will deny it?*

ANTISTROPHE

695 *My friends, shall we clearly
cry out in the ears of my mistress
blame upon the husband who alone
afforded her hope she could share?
Now he is happy, she is maimed by troubles.*

700 *She is falling to gray age; he does not honor his love.*
A stranger he came, wretch,
to the house, and betrays the fortune
bestowed. He wronged her.—Die then!
And may he not gain
705 *from god the prayer*
he sends with holy cakes
ablaze on bright altars.
He shall be sure of my feelings,
710 *how much I love the queen.*
The new father and son are now near
to their new banquet.

EPODE

O the ridge of the rocks of Parnassus
715 *which hold in the skies the watchtower*
where Dionysus holds the two-flamed
torch, leaping lightly with his
nighttime wandering maenads:
let the boy never see my city,
720 *let him die first, leave his new life.*
A city in trouble has reason
to welcome the coming of strangers.
But Erechtheus, our ancient founder,
united us long ago.

(Enter Creusa and the Old Man from the side.)

CREUSA

725 *Old man, my father, Erechtheus, while he was*
alive already had you as his tutor:

come up with me now to Phoebus' oracle
to share my happiness if his prophecy
gives hope of children; since it is a joy
730 to share success with those we love; and if—
I pray that they may not—reverses come,
there is comfort in seeing a friendly face.
And, though I'm your mistress, I care for you as if
you were my father, as you did my own.

OLD MAN

735 My daughter, you preserve a noble spirit
and equal to your noble ancestors:
you do not shame your fathers, sons of Earth.
Give me your help, and bring me to the temple.
The shrine is steep, you know. Support my limbs
740 and heal my weak old age.

CREUSA

Come then. Be careful how you place your feet.

OLD MAN

You see. My mind is nimbler than my feet.

CREUSA

Lean on your staff as the path winds around.

OLD MAN

The staff is blind too when my eyes are weak.

CREUSA

745 Yes, true. But fight against your weariness.

OLD MAN

I do. But now I have no strength to summon.

CREUSA

You women, faithful servants of my loom
and shuttle, what hope of children did my husband
receive before he left? We came for that.

750 Tell me; and if the news is good you will
not find your mistress faithless or ungrateful.

CHORUS LEADER [*singing*]

An evil fate!

OLD MAN

Your prelude is not one that suits good luck.

CHORUS LEADER [*singing*]

Unhappy lot!

OLD MAN

755 But what is wrong about the oracle?

CHORUS LEADER [*now speaking*]

What can we do when death is set before us?

CREUSA

What strain is this? Why should you be afraid?

CHORUS LEADER

Are we to speak or not? What shall we do?

CREUSA

O speak! You know of some misfortune coming.

CHORUS LEADER

760 You shall be told then, even if I die
twice over.—You will never have a child
to hold in your arms, or take one to your breast.

CREUSA [*singing in a lyric interchange with the Old Man, who also sings in reply*]

I wish I were dead.

OLD MAN

Daughter!

CREUSA

*O this blow
is hard, this pain put upon me,
I cannot endure it, my friends.*

OLD MAN

Hopeless now, my child.

CREUSA

765 *Yes, ah! Yes.*
This blow is fatal, a heart-thrust.
The sorrow has pierced within.

OLD MAN [*now speaking*]

Mourn no more...

CREUSA [*continuing to sing throughout this scene*]

I have reason enough.

OLD MAN

...until we know...

CREUSA

770 *Is there anything to know?*

OLD MAN

...if you alone have this misfortune, or
my master too must share the same distress.

CHORUS LEADER

To him Apollo gave a son, but this
775 good luck is his alone; his wife has nothing.

CREUSA

*One after the other you have cried out my griefs.
This is the worst to lament.*

OLD MAN

And did the oracle concern a living son,
or must some woman yet give birth to him?

CHORUS LEADER

780 Loxias gave him a son already born,
a full-grown youth; and I myself was witness.

CREUSA

*How can it be true? No! An incredible thing.
It is unspeakable.*

OLD MAN

785 Unspeakable indeed! Tell me how the oracle

is being fulfilled, and who the son can be.

CHORUS LEADER

He gave your husband for a son the one
he would meet first as he came from the temple.

CREUSA

Ah, ah! Then it is settled.

790 *He said mine is the childless part,
the solitary life in a desolate house.*

OLD MAN

Who then was destined for Xuthus to meet?
And tell me how and where he saw his child.

CHORUS LEADER

There was a young man who swept the temple here.
795 You know him, lady? That one is the son.

CREUSA

*I wish that I might fly
through the moist air far away
from Greek earth to the western stars!
Such is my anguish, my friends.*

OLD MAN

800 What was the name his father gave to him?
You know it? Or does that remain uncertain?

CHORUS LEADER

He called him Ion, since he met him first.^o
But who his mother is^o—that I cannot say.

Xuthus, to tell you all I know, old man,
has gone away unbeknownst to her, his wife,
805 to offer in the consecrated tent
a birthday sacrifice, to pledge the bond
of friendship in a feast with his new son.

OLD MAN

My lady, we have been betrayed—I
share
in your grief—by that man, your
husband. We are
810 insulted by design, cast from
Erechtheus'
house: I say this not because I hate
him,
but rather because I love you more
than him—
the foreigner who arrived and
married you,
was welcomed to the city and your
house,
received your heritage, and now is
proved the father
815 of children by another woman—
secretly.
How secretly I will explain to you.
Aware that you yourself would have
no children,
he scorned to suffer equally with
you
in this mischance, and had a secret
child

by some slave woman, and then
sent him away

820

for someone here in Delphi to
rear. The boy

was dedicated to Apollo's temple,
and there grew in concealment.

Then the father,
now knowing that the boy was
grown, pressed you
to travel here because you had no
child.

825

And it wasn't Apollo who lied, but
this man, who
has long been rearing the child.

This is his web
of deceit: discovered, he would lay
the blame
upon the god; if not, to guard
against^o

the blows of time, his plan was to
invest

him with the city's rule. As time
went on,

830

the new name Ion was invented,
suing

this trick of meeting him outside the
temple.

CHORUS LEADER

I hate all evil men who plot injustice,
then trick it out with subterfuge. I would
prefer as friend a good man ignorant
than one more clever who is evil too.

835

OLD MAN

Worst shame of all that he should bring into
your house a cipher, motherless, the child
of some slave woman. For the shame at least
would have been single, if, with your consent,
840 because you could not bear a child yourself,
he had an heir by one highborn. If this
had been too much, he should have been content
to marry an Aeolian.

And so you now must act a woman's part:
kill them, your husband and his son, by sword,^o
845 by poison, or some trick, before death comes
to you from them. Unless you act, your life
is lost; for when two enemies have met
together in one house, then one must be
850 the loser. Now I'll help you kill the son:
visiting the place where he prepares the feast,
to pay the debt I owe my masters thus,
and then to live or die. A slave bears only this
855 disgrace: the name. In every other way
an honest slave is equal to the free.

CHORUS LEADER

I too, dear mistress, want to share your fate,
to die with you, or else to live with honor.

CREUSA [*singing*]

O my heart, how be silent?
860 *Yet how can I speak of that secret*
love, strip myself of all shame?

[chanting]

Is one barrier left still to prevent me?

Whom have I now as my rival in virtue?

Has not my husband become my betrayer?

865 *I am cheated of home, cheated of children,*

hopes are gone which I could not fulfill,

the hopes of arranging things well

by hiding the rape,

by hiding the birth which brought sorrow.

870 *No! No! But I swear by the starry abode*

of Zeus, by the goddess who reigns on our peaks

and by the sacred shore of the lake

of Tritonis, I will no longer conceal that rape:

when I have put away the burden,

875 *my heart will be easier.*

Tears fall from my eyes, and my spirit is sick,

evilly plotted against by men and by gods;

I will expose them,

880 *ungrateful betrayers of women's beds.*

[singing]

O you who give the seven-toned lyre

a voice which rings out of the lifeless,

rustic horn the lovely sound

of the Muses' hymns,

885 *on you, Leto's son, here*

in daylight I will lay blame.

You came with hair flashing

gold, as I gathered

into my cloak saffron flowers ablaze

890 *with the golden light.*

Grabbing my pale wrists
as I cried for my mother's help
you led me to bed in a cave,
895 a god and my lover, shamelessly
gratifying the Cyprian goddess's will.
In misery I bore you
a son, whom in fear of my mother
I placed in that bed
900 where you cruelly forced me.
Ah! He is lost now,
snatched as food for birds,
my son and yours; O lost!
905 But you play the lyre,
singing your paeans.
Oh, O hear me, son of Leto,
who assign your prophecies
from the golden throne
910 and the temple at earth's center,
I will proclaim my words to the daylight:
ah, ah! you are an evil lover;
though you owed no favor
to my husband, you have
915 set a son in his house.
But my son, yes and yours, hard-hearted,^o
is lost, carried away by birds,
the swaddling clothes his mother put on him abandoned.
920 Delos hates you, and the young
laurel which grows by the palm
with its delicate leaves, where Leto
bore you, a holy child, fruit of Zeus.

CHORUS LEADER

O what a store of miseries is now
disclosed; who would not weep at hearing them?

OLD MAN

925 O child, watching your face I'm filled with pity^o
and my reason is distracted. For just when
I banished from my heart one wave of trouble,
a second one rose at the stern, caused by the words
you spoke about your present woes, before
930 you trod the evil path of other sorrows.
What do you say? What is your accusation
against Apollo? What child is this you claim
you bore? Where in the city did you put
this beloved corpse for beasts? Tell me again.

