

THE COMPLETE GREEK TRAGEDIES

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EURIPIDES • III

HECUBA

Translated by William Arrowsmith

ANDROMACHE

Translated by John Frederick Nims

THE TROJAN WOMEN

Translated by Richmond Lattimore

ION

Translated by Ronald Frederick Willetts

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INTRODUCTION TO ION

THE *Ion* can be fairly certainly assigned, on stylistic and metrical grounds, to the decade 420–410 B.C. There is no conclusive evidence for a more exact date within this period.

Creusa was the daughter of Erechtheus, the autochthonous king of Athens. While still a girl, she was seduced by Apollo and gave birth to a son whom she exposed from fear of her parents. She naturally supposed that the child had died. But, unknown to her, Apollo sent Hermes to take the child to Delphi and leave him beside the temple. There he was found by the prophetess, who brought him up. He eventually became a steward in the temple. Knowing nothing of the circumstances of his birth, he lives a sheltered life and is happy in the service of the god. In the meantime his mother has married Xuthus. He, though a foreigner, won his bride as a reward for his services to Athens in war. Though long married, they are childless. They have therefore decided to come to Delphi to consult the god about their chances of having children.

Such is the situation at the opening of the play. It arose from an old wrong, the seduction of Creusa by Apollo. It lends itself to development in a number of different ways. The wrong can be righted and Athens glorified by accepting Ion's divine birth as a mark of favor to the Ionian tribes. Or the romantic can be rejected in favor of a more realistic approach. Euripides was sometimes romantic, more often realistic, in his treatment of myths. Here he chose to handle the theme realistically and was preoccupied with the human problem it presented. He weaves the strands of the Ion legend together to form the framework outlined above. He then tears from the story its mythological and supernatural pretensions—at least until Athene appears as *dea ex machina*. Here, at first sight, it seems that the playwright welcomes her with gratitude to supply a ready-made solution for his tangled plot.

The essence of the realist method in this play lies in the double-edged treatment of mythology. Euripides accepts Apollo as the di-

vine lover of Creusa and then invests him with human attributes. In consequence, Apollo emerges in very poor light as a barbarian god whose ethics are shattered by the probings of a civilized and skeptical mind. This exposure is achieved not only by Creusa's intense denunciation of the god in a moment of high climax in the unfolding of the intricate plot. It is more subtly managed through the impact of the whole action upon the boy, Ion. Perhaps the chief merit of this well-designed play is the careful study of Ion's development, the revelation of the changes brought about by the abrupt contact of youthful, cloistered virtue with worldliness. At times we may suspect that the boy grows up too quickly—not so quickly, however, that he becomes a cynic: though he learns with rapidity, he also learns ingenuously. As he becomes more and more disturbed, and therefore more and more disturbing, to his initial charm are added self-confidence and strength of will.

As the plot is presented, Ion is foisted as a son upon Xuthus by the oracle. This leads to the attempt of the mother to kill her son. When this is foiled there follows the further attempt of the son to kill his mother. The rest of the play falls into two parts—the cleverly contrived recognition scene between mother and son and the appearance of Athene as *dea ex machina*.

To accept the resolution of the play at its face value is impossible if we are to believe that there is any serious purpose behind it. Until the end we have no doubts that Euripides is, in fact, dealing with an important theme in earnest. At the end we are likely to feel that our emotions have been cheated; for the explanations of the goddess seem paltry and inconsistent with the dramatic quality and the seriousness of all that has gone before. The contrast is so marked that the play cannot be easily accepted as a tragicomic fairy tale with a well-knit, tense plot and a happy ending, designed to extol the Apolline origin of the Athenian race. The poignant dramatic structure, we feel, must not be reduced to the level of a preface to a pamphlet, even if delivered by an Olympian.

In other words, there is a critical problem to be solved here. Now the "rationalizing" view of the play, associated particularly with A. W. Verrall, had the merit of recognizing that this problem exists.

Verrall agreed with the argument that the *Ion* is an attack upon Delphi and must be interpreted in this way; that the oracle delivered to Xuthus, like the recognition scene between Creusa and Ion, is a Delphian fraud, the attribution of Ion to Apollo and Creusa being due to a change of tactics following upon Creusa's confession and denunciation of Apollo.

But this "rationalizing" solution ignores a most important point. Creusa, even when Ion takes her aside in confidence and suggests the possibility, will not admit that her lover was a mortal man. The whole design of the play depends on the assumption that Apollo seduced Creusa. Are the design and the assumption sustained throughout? Let us examine the last two scenes with this query in mind.

As Ion and the crowd advance threateningly toward Creusa, after she has been discovered in refuge at the altar, the Pythian priestess enters from the temple, carrying a cradle bound with fillets of wool resembling those on the altar. She had kept the cradle in which she had found Ion, together with his swaddling clothes and ornaments, and now gives them to him in case he should find a clue to his mother's identity in Athens or elsewhere. Ion examines the cradle with great interest, marveling at the freshness of its fastenings. On the "rationalist" view this would have been part of the fraud perpetrated by the Delphians, since Euripides could not have intended such magical hocus-pocus to be taken seriously: that would have been inconsistent with his "rationalism." But Euripides is consistently irrational in such respects in other plays; though inconsistency is one of his strongest characteristics as a playwright.

When Ion unties the fillets, Creusa recognizes the cradle, is overwhelmed for the moment and then rushes from the altar to embrace him, prepared to risk death, and greets him as her child. He supposes she is playing a trick on him, orders the guards to seize her, and then decides on a better method. He will test her knowledge of the contents of the cradle. But Creusa answers all his questions. Ion is convinced she is his mother. In the joy of her discovery all thought of Xuthus is obliterated. Her son has brought her her personal triumph. As she had tried to murder him as a menace, so now she welcomes

him as the savior of her house. The stigma of childlessness is removed together with the memory of Xuthus as the partner of her unhappiness. He has no mention in her triumphant outburst.

Ion puts an end to this rapture by asking for his father to be there to share their happiness. Creusa is again obliged to describe the seduction by Apollo. Ion is guarded in his reception of the story, though his sympathy with his mother as she describes her suffering is spontaneously generous. He can credit the story—with reservations. This is clear when, after making some platitudinous remarks about the workings of providence, intended for the Chorus and others on the stage, he draws his mother aside and puts the question that is uppermost in his mind. Is Apollo being made into a convenient scapegoat?

This is a crucial passage where the "rationalist" explanation breaks down. Ion makes a natural assumption. It demands a truthful answer. There have been enough complications in the plot. Let us suppose that Creusa had agreed with his suggestion. She would presumably have made some confession of an intrigue in her youth. Ion would then have asked the reason for the oracle's deception in giving him to Xuthus as his son. The fraud which the "rationalizers" are anxious to prove would have been most obvious and the play would become more of an open attack upon Delphi than a criticism of Olympian morals. Creusa and Ion might then have agreed, for the sake of convenience, to leave Xuthus in blissful ignorance of the facts, the happy ending would be dramatically justified, the purpose of propaganda achieved, and Athene could have predicted Ion's future without having to make lame excuses for Apollo. The main objection to all this is that, since no one was aware of the birth and exposure of the child except the mother, there was no reason to put any blame upon Apollo. Yet Euripides purposely adopts that version of the story.

Instead, what happens? Creusa vehemently denies any suggestion of deceit. The play proceeds and still gains its effects from the assumption that Apollo was the father. The characters still continue to judge him by human standards. For Ion immediately asks why Apollo should give his own son to Xuthus, with the plain falsehood that he was the father. Creusa, now quite happy in the possession of

her son, is content to let moral problems go by the board. Apollo, she says, practiced the deceit out of kindness to Ion. But Ion is not satisfied. He has already received some shocks to his beliefs. His only wish now is to decide finally whether Apollo is a sham:

But, mother, does Apollo tell the truth,
Or is the oracle false? With some good reason
That question troubles me.

