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Euripides' Ion: a performance text

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Euripides’ *Ion*

*a performance text*

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by
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I have more for which I am grateful, and more people to whom I am grateful, than I can write about in a single page. I’ll keep this brief.

To my family: thank you for keeping your doors open and your cell phones on.
Celia: thank you for making me a better writer and chess player.
Olive: thank you for being the Jughead to my Kevin.
Shane: thank you for the cat pictures and bad movies.
Amelia: thank you for the Sunday night company.
David: thank you for the mindfulness.
Madison: thank you for all of the late night drives.
Natasha: thank you for sticking Greek out with me all the way.
Geneva: thank you for watching 300 with me.
Palash: thank you for making the library my second home.
Theo and Hannah: thank you for writing such beautiful music and being such amazing friends.
Daniel Mendelsohn: thank you for your patience and your wisdom.
To anyone else I’ve forgotten: thank you for everything.

Oh, and to Euripides: I hope I did it justice.
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Introduction

Good theater changes lives. The Ancient Greeks knew this, and their longstanding tradition that established theater as a civic and religious institution stands as a testament to this fact. Each March, every Athenian citizen was expected to attend the City Dionysia, a five-day dramatic festival during which three tragedians competed against one another by presenting a set of three tragedies over the course of a single day, from sunrise to sunset. The festival dates back as far as 6th-century BCE tyrant Peisistratos.

In this mandatory civic context, Greek theater provided a venue not only for the voices of traditional heroism—the great characters of the mythic tales of the Trojan War, or the Labdacid clan—but also for the voices of the disenfranchised: in particular, women. It may be an accident of preservation, but stories of women are told far more frequently in drama and comedy than in any other Greek literature. In the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus explores the stories of abandoned Klytaimnестra, besieged Kassandra, and grieving Elektra. In *Antigone*, Sophokles tells the tale of a young girl who dares to defy the impositions of the state on her familial and religious duties. Euripides in particular, as the ancients themselves were well aware, gives a particularly broad platform to the voices of women, again and again: Alkestis, Medea, Andromakhe, and indeed a swath of the enslaved female population of Troy in the *Trojan Women*. Athenian dramatists imagine a world in which women, however much they may have been cloistered in the home in real life, enjoy lives of high emotional color and heroic importance.

Theater continues to elevate the voices on the fringes in a context that is overtly political and communal. Ours is the age of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, in which American history is reconfigured for those on whose backs it was built. And ours is the age of *Theater of War*, the group which brought Sophokles’ *Antigone* to Ferguson, Missouri in an attempt to bring the community
together after the murder of Mike Brown in 2014. Speaking more personally, I can say that theater (especially musical theater) has always been an important part of my life. As I discovered my own queerness in the years before our current political moment took hold, gay and lesbian voices like those in Jonathan Larson’s RENT, Jon Hartmere and Damon Intrabartolo’s bare: a pop opera, and Richard O’Brien’s The Rocky Horror Show provided much of my early education.

I did not come to Bard intending to study Classics. I took on a whim an Intensive Greek class and almost immediately switched majors. Much about Ancient Greek is enthralling to me. I love the shapes of the letters, so much that I had a small phrase from Euripides’ Bakkhai tattooed on my leg.\(^1\) I love the syntax, how sentences curl around themselves and do not immediately reveal their meaning.\(^2\) More than all that, however, I love the Greeks themselves. I love the stories they choose to tell, and I love the stories they choose to enact—not through epic, not through lyric poetry, but through live drama. The first play I read in Greek was Sophokles’ Philoktetes, during my second semester of Greek instruction under Carolyn Dewald. In it, Neoptolemos, the son of the Iliad’s great hero, Akhilleus, and Odysseus, the hero of the Odyssey, attempt to bring the ailing and angry Philoktetes back to the fight at Troy. What I witnessed was the manipulation of the epic canon for a new, contemporary, and very dramatic goal: in this play, Sophokles uses characters and episodes well-known from epic to explore issues of burning importance in the fifth-century Athenian state: the deep-rooted struggle to

\(^1\) On my upper left thigh, “οὐδ’ ἔκαεν,” (l. 758; “it burned nothing,”). This phrase refers to the Bakkhic Maenads, who wear woven fire within their hair. Euripides deftly crafts a sentence that begins with the women as the subject and ends with the fire as subject. More than that, he describes mortals who are elevated beyond their usual status, who wield what ought to be dangerous without being damaged by it. These two words are all about harnessing power and overcoming it.