CREUSA

I will tell you, although I feel ashamed.

OLD MAN

935 Yes, I know how to feel with friends in trouble.

CREUSA

Then listen. You know the northern cave which lies
above the hill of Cecrops, called Long Rocks?

OLD MAN

I know. Pan's altars and his shrine are near.

CREUSA

It was there that I endured a fearful trial.

OLD MAN

940 Yes? My tears well up to meet your words.

CREUSA

Phoebus became my lover against my will.

OLD MAN

My child, could that have been the thing I noticed?

CREUSA

What was it? Speak out, and I'll tell the truth.

OLD MAN

When you were suffering from a secret illness?

CREUSA

945 That was the sorrow which I now reveal.

OLD MAN

How did you hide this union with Apollo?

CREUSA

I had a child.—Please hear my story out.

OLD MAN

But where? Who helped you? Or were you alone?

CREUSA

Alone in that cave where I met Apollo.

OLD MAN

950 Where is the child? You need not be childless.

CREUSA

Dead. He was left for beasts to prey upon.

OLD MAN

Dead? Then Phoebus was false, gave you no help?

CREUSA

He did not help. The child grows up in Hades.

OLD MAN

But who exposed the child? Of course not you?

CREUSA

955 I did: I wrapped him in my robes at night.

OLD MAN

And there was no accomplice in your deed?

CREUSA

No, nothing but concealment and misfortune.

OLD MAN

How could you leave your child there, in the cave?

CREUSA

How, but with many tender words of pity?

OLD MAN

960 Ah, you were harsh; Apollo harsher still.

CREUSA

If you'd seen the child stretch out his hands to me!

OLD MAN

To find your breast, or to lie there in your arms?

CREUSA

Yes, to find what I was cruelly refusing.

OLD MAN

But why did you decide to expose your child?

CREUSA

965 Because I hoped the god would save his own.

OLD MAN

Ah, what a storm embroils your house's fortunes!

CREUSA

Why do you hide your head, old man, and weep?

OLD MAN

I see your father and yourself so stricken.

CREUSA

Such is the life of mortals. All things change.

OLD MAN

970 My child, let us no longer cling to tears.

CREUSA

What can I do? For pain has no resource.

OLD MAN

Avenge yourself on the god, who wronged you first.

CREUSA

How can a mortal fight immortal power?

OLD MAN

Burn down Apollo's sacred oracle.

CREUSA

975 I am afraid. I have enough of sorrow.

OLD MAN

Then do what's in your power: kill your husband.

CREUSA

He was once loyal, and I honor that.

OLD MAN

Then kill the son, who's come to menace you.

CREUSA

But how? If only I might! I would do that!

OLD MAN

980 By putting swords into your attendants' hands.

CREUSA

Let us begin. But where can it be done?

OLD MAN

The sacred tent, where he is feasting friends.

CREUSA

Murder is flagrant; slaves are weak support.

OLD MAN

Ah, you're being a coward; come now, make a plan!

CREUSA

985 Well yes, I have something which is sure and subtle.

OLD MAN

And I can be your helper in both these ways.

CREUSA

Then listen. You know the war fought by Earth's sons?

OLD MAN

When the Giants fought against the gods at Phlegra.

CREUSA

Earth there produced an awful monster, Gorgon.

OLD MAN

990 To help her children and harass the gods?

CREUSA

991 Yes, but killed by Zeus's daughter Pallas.°

OLD MAN

994 Is this the tale which I have heard before?

CREUSA

995 Yes, that she wears its skin upon her breast.

OLD MAN

996 Athena's armor which they call her aegis?

CREUSA

997 So called from how she rushed into the battle.

OLD MAN

992 What is the appearance of this ferocious thing?

CREUSA

993 A breastplate that is armed with serpent coils.

OLD MAN

998 But my child, what harm can this do to your foes?

CREUSA

 You know Erichthonius?—Of course you must.

OLD MAN

1000 The founder of your house, the son of Earth.

CREUSA

 To him, as a newborn child, Athena gave...

OLD MAN

 Yes, what is this you hesitate to say?

CREUSA

 ...two drops from the blood of the Gorgon.

OLD MAN

 And what is their effect on human beings?

CREUSA

1005 The one is poisonous, the other cures disease.

OLD MAN

But how did she attach them to the child?

CREUSA

By golden chains which he gave to my father.

OLD MAN

And then, when he had died, it came to you?

CREUSA

Yes, I always wear it on my wrist.

OLD MAN

1010 How is the twofold gift compounded then?

CREUSA

The drop extracted from its hollow vein...

OLD MAN

How is it to be used? What power has it?

CREUSA

...fosters life and keeps away disease.

OLD MAN

What action does the other of them have?

CREUSA

1015 It kills—a poison from the Gorgon's snakes.

OLD MAN

You carry them apart or mixed together?

CREUSA

Apart. For good and evil do not mingle.

OLD MAN

O my dear child, you have all that you need!

CREUSA

By this the boy shall die, and you shall kill him.

OLD MAN

1020 But when and how? Tell me: it shall be done.

CREUSA

In Athens when he comes into my house.

OLD MAN

No, I distrust this plan as you did mine.

CREUSA

Why?—Can we both have seen the same weak point?

OLD MAN

They will accuse you, innocent or guilty.

CREUSA

1025 True: they say stepmothers are always jealous.

OLD MAN

So kill him here and then deny the crime.

CREUSA

And in that way I taste my joy the sooner.

OLD MAN

And turn his own deceit upon your husband.

CREUSA

1030 You know then what you are to do? Here, take
this golden bracelet from my hand, Athena's
old gift; go where my husband holds his feast
in secret; when they end the meal, begin
to pour the gods' libation, then drop this,
under the cover of your robe, into
1035 the young man's cup—in his alone, not all.
Reserve the drink for him who would assume
the mastery of my home. Once he drains this,
he will be dead and here is where he'll stay—
never will he see our glorious Athens.

OLD MAN

1040 Now go to your host's house, and I will do
the task that I have been assigned to do.
Old feet, come now, take on a youthful strength
for work, although the years deny it you.
March with your mistress upon the enemy,
and help to kill and cast him from the house.
1045 It's right that the fortunate should honor piety,
but when we wish to harm our enemies
there is no law which can get in our way.

(Exit Creusa to one side and the Old Man to the other.)

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE A

*Demeter's daughter, guarding the roadway, ruling
what moves through the paths of the night
1050 and the daytime, O guide the filling
of the death-heavy cup
to whom the queen sends it, brew
1055 of the blood-drops from the Gorgon's severed throat,
to him who lifts his presumptuous hand
against the house of Erechtheus.
Let none from other houses have
sway in the city:
1060 only the sons of Erechtheus.*

ANTISTROPHE A

*My mistress is planning a death, and if it should fail,
the occasion of action go past,
now her sole anchor of hope,
she will sharpen a sword
1065 or fasten a noose to her neck,
ending sorrow by sorrows, pass down to a different life.
For she would never endure to see
1070 foreigners ruling the house,
not while, living, her eyes^o
still have their clarity—
she, born of a noble line.*

STROPHE B

*O the shame to many-hymned
Dionysus,
1075 if by the springs of
Callichoroe
Apollo's wandering boy shall behold*

unsleeping, keeping the watch,
the torches burning on the festival
night,
1080 when the star-faced heavens join in the
dance,
with the moon and the fifty Nereids
who dance in the depths of the sea,^o
in perennial river-springs,
1085 honoring the gold-crowned Maid loss
and her mother, holy Demeter:
there, where he hopes
to rule, usurping
what others have wrought.

ANTISTROPHE B

1090 All you poets who raise your unjust strains
singing the unsanctioned, unholy loves
of women, see how much we surpass
1095 in virtue the unrighteous race
of men. Let a song of different strain
ring out against men, harshly indicting^o
their loves. For here is one
of the offspring of Zeus's sons who shows
1100 his ingratitude, failing
to bring good luck to the house
with his and Creusa's child:
but yielding to passion
for another, he has
1105 a bastard son.

(Enter a Servant of Creusa from the side.)

SERVANT

Women, can you tell me where I may find
Erechtheus' noble daughter?° I have searched
the city everywhere without success.

CHORUS LEADER

What is it, friend? Why are you hurrying?
1110 What is the message you have brought?

SERVANT

They're after us. The Delphians are looking
for her to stone her to death.

CHORUS LEADER

What do you mean? Have they discovered then
the secret plot we made to kill the boy?

SERVANT

1115 Correct—and you will not be the last to suffer.

CHORUS LEADER

How was this scheme, unknown to them, discovered?

SERVANT

The god refused to be defiled,° and so
discovered how justice could defeat injustice.

CHORUS LEADER

But how? I beg you tell me that: for whether
1120 I have to die, or not, I shall be more
content if I can know just what has happened.

SERVANT

Creusa's husband came out from the shrine
of Phoebus, and then took his new-found son
away to join the feast and sacrifice
he was preparing for the gods. Xuthus
1125 himself was going to the place where
the sacred Bacchanalian fires leap,
to sprinkle the twin crags of Dionysus
with victims' blood for having seen his son.
"My son," he said, "will you stay here and see
that workmen build a tent enclosed on all
its sides? And if I should be long away,
1130 while sacrificing to the gods of birth,
begin the banquet with such friends as come."