Creusa offers the same explanation again, but Ion's question "cannot be so lightly answered." He is about to enter the temple to ask the oracle if Apollo is his father when Athene appears. She begins by saying that Apollo did not care to come, since some criticism of his previous conduct might be expected. This answer to Creusa's earlier challenge is intentionally farcical. Apollo now becomes contemptible. Ion is saved the trouble of consulting the oracle. Athene assures him that Apollo is really his father. The legend is preserved to the end. But Ion's question is ignored. The answer is too obvious.

Athene's final remarks are all the more ironic because redundant. They are an appeal to faith, and Euripides has done his best to destroy the basis of faith. Even now Apollo can go merrily on from one deceit to another. Xuthus is not to know the truth, and Apollo makes Creusa and Ion partners in his falsehood. Only Athene, Hermes, and Creusa seem satisfied that Apollo "has managed all things well." Certainly no reader of the play can be. But Creusa, at least, may be pardoned for grasping her long-awaited reward without too much questioning.

Athene serves a double function. As in other plays of Euripides with a *deus ex machina*, she commemorates the foundation of a hero-cult and prophesies future Athenian history. At the same time, by uttering her divine commonplaces, she adds nothing to our knowledge but fits in with the dramatic purpose of the play. Before her appearance Apollo had still some chance to justify himself. After it, he retains no shred of dignity.

ION

ION

SCENE: *Before the temple of Apollo at Delphi, just before sunrise.*

(Enter *Hermes*.)

CHARACTERS

Hermes

Ion

Chorus (Creusa's attendants)

Creusa

Xuthus

Old Man

A Servant

Pythian priestess

Athene

Hermes

Atlas, who wears on back of bronze 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
Where Phoebus sits at earth's mid-center, gives
His prophecies to men, and passes judgment
On what is happening now and what will come.

For in the famous city of the Greeks
Called after Pallas of the Golden Spear,
Phoebus compelled Erechtheus' daughter Creusa
To take him as her lover—in that place
Below Athene's hill whose northern scarp
The Attic lords have named the Long Rocks.
Her father, by the god's own wish, did not
Suspect her, and she carried her 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 Phoebus,
And in a wicker cradle there exposed
Him to his death. She kept an ancient custom
Begun in Athens when Athene placed
By Erichthonius, son of Earth, two snakes
As guardians, when the daughters of Aglaurus
Were given charge of him.

And so Creusa tied
To him whatever girlish ornaments
She had, before she left him to his death.
My brother Phoebus then made this request:

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"You know Athene's city well," he said,
 "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, where
 They must be left before the temple entrance.
 I will arrange the rest. The child is mine."

I did as Loxias my brother wished,
 Took up the wicker cradle, brought it here,
 Setting it on the temple steps before
 I opened it, so that someone might see
 The child. Now when the sun began to ride
 In heaven, the prophetess was entering
 The holy shrine. Her eyes were drawn toward
 The helpless child. Astonished that a girl
 Of Delphi should dare to cast her secret child
 Before Apollo's temple, she would have taken it
 Outside the sacred precinct, but her pity
 Expelled the cruel impulse—and the god
 Designed to keep his son within his house.
 And so she took the child and reared him,
 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 wandered. But when he was fully grown,
 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 was surging high
 Between Chalcidians of Euboea and Athens,
 Whose ally, Xuthus, helped to end the strife.

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. Apollo seems indifferent,
 But he controls their fate and guides them here.
 When Xuthus comes before the shrine, the god
 Will give him his own son, declaring Xuthus
 The father. Thus the boy shall be received
 Into his mother's house, made known to her.
 And while Apollo's intrigue is kept secret,
 His son may have what is his due. Moreover,
 Apollo will bestow on him the name
 Of Ion, make that name renowned through Greece
 As founder of ancient cities.

Now, because

I wish to see this young boy's destiny
 Complete, I shall conceal myself within
 These laurel groves. This is Apollo's son,
 Who comes here now, with branches of bay, to make
 The portals bright before the temple. And I
 Will be the first of all the gods to call
 Him by his future name of—Ion.

(*The central doors of the temple open, and Ion comes out with a group of Delphian servants. He is wearing a brightly colored tunic and cloak, and on his head is a wreath of bay leaves. He carries a bow and arrow, symbol of his service to Apollo, which is to have a more practical purpose later in the scene. The two peaks of Parnassus which overlook the temple have caught the first rays of the dawn, and Ion points to them as he begins to speak.*)

Ion

Look, now the sun's burning chariot comes
 Casting his light on the earth.

Banned by his flame, the stars flee
To the awful darkness of space.
The untrodden peaks of Parnassus,
Kindling to flame, receive for mankind
The disk of the day.

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.

You Delphians, attendants of Phoebus,
Go down to Castalia's silvery eddies:
When you have bathed in its holy dews,
Return to the temple.

Let your lips utter no words
Of ill-omen, may your tongues
Be gracious and gentle to those who
Come to the oracle.

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
Portals, cleanse the floor with
Sprinklings of water,
Put to flight with my arrows the birds
Who foul the offerings.
Since I have neither mother nor father,
I revere the temple of Phoebus
Where I have lived.

Come, fresh-blooming branch
Of lovely laurel,
With which I sweep clean
The precinct below the shrine,
Sprung from the eternal garden
Where the sacred spring sends
A welling, never failing stream

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From the myrtle grove
To water the sacred leaves,
Leaves I brush over his fane,
Every day serving with my daily task
When the sun's swift wing appears.

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

Fair, fair is the labor,
O Phoebus, which
I am doing for you,
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
Over my pious tasks.

I praise him who feeds me, Phoebus
My father—his love deserves the name,
Phoebus, lord of the temple.

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

Now I have finished my sweeping
With my broom of bay,
I will pour from golden bowls
Water risen from the earth,
Drawn from the spring
Of Castalia.

Myself holy and chaste, I can
Cast the lustral water.
Always thus may I serve Phoebus,
Service without end—
Or an end come with good issue.

Look! Look!

Here come the birds already,
Leaving their nests on Parnassus.
Keep away from the cornices
And the gold-decked abode.
I will strike you again with my arrows,
You herald of Zeus,
Though your beak is strong,
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
At all from my bow,
Turn your wings,
Speed on to the lake of Delos.
If you do not obey,
You will raise, and in blood,
That clear-toned song.

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 it.
Go, I tell you and rear
Your young in the eddies of Alpheus
Or the Isthmian grove,
Without fouling the offerings
And Apollo's shrine.
Yet I scruple to kill you
Who announce to mankind
The will of the gods.
But I will bend to the labors
Of my devotion,
Never ceasing to honor him
Who gives me life.

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(*Ion goes out. The Delphian servants enter in silence and perform a sacrifice on the altar in front of the temple. After the sacrifice the Chorus, young girl servants of Creusa, enter.*

(They pass up and down, excitedly admiring the temple buildings.)

Chorus

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.

Look, look at this: Zeus's son
Is killing the Lernaean Hydra
With a golden sickle,
Look there, my dear.

Yes—and near him another is raising
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,
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.

My eyes dart everywhere.
See! The battle of the giants
On the marble walls.
Yes we are looking.
Can you see her, brandishing
Her Gorgon shield against Enceladus—?

185

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210

I can see my goddess Pallas Athene.

Oh! The terrible thunderbolt
With fire at each end which Zeus holds
Ready to throw.

Yes I see. Raging Mimas
Is burnt up in the flames.

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

(*Ion enters through the central doors of the temple.*)

Chorus Leader

You there by the temple,
May we with naked feet
Pass into this sanctuary?