\(^2\) Take, for example the opening to Pindar’s 6th Olympian: “χρυσάς ὑποστάσαντες εὐτειχεῖ προθύρῳ θαλάμου / κίονας, ὡς ὅτε θαητὸν μέγαρον / πάξομεν,” (ll. 1-3). If I were to translate it word for word, using Pindar’s order, it would sound something like: “The golden, placing them in the well-walled portico of the mansion, columns— thus we will an admirable hall build.”
justify one’s morals in a cynical age, and the devastating impact a person feels when he is defined by trauma.

When I began to think about my Senior Project during the summer of 2016, it seemed unlikely to me that I would want to do anything other than translate a Greek play and bring it to a modern audience. Such an endeavor would, after all, combine all of my passions: for theater, for theater’s treatment of marginalized voices, and for Greek. The goal, then, was to compose a translation that could stand on its own in front of an audience who was not necessarily be versed in the traditions upon which Greek tragedies draw. I did not want it to need any sort of apparatus to explain those references. The apparatus, as it were, would exist within the text itself. I knew I wanted a verse translation, not prose, written in flexible meter, that emphasized the psychological and the emotional underpinnings of the play.

I read many English translations of tragedy that summer, often out loud as I sat on my porch in Tivoli, while I attempted to decide which one to translate. I read the speech of the doomed Kassandra in Aiskhylos’s Agamemnon—a girl enslaved in war, destined to be the sex-slave of a victorious warlord—and thought about recreating certain aspects of the City Dionysia of 458 BCE: crafting a day-long theatrical experience with all three plays of the Oresteia, beginning with a recreation of the pompe procession, during which the Athenians marched to the theater while holding phalloi up high. I read Sophokles’ Oidipous Tyrannos and was so moved by the stylistic potential of its climax, the ultimate tragic revelation that good king Oidipous is, in fact, the cause of his beloved city’s turmoil, that I considered throwing my lot in with yet another production of Aristotle’s famous drama. Then I happened upon Euripides’ Ion. I read the title character’s decrinal of Apollo and found myself immediately touched, tearful. One some level, my decision was made then and there, but every pass
through the play, every dip I took into the scholarship written about it, confirmed what I had immediately felt in my gut, a sense of profound heartache and wonder.

The *Ion* is a strange work. Scholars disagree on when Euripides wrote it, but they do agree that it is a tragi-comedy, a soap opera melodrama stuffed to the brim with heightened emotions. It tells the story of Athenian queen Kreousa and her long-lost son, both of whom are drawn to Delphi by the god Apollo. Euripides begins his drama with a prologue speech by the god Hermes that retails the back-story: Years ago, Apollo raped the Athenian princess Kreousa, who subsequently gave birth to a male child. Secretly she exposed him, and unbeknownst to her, Apollo arranged for the infant to be brought to his shrine and raised there as an orphaned servant in the god’s service. Years later, Kreousa married Xouthos, a foreign prince who had aided Athens during a moment of civil strife. The couple try to have children together, but as the end of Kreousa’s childbearing years approaches, their lack of success makes them nervous and so they and go to Delphi to ask the oracle if Kreousa can ever bear children. Hermes tells the audience Apollo’s plan: intending to preserve Kreousa’s honor and keep his misdeeds a secret, the god will have his oracle say that Ion is Xouthos’ son. Hermes departs to watch the action unfold from offstage.

First comes Ion, who performs his daily duties at the shrine while singing contentedly. When he finishes, the Khoros — part of a retinue also including an Attendant and an Old Man — arrive ahead of their mistress Kreousa. They appreciate at length the beauty of the temple, recounting to one another the mythic stories depicted in its frieze. When Kreousa enters, she and Ion immediately feel a connection. They share an intimate conversation that is almost unbearably saturated with dramatic

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4 Conacher 35.
irony: at its conclusion, Kreousa tells the youth the story of her “friend” with whom Apollo slept. She
wishes, she says, to learn from the oracle whether the exposed child survived, but Ion assures her that
nobody at the precinct would be willing reveal one of Apollo’s secrets. Before Kreousa can ask anything
further, her husband Xouthos arrives.