He took the sacrificial calves and left.
Ion had the framework built in ritual form
on upright poles without a wall, and paid
1135 attention to the sun, so that he might
avoid its midday and its dying rays
of flame, and measuring a square, its sides
a hundred feet, so that he could invite
1140 all Delphi to the feast. To shade the tent
he took from store some sacred tapestries,
a wonder to behold. And first he shaded
the roof-frame with a wing of cloth, spoil from
the Amazons, which Heracles, the son
1145 of Zeus, had dedicated to the god.
And there were figures woven in design:
for Ouranus was mustering the stars
in heaven's circle; and Helios drove his horses

toward his dying flame and trailed the star
1150 which shines bright in the West. While black-robed Night,
drawn by a pair, urged on her chariot,
beside her the stars kept pace. The Pleiades
and Orion, his sword in hand, moved through
the sky's midpath; and over them, the Bear
who turned his golden tail around the Pole.
1155 The round full moon threw up her rays, dividing
the month; the Hyades, the guide most sure
for sailors; then light's herald, Dawn, routing
the stars. The sides he draped with tapestries
also, these of barbarian design.
1160 There were fine ships which fought with Greeks, and creatures,
half man, half beast, and horsemen chasing deer
or lion hunts. And at the entrance, Cecrops,
his daughters near him, wreathed himself in coils
of serpents—this a gift which had been given
1165 by some Athenian. Then in the center
he put the golden mixing bowls. A herald
rose up then and announced that any Delphian
who pleased was free to attend the feast. And when
the tent was full, they wreathed their heads with flowers
and ate the food spread in abundance till
desire was satisfied.
1170
When they had done
with eating,^o an old man came in and stood
among the guests, and threw them into laughter
with his officious antics. He poured out
water from jars to wash their hands, or burned
1175 the ooze of myrrh, and put himself in charge
of golden drinking cups. And when the reed pipes

joined in, together with the mixing bowl which all
had now to drink, he said, “Enough of these
small cups, we must have large; the company
1180 will then be all the sooner in good spirits.”
And now they busied themselves with passing gold
and silver cups; but he, as though he meant
to honor his new master, offered him
a special cup, full of wine, in which
1185 he had dropped a fatal poison which they say
our mistress had given, to eliminate this new son.
And no one saw. But when like all the rest
Ion held his cup, one of the slaves let fall
some phrase of evil omen. Ion had been reared
1190 among good prophets in the temple, and knew
the sign and ordered them to fill another.
The first libation of the god he emptied
on the ground and told the rest to pour
as he had done. A silence followed as
1195 we filled the sacred bowls with Bibline wine
and water. While this was being done, there came
into the tent a riotous flight of doves—
they haunt Apollo’s shrine and have no fear.
To slake their thirst, they dipped their beaks into
1200 the wine the guests had poured and drew it down
their well-plumed throats; and all but one were not
harmed by the god’s libation. But one had perched
where Ion poured his wine, and tasted it.
At once her feathered body shook and quivered,
1205 maenad-like, she screamed strange cries of anguish.
The guests all watched, amazed to see her struggles.

She died in her convulsions, her pink claws
and legs gone limp. The son the god foretold
then stretched his uncloaked arms across the table,
1210 and cried, “Who planned my death? Tell me, old man,
since you were so officious; you handed me
the drink.” He held the old man by the arm
and searched him instantly, so that he might
convict him in the act.◦ His guilt was proved
1215 and he revealed, compelled against his will,
Creusa’s plotting with the poisoned drink.

The youth bestowed by Loxias collected
the guests, went from the tent without delay,
and took his stand before the Delphian nobles.
1220 “O rulers of the sacred city,” he said,
“a foreign woman, daughter of Erechtheus,
has tried to poison me.” The lords of Delphi
by many votes decided that my mistress
be put to death, thrown from the rock, for planning
the murder of a sacred person there
1225 inside the temple. Now all the city’s looking
for her whom misery advanced on this
unhappy path. Desire for children caused
her visit here to Phoebus, but now her life
is lost, and with her life all hopes of children.

CHORUS [*singing*]

There is no escape, we are doomed,
1230 *no escape from death.*
It has been made clear,
by the libation of Dionysian grapes◦
mingled for murder with blood drops

*from the swift-working viper,
1235 clear that in sacrifice to the gods below
my life is set for disaster,
and they will stone my mistress to death.
What winged flight can I take,
down to what dark caverns of the earth
1240 can I go to escape the stones of destruction?
By mounting a chariot
drawn by horses with speedy hooves,
or the prow of a ship?*

*[chanting]
There is no concealment, unless a god wishes
1245 to withdraw us from sight.
O unhappy mistress, what sufferings
wait for your soul? Shall we not,
because we intended to do harm to our fellows,
according to justice, suffer ourselves?*

(Enter Creusa from the side.)

CREUSA

1250 They are in pursuit, my friends; they want to kill me;
by the judgment of the Pythian vote my life is forfeit.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, we know in what distress you are, unhappy woman.

CREUSA

Where can I find refuge then? For I have evaded them
by a trick, just left the house in time to save my life.

CHORUS LEADER

Where, but at the altar?

CREUSA

1255 What advantage will that give me?

CHORUS LEADER

God defends the suppliant.

CREUSA

Yes, but the law condemns me.

CHORUS LEADER

They must seize you first.

CREUSA

And here my bitter adversaries come,
pressing on with sword in hand.

CHORUS LEADER

Sit on the altar now.
For if you die sitting there, your killers will be made
1260 guilty of your blood. Your fate must be endured.

(Enter Ion from the side, with a group of armed Delphians.)

ION

O Cephisus, bull-shaped ancestor,
what viper or what serpent glancing out
its deadly flame of fire did you beget
in her, this woman who will balk at nothing,
1265 worse than the Gorgon drops with which she tried

to poison me! Take hold of her and let
Parnassus' peaks dishevel those perfect tresses,
when like a ball she's bounced from rock to rock.

Luck favored me before I went to Athens
1270 to fall a victim to a stepmother.
For here, among my friends I learned to measure
your mind, your menace, and your enmity.
But if I had been trapped inside your house,
you would have sent me utterly to death.

(Creusa runs to the altar and sits on it.)

1275 The altar will not save you, nor Apollo's^o
house, since much greater pity is reserved
for me and for my mother. For even if
in body she's not here, her name's not absent.

(To his companions.)

You see her treachery—how she can twist
one scheme upon another! She has fled
1280 to cower at the god's own altar, hoping
thus to avoid her penalty for wrong.

CREUSA

I warn you not to kill me—and I speak
not only for myself but for the god
who guards this place.

ION

What can you have in common with the god?

CREUSA

1285 My body is his to save, a sacred charge.

ION

You tried to poison me and I was his.

CREUSA

No longer his; for you had found your father.

ION

I belonged to Phoebus till my father came.°

CREUSA

But then no more. Now I belong to him.

ION

1290 Yes, but I had the piety you lack.

CREUSA

I tried to kill the enemy of my house.

ION

I did not march upon your land with arms.

CREUSA

Yes you did, and you tried to burn Erechtheus' house!

ION

What fiery flame, what torches did I carry?

CREUSA

1295 You hoped to force possession of my home.

ION

My father's gift—the land he gained himself.

CREUSA

How can Aeolians share Athenian land?

ION

Because he saved it, not with words, but arms.

CREUSA

An ally need not own the land he helps!

ION

1300 You planned my death through fear of my intentions?

CREUSA

To save my life if you stopped just intending.

ION

Childless yourself, you envied my father's child.

CREUSA

So you will snatch those homes without an heir?

ION

Had I no right to share my father's land?

CREUSA

1305 A shield and spear, these are your sole possessions.

ION

Come, leave the altar and the shrine of god.

CREUSA

Go, find your mother, and give her your advice.

ION

While your attempted murder goes unpunished?

CREUSA

Not if you wish to kill me in the shrine.

ION

1310 What pleasure can the god's wreaths give to death?

CREUSA

I shall thus injure one who injured me.

ION

O this is monstrous! The laws of god for men
are not well made, their judgment is unwise.
The unjust should not have the right of refuge
1315 at altars, but be driven away. For gods
are soiled by the touch of wicked hands. The just,
the injured party, should have this asylum.
Instead both good and bad alike all come,
receiving equal treatment from the gods.

(Enter the Priestess of Apollo from the temple, carrying a cradle.)

PRIESTESS

1320 O stop, my son. For I, the prophetess
of Phoebus, chosen from all the Delphian women
to keep the tripod's ancient law, have left
the seat of prophecy to pass these bounds.

ION

Dear mother, hail! Mother in all but birth.

PRIESTESS

1325 Then let me be so called. It pleases me.

ION

You heard how she had planned to murder me?

PRIESTESS

I heard—but your own cruelty is sinful.

ION

Have I no right to kill a murderer?

PRIESTESS

Wives are unkind to children not their own.

ION

1330 As we can be to them if they mistreat us.

PRIESTESS

No. When you leave the temple for your country...

ION

What must I do? What is your advice?

PRIESTESS

...go into Athens, pure and with good omens.

ION

All men are pure who kill their enemies.

PRIESTESS

1335 No more of that. Hear what I have to say.

ION

Then speak. Your message could not be unfriendly.

PRIESTESS

You see the basket I am carrying?

ION

I see an ancient cradle bound with wool.

PRIESTESS

I found you in this once, a newborn child.