Ion

You may not, strangers.

Chorus Leader

Perhaps you would tell me—?

Ion

Tell me, what do you want?

Chorus Leader

Is it true that Apollo's temple
Really contains the world's center?

Ion

Yes, wreathed in garlands, flanked by Gorgons.

Chorus Leader

That is the story we have heard.

Ion

If you have offered sacrificial food
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 Leader

I understand.

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

215

230

Ion

Look where you please at what is lawful.

Chorus Leader

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

220

Ion

In whose house do you serve?

Chorus Leader

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

235

(Enter Creusa.)

Ion

Whoever you may be, you are a noble,
Your looks reveal your character: by looks
Nobility is often to be judged.

225

240

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 for your distraction?
Where others are glad to see the sanctuary,
Your eyes are filled with tears.

245

Creusa

That you should be surprised about my tears
Is not ill-bred. But when I saw this temple,
I measured an old memory again,
My mind elsewhere, though I stand here.

250

(aside) Unhappy women! Where shall we appeal
For justice when the injustice of power
Is our destruction?

Ion

What is the cause of this strange melancholy?

255

Creusa

Nothing. Now I have loosed my shaft I shall
Be silent, and you will not think of it.

Ion

But tell me who you are, your family,
Your country. And what is your name?

Creusa

Creusa is my name, Erechtheus' daughter,
And Athens is my native land.

260

Ion

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

Creusa

Yes, fortunate in that—but nothing else.

Ion

There is a story told—can that be true?

265

Creusa

But tell me what you want to know.

Ion

Your father's ancestor sprang from the earth?

Creusa

Yes, Erichthonius—the glory is no help.

Ion

Athene really took him from the earth?

Creusa

Into her virgin arms, though not her son.

270

Ion

And then she gave him as we see in paintings—

Creusa

To Cecrops' daughters, who were to keep him hidden.

Ion

I have been told they opened the cradle.

Creusa

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

Ion

Oh. (*pauses*)

The other story? Is that true or not?

275

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

I was a baby in my mother's arms.

280

Ion

And was your father buried in a chasm?

Creusa

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 are reminding me.—

Ion

The lightning-fire of Phoebus honors it.

285

Creusa

Vain honor. I wish I had never seen it.

Ion

Why do you hate a place he dearly loves?

Creusa

No matter.—But I know its secret shame.—

Ion

And what Athenian became your husband?

Creusa

My husband is no citizen of Athens.

290

Ion

Who then? He must have been of noble birth.

Creusa

Xuthus, the son of Aeolus and Zeus.

Ion

A stranger. How then could he marry you?

Creusa

A neighboring land of Athens is Euboea—

Ion

Which has a sea for boundary they say.

295

Creusa

—Which Athens conquered with the help of Xuthus.

Ion

The ally came, and 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

With him. But he stayed at Trophonius' shrine.

300

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

No children? You have never had a child?

305

Creusa

Apollo knows 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

A city's votive gift or sold by someone?

310

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

Apolio's home is mine, wherever I sleep.

315

Creusa

And did you come here as a child?

Ion

A child, they say who seem to know.

Creusa

What Delphian woman suckled you?

Ion

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

Creusa

Yes, who, poor child?

(aside) A sorrow like my own.

Ion

The prophetess, I think of her as mother.

Creusa

But what supported you as you grew up?

Ion

The altars and the visitors who came.

Creusa

And your unhappy mother! Who was she then?

Ion

My birth perhaps marked her betrayal.

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?

Creusa

Ah yes. (pause)

Another suffered as your mother did.

Ion

Who was she then? If she would help me in my grief!

Creusa

On her behalf I came before my husband.

Ion

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

333

Creusa

I have a friend—who says—she lay with Phoebus.

338

Ion

Not Phoebus and a mortal woman. No!

Creusa

And had a child unknown to her own father.

340

Ion

She is ashamed to own some man's betrayal.

Creusa

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

Ion

Why, if her lover was a god?

Creusa

She put from out the house the child she had.

345

Ion

Where is the child? Is it alive?

Creusa

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

Ion

If he is dead, how did he die?

Creusa

Killed by wild beasts, she thinks.

350

Ion

What reason could she have for thinking so?

Creusa

She could not find him when she went again.

Ion

But were there drops of blood upon the ground?

Creusa

She says not, though her search was careful.

Ion

And how long is it since the child was killed?

Creusa

He would have been your age by now.

Ion

Apollo is unjust. She has my pity.

355

Creusa

For she has never had another child.

(Pause as *Ion* reflects. He is still unwilling
to believe Apollo guilty.)

Ion

Supposing Phoebus reared him in secret?

Creusa

To keep that pleasure for himself is wrong.

Ion (sighs)

Ah! This misfortune echoes my own grief.

Creusa

And some unhappy mother misses you.

360

Ion

Do not revive the grief I had forgotten.

Creusa

No.—Then you will see to my request?

Ion

But do you know where that request is faulty?

Creusa

What is not faulty for that wretched woman?

Ion

Will Phoebus tell the secret he wants to hide?

365

Creusa

If oracles are open to all Greeks.

Ion

Do not press him to reveal his shame.

Creusa

His shame means suffering to her!

Ion

No one will give this oracle to you.
Convicted of evil here inside his own temple,
Apollo would justly take vengeance on
His prophet. Think no more of it: avoid
A question which the god himself opposes.
This foolishness we should commit in trying
By any means to force reluctant answers,
Whether by slaying sheep before the altar
Or taking omens from the flight of birds.
The benefits we win by force against
Their will are never blessed. We only profit
By what the gods give with their blessing.

370

375

380

Chorus Leader

The woes assailing human life are many,
The forms of woe diverse. And happiness
Is rare and rarely comes to light on man.

Creusa

(Raising her hands toward the temple.)

Apollo! Then and now unjust to her,
The absent woman whose complaints are here.
You did not save the child you should have saved.
A prophet, you have no answer for its mother.
But now that hope must die, 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
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. Since good and bad

385

390

395

Are not distinguished, all of us are hated.
To this misfortune we are born.

400

(*Xuthus enters with servants and Delphians.*)

Xuthus

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

(*He sees she is upset.*)

But has my long delay

Caused you alarm?

Creusa

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

405

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

O holy mother of Apollo, may
Our journey here end well, our dealings with
Your son have a happier issue than before!

410

Xuthus

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

Ion

Sir, that is my role outside the temple—
Inside are others, near the shrine, the nobles
Of Delphi, chosen by lot.

415

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 strangers, has
Already fallen before the altar. Omens
Today are good, and I would like to have

420

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 from Apollo's house.

(*Xuthus enters the temple, Creusa watches him go and
speaks with her hands raised toward the temple.*)

Creusa

So it will be! So it will be!

And now

425

If Phoebus at least amends his former wrongs,
Although his love can never be complete,
Because he is a god, I will accept
Whatever he bestows.

(*Exit.*)

Ion

Why does this stranger always speak in riddles,
Reproach the god with covert blasphemy?
Is it through love of her on whose behalf
She comes before the oracle? Perhaps
She hides a secret which she cannot tell.

430

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 afterward betray!

440

To leave a child to die which has been born
In secret! No! Do not act thus. But since

You have the power, seek the virtuous path.
All evil men are punished by the gods.

445

How then can it be just for you to stand
Accused of breaking laws you have yourselves

Laid down for men? But if—here I suppose
What could not be—you gave account on earth
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 pleasure
 Without forethought. And justice now demands
 That we should not speak ill of men if they
 But imitate what the gods approve, but those
 Who teach men their examples.

(Exit.)