Xouthos goes within the temple to hear from Apollo, and Kreousa goes off to another part of
the precinct to pray for good news. Ion takes a moment to address Apollo; processing Kreousa’s story
of the rape, he begins to question what it means to live in a world where the powers that have
established the moral guidelines are themselves corrupt and abusive. He too goes offstage to complete
another one of his sacred duties, and alone, the Khoros dances and prays.

Ion returns, almost immediately followed by Xouthos, who energetically attempts to squeeze
the boy in a bear-hug before revealing that the oracle has done as Hermes said it would. When Ion
finally accepts the “truth,” the two ponder over who his mother could be. They decide that Ion was
most likely the result of a drunken tryst. Ion worries that the proud and xenophobic Athenians would
never look favorably upon the bastard foreign son of a foreign king. However, Xouthos convinces Ion
to return to Athens with him and inherit his rule over the city. They exit to plan a feast in celebration
of their discovery of one another.

But the “comic” resolution of one parental dilemma leads to the onset of a bizarrely
exaggerated and melodramatic ‘tragic’ parental crisis--the second half of this capacious play. Alone
again, the Khoros fearfully imagines what Kreousa’s response will be to this news. Kreousa returns
accompanied by her tutor, and coerces the Khoros into revealing what they have heard. Kreousa
believes this is a confirmation she will remain childless forever; overcome with grief, she is compelled to
at last reveal the truth of her history with Apollo in a stirring monologue. The Khoros and the Old
Man voice their support for their queen and friend, and they all craft a plot to take revenge on Xouthos by murdering Ion before he can leave Delphi for Athens. The Old Man and Kreousa go off to make this happen. The Khoros prays for the success of their mission.

But the murderous plot goes bizarrely awry. After a choral interlude, another member of Kreousa’s retinue, an Attendant, appears as a messenger, explaining the outcome of the distraught woman’s plan. She explains that the plot to poison Ion at the feast was foiled by apparent divine intervention, and that now all of Delphi hunts for Kreousa to punish her for what she has done. Kreousa enters, and the Khoros encourages her to take refuge as a supplicant at Apollo’s altar. Just after she takes her seat, Ion arrives. He is violently angry and almost willing to violate the laws of the shrine to murder her. He bewails the futility of those laws when they allow criminals to be treated on an equal footing with the innocent.

At this crucial moment, the High Priestess of Delphi, Pythia, emerges from the temple. She rebukes Ion for almost committing a dire sin and encourages him to empathize with Kreousa’s situation. She then reveals the cradle infant Ion was left within on the steps of the shrine, telling him that within it are tokens he can use to search for his mother. The two share a tearful farewell, before Pythia leaves. Kreousa recognizes the cradle as hers and realizes that Ion is actually her son. It takes some convincing, but she is at last able to prove, through her familiarity with the tokens she had left in the cradle when she exposed her child, that it was she who abandoned Ion all those years ago.

Ion still harbors doubt about his divine parentage and wonders whether Kreousa is merely trying to cover up her own indiscretions. He intends to enter the temple and ask the oracle, but the arrival of Athena, ex machina, interrupts him and ends the play. The goddess verifies Kreousa’s story and explains that Apollo would have come himself if not for the shame his son and his victim have
already heaped upon him. Athena gives a prophecy that details the long and famous lineage that is to be enjoyed by both Ion and Kreousa, whose descendants will proliferate the Athenian line throughout all of Greece. Everyone happily leaves for Athens.

The *Ion* is the tale of a family reuniting, of old traumas at last addressed, of xenophobia overcome. Nobody dies or blinds himself at its conclusion. In fact, like the other Euripidean romances, it ends happily. Euripides explores the parallel themes of knowledge—especially one’s knowledge of self—and deception. He examines the ways in which national pride and xenophobia go hand in hand, and he even suggests that had such behavior not been checked, Athens would have gone without its rightful king and the blessed continuation of its monastic line. Most prominently, Euripides asks questions about the ability of power to corrupt, about the need to question institutions which are rotten to their core, and the hypocrisy of moral laws written by immoral actors.