ION

1340 What do you say? This tale is new to me.

PRIESTESS

I kept it secret. Now I can reveal it.

ION

Why did you keep it from me all these years?

PRIESTESS

The god desired to keep you as his servant.

ION

And now he does not wish it? How can I know?

PRIESTESS

1345 Revealing your father, he bids you go from here.

ION

Why did you keep the cradle? Was that an order?

PRIESTESS

Apollo put the thought into my mind...

ION

What thought? Tell me. I want to hear the end.

PRIESTESS

...to keep what I had found until this time.

ION

1350 And does it bring me any help?—or harm?

PRIESTESS

The swaddling clothes you wore are kept inside.

ION

These clues you bring will help to find my mother?

PRIESTESS

The god desires this now—though not before.

ION

This is indeed a day of happy signs!

(She gives him the cradle.)

PRIESTESS

1355 Take this with you—and now look for your mother.

ION

Throughout all Asia, beyond the bounds of Europe!

PRIESTESS

That is your own affair. I reared you, child,
by Phoebus' will, and give these back to you,
what he wished me to take and keep, although
1360 without express command.◦ Why he so wished
I cannot say. There was no man who knew
that I had these or where they were concealed.
And now farewell. I kiss you like a mother.
As for the search, begin it as you ought:◦
1365 your mother might have been a Delphian girl
who left you at the temple; inquire here first,
and then elsewhere in Greece. Now you have heard
all that we have to say—Apollo, who had
an interest in your fate, and I myself.

(Exit into the temple.)

ION

O how the tears well from my eyes
whenever
1370 my mind goes back to that time
when the woman
who gave me birth, the child
of secret love,
disposed of me by stealth, and kept
me from
her breast. Instead, unnamed, I had
a life
of service in Apollo's house. My
fate
was cruel, though the god was
kind. I was

deprived of my dear mother's love
throughout
1375 the time I might have lived content
and happy,
held in her arms. My mother
suffered too;
she lost the joy a child can bring.

And
now

1380 I will consign the cradle as a gift
to god to ward away unpleasant
news.

If by some chance my mother were
a slave,
to find her would be worse than
ignorance.

O Phoebus, to your shrine I
dedicate it.

1385 And yet, what am I doing? It
is against
the god's own wish; he has
preserved for me
my mother's tokens. I must have
the courage
to open them. I cannot shun my
fate.

O sacred bands and ties which
guard my precious
1390 tokens, what secret do you hide
from me?

(He examines the cradle.)

A miracle! See how the cradle's covering
is still unworn; the wicker is not decayed,
yet years have passed since they were put away.

CREUSA

1395 But what is this I see—beyond my hopes?

ION

Silence. You were my enemy before.

CREUSA

This is no time for silence. Do not try
to check me. In that cradle I exposed
you then, O my own son, a newborn child,
1400 where the Long Rocks hang over Cecrops' cave.
I will desert this altar even if
I have to die.

(She leaves the altar and runs up to Ion.)

ION

Seize her! God's madness has made her leap away
from the altar's images. Now bind her arms.

CREUSA

Go on and kill me. I'll compete with her
1405 and you for what is hidden there inside.

ION

Is not this dreadful? To rob me with a trick!

CREUSA

No! You are found, a loved one for your loved ones.

ION

What, you love me? And try a secret murder?

CREUSA

You are my son: what's most loved by his parents.

ION

1410 Stop spinning lies. For I am sure to catch you.

CREUSA

O do so then! That is my aim, my son.

ION

This cradle—has it anything inside?

CREUSA

It has the clothes you wore when I exposed you.

ION

And can you give their names before you see them?

CREUSA

1415 I can; and, if I fail, I agree to die.

ION

Then speak. Your audacity is strange indeed.

CREUSA

Look, all, at weaving which I did in childhood.

ION

Describe it; girls weave many kinds of things.

CREUSA

It is unfinished, a kind of trial piece.

ION

1420 And its design? You cannot cheat me there.

CREUSA

There is a Gorgon in the center part.

ION

O Zeus! What fate is this that tracks me down!

CREUSA

The piece is fringed with serpents like an aegis.

ION

And here it is, found like an oracle!°

CREUSA

1425 The loomwork of a girl—so long ago.

ION

And anything else? Or will your luck fail now?

CREUSA

Serpents, all gold, our ancient race's custom.°

ION

Athena bids you raise your child in them?

CREUSA

Yes, in memory of Erichthonius.

ION

1430 What do they do with this gold ornament?

CREUSA

It is a necklace for a newborn child.

ION

Yes, here it is. I long to know what's third.

CREUSA

I put an olive wreath around you then,
from the first tree Athena's rock brought forth;
1435 if that is there, it has not lost its green,
but flourishes because the tree is holy.

ION

O dearest mother, what happiness to see you,
to kiss you, and to know that you are happy!

CREUSA

O child! O light more welcome than the sun!
1440 —The god forgive me—I have you in my arms.

[singing throughout this interchange with Ion, who speaks in reply]

*I have found you against all my hopes,
whom I thought underground in the world
of Persephone's shades.*

ION

Dear mother, yes, you have me in your arms,

who died and now have come to you alive.

CREUSA

1445 *O radiant heaven's expanse,
 how can I speak or cry
 my joy? How have I met
 unimagined delight, and what
 has made me happy?*

ION

1450 There was no more unlikely chance than this,
 to find that I am, after all, your son.

CREUSA

I am trembling with fear.

ION

That I'd be lost, although you hold me now?

CREUSA

*Yes, since I had cast all hope away.
But tell me, priestess, from where
did you take my child to your arms?*
1455 *Whose hand brought him to Apollo's house?*

ION

It was the work of god. But as we have suffered
before, so now we must enjoy our fortune.

CREUSA

*My child, you were born in tears,
in sorrow torn from your mother.*

1460 *But now I can breathe on your cheek,
and am blessed with tender joy.*

ION

I have no need to speak. You speak for both.

CREUSA

*I am childless no longer, no longer
without an heir.*

*The hearth is restored to the home,
the rulers return to the land,*

1465 *And Erechtheus is young once more;
now the house of the earth-born is delivered from night
and looks up to the rays of the sun.*

ION

Mother, my father should be here with me
to share the happiness I bring you both.

CREUSA

1470 *My child, my child,
how am I put to shame!*

ION

Yes? Tell me.

CREUSA

You do not know your father.

ION

So I'm a bastard, born before your marriage?

CREUSA

The marriage which gave you birth
1475 *saw no torches or dancing, my son.*

ION

A lowly birth! Mother, who was my father?

CREUSA

Athena who slew the Gorgon,
I call her to witness...

ION

Why this beginning?

CREUSA

...she who on my cliff
sits upon the hill that bears olives...

ION

Your words to me are cryptic and obscure.

CREUSA

1480 *...by the rocks where the nightingales sing,*
Apollo—

ION

Why name Apollo?

CREUSA

...became my lover in secret...

ION

1485

Speak on; for what you say will make me happy.

CREUSA

*...and when nine months passed, I bore you,
the unknown child of Apollo.*

ION

How welcome this news is, if it is true!

CREUSA

*And these were your swaddling clothes;
1490 in fear ^o of my mother I wrapped you
in them, the careless work of a girl
at her loom.
I gave you no milk;
you were not washed with my hands,
but in a deserted cave,
1495 a prey for the beaks of birds,
delivered to death.*

ION

O mother, what horror you dared!

CREUSA

*Myself in the bondage of fear,
I was casting away your life,
I killed you against my will.^o*

ION

1500 And I attempted an impious murder.^o

CREUSA

*Fate drove us hard in the past,
just now oppressed us again.
There is no harbor of peace
1505 from the changing waves of joy and despair.
The wind's course veers.
Let it rest. We have endured
sorrows enough. O my son,
pray for a favoring breeze
of rescue from trouble.*

CHORUS LEADER

1510 From what we have seen happen here, no man
should ever think that anything is hopeless.

ION

O Fortune, you've transformed unnumbered lives
to misery and then again to joy!
How near I was to killing my own mother,
1515 how near myself to undeserved disaster.
But don't the sun's bright rays in daily course
illumine many such events as this?
It was so good at last to find you, mother,
and I can cast no blame upon my birth.
1520 But there is something else I wish to say
to you alone. Come here with me; my words
are for your ear; your answer shall be hidden.
Now tell me, mother—might you not, deceived
as young girls are in love affairs kept secret,
1525 be laying blame upon the god, and saying,
attempting to escape the shame I brought,
that Phoebus is my father, though in fact

the one who fathered me was no god at all?

CREUSA [*now speaking*]

No, by Athena, Goddess of Victory,
who in her chariot fought by Zeus's side
against the Giant race, my son, your father
1530 was not a mortal being but a god,
the very one who reared you, Loxias lord.

ION

If this is true, why give his son to others,
why does he say that Xuthus is my father?

CREUSA

No, he does not; you are his son, a gift
1535 bestowed by him on Xuthus, just as a man
might give a friend his son to be his heir.

ION

But, mother, does Apollo tell the truth,
or is the oracle false? With some good reason
that question does not cease to trouble me.

CREUSA

Then listen. This is what I think, my son:
1540 it is for your own good that Loxias
is placing you within a noble house.
Acknowledged as his son, you would have lost
all hope of heritage or father's name.
What chance did you have when I concealed
the truth, and even planned your death in secret?
And so to help you he is giving you

1545 another father.

ION

My question cannot be so lightly answered;
no, I will ask Apollo in his temple
if I am a son of his, or born of man.