450

Chorus

STROPHE

O my Athene, born
 Without birth pains,
 Brought forth from the head of Zeus
 By Prometheus, the Titan,
 Blessed goddess of Victory,
 Take flight from the golden halls
 Of Olympus, come, I entreat you,
 Here to the Pythian temple,
 Where at earth's center Apollo's shrine
 Proclaims unfailing prophecy,
 At the tripod where they dance and sing.
 Come with Artemis, Leto's daughter,
 Virgin goddesses both,
 Holy sisters of Phoebe.
 Beseech him, O maidens,
 That the ancient race of Erechtheus may
 At last be sure by a clear response
 Of the blessing of children.

455

ANTISTROPHE

Wherever gleams bright the flame
 And strength of youth,
 A promise to the house of growth,
 There a man has a fund
 Of joy overflowing;

460

465

470

475

From the fathers the children will gather
 Hereditary wealth, and in turn
 Pass it on to their own.
 They are a defense in adversity,
 In happiness a delight,
 And in war their country's shield of safety.
 For myself I would choose, rather than wealth
 Or a palace of kings, to rear
 And love my own children:
 Shame to him who prefers
 A childless life, hateful to me.
 May I cling to the life of few possessions,
 Enriched by children.

480

485

490

495

500

505

EPODE

O haunts of Pan,
 The rock flanking
 The caves of the Long Cliffs,
 Where the daughters of Aglaurus
 Dance, and their feet tread
 The green levels before the shrines
 Of Pallas, in time to the changing
 Music of the pipes, when you play,
 O Pan, in your sunless caves,
 Where a girl in misery
 Bore a child to Phoebe
 And exposed it, a prey for birds,
 Food for wild beasts to rend, shame
 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.

Ion

(Enter Ion from the central doors of the temple.)

Serving women who are keeping watch here at the steps
 Of the house of sacrifice, awaiting your master,

510

Tell me, has Xuthus already left the sacred tripod
And the oracle, or does he still remain within,
Seeking answer to his question?

Chorus Leader

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

(*Xuthus appears from the temple. As soon as he sees Ion, he shows great excitement, runs to him and tries to embrace him. Ion, much surprised by this behavior, resists.*)

Xuthus

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

Ion

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

Xuthus

Let me kiss your hand, embrace you.

Ion

Are you sane? Or can the god have made you mad somehow?

515

Xuthus

Mad, when I have found my own and want to welcome him?

520

Ion

Stop.—Or if you touch it, you may break Apollo's crown.

Xuthus

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

525

Ion

Must I shoot this arrow first, or will you loose me now?

Xuthus

Why must you avoid me just when you have found your nearest?

530

Ion

Mad and boorish strangers are no pleasure to instruct.

Xuthus

Kill me, and then bury me. For you will kill 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

I am your father. You are my son.

530

Ion

Who has told you this?

Xuthus

Apollo, he who reared my son.

Ion

You are your own witness.

Xuthus

But I know my oracle too.

Ion

You mistook a riddle.

Xuthus

Then my hearing must have failed.

Ion

And what is Apollo's prophecy?

Xuthus

That him I met—

Ion

Oh! A meeting? Where?

Xuthus

As I came from the temple here.

535

Ion

Yes, and what would happen to him?

Xuthus

He would be my son.

Ion

Your own son or just a gift?

Xuthus

A gift and 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

That I cannot say.

540

Ion

And Apollo?

Xuthus

Happy with this news, I did not ask.

Ion

Earth then was my mother!

Xuthus

Children do not spring up there.

Ion

How could I be yours?

Xuthus

Apollo, not I, has the answer.

Ion (*after a pause*)

Let us try another tack.

Xuthus

Yes, that will help us more.

Ion

Have you had a secret lover?

Xuthus

Yes, a youthful folly.

545

Ion

And before you were married?

Xuthus

Yes, but never afterward.

Ion

So that could be my origin?

Xuthus

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

To the wine-god's torch feast.

550

Ion

You stayed with a temple steward?

Xuthus

He—there were girls of Delphi.

551

Ion

He introduced you to their rites?

Xuthus

Yes, they were Bacchanals.

552

Ion

You had drunk well?

Xuthus

I was reveling in the wine-god's feast.

553

Ion

Then that was the time.

Xuthus

The girl perhaps exposed her child.

555

Ion (after a pause)

I am not a slave then.

Xuthus

And you can accept a father.

556

Ion

Could I wish for better?

Xuthus

That you might have seen before.

558

Ion

Than descent from Zeus's son?

Xuthus

This is indeed your birthright.

559

Ion

Shall I touch my father then?

Xuthus

Yes, have faith in the god.

560

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.

(They embrace.)

*Ion*My dear mother! Shall I ever see your face as well?
Now, whoever you may be, I long to see you even
More. But she is dead perhaps, and I can have no hope.

565

*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
That I should find you, and united us.
You found a father whom you never knew.

570

Your natural desire I share myself
That you will find your mother, I, in her
The woman who gave me a son. And if
We leave all that to time, perhaps we shall
Succeed. But end your waif's life in the temple.

575

Let me persuade you, come with me to Athens,
For there your father's prosperous power awaits
You, and great wealth. Though now you suffer
In one respect, you shall not have the name
Of bastard and of beggar, but highborn

580

And well endowed with wealth. But why so silent?
Why do you hold your eyes downcast? Now you have changed
Your father's joy to fear.*Ion*Things have a different face as they appear
Before 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

585

To be no alien race. I should intrude
There marked by two defects, a stranger's son,
Myself a bastard. And if I remain
Obscure, with this disgrace they will account
Me nothing, nobody's son. If I aspire

590

To the city's helm, ambitious for a name,
I shall be hated by the powerless.
Authority is never without hate.
And those who have ability for power

595

But wisely keep their silence, are not eager
For public life, will mock my folly, blindly
Deserting peace for Athens' crowded fears.
And then if I invade positions which

600

Are filled, I shall be countered by the moves
Of those with knowledge who control affairs.
For so it always happens, father: men
Who hold the cities and their dignities
Above all are opposed to rivalry.

Then, coming to another's house, a stranger,
To live with one who has no children, who
Before had you to share the sorrow—now,
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
To her, betraying me, or honor me
And bring confusion to your house: 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.
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 askance for violence, and fear
Draws out his days? I would prefer to live
A happy citizen than be a king,
Compelled to have the evil as his friends,
Who must abhor the good for fear of death.
You might reply that gold outweighs all this,
The joys of wealth—no joy for me to guard
A fortune, hear reproaches, suffer its pains.
Let me avoid distress, win moderation.

But father, hear the good points of my life
In Delphi: leisure first of all, most dear
To any man, the friendly people, no one
To thrust me rudely from my path; to yield,
Give elbow room to those beneath us is

Intolerable. Then I was busy with
My prayers to gods or talk with men,
Serving the happy, not the discontented.
I was receiving guests or sending them
Away 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
Me righteous to god. When I compare the two,
Father, I think I am more happy here.
Let me live here. Delight in splendor is
No more than happiness with little: for both
Have their appeal.

Chorus (aside)
Well have you spoken if indeed your words
Mean happiness for her I love.

Xuthus
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, a guest, and give
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
Assumption of my rule.

Your name shall be Ion, a name to fit
Your destiny; you were the first to meet
Me coming from Apollo's shrine. But now
Collect your friends together, say farewell
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 will mean your death.

Ion

Yes, I will go. But one piece of good luck
Eludes me still: unless I find my mother,
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 stranger comes into a city
Of pure blood, though in name a citizen,
His mouth remains a slave: he has no right
Of speech.

(Exeunt.)

670

Chorus

STROPHE

I see tears and mourning
Triumphant, a sorrowful entrance,
When the queen hears of the son,
The blessing bestowed on her husband
Alone, still childless herself.
O Latona'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.