As far as performance is concerned, I felt that *Ion* could be perfectly overlaid with a contemporary theatre aesthetic. Its many sections of stichomythia make for a fast-paced play that pulls its audience in and keeps its tensions rising. Ion’s first monody reads like something pulled from Sondheim, with a lyrical wit that develops character and turns expectations on their head. At its heart, the play is motivated by a compassion for and an interest in the human experience, in putting its all-too real characters into situations of extreme emotional duress and feeling pleasure as they overcome and

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5 Sondheim is known especially for his metrically tight lyrics and brings his trademark flavor to *Into the Woods*; like a Greek tragedy, this play examines a pre-existing canon (in this case, the world of fairytales) and turns it on their head by extending the stories past their “end” to reconfigure their fantastic plots in a legitimate psychological setting. So too does the *Ion* explore the psychological ramifications of a common tragic trope, the rape of the maiden.
grow through these experiences. Euripides is at his most beautifully lyric when his characters explode their grief outward, whether that is Kreousa removing the veil from the emotional pain she feels, or Ion afraid for his life and exaggeratedly responding to the threat of Kreousa’s poison.

In addition to all of these factors, I was moved by the possibilities the Ion presented as a piece of political theatre. When it was written, its themes of xenophobia and violence reflected on and subverted contemporary controversies in the realm of Periclean Athens. Ionia, legacy of the character Ion, played a major part in the late Peloponnesian War as revolt against Athenian rule swept across the coast of Asia Minor in cities such as Klazomenai, Lebedos, and Ephesos. A reconciliation between these peoples and the Athenians who would have watched the play may very well have been on Euripides’ mind. In the domestic sphere, the play is written less than 50 years after Pericles restricted the ability of those who are only half-Athenian to gain citizenship. The fifth century saw massive migration of metics into the city, and the Periclean law reflected a growing anxiety about such an influx, an anxiety that Euripides takes pains to dispel. Both of these concerns find their own iterations in modernity, as the European Union falters and the United States government shows great anxiety about the strength of its own border against immigrants.

The play’s most striking modern parallel, however, is its treatment of Kreousa and her trauma. October 2017 saw the emergence of the Me Too movement on social and in traditional media. Pop culture turned its eye toward the issue of sexual assault; people (mostly women) began to share their own experiences as they called for a higher level of accountability amongst people in positions of power (mostly men). As I see it, Euripides writes about a similar trajectory in the Ion. Kreousa is enabled to

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move forward by vocalizing her trauma, and in doing so inspires others to begin questioning what it means to live in a world where rulers and gods are abusers and rapists. Such a thematic treatment of divinity can be expected of Euripides, who often explores the fallibility of the Olympic pantheon. In *Herakles*, the playwright wrestles with the inability of mortals to understand the acts of the gods. In *Hippolytos*, Euripides portrays Aphrodite and Artemis as sinful and subject to cruel whimsy. In the *Bakkhai*, the playwright casts a nightmare vision of a brutal god whose all-too human desire for recognition and respect leads him to acts of savagery against a cousin whose own desire for control and mastery the young god shares, perhaps, more than he knows. Other critics have noted that in the *Ion*, Euripides focuses on systems of violence and explores various forms of oppression and the effects it bears upon the characters, though their interpretations are not located within an environment as politically charged as the one in which I situate my thesis.⁸ In my translation, I choose to focus on Kreousa’s trauma and the condemnation of the gods, to draw these troubling aspects of the play front and center.

Among the theater-going public, Euripides’ great heroines occupy a particularly prominent space of feminist empowerment. Medea, in the play that bears her name, ends by overpowering her husband, among the most famous of Hellenic heroes, and takes control of her life. Phaedra, in *Hippolytos*, tragically attempts to resist the desires instilled within her by the gods, with ruinous results. Hecuba, in the *Hecuba*, matches wit with clever Odysseus, showing herself capable of rhetorical skills equal to his even as she exacts gruesomely violent physical vengeance for the wrongs done to her family by the wicked Thracian king Polymestor. Each of these women wrestles with gods and men, and each has her story retold often. Yet *Ion*’s Kreousa has not exerted a similar hold over the popular

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imagination. The play remains unfamiliar to those outside the scholarly community: For over a year now, I have been met with a series of blank stares whenever I have told people about the Ion; out of my dozen interlocutors, only one had ever even heard its name. Its most recent English translation was published in 2006; it was most recently performed in 2015 by the Barnard/Columbia Ancient Drama Group, in Ancient Greek and not in English. Perhaps Kreousa, explicitly the victim of a sexual crime, is not viewed as having the same sort of power that Medea does. Perhaps the genre of her story, more on of “mixed reversal” (As Anne Pippin Burnett refers to these works) than “straight” tragedy, makes her an inaccessible character, too confusing to appeal to actresses. But I see Kreousa as a survivor, not a victim. I see her ability to bring into the light what was done to her, to lovingly reconcile with a son who is the product of that traumatic event, and even to make peace with her abuser, as indicators of her laudable strength, not shameful weakness. Were she alive today, the Me Too movement would belong to Kreousa, too.