(Enter Athena above the temple.)

Ah!

What goddess shows her sunlit face above
1550 the fragrant temple? Mother, let us fly.
We should not see the gods unless the right
is given to us.

ATHENA

No, stay. I am no enemy to flee,
but well disposed, in Delphi as in Athens.
1555 I am Athena, whose name your city bears:
I have come here in haste, sent by Apollo,
who did not think it right to come himself
before you, lest he should be blamed in public
for what has happened in the past; he sent me
to give his message:

1560 This woman is your mother,
your father is Apollo; and he gave you
to him to whom he gave you not because
you are his son, but so that he could place you
in a noble house. But when this plan he made
was opened and laid bare, he was afraid
your mother's scheme of murder would succeed,
1565 or she be killed by you, and he found the means

of rescue; but for this, he would have kept
the secret longer and in Athens showed you
Creusa as your mother and himself
the father of her child. But I must end
my task and tell the purpose of my journey.

1570 Now hear Apollo's revelations.

Creusa,

go with your son to Cecrops' land, and then
appoint him to the royal throne; for since
he is descended from Erechtheus, he has
the right to rule my land: and he shall be
1575 renowned through Greece. His sons, four branches from
one stock, shall give their names to land and peoples,
divided in their tribes, who live about my rock.
The first shall be named Geleon, the tribe^o
1580 of Hopletes second, then Argades, and one
Aegicores, the name from my own aegis.
At the appointed time, the children born
of them shall colonize the Cyclades,
possess the island cities and the coast,
and thus give strength to my own land of Athens.
They shall live in the two broad plains of Asia
1585 and Europe, which lie on either side the Straits,
becoming famous under this boy's name,
Ionians. Moreover, you and Xuthus
are promised children. First Dorus, whose name
1590 shall cause the town of Doris to be hymned
throughout the land of Pelops. Then Achaeus,
king of the coast near Rhion, who shall mark
a people with his name.

Apollo then

1595 has managed all things well. He made your labor
easy, so that your family would not know;
and when the child was born and you exposed
him in his swaddling clothes, he ordered Hermes
to take him in his arms and bring him here,
1600 and would not let him die, but reared him up.
Now tell no one that Ion is your son,
and Xuthus will be happy in his belief,
while you may go away, Creusa, sure
of your own blessings.—Now farewell you all;
you are delivered of your present evils,
1605 and I confirm: your future holds good fortune.

ION

O Athena, child of mighty Zeus, we have received
what you say on trust. And I believe myself Apollo's
and Creusa's son—and even previously this was credible.

CREUSA

Listen to me. Although before I did not praise him,
1610 now I praise Apollo. For the son he^o had neglected
is restored to me; and now this oracle, these doors,
I look upon with joy, though they were hateful once.
Happily I cling to them and bid farewell.

ATHENA

I approve this change, this praise of him.^o The gods perhaps
1615 move to action late, but in the end they show their strength.

CREUSA

Son, now let us go.

ATHENA

Yes, go, and I will follow you.

ION^o

Worthy guardian of our journey...

CREUSA

...and one who loves the city.

(To Ion.)

ATHENA

Mount the ancient throne.

ION

That is a worthy prize for me.

(Exit Creusa and Ion to the side; exit Athena.)

CHORUS

O Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, now farewell.

1620 He whose house is pressed by trouble should respect the gods,
so preserving courage. For at last good men are honored,
evil men by their own nature cannot ever prosper.

TEXTUAL NOTES

(Line numbers in some cases are only approximate.)

HERACLES

89: This line is transmitted after line 86 in the manuscript but is placed here by most modern scholars.

119–23: Text uncertain.

191–92: These lines are transposed to after 194 by many scholars, and are rejected by others as an interpolation.

252–74: These lines are assigned by the manuscript to Amphitryon but are given by all modern scholars to the Chorus Leader. Perhaps different sections of this speech are to be assigned to different members of the chorus.

257: Text uncertain.

452: This line is rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

531–32: The manuscript assigns both of these lines entirely to Megara; some scholars attribute them to Amphitryon.

588–92: These lines are rejected by many scholars as an interpolation.

697: Text uncertain.

762: This line is rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

845: Text uncertain.

880: It is uncertain whether the reference is to Madness or to Iris; the text may be corrupt.

906–9: The text of these lines and their attribution (to Amphytrion or to the chorus) are uncertain.

955: Text uncertain.

957: Text uncertain.

1009–10: These two lines are transmitted in the manuscript in reverse order.

1022: Text uncertain.

1062: Text uncertain.

1159: This word is missing in the manuscript.

1185–89: Scholars disagree about the proper order of these lines.

1228: Text uncertain.

1241: Probably one line spoken by Heracles, expressing some kind of threat, and one spoken by Theseus in reply are missing here.

1288: Text uncertain.

1291–93: These lines are rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

1299–1300: These lines are rejected by many scholars as an interpolation.

1311: The manuscript assigns these two lines to Theseus as the beginning of his speech, but most scholars give them to the Chorus Leader instead.

1312: Probably one or more lines spoken by Theseus are missing before this line.

1338–39: These lines are rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

1366: This line is rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

1420: Text uncertain.

1421: This line is rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

THE TROJAN WOMEN

13–14: These two lines are rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

201: The manuscripts read “the bodies of my sons”; the translation reflects an emendation accepted by most scholars.

261: A word or two seem to be missing here.

383–85: Some or all of these lines are rejected as interpolations by many scholars.

434: After this line, one or more verses seem to be missing; line 435 gives the probable sense.

587–94: Scholars disagree on which of these lines to assign to Hecuba, which to Andromache.

604–5: A word or two seem to be missing from each of these two lines.

634–35: These two lines are rejected by most scholars as interpolations.

638: Text uncertain.

861: After this line, the manuscripts transmit two lines, “For I am Menelaus, I who indeed have toiled much, and the Greek army” (862–63); they are rejected by most scholars as an interpolation.

959–60: These two lines are rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

961: After this verse many scholars suggest that one or more lines have been lost.

990: The beginning of the name “Aphrodite” sounds like various Greek words for folly or lust.

1090: Text uncertain.

1140: This line is rejected by many scholars as an interpolation.

1211: Text uncertain.

1217: Astyanax's name means etymologically "lord of the city."

1239: Text uncertain.

1240: Text uncertain.

1290: Text uncertain.

1299–1300: Text uncertain.

IPHIGENIA AMONG THE TAURIANS

35–41: Text uncertain.

58: After this line the manuscript transmits two lines (59–60) that are rejected by most modern scholars as an interpolation: "Nor can I apply this dream to my dear ones: for Strophius did not have a son when I was being killed."

83: After this line the manuscript transmits one line (84): "which I suffered wandering throughout Greece." This line is similar to line 1455 and is deleted here by some scholars as an interpolation.

98–100: Text uncertain.

112: After this line the manuscript transmits one and a half lines (113–14) of which the text and translation are uncertain.

115: After this line the manuscript transmits two lines (116–17) which it assigns to Orestes: "We certainly did not come by ship on such a long voyage only to set out again from its limits for home." Scholars are divided whether to maintain that attribution, assign them to Pylades instead, transpose them elsewhere, or delete them.

123–25: Scholars disagree on whether to assign these first three verses to Iphigenia, to the chorus, or to both.

140: After this line the manuscript transmits one metrically defective line (141): “of the famous sons of Atreus.” The correct text of these words is uncertain.

150: Text uncertain.

190–97: Text uncertain.

203: Two half-lines may be missing here.

212: After this line the manuscript transmits one line (213): “she bore, she raised, invoked by prayer.” The text and meaning of this line are uncertain.

208: This line is transposed here by many scholars.

225: Text and translation uncertain.

258–59: Some scholars transpose these lines so that they come after line 245 or 335, in either case assigning them to the Herdsman.

288–90: Text uncertain.

293: After this line the manuscript transmits one line (294): “which they say the Erinyes emit as imitations.” The text and meaning of this line are uncertain and many scholars reject it as an interpolation.

299: Rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

316: After this line the manuscript transmits one line (317): “and the present disaster near to them.” This line is rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

331: The manuscript reads “stole”; the translation reflects a widely adopted modern emendation.

395: One or two words are probably missing here.

409: Text uncertain.

415: Text uncertain.

427: One word is probably missing here.

451–55: Text and translation uncertain.

515–16: These two lines are transmitted in the manuscript after line 514 and are transposed to after line 510 by many modern scholars.

571: After this line the manuscript transmits three lines (572–74): “There is much turmoil in divine affairs and in those of mortals. He feels grief in one regard only, when, although he is not stupid, he has been convinced by the words of seers and is destroyed as he is destroyed for those who know.” The text and meaning of these lines is uncertain.

580: Text uncertain.

587: Text uncertain.

633: Text uncertain.

780–81: The assignment of the speakers for these lines is confused in the manuscript; the translation reflects a plausible modern scholarly correction.

798–99: These lines are assigned by the manuscript to the chorus, but most modern scholars give them to Iphigenia instead.

829: Text uncertain.

867: This line is transmitted after line 866 in the manuscript, where it is attributed to Orestes; it is transposed to after 865 and attributed to Iphigenia by modern scholars.

874: Text uncertain.

895–97: Text and translation uncertain.

907–8: Rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

914: Text and translation uncertain.

930–36: The manuscript transmits the lines in the order indicated by the numbering; the order in which they are translated here reflects a

transposition accepted by most modern scholars.