675

There may be a fraud.
I fear the issue
Of this encounter.
For these are strange matters,
A strange command on my silence.
Treachery and chance combine
In this boy of an alien blood.
Who will deny it?

680

ANTISTROPHE

My friends, shall we clearly
Cry out in the ears of my mistress

685

690

695

Blame upon him who alone
Afforded her hope she could share?
Now she is maimed by his joy.
She is falling to gray age, he does not honor his love.

700

A stranger he came, wretch,
To the house, and betrays the fortune
Bestowed. He wronged her.—Die then!
And may he not gain
From god the prayer
He sends with incense
Ablaze on bright altars.
He shall be sure of my feeling,
How much I love the queen.
The new father and son are now near
To their new banquet.

705

710

EPODE

O the ridge of the rocks of Parnassus
Which hold in the skies the watchtower
Where Bacchus holds the two-flamed
Torch, leaping lightly with his
Nighttime wandering Bacchanals:
Let the boy never see my city,
Let him die and 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.

715

720

(*Creusa enters with an Old Man, a slave and trusted servant
of the family. They begin to climb the temple steps,
Creusa supporting him.*)

Creusa

Erechtheus, my father, long before he died
Made you the guardian of his children: (*pauses*)
Come up with me to Phoebus' oracle
To share my pleasure if his prophecy
Gives hope of children; since it is a joy

725

To share success with those we love; and if—
I pray that they may not—reverses come,
There is a balm in seeing friendly eyes.
And, though I am your mistress, I love you
As if you were my father, as you did
My own.

Old Man

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

Creusa

Come then. Be careful how you place your feet.

Old Man (as he stumbles)

You see. My mind is nimbler than my feet.

Creusa

Lean with your staff upon the path around.

Old Man

And that is blind now when my eyes are weak.

Creusa

Yes, true. But fight against your weariness.

Old Man

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

*(He turns slowly and with Creusa's help settles himself on the temple steps, looking toward the audience. They are now face to face with the Chorus.
Creusa addresses the Chorus.)*

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.

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

Chorus

An evil fate!

Old Man

Your prelude is not one that suits good luck.

Chorus

Unhappy lot!

Old Man

But what is wrong about the oracle?

Chorus

What can we do when death is set before us?

Creusa

What strain is this? Why should you be afraid?

Chorus

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

Creusa

O speak! You know of some misfortune coming.

Chorus Leader

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

(Creusa sinks down to the steps beside the slave.)

Creusa

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

Yes, ah! yes.

This blow is fatal, a heart-thrust.
The sorrow has pierced within.

765

Old Man

Mourn no more—

Creusa

I have reason enough.

Old Man

Till we know—

Creusa

Is there anything to know?

770

Old Man

—If you alone have this misfortune, or
Our master too must share the same.

Chorus Leader

To him Apollo gave a son, but this
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 deplore.

Old Man

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

Chorus Leader

Phoebus 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 surely fantastic.

Old Man

Fantastic! Tell me how the oracle
Is carried out, and who the son can be.

780

785

Chorus Leader

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

Creusa

Then it is settled.
Mine is the childless part,
The solitary life in a desolate house.

790

Old Man

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

Chorus Leader

There was a boy who swept the temple here.
You know him? For he is the son.

795

Creusa

Would that I might fly
Through the gentle air far away
From Greek earth to the evening stars.
Such is my anguish, my friends.

Old Man

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

800

Chorus Leader

He called him Ion, since he met him first.

Old Man

Who is his mother?

Chorus Leader

That I cannot say.
But Xuthus, to tell you all I know, old man,
Has gone away unknown to her, his wife,
To offer in the consecrated tent
A birthday sacrifice, to pledge the bond
Of friendship in a banquet with his son.

805

Old Man

My lady, we have been betrayed by your
Own husband—for I share your grief; we are

Insulted by design, cast from the house
Of Erechtheus: this I say not out of hatred,
But rather since I love you more than him:
The foreigner who married you and came
Into the city and your house, received
Your heritage, and now is proved the father
Of children by another—secretly.
How secretly I will explain to you.
Aware that you would have no children,
He scorned to suffer equally with you
In this mischance, and had a secret child
By some slave woman, and sent him away
For someone in Delphi to rear. The boy
Was dedicated to Apollo's temple,
And there grew in concealment. While the father,
Now knowing that the boy was grown, pressed you
To travel here because you had no child.
And so Apollo did not lie, but he
Who has long reared the child. This is his web
Of deceit: discovered, he would lay the blame
Upon the god; if not, to guard against
The blows of time, his plan was to invest
Him with the city's rule. As time went on,
The new name Ion was invented, suiting
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.

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 open, if, with your consent,

810 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.
815 And so you must now act a woman's part:
Kill them, your husband and his son, by sword,
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 a house, the one must be
Unlucky. Now I will help you kill the son:
Visit the place where he prepares the feast,
To pay the debt I owe my masters, thus
To live or die. A slave bears only this
Disgrace: the name. In every other way
An honest slave is equal to the free.
820
825
830
835

Chorus Leader
I too, dear mistress, want to share your fate,
To die, or live with honor.
Creusa
(After a pause, then coming to the front.)
O my heart, how be silent?
Yet how can I speak of that secret
Love, strip myself of all shame?
Is one barrier left still to prevent me?
Whom have I now as my rival in virtue?
Has not my husband become my betrayer?
I am cheated of home, cheated of children,
Hopes are gone which I could not achieve,
The hopes of arranging things well
By hiding the facts,
By hiding the birth which brought sorrow.
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 it:
 When I have put away the burden,
 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,
 Ungrateful betrayers of women.

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,
 On you, Latona's son, here
 In daylight I will lay blame.
 You came with hair flashing
 Gold, as I gathered
 Into my cloak flowers ablaze
 With their golden light.
 Clinging to my pale wrists
 As I cried for my mother's help
 You led me to bed in a cave,
 A god and my lover,
 With no shame,
 Submitting to the Cyprian's will.
 In misery I bore you
 A son, whom in fear of my mother
 I placed in that bed
 Where you cruelly forced me.
 Ah! He is lost now,
 Snatched as food for birds,
 My son and yours; O lost!
 But you play the lyre,
 Chanting your paeans.

O hear me, son of Latona,
 Who assign your prophecies
 From the golden throne

875

880

885

890

895

900

905

910

915

920

925

930

935

And the temple at earth's center,
 I will proclaim my words in your ears:
 You are an evil lover;

Though you owed no debt
 To my husband, you have
 Set a son in his house.
 But my son, yes and yours, hard-hearted,
 Is lost, carried away by birds,
 The clothes his mother put on him abandoned.
 Delos hates you and the young
 Laurel which grows by the palm
 With its delicate leaves, where Latona
 Bore you, a holy child, fruit of Zeus.

*(She breaks down, weeping, on the temple steps.
 The Chorus gathers round her.)*

Chorus Leader

O what a store of miseries is now
 Disclosed; who could but weep at hearing them?

Old Man

O child, your face has riveted my gaze,
 My reason is distracted. For just when
 I banished from my heart a wave of trouble,
 A second rose at the stern, caused by the words
 You spoke about your present woes, before
 You trod the evil path of other sorrows.
 What do you say? What child is this you claim
 To bear? Where in the city did you put
 This welcome corpse for beasts? Tell me again.

Creusa

I will tell you, although I feel ashamed.

Old Man

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

Creusa

Then listen. You know the cave which lies above
 The north of Cecrops' hill, its name Long Rocks?

Old Man

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

Creusa

It was there I endured a fearful trial.

Old Man

Yes? My tears spring to meet your words.

Creusa

Phoebus became my lover against my will.

Old Man

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

Creusa

I shall acknowledge truth if you tell me.