My production was designed to highlight Kreousa and her strength. I wanted to marry the aesthetics of a modern play with the tendencies of Euripidean drama. The play would feature a full cast (with the occasional double-casting due to logistics). As in antiquity, some of the show would have been sung: Ion’s first monody and the choral odes, specifically. The music that I commissioned for the production, composed by Theo Lowrey and Hannah Livant, marries musical theater grandiosity with an understanding of Greek instrumentation and traditions. Each scene would have been structured around one or two central stage pictures, like the arrangement of figures on a temple frieze, but the dynamic look of the play would have come mostly from the actors. I would have encouraged them each to live within the story of the play, to find the psychological truths to their characters, to unfold

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onstage a story that for all its melodrama rings emotionally true. Above all, I wanted to recreate for a modern audience what it would have felt like for an Athenian to see this play at the City Dionysia. This endeavor, of course, was never about replicating the experience: A modern theatergoer would, after all, react differently to the specific conditions of fifth century dramatic production than would someone contemporary to it. Rather, I made choices in imagining my own production that would have translated the values, rather than the specifics, of the ancient original. For instance (I explain these items in greater detail in the stage directions within my text, below), instead of a Greek temple facade as my set, I draw upon Christian religious imagery to communicate the ritual nature of Greek theater to a Western audience. I use loose translation and English idiom, because Euripides did not write in a style that felt archaic to his contemporaries (in this play, at least). I even once interpolate a reference to modern politics, the way Euripides explicitly and frequently referenced Athenian politics in plays such as the *Suppliant Women* and *Trojan Women*.

Unfortunately, I was unable to stage this production of the play. It came down to a shortage of actors, and without a sufficient number of performers (I never intended to replicate the “three actor” rule of ancient drama), there was no way I could stage the production I had in mind. But although Bard will not be the home of this production, I do hope to someday take the work I have laid down here and use it as a foundation for a performance elsewhere. In the meantime, I have put together a “performance text” that is meant to establish a picture of what the play would have looked like, while explaining the intentions of my decisions.

This thesis contains both a philological and performative component, wedded together to form my “performance text.” I provide a full translation of the play, annotated with commentary on translational choices and references to relevant elements of the salient secondary literature on the play.
Embedded within the translation, I provide notes and stage directions and other descriptions of my hypothetical production, in order to present my vision of the *Ion* and explore what it can achieve when performed live. Within these narrative sections, I include detailed description of production elements such as set and costume, and describe where possible character movement and stage tableaux. I include my vision of what the characters do and how they interact mainly to highlight the shifts in motivations and tactics felt and deployed by the characters throughout the play; in an actual production, movement on this level would most likely be determined by the actors and not by me in my capacity as director. I use italics to denote when dialogue is meant to be sung. (An Appendix of sheet music for Ion’s Monody and the first two Choral Odes may be found at the back of this text.) I imagine the production as full of dance and movement pieces designed to highlight the underlying themes of the play, and as such, three additional pieces of music meant to go beneath three of the play’s larger speeches may also be found in the Appendix.

My aim is to give the reader of this thesis a clear understanding of my vision of Euripides’ great and neglected drama. I think the *Ion* has much to offer from a production standpoint. Its characters never stand still, emotionally or physically. Its upheavals of trauma and shame speak to us on the deepest of levels. It poses queries we still cannot answer, and in the end it provides a route out of its confused and labyrinthine mire of obfuscation and grief. Kreousa faces her trauma head-on and comes out triumphant. In her strength and dignity, she encourages us all to do the same.
ACT I

The theater sits in pre-show darkness. We are in Delphi, where night and her stars still rule. As though floating, untethered, two neon signs suddenly flood the gloom with stark red, artificial light:

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ
(KNOW YOURSELF.)

ΜΗΔΕΝ ΑΓΑΝ
(NO THING TOO MUCH.)

They flicker, legible, for a moment, and then cut out. Darkness again.