942–43: Text uncertain.

1050: This line is transmitted in the manuscript between lines 1049 and 1051 and is transposed to after line 1051 by modern scholars.

1052: This line is attributed in the manuscript to Orestes; some modern scholars assign it instead to Iphigenia.

1071: Rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

1132–36: Text uncertain.

1143–52: Text uncertain.

1214: Iphigenia's words are missing in the manuscript.

1218: Text and translation uncertain.

1249: Text and translation uncertain.

1260: One word is probably missing in the manuscript here.

1309: Text uncertain.

1380: This word is missing in the manuscript and is supplied by modern scholars.

1469: Probably one or more lines are missing here.

1490–91: These lines are assigned to Athena by the manuscript; some scholars give them to the chorus, but it would probably be better to give them to Thoas instead. Lines 1490–96 are suspected by some scholars of being an interpolation.

1497–99: These lines are identical to *The Phoenician Women* lines 1764–66, *Orestes* 1691–93, and *Hippolytus* lines 1466a–c; most scholars reject them here as an interpolation.

ION

1: The text is uncertain, but the meaning is clear.

169: The text of this line is uncertain.

178: A word is missing here in the manuscript, presumably an adjective modifying “shrine.”

184–221: The manuscript assigns some parts of this song to Ion, some to the chorus; modern scholars assign it all to the chorus. Probably some parts were sung by different individual members of the chorus.

221: A word is missing here in the manuscript.

237: Before this line a verse may be missing in the manuscript.

285: The exact reading is uncertain.

286: The manuscript reads “He honors, he honors.” The translation reflects a widely accepted scholarly emendation.

360: The Greek can just as well mean, “And you miss your unhappy mother?”

374–77: Some scholars reject these lines as an interpolation.

390: The text and meaning of this line are uncertain.

467: Text uncertain.

487: The text of this line and the next one is uncertain.

578–81: Some scholars reject these lines as an interpolation.

593–94: The text is uncertain.

661–63: Ion’s name is derived here from a word meaning “going.”

697–98: The text of these lines and their exact sense are uncertain.

709–10: A line and a half are missing in the manuscript; the translation reflects the probable meaning.

721: Text and meaning are uncertain.

801: See note on lines 661–63.

802: The manuscript assigns this half line to the Old Man, but many editors give it to the Chorus Leader instead.

828: The text of this line is uncertain. Some scholars reject lines 828–31 as an interpolation.

844–58: Many scholars reject some or all of these lines as being interpolated.

916: Text uncertain.

925: Text uncertain.

991–98: The line numbers indicate the sequence transmitted by the manuscript; modern scholars have rearranged them as indicated to yield a more satisfactory sense.

1071: Text uncertain.

1082–83: Text uncertain.

1098–99: The text of these lines is uncertain.

1107: One line is probably missing in the manuscript at this point.

1117: The following words are rejected by some scholars as an interpolation.

1171: One word is missing in the manuscript here.

1214: One line is probably missing in the manuscript at this point.

1232–34: Text uncertain.

1275–78: Some scholars reject these lines as an interpolation; others transpose them to follow line 1281.

1288: The text and meaning of this line are uncertain.

1300–1303: Many scholars transpose these lines to follow line 1295.

1360: The text of the following sentence is uncertain.

1364–68: Some scholars reject these lines as an interpolation.

1424: The text of these last words and their meaning are uncertain.

1427: The text of this line is uncertain; the translation reflects a widely accepted scholarly emendation.

1489: The text is uncertain here; the translation reflects one plausible scholarly emendation.

1499: Some scholars emend the text of this line to read “You killed me against your will” and assign it to Ion together with the following lines.

1500: The text of these words is uncertain but their meaning is fairly secure.

1579: Some scholars suggest that a line has been lost in the manuscript at this point.

1610: Some scholars emend the text to read “I had neglected.”

1614: Text uncertain.

1617 and 1618: These words are assigned in the manuscript to Creusa (if so, then Ion remains silent from line 1608 for the rest of the play); most modern scholars assign them instead to Ion.

GLOSSARY

Abantian: Euboean, referring to the island off the eastern coast of mainland Greece.

Acastus: son of Pelias (the king of Iolcus); brother of Alcestis.

Achaeans: inhabitants of Achaea, a region in Greece on the northern coast of the Peloponnese; sometimes used to refer to all the Greeks.

Achaeus: son of Xuthus and Creusa; legendary founder of the Achaeans.

Acheron: a river or lake of the underworld; more generally, the underworld.

Achilles: son of Peleus and Thetis; father of Neoptolemus; the greatest Greek warrior at Troy.

Aegean: the sea to the east and south of mainland Greece.

Aegicores: one of the four tribes into which the people of Attica were traditionally divided.

aegis: the shield of Athena, displaying the head of a Gorgon in its center.

Aeolian: referring to the Aeolians, one of the four major tribes of ancient Greece.

Aeolus: son of Zeus; father of Xuthus; legendary founder of the Aeolians.

Aetna: a volcanic mountain on the island of Sicily.

Agamemnon: son of Atreus; leader of the Greek army at Troy; brother of Menelaus; husband of Clytemnestra, killed by her and Aegisthus upon his return from Troy; father of Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes.

Aglaurus: legendary wife of Cecrops; mother of three girls to whom Athena entrusted the baby Erichthonius under condition that they not look upon him; they disobeyed her instructions, went mad, and jumped to their death from the Acropolis.

ailinos: a ritual cry of anguish or mourning.

Ajax: son of Oileus; Greek warrior during the Trojan War, less famous than Ajax, son of Telamon; at Troy's capture he raped the virgin priestess

Cassandra, who had sought refuge in the temple of Athena.

Alcaeus: a son of Perseus and Andromeda, and father of Amphitryon.

Alcmene: wife of Amphitryon; mother of Heracles.

Alexander: another name of Paris; son of Priam and Hecuba.

Alpheus: a river in the Peloponnese in southern Greece; it flows along Olympia, the site of an important Greek religious center.

Amazons, Amazonian: a mythical race of warrior women who fought against the Greeks led by Heracles, or, according to another legend, against the Athenians led by Theseus.

Amphanae: a town in the region of Doris in south-central Greece.

Amphion: legendary co-builder of Thebes together with his twin brother Zethus.

Amphitrite: a sea goddess, wife of Poseidon.

Amphitryon: husband of Alcmene, and human father of Heracles.

Amyclae: a town southwest of Sparta in the Peloponnese in southern Greece.

Anaurus: a river in southeastern Thessaly in central Greece.

Andromache: during the Trojan War, the wife of Hector and mother of Astyanax; afterward, the slave concubine of Neoptolemus and mother of a child with him.

Aphrodite: goddess of sexual desire; the beginning of her name sounds like various Greek words for folly or lust.

Apollo: son of Zeus and Leto; twin brother of Artemis; god of archery, prophecy, healing, and poetry; his prophetic seat was at Delphi.

Arcadia: a region in southern Greece in the central Peloponnese.

Ares: god of war.

Argades: one of the four tribes into which the people of Attica were traditionally divided.

Argive: referring to Argos; in general, Greek.

Argos: a city and region in the eastern Peloponnese in southern Greece, not always distinguished clearly from Mycenae.

Artemis: daughter of Zeus and Leto; twin sister of Apollo; goddess of the hunt, childbirth, and virginity, who protected wild animals and boys and

girls before they reached adolescence; as “Lightbringer,” identified with the moon.

Asia: the western coast of what is now Turkey, also called Asia Minor.

Asopus: a river in Boeotia that flows near Thebes.

Astyanax: young son of Hector and Andromache; hurled from the walls of Troy when the Greeks sacked the city; his name means etymologically “lord of the city.”

Athena: daughter of Zeus and Metis; goddess of wisdom and warfare; patron goddess of Athens.

Athens: an important city in the region of Attica in the east-central part of Greece; home of Greek tragedy.

Atlas: a mythical giant said to stand at the far western extremity of the world and to bear the heavens on his shoulders.

Atreus: father of Agamemnon and Menelaus; brother of Thyestes.

Attic: referring to a region of east-central Greece (Attica) dominated by and belonging to Athens.

Aulis: a harbor in eastern Greece in Boeotia, from which the Greek fleet set sail for Troy.

Bacchanalian: referring to the celebrations of the worship of Dionysus.

Bacchus: Dionysus.

Bear: the constellation of Ursa Major.

Bibline: a celebrated wine from Thrace.

Brauron: site of an important cult of Artemis in Attica.

Cadmus: originally a Phoenician prince, mythical founder of the Greek city of Thebes.

Calchas: the most important seer of the Greek army during the Trojan War.

Callichoroe: a spring at Eleusis, a town near Athens, around which girls performed choral dances.

Capherea: a promontory on the southeast coast of Euboea.

Carystus: a town on the island of Euboea off the coast of eastern central Greece.

Cassandra: daughter of Priam and Hecuba; inspired prophetess of Apollo; when Troy was captured, she sought refuge at the temple of Athena but

was raped by Ajax, son of Oileus; afterward she was brought home by Agamemnon as his concubine and was murdered by Clytemnestra.

Castalia: a fountain at Delphi at the foot of Mount Parnassus.

Castor: together with Polydeuces (or Pollux), one of the twin sons of Tyndareus; brother of Helen and Clytemnestra; a divinity who protected mariners in distress.

Cecrops: a legendary king of Athens.

Centaurs: mythical savage beings, half-human, half-horse, against whom Heracles waged war.