Old Man

When you were suffering from a secret illness?

Creusa

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

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 grew up in Hades.

940

955

Old Man

But who exposed the child? Of course not you?

Creusa

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

Old Man

And there was no accomplice in your deed?

Creusa

No, nothing but the silence and my grief.

Old Man

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

Creusa

How, but with many tender words of pity?—

Old Man

Ah, you were harsh; Apollo harsher still.

945

960

Creusa

If you had seen the child stretch out his hands!

Old Man

To find your breast, lie in your arms?

Creusa

To find what I was cruelly refusing.

Old Man

But why did you decide to expose your child?

Creusa

Because I hoped the god would save his own.

950

965

Old Man

A storm embroils the fortunes of your house.

(A pause.)

Creusa

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

Old Man

I see your father and yourself so stricken.

Creusa

Such is man's life. All things must change.

(*A pause, as the Old Man leads Creusa to the front of the stage.*)

Old Man

My child, let us no longer cling to tears.

970

Creusa

What can I do? For pain has no resource.

Old Man

Avenge yourself on him who wronged you first.

Creusa

How can a mortal fight immortal power?

Old Man

Burn down Apollo's sacred oracle.

Creusa

I am afraid.—I have enough of sorrow.

975

Old Man

Then kill your husband. This is in your power.

Creusa

He was once loyal, and I honor that.

Old Man

The son then who has come to menace you.

Creusa

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

Old Man

By putting swords in your attendants' hands.

980

(*A pause.*)

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 poor support.

Old Man (despairingly)

You play the coward; come, give me your plan now.

(*A pause, as she prepares to explain her scheme; she goes near to him, speaking softly and urgently, as if to emphasize her own resolution.*)

Creusa

Yes, I have something which is sure and subtle.

985

Old Man

And I can help in both these ways.

Creusa

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

Old Man

When giants fought against the gods at Phlegra.

Creusa

Earth there produced an awful monster, Gorgon.

Old Man

To harass all the gods and help her children?

990

Creusa

Yes, but destroyed by Zeus's daughter Pallas.

Old Man

Is this the tale which I have heard before?

Creusa

Yes, that she wears its skin upon her breast.

995

Old Man

Athene's armor which they call her aegis?

Creusa

So called from how she rushed into the battle.

Old Man

What was the form of this barbaric thing?

Creusa

A breastplate armed with serpent coils.

(*An impatient pause.*)

Old Man

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

Creusa

You know Erichthonius?—Of course you must.

Old Man

The founder of your house, the son of Earth.

1000

Creusa

A newborn child, Athene gave to him—

(*She pauses.*)

Old Man

Yes, what is this you hesitate to say?

Creusa (slowly)

Two drops of Gorgon's blood.

Old Man

And these have some effect on men?

Creusa

One is poisonous, the other cures disease.

1005

Old Man

But how did she attach them to the child?

Creusa

A golden chain which he gave to my father.

Old Man

And when he died it came to you?

Creusa

Yes, I always wear it on my wrist.

Old Man

How is the twofold gift compounded then?

1010

Creusa

The drop extracted from the hollow vein—

Old Man

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

Creusa

It fosters life and keeps away disease.

Old Man

What action does the other of them have?

Creusa

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

1015

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 want!

Creusa

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

Old Man

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

1020

Creusa

In Athens when he comes into my house.

(*A pause, as the slave considers.*)

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

Since foster mothers must be jealous,

1025

Old Man

But kill him now and so 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

You know then what to do? Here, take
This golden bracelet from my hand, Athene'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 cover of your robe, into
The young man's cup—in his alone, no more.
Reserve the drink for him who would assume
The mastery of my home. Once this is drained,
He will be dead, stay here and never see
Our glorious Athens.

Old Man

Now go to our host's house, and I will do
The task appointed for me.

Old foot, come now, take on a youthful strength
For work, although the years deny it you.
March with your masters upon the enemy,
And help to kill and cast him from the house.
Right that the fortunate should honor virtue,
But when we wish to harm our enemies
There is no law which can prevent.

(Pause.)

1040

(Exeunt.)

1045

Chorus

STROPHE

Demeter's daughter, guarding the roadway, ruling
What wings through the paths of the night
And the daytime, O guide the potion
Of the death-heavy cup
To whom the queen sends it, brew
Of the blood drops from the Gorgon's severed throat,
To him who lifts his presumptuous hand

1050

1055

Against the house of Erechtheus.

Let no others ever have

Sway in the city:

Only the sons of Erechtheus.

1060

ANTISTROPHE

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
Or fasten a noose to her neck,
Ending sorrow by sorrows, pass down to the realm of change.
For she would never endure to see
Foreigners ruling the house,
Not while living her eyes
Still have their clarity—
She, born of a noble line.

1065

1070

STROPHE

O the shame to many-hymned Dionysus, if by the springs
Where lovely choruses are danced,
Apollo's bastard son shall behold
Unsleeping, keeping the watch,
The torches burning on the festival night,
When the star-faced heavens join in the dance,
With the moon and the fifty Nereids
Who dance in the depths of the sea,
In perennial river-springs,
Honoring the gold-crowned Maid
And her mother, holy Demeter:

1075

There, where he hopes
To rule, usurping
What others have wrought.

1080

1085

ANTISTROPHE

All you poets who raise your unjust strains
Singing the unsanctioned, unholy loves

1090

Of women, see how much we surpass
 In virtue the unrighteous race
 Of men. Let a song of different strain
 Ring out against men, harshly indicting
 Their love. For here is one
 Of the offspring of Zeus who shows
 His ingratitude, refusing
 To bring good luck to the house
 With his and Creusa's child:
 But yielding to passion
 For another, has found
 A bastard son.

(Enter a Servant of Creusa, greatly agitated.)

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?
 What is the message you have brought?

Servant

They are behind. The Delphian officers are looking
 For her to stone to death.

Chorus Leader

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

Servant

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
 Found means of combating the victory
 Of justice over the unjust.

1095

1100

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1115

Chorus Leader

But how? I beg you tell me that: for if
 I have to die, I shall die more content
 Because I know my fate.

(The women press nearer to the Servant.)

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
 Himself was going to the place where
 The sacred Bacchanalian fires leap,
 To sprinkle the twin crags of Dionysus
 With victim's blood for having seen his son.
 "My son," he said, "will you stay here and see
 That workmen build a tent inclosed on all
 Its sides. And if I should be long away,
 While sacrificing to the gods of birth,
 Begin the banquet with such friends as come."

He took the victims then and went away.
 Ion had the framework built in ritual form
 On upright poles without a wall, and paid
 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
 All Delphians to the feast. To shade the tent
 He took from store some sacred tapestries,
 A wonder to behold. And first he cast
 Above the roof a wing of cloth, spoil from
 The Amazons, which Heracles, the son
 Of Zeus, had dedicated to the god.

And there were figures woven in design:
 For Uranus was mustering the stars
 In heaven's circle; and Helios drove his horses
 Toward his dying flame and trailed the star

1120

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1145

Which shines bright in the West. While black-robed Night,
 Drawn by a pair, urged on her chariot,
 Beside the stars kept pace with her. The Pleiades
 And Orion, his sword in hand, moved through
 The sky's mid-path; and then, above, the Bear
 Who turned his golden tail within the vault.
 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, but of barbarian design.
 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
 By some Athenian. Then in the center
 He put the golden mixing bowls. A herald
 Then went 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. When they had done
 With eating, 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
 The ooze of myrrh, and put himself in charge
 Of golden drinking cups. And when the flutes
 Came in together with the bowl which all
 Had now to drink, he said, "Enough of these
 Small cups, we must have large; the company
 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

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1200

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1215

A chosen cup of wine, and put in this
 A fatal poison which they say our mistress
 Had given, to have an end of this new son.
 And no one knew. But when like all the rest
 He held his cup, one of the slaves let fall
 Some phrase of evil omen. He had been reared
 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 when
 We filled the sacred bowls with Byblian 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
 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 she had perched
 Where Ion poured his wine and tasted it.
 At once her feathered body shook and quivered,
 She screamed strange cries of anguish. All the band
 Of guests looked on amazed to see her struggles.
 She died in her convulsions, her pink claws
 And legs relaxed. The son the god foretold
 Then stretched his uncloaked arms across the table,
 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
 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.