ACT I SCENE I — PROLOGUE
(lines 1-81)

A single beam of early-morning sun cuts through the air, illuminating the set: the APOLLO SHRINE AT DELPHI. Upstage center, almost all the way in the back, is a raised platform painted to look like marble. Three steps lead up to the door of the shrine, flanked by two fluted Ionic columns. On either side of the stage hangs a pair of tall rectangular stained glass windows, depicting stylized Meanders in vibrant blues and yellows; in each pair, one window is farther upstage and farther center than its partner. The windows are slightly raked, so that they make a trapezoid which pulls attention toward center stage.

10 These are the two Delphic Maxims displayed in the temple at Delphi, as per Pausanias: “ἐν δὲ τῷ προνάῳ τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖς γεγραμμένα ἐστὶν ὠφελήματα… τὰ ᾀδόμενα Γνῶθι σαυτὸν καὶ Μηδὲν ἄγαν” (10.24.1: “In the pronaoi at Delphi there are written useful phrases... the celebrated maxims, ‘Know yourself,’ and ‘No thing too much.’”) These sayings are recorded here in the neon ubiquitous to the early 20th century C.E. to indicate both that this play will exist in a space of atemporality and that Delphi itself is as much a character in the drama as any of the actors.

11 The Ionic columnar order, developed in Ionia, cannot predate the patronym of Greek Asia Minor and exist in Delphi before Ion even receives his name. They are used here as another suggestion of atemporality but also a nod forward to the important role Ion plays in the mythologized history of Greece popularized by Herodotus (Conacher, 23; Herodotus 7.94.1, 8.44.2) and drawn upon by Euripides.

12 Though small objects were produced out of stained glass as early as the Romans, the medium did not acquire its religious significance until around the 7th century C.E. In my interpretation, I figure the liminal outdoor space of the Delphic Shrine as a cross between a Renaissance piazza, a Gothic church interior, and what is known of the Greek complex at Delphi from its archaeological remains. For the Greeks, theater was a religious event. To attend a performance was to automatically recognize the air of piety and the sacred surrounding such an event. By invoking easily-read signage of religion, I hope to recreate that atmosphere for a modern audience.
Over the temple door hangs a fifth stained glass window, an oval. Only its bottom third is visible to the audience. It shows a pair of lean athletic legs, rendered in radiant gold, and bare feet. Below them, a scroll ripples across the plain, Greek letters identifying the body as belonging to the Delphic god himself: **ΑΠΟΛΛΩΝ**.\(^{13}\)

Delphi is a place of rain.\(^{14}\) Delphi is a place of growth; beneath a low and heavy fog, small green plants curl out of the fecund earth. These blades of grass glisten and catch the morning light, but on closer inspection it is not dew that makes them shine. The plants are shards of stained glass in shades of green, small pleats and coils like a fragmented acanthus scroll.

Directly center stage, on the same axis as the doorway of the temple, is the altar. It is a simple wooden fixture, painted white. The only notable thing about it is the nimble, mischievous god sitting casually on top—Hermes, god of crossroads, commerce, travel, and tricks. As a mark of his divinity, he wears a black pinstripe suit with thin pants, a dark shirt, and slick combed hair. His tie bears a caduceus.\(^{15}\)

Light strikes the altar, and the god comes alive.

**HERMES**

You've heard of Atlas?\(^{16}\) The titan who wears down the ancient sky-home of the gods with back of bronze?

He fathered Maia, who with Great Zeus gave birth

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\(^{13}\) This window, like a depiction of Jesus behind a pulpit, signifies the cult statue of Apollo at Delphi, again as per Pausanias: "χρυσοῦν Ἀπόλλωνος ἔτερον ἄγαλμα ἀνάκειται" (10.24.5, "another golden statue of Apollo is set up."). Notably, Apollo's face remains hidden, while his legs never leave the view of the audience. Apollo's presence looms over the entire play; he sets things in motion from behind the scenes and the ramifications of his actions occupy much dramatic space in the place, but Euripides does not ever bring the god himself onstage. With this window, I make that distant looming presence explicit.

\(^{14}\) I have imagined Delphi as a place of rain, and this reading informs much of the play's aesthetic. As a location for prophecy, Delphi acts as a space for the communion between the heavens and the earth; that communion is substantiated here by rain, mud, and fog. Rain may bring word from the heavens but also brings mud and fog, which exemplify the confusion that settles over the visitors to Delphi during the play.

\(^{15}\) The *Ion* is preoccupied with the divisions that separate people (Walsh