Cephisus: a major river that waters the plain west of Athens.

Chalcodon: leader of the Abantes, an ancient Ionian tribe who lived on Euboea.

Charon: the mythical boatman who ferried the souls of the dead across the river into the underworld.

Clashing Rocks: the two rocks (Symplegades), located at either side of the Bosphorus at the entrance to the Black Sea; they were said to crash together and crush ships as they tried to pass through.

Clytemnestra: wife of Agamemnon; together with her lover Aegisthus she killed him on his return from Troy; mother of Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes, who killed her in revenge for his father's death. Also written Clytaemestra.

Crathis: a river in southern Italy.

Creon: a king of Thebes.

Crete: a large and important Greek island in the southeastern Mediterranean.

Creusa: a legendary queen of Athens, mother of Ion.

Cronion: Zeus as the son of Cronus.

Cyclades: a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea.

Cyclopes, Cyclopean: divine craftsmen who were thought to have built the walls of Mycenae, Argos, and other cities.

Cygnus: son of Ares; murderer of travelers until Heracles killed him.

Cynthian: an epithet of Apollo, who was born at Mount Cynthus on Delos.

Cypris, Cyprian: Aphrodite, who was born in the sea near the island of Cyprus.

Danaans: descendants of Danaus; in general, Argives and, more generally, all the Greeks.

Danaus: a hero who was one of the legendary founders of Argos; father of fifty daughters (the Danaids), forty-nine of whom killed on their wedding night the cousins they were obliged to marry.

Dardanian: Trojan.

Dardanus: a hero who was one of the legendary founders of Troy.

Deiphobus: Trojan warrior, son of Priam and Hecuba; after Paris was killed, Deiphobus became the second Trojan husband of Helen.

Delos, Delian: a Greek island, birthplace of Apollo and Artemis and a center of their worship.

Delphi: the major oracle and cult center of Apollo, situated on Mount Parnassus in central Greece.

Demeter: goddess of grains and fertility, mother of Persephone.

Dictynna: a Cretan mountain nymph identified with Artemis.

Diomedes: a giant of Thrace who owned man-eating horses.

Dionysus: son of Zeus and Semele; god of wine, music, and theater; also known as Bacchus.

Dirce: a legendary heroine of Thebes; aunt of Antiope, who was the mother of Amphion and Zethus; also a fountain and river in Thebes.

Dirphys: the tallest mountain on Euboea.

Doris: a region and town in central Greece, traditionally the homeland of the Dorians, one of the four major tribes of ancient Greece.

Dorus: son of Xuthus and Creusa; legendary founder of the Dorians.

Electra: daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; sister of Iphigenia and Orestes.

Electryon: son of Perseus and Andromeda; king of Tiryns; father of Alcmene.

Enceladus: one of the Giants defeated by the Olympian gods; he was wounded by Athena.

Epeius: Greek warrior, designer of the Trojan horse.

Erechtheus: a legendary king of Athens.

Erichthonius: son of Earth and Hephaestus; a legendary king of Athens.

Erytheia: a city or island off the coast of southwestern Spain.

Euboea, Euboean: referring to a large island off the coast of eastern mainland Greece.

Euripus: the narrow channel of water between the island of Euboea and the Greek mainland at Aulis.

Eurotas: a river near Sparta in the Peloponnese in southern Greece.

Eurystheus: son of Sthenelus; legendary king of Mycenae or Argos; he imposed the twelve labors on Heracles.

fire god: Hephaestus, god of human and natural fire.

Furies: monstrous female divinities of vengeance, who punished especially murder within the family.

Gaia: Earth.

Ganymede: a beautiful Trojan prince, abducted by Zeus to serve as his cupbearer on Olympus.

Geleon: legendary founder of the Geleontes, one of the four tribes into which the people of Attica were traditionally divided.

Geryon: a monstrous herdsman who lived in the far western part of the Mediterranean; Heracles killed him and stole his cattle.

Giants: children of Earth, also sometimes called Titans, who fought against the Olympian gods and were defeated by them.

Gorgon: a monster produced by Earth to help her children, the Titans; killed by Athena; one of three monstrous snake-women who included Medusa, killed by Perseus; their faces were so terrifying that whoever looked on them was turned to stone.

Graces: companions of Aphrodite, goddesses of all kinds of beauty and charm.

Hades: brother of Zeus and Poseidon; god of the underworld; his name is used synonymously for the underworld itself.

Halae: a site in Attica near Brauron; location of a temple of Artemis Tauropolus.

Hebrus: a large river in northern Greece.

Hecate: goddess associated with witchcraft, night, doorways, crossroads, and the moon; sometimes identified with Artemis.

Hector: the foremost warrior of the Trojans during the Trojan War; a son of Priam and Hecuba; husband of Andromache; he was killed by Achilles.

Hecuba: queen of Troy; wife of Priam, and, according to some accounts, mother of fifty sons and daughters.

Helen: daughter of Zeus (or Tyndareus) and Leda; wife of Menelaus (the brother of Agamemnon); her elopement with Paris caused the Trojan War.

Helicon: a mountain in Boeotia in central Greece associated with the Muses.

Helios: the god of the sun.

Hellas: Greece.

Hellene: Greek.

Hera: wife and sister of Zeus; queen of the gods; goddess of marriage; she had an important cult center at Argos.

Heracles: son of Zeus and Alcmene; the greatest hero of Greek legend, famous for his physical strength, his twelve labors, and his wildness in drinking and sexuality; he was said to have led a first Greek expedition that conquered Troy in the generation before the Trojan War celebrated by Homer.

Hermes: son of Zeus and Maia; the messenger god; god of travelers, contests, stealth, and heralds; he escorted the souls of the dead to the underworld.

Hermione: a town in the eastern Peloponnese in southern Greece, site of a temple of Demeter.

Hesperides: legendary nymphs who tended a beautiful garden at the far western corner of the world near Atlas.

Hill of Ares: the Areopagus, a hill in Athens near the Acropolis, site of an important court of law.

Hippodameia: daughter of Oenomaus. He challenged all suitors of her hand to a chariot race and killed them when they lost; eventually Pelops bribed Oenomaus' charioteer, who sabotaged Oenomaus' chariot so that he was killed during the race, and Pelops married Hippodameia.

Homole: a mountain in Thessaly in central Greece.

Hopletes: one of the four tribes into which the people of Attica were traditionally divided.

Hostile Sea: the Black Sea, traditionally difficult for sailors and inhabited by hostile peoples (the usual Greek name, *Euxeinos*, means “hospitable” and was probably euphemistic).

Hyades: nymphs, daughters of Atlas; sisters of the Pleiades, who like them were turned into a cluster of stars.

Hydra: a mythical monster with many heads that grew back whenever one was cut off; killed by Heracles.

Hymen, or Hymenaeus: god of marriage; wedding song.

Ida: a mountain near Troy, where Paris judged a beauty contest between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite.

Ilium: Troy.

Iolaus: a nephew and comrade of Heracles who assisted him in many of his exploits.

Ion: son of Creusa and Apollo; legendary king of Athens and founder of the Ionian tribe. Euripides derives his name from a word meaning “going.”

Ionian Sea: the sea to the west of Greece and the southeast of Italy.

Ionians: one of the four major tribes of ancient Greece.

Iphigenia: eldest daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; when adverse winds blocked the Greek fleet at Aulis from sailing to Troy, she was sacrificed to Artemis there by her father (in some versions Artemis spirited her away to the land of the Taurians and put a deer in her place).

Iris: the messenger of the gods.

Ismenus: a river in Boeotia that flows through Thebes.

Isthmus, Isthmian: a narrow strip of land connecting the Peloponnese in southern Greece to the rest of mainland Greece; site of an important religious center and of the large and important city of Corinth.

Ithaca: a western Greek island in the Ionian Sea, home of Odysseus.

Ixion: a mythical criminal who after numerous misdeeds was punished in the underworld by being tied to a fiery wheel that spun forever.

Kore: Persephone (literally, “daughter”).

Lacedaemonian: Spartan.

Laconia: a region in southern Greece in the southeastern part of the Peloponnese; Sparta is situated there.

Laertes: father of Odysseus.

Laomedon: Trojan king, father of Ganymede.

Leda: mythical queen of Sparta, wife of Tyndareus; visited by Zeus in the form of a swan, hence the mother of Castor and Polydeuces, and of Helen and Clytemnestra.

Lemnos: an island in the northern part of the Aegean Sea; according to legend, its female inhabitants went mad and killed all their male relatives.

Lerna, Lernaean: a marshy area near Argos; home of the Hydra.

Leto: goddess, the mother of Apollo and Artemis.

Leucothea: a Theban heroine, originally named Ino, who was driven mad by Hera and carrying her son Melicertes jumped into the sea; her son was divinized as Palaemon; both divinities protected sailors.

Libyan: referring to Libya, a region on the southern coast of the Mediterranean.

Ligyan: Ligurian, referring to the western coast of Italy.

Linus: a son of Apollo and a Muse, according to some versions killed by Heracles; personification of funeral dirges.

Long Rocks: cliffs on the northern slope of the Acropolis in Athens.

Loxias: Apollo; the word means “slanting” and may refer to the ambiguity of his oracles.

Lycus: a legendary king of Thebes; another Lycus, a descendant of this first one, later usurped the throne of Thebes.

maenad: a female worshipper of Dionysus.

Maeotis: a sea to the northeast of the Black Sea, now called the Sea of Azov.