"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
 Inside the temple. Now all the city looks
 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.

Chorus

There is no escape, we are doomed,
 No escape from death.
 It has been made clear,
 The libation of Dionysian grapes
 Mingled for murder with blood drops
 From the swift-working viper,
 Clear that in sacrifice to the gods below
 Our lives are set for disaster.
 They will stone my mistress to death.
 What winged flight can I take,
 Down to what dark caverns of the earth
 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?

There is no concealment, unless a god wishes
 To withdraw men from sight.
 O unhappy mistress, what sufferings
 Wait for your soul? Shall we not,
 For the will to do harm to our fellows,
 According to justice, suffer ourselves?

(Creusa rushes in, wildly agitated and despairing.)

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

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

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

Where, but at the altar?

What advantage will that give me?

God defends the suppliant.

Yes, but the law condemns me.

They must seize you first.

And here my bitter rivals come,
 Pressing on with sword in hand.

Sit at the altar now.
 For if you die sitting there, your killers will be made
 Guilty of your blood. Now destiny must be endured.

(Creusa retires quickly to the altar at the back of the stage. She has hardly had time to sit there before Ion, sword in hand, comes in at the head of a group of armed men, closely followed by a crowd of Delphians. For some time he is not aware that Creusa is at the altar.)

O Cepheus, her bull-shaped ancestor,
 What viper or what serpent glancing out
 A deadly flame of fire did you beget

In her, this woman who will balk at nothing,
Match for the Gorgon drops with which she tried
To poison me! Take hold of her and let
Parnassus' top, when like a quoit she bounds
From rock to rock, comb out those perfect tresses.

Luck favored me before I went to Athens
To fall a victim to a stepmother.

For here, among my friends I learnt to measure
Your mind, your menace, and your enmity.
But if I had been trapped inside your house,
You would have sent me straight to death.

*(He suddenly catches sight of Creusa cowering
at the altar. He strides up to her.)*

The altar will not save you, nor Apollo's
House, since my greater pity is reserved
For myself and my mother. For although
She is not here, my thought of her is constant.

(He appeals to the people with him.)

You see her treachery—how she can twist
One scheme upon another! She has fled
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

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.

1265

Ion

I belonged to Phoebus till my father came.

1270

Creusa

But then no more. Now I belong to him.

1275

Ion

Yes, but I had the piety you lack.

1290

1280

Creusa

I tried to kill the enemy of my house.

Ion

I did not march upon your land with arms.

1285

Creusa

You tried to set Erechtheus' house in flames!

1295

Ion

What fiery flame, what torches did I carry?

1295

Creusa

You hoped to force possession of my home.

1300

Ion

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

1285

Creusa

How can Aeolians share Athenian land?

1305

Ion

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

1310

Creusa

An ally need not own the land he helps!

1315

Ion

You planned my death through fear of my intentions?

1320

Creusa

To save my life in case you ceased intending.

1325

Ion

Childless yourself, you envied my father's child.

1330

Creusa

So you will snatch those homes without an heir?

Ion

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

Creusa

A shield and spear, these are your sole possessions.

1305

(*Ion loses his temper.*)

Ion

Come, leave the altar and the shrine of god.

Creusa

(*Her moral indignation yielding to spite.*)

Go, find your mother and give her advice.

Ion

While your attempted murder goes unpunished?

Creusa

Not if you wish to kill me in the shrine.

(*She grasps the wreaths on the altar as if in supplication.*)

Ion

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

1310

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
At altars, but be driven away. For gods
Are soiled by the touch of wicked hands. The just—
The injured man, should have this sanctuary.
Instead both good and bad alike all come,
Receiving equal treatment from the gods.

1315

(*The Pythian Priestess now enters from the temple. She is old and very dignified, wearing long white robes fastened by a golden girdle at the waist; on her head is a wreath of bay leaves and the riband or fillet which is the sign of her office. She is carrying a cradle wrapped in bands of wool.*)

Priestess

O stop, my son. For I, the prophetess
Of Phoebus, chosen by all the Delphians
To keep the tripod's ancient law, have left
The seat of prophecy to pass these bounds.

1320

(*Ion greets her with great respect.*)

Ion

Dear mother, hail! Mother in all but name.

Priestess

Then let me be so called. It pleases me.

1325

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

As we can be ill used by them.

1330

Priestess

No. When you leave the temple for your country—

Ion

What must I do? What is your advice?

Priestess

Go into Athens, with good omens.

Ion

All men are pure who kill their enemies.

Priestess

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

1335

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 picked you up in this, a newborn child.

Ion

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

1340

Priestess

I kept it secret. Now I can reveal it.

Ion

How have you kept it from me all these years?

Priestess

The god desired to hold you as his servant.

Ion

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

Priestess

Revealing your father, he bids you go from here.

1345

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

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

1350

Priestess

The swaddling clothes you wore are kept inside.

Ion

These clues you bring will help to find my mother.

Priestess

Which now the god desires—though not before.

Ion

This is indeed a day of happy signs!

(She offers him the cradle.)

Priestess

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

1355

Ion

(Taking the cradle.)

Throughout all Asia, to Europe's boundaries!

Priestess

That is your own affair. I reared you, child,
For Phoebus' sake, and these restore to you,
Which he wished me to take and keep, although
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 as my son.

1360

(She embraces him. She turns and takes a few steps toward the
temple entrance. Then she faces him again, to prolong
her farewell with a few last words of advice.)

1365

As for the search, begin it as you ought:
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.

(She leaves the stage through the temple door.)

Ion

(Putting his hands to his face.)

1370

O how the tears well from my eyes whenever
My mind goes back to the 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; and fate
Was cruel, though the god was kind. I was
Deprived of my dear mother's love throughout
The time I might have lain content and happy,
Held in her arms. My mother suffered too;
She lost the joy a child can bring.

And now

I will resign 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—

And yet, what does this mean? It is against
The god's own wish; he has preserved for me
My mother's tokens. I must have the courage
To open it. I cannot shun my fate.
O sacred bands and ties which guard my precious
Tokens, what secret do you hide from me?

(He unties the bands of wool from 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 is trembling with excitement, her eyes
riveted upon the cradle.)

Creusa

But what is this I see—beyond my hopes?

Ion

Silence. You were my enemy before.

(Creusa controls her excitement with a great effort and gradually
raises herself to a standing position by the altar. The
crowd of Delphians, her own women, and Ion
all gaze toward her in tense silence.)

Creusa

This is no time for silence. Do not try
To check me. In that cradle I exposed

1375

1380

1385

1390

1395

You then, my son, a newborn child,
Where the Long Rocks hang over Cecrops' cave.
I will desert the altar even though
I have to die.

(She rushes away from the altar, runs up to Ion,
and throws her arms round his neck.)

1400

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 will not lose you,
The cradle, or the tokens it contains.

1405

Ion

O hypocrite to cheat me with a trick!

Creusa

Oh no! You have found one who loves you.

Ion

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

Creusa

You are my son: a mother must love her son.

Ion

Stop spinning lies.—For I am sure to have you.

1410

(Decides to trick her.)

Creusa

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

Ion

This cradle—has it anything inside?