Maia: a nymph, who bore Hermes to Zeus.

Maid: another epithet for Persephone.

Maiden of Ilium: Athena.

Megara: wife of Heracles, mother of their three sons.

Menelaus: son of Atreus; brother of Agamemnon; husband of Helen.

Menoceus: father of Creon.

Mimas: one of the Giants defeated by the Olympian gods; he was burned up by molten metal launched by Hephaestus.

Minotaur: a mythical Cretan monster, half man, half bull, to which every year fourteen young Athenians were sacrificed; killed by Theseus.

Minyan: a legendary primitive people in Greece, defeated by Heracles.

Mount Parnassus: *see* Parnassus

Muses: daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus, associated with all forms of cultural, especially artistic, musical, and poetic, excellence.

Mycenae: an ancient city in Greece in the northeastern Peloponnese, not always distinguished clearly from nearby Argos.

Myconos: a Greek island in the Aegean sea near Delos.

Mysteries: various esoteric forms of Greek religion involving secrecy, mystic doctrines, and hopes for the afterlife.

Nauplia: a harbor on the eastern coast of the Peloponnese (modern Nafplion).

Nemean: referring to Nemea, a site near Argos; after Heracles defeated a monstrous lion there, he founded the Nemean athletic games.

Neoptolemus: also known as Pyrrhus; son of Achilles; notorious for his brutality at the sack of Troy (he killed Priam at an altar); afterward he took Andromache as slave and concubine, and was later killed at Delphi.

Nereid: a sea nymph, one of the fifty daughters of Nereus.

Nereus: a divinity of the sea, father of the fifty Nereids; famous for his wisdom.

Nisus: legendary king of the city of Megara in Attica.

Odysseus: son of Laertes or Sisyphus; Greek warrior at Troy, famous for his cleverness.

Oechalia: a legendary city of unknown location captured famously by Heracles.

Oenoë: a town on the island of Icaria in the eastern Aegean Sea, home of a famous temple of Artemis.

Oenomaus: *see* Hippodameia

Olympus: a mountain on which the gods make their home, located in Pieria in northern Greece.

Orestes: son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; brother of Iphigenia and Electra; he killed his mother to avenge his father, and consequently was pursued by her Furies.

Orion: a legendary monstrous hunter, placed after his death among the stars.

Ouranus: god of the heavens.

Paeon: a name for Apollo as a healer and savior; a kind of poem addressed to the god and imploring or celebrating his help.

Palaemon: the son, originally named Melicertes, of Ino (see Leucothea).

Pallas: Athena.

Pan: a rustic, musical god dwelling in wild nature and associated with sudden mental disturbances (hence our term “panic”).

Parnassus, Parnassian: a mountain above Delphi in central Greece, associated with Apollo and the Muses.

Peirene: a fountain in Corinth.

Pelasgia: Argos.

Peleus: father of Achilles.

Pelias: father of Acastus and Alcestis; half-brother of Aeson, Jason’s father, from whom Pelias stole the throne of Iolcus.

Pelion: a mountain in the southeastern part of Thessaly in central Greece.

Pelops: son of Tantalus; a mythical king of the city of Pisa in the Peloponnese in southern Greece. The land of Pelops was the “Peloponnese.” *See also* Hippodameia.

Peneus: a river in Thessaly in central Greece.

Pergamum: Troy.

Persephone: daughter of Demeter; wife of Hades and queen of the underworld.

Perseus: legendary hero who killed the Gorgon Medusa; father of Alcaeus; grandfather of Amphitryon; great-grandfather of Heracles.

Phineus: a legendary blind prophet and king of eastern Thrace, on the western shore of the Black Sea; he was persecuted by Harpies, disgusting winged women who stole or befouled his food, until they were driven off by the Argonauts.

Phlegra, Phlegraea: the legendary place in Thrace or southern Italy where Zeus and the other Olympian gods defeated the Giants.

Phocis: a region in central Greece on the northern shore of the Gulf of Corinth.

Phoebus: epithet of Apollo meaning “bright.”

Pholoë: a mountain in Arcadia, in the Peloponnese in southern Greece; home of the Centaurs.

Phrygia, Phrygians: a kingdom (and its people) in what is now west central Turkey; often used as a synonym for Troy (and its people).

Phthia: a region in southern Thessaly in north central Greece.

Phthiotis: a region in east-central Greece.

Pisa: a town in the western Peloponnese in southern Greece, near Olympia.

Pitana: a district of Sparta.

Pleiades: nymphs, daughters of Atlas; sisters of the Hyades, who like them were turned into a cluster of stars.

Pluto: Hades.

Polyxena: daughter of Priam and Hecuba; sacrificed by the Greeks to the dead Achilles after the fall of Troy.

Poseidon: brother of Zeus; god of the sea, of horses, and of earthquakes.

Priam: king of Troy; husband of Hecuba; killed by Neoptolemus at the altar of Zeus during the fall of Troy.

Procne: a mythical Athenian heroine who married Tereus, a Thracian king; when she discovered that he had raped her sister Philomela and torn out her tongue to prevent her from disclosing this, she killed their son Itys and served him to Tereus for dinner.

Prometheus: one of the Titans; he helped Zeus give birth to Athena from his head.

Punic: Phoenician, often referring to Carthage and its empire on the north coast of Africa.

Pylades: son of Strophius of Phocis; the loyal comrade of Orestes.

Pythian: belonging to Delphi (where Apollo had killed the monstrous Python).

Rhion: a town in Achaea, a region of western Greece.

Salamis: an island near Athens.

Scamander: a river near Troy.

Scyros: an island of the Sporades group in the Aegean Sea; the home of Neoptolemus.

Scythian: referring to the Scythians, a nomadic barbarian people living to the north and east of the Black Sea.

Simois: a river near Troy.

Sisyphus: legendary founder of Corinth; a trickster figure who famously deceived the gods on multiple occasions and was punished by having to roll a stone up a hill in the underworld that always rolled back down when it neared the summit.

Sown Men: “Spartoi”; according to Theban legend, the original inhabitants of the city sprang from the ground, from the teeth of a dragon that Cadmus sowed.

Sparta, Spartan: referring to an important Greek town in the Peloponnese in southern Greece.

sprouted men: *see* Sown Men

Straits: the Hellespont, the narrow channel of water linking the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and separating Europe from Asia.

Strophius: king of Phocis; father of Pylades; when Clytemnestra and Aegisthus killed Agamemnon, Orestes was rescued and brought to Strophius for safekeeping.

Taenarus: a cape at the southernmost tip of the Peloponnese in southern Greece, where there was said to be an entrance to the underworld.

Talthybius: a herald of the Greek army at Troy.

Tantalid: referring to the descendants of Tantalus.

Tantalus: father of Pelops; founder of the house of Atreus to which Agamemnon and Aegisthus belonged.

Taphians: piratical inhabitants of the island of Taphos in the Ionian Sea off the coast of northwestern Greece.

Taurians: a barbarian people who inhabited the southern coast of the Crimean peninsula on the Black Sea.

Tauropolus: cult epithet of Artemis as she was worshipped at Halae in Attica.

Telamon: Greek hero from the island of Aegina; son of Aeacus; brother of Peleus; father of Ajax and Teucer.

Thebes: a large city in southern Boeotia in central Greece.

Themis: primeval goddess of custom and established law.

Theseus: son of Aegeus and Aethra; the most important hero of Athenian legend; supposedly the first king of a unified Attica.

Thessaly: a large region in the north central part of Greece.

Thoas: king of the Taurians; his name suggests swiftness.

Three-Quart Jug: a festival, called the *Choes* (“Pitchers”), held every year at Athens in honor of Dionysus, at which there was a competition to drink the new wine; each participant had his own table, wine, and three-quart pitcher.

thyrsus: a wand carried by worshippers of Dionysus, made of a fennel stalk with ivy vines and leaves wound around its tip and topped by a pine cone.

Titan: one of the primeval divinities born from Earth and sometimes called Giants, defeated by Zeus, Athena, and the other Olympian gods.

Tithonus: a beautiful Trojan prince, abducted by Eos, goddess of the dawn.

Tritonis: a lake in northern Africa, sacred to Athena.

Trojan: referring to Troy.

Trophonius: Greek seer who was honored at an oracular cave near Delphi.

Troy: city in northwestern Anatolia (now northwestern Turkey), defeated and pillaged by a Greek army.

Twins of Zeus: Amphion and Zethus, the legendary founders of Thebes.

Tyndareus: king of Sparta; husband of Leda; human father of Castor and Polydeuces, and of Helen and Clytemnestra.

Typhon: a mythical monster, born from Earth, who fought against Zeus and the Olympian gods; Heracles is said to have killed a number of Typhon’s monstrous offspring.

war god: Ares.

White Shore: an uninhabited island (now called Fidonisi) on the southwest coast of the Black Sea, about thirty miles northeast of the mouth of the Danube in what is now Romania; the ghost of the dead Achilles was thought to haunt it.

wooden horse: a large, artificial horse made of wood containing a number of Greek warriors; when the Trojans brought it into the city the Greek warriors emerged and let the rest of their army into Troy, which they destroyed.

Xuthus: a legendary king of Athens; husband of Creusa; real or putative father of Ion; founder of various Greek tribes through his sons.

Zethus: legendary co-builder of Thebes together with his twin brother Amphion.

Zeus: king of gods and men; father of several of the Olympian gods, including Apollo; also father of Heracles and many other human heroes.