Creusa

It has the things you wore when I exposed you.

Ion

And can you give their names before you see them?

Creusa

I can; and, if I fail, consent to die.

1415

Ion

Then speak. Your audacity is strange indeed.

(He opens the cradle, standing far enough away from Creusa
to prevent her seeing inside it.)

Creusa

Look for the weaving which I did in childhood.

Ion

Describe it; girls do many kinds of work.

Creusa

It is unfinished, a kind of trial piece.

Ion

And its design—You cannot cheat me there.

1420

Creusa

There is a Gorgon in the center part.

Ion (aside)

O Zeus! What fate is this to track us down!

Creusa

The stuff is fringed with serpents like an aegis.

Ion

And here it is—found like an oracle!

Creusa

The loomwork of a girl—so long ago.

1425

Ion

And anything else? Or will your luck fail now?

Creusa

Serpents, the custom of our golden race.

Ion

Athene's gift, who bids you wear them?

Creusa

Yes, in memory of Erichthonius.

Ion

What do they do with this gold ornament?

1430

Creusa

It is a necklace for a newborn child.

Ion

Yes, here they are.

(Shows them. He is now anxious for her success.)
I long to know the third.

Creusa

I put an olive wreath around you, from
The tree Athene first planted on the rock;
If that is there, it has not lost its green,
But flourishes because the tree is holy.

1435

(Ion, quite convinced, throws himself into his mother's arms.)

Ion

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

Creusa

O child! O light more welcome than the Sun.
—The god forgives me—I have you in my arms.
I have found you against all my hopes,
Whom I thought underground in the world
Of Persephone's shades.

1440

Ion

Dear mother, yes, you have me in your arms,
Who died and now have come to you alive.

Creusa

O radiant heaven's expanse,
How can I speak or cry
My joy? How have I met
Unimagined delight, and why
Am I made happy?

1445

Ion

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

1450

Creusa

I am trembling with fear.

Ion

That I am lost, although you hold me now?

Creusa

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

1455

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.
But now I can breathe on your cheek,
And am blessed with tender joy.

1460

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,
And Erechtheus is young once more;
Now the house is delivered from night
And looks up to the rays of the sun.

1465

Ion

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

Creusa

My child, my child—
How am I put to shame!

1470

Ion

Yes?—Tell me.—

Creusa

You do not know your father.

Ion

So I was born before your marriage then?

Creusa

The marriage which gave you birth
Saw no torches or dancing, my son.

1475

Ion

A bastard son—My father? Tell me that.

Creusa

Athene who slew the Gorgon,
I call her to witness—

Ion

Why this beginning?

1480

Creusa

By the rocks where the nightingales sing,
Apollo—

Ion

Why name Apollo?

1485

Creusa

Became my lover in secret—

Ion

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

Creusa

When the time passed, I bore you,
The unknown child of Apollo.

Ion

How welcome this news is—if it is true.

1490

Creusa

And these were your swaddling clothes;
In fear 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,

A prey for the beaks of birds,

Delivered to death.

1495

Ion

O mother, what horror you dared.

Creusa

Myself in the bondage of fear,

I was casting away your life,

But against my will.

Ion

And I attempted an impious murder.

1500

Creusa

Fate drove us hard in the past,

Just now oppressed us again.

There is no harbor of peace

From the changing waves of joy and despair.

1505

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

From what we have seen happen here, no man

1510

Should ever think that any chance is hopeless.

(A pause. *Ion* is afflicted with doubt.)

Ion

O Fortune, who has already changed the lives

Of countless men from misery to joy,

How near I was to killing my own mother,

How near myself to undeserved disaster.

1515

(Pause.)

But do the sun's bright rays in daily course
Illumine such events as this—all this?

(Pause, as he turns to his mother.)

It was so good at last to find you, mother,

And I can cast no blame upon my birth.

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.

1520

(He draws her aside.)

Now tell me, mother—are you not, deceived

As young girls are in love affairs kept secret,

Now laying blame upon the god, and say,

Attempting to escape the shame I brought,

That Phoebus is my father, though in fact

He is no god at all?

1525

Creusa

No, by Athene, Goddess of Victory,

Who in her chariot fought by Zeus's side

Against the Giant race, my son, your father

Was not a mortal, but the very god

Who reared you, Loxias.

1530

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

Bestowed by him on Xuthus, just as a man

Might give a friend his son to be his heir.

1535

Ion

But, mother, does Apollo tell the truth,

Or is the oracle false? With some good reason

That question troubles me.

Creusa

Then listen. This is what I think, my son:
 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 had you when I concealed
 The truth, and even planned your death in secret?
 And so to help you he is giving you
 Another father.

1540

1545

Ion

My question cannot be so lightly answered;
 No, I will ask Apollo in his temple
 If I am his, or born of man.

(As he steps toward the temple, he sees the goddess)
Athene appearing above it.)

Ah!
 What goddess shows her face above the temple
 To look toward the sun? O mother, let us fly.
 We should not see the gods unless the right
 Is given to us.

1550

(All on the stage bow their heads to the ground
 and step backward from the temple.)

Athene

No, stay. I am no enemy to flee,
 But well-disposed in Delphi as in Athens.
 I am Athene, 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 for what
 Has happened in the past; he has sent me
 To give his message:

1555

1560

This woman is your mother,
 Your father is Apollo; the one you know
 Received you as a gift, and not because

You are his son; and this was done with purpose,
 To find you an established place among
 A noble house. But when this plan he made
 Was open and laid bare, he was afraid
 Your mother's scheme of murder would succeed,
 Or she be killed by you, and found some means
 Of rescue; but for this he would have kept
 The secret longer and in Athens revealed
 Creusa as the mother and himself
 The father of his child. But I must end
 My task and tell the purpose of my journey.
 Now hear Apollo's revelations.

1565

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
 Renowned through Greece. His sons, four branches from
 One stock, shall name the country and its peoples,
 Divided in their tribes, who live about my rock.
 The first shall be named Geleon, the tribe
 Of Hopletes second, then Argades, and one
 Aegicores, the name from my own aegis.
 At the appointed time, the children born

1570

Of them shall colonize the Cyclades,
 Possess the island cities and the coasts,
 And thus give strength to my own land of Athens.
 They shall live in the two broad plains of Asia
 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
 Shall cause the Dorians to be hymned throughout
 The land of Pelops. Then Achaeus, king
 Of that sea coast near Rhion, who shall mark
 A people with his name.

1575

1580

1585

1590

« EURIPIDES »

Apollo then
Has managed all things well. He made your labor
Easy, so that your parents should 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,
And would not let him die, but reared him.
But 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 are delivered of your present evil,
The future holds good fortune.

1595

Ion (ironically)
O Athene, child of mighty Zeus, we have received
What you say on trust. And I believe myself Apollo's
And Creusa's son—though that was credible before.

(*To the end of the scene Ion stands in silence.*)

Creusa
Listen to my tribute. Though before I gave no praise,
Now I praise Apollo. For the son he had neglected
Is restored to me; and now this oracle, these doors,
Wear a friendly look, though they were hateful in the past.
Joyfully I cling to them and bid farewell.

1605

Athene
I approve this change, this praise of him. The gods perhaps
Move to action late, but in the end they show their strength.

1610

Creusa
Son, now let us go.
Athene
Yes, go, and I will follow you.

1615

Creusa
Welcome guardian of our journey, one who loves the city.

« ION »

Athene (to Ion)
Mount the ancient throne.

(*Ion is silent. There is an embarrassing pause.*)

Creusa
That is a worthy prize for me.

(*The actors slowly move off the stage in procession.*
Athene disappears.)

Chorus

(*To the temple.*)

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

(*To the audience.*)
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.

1620

(*Exeunt.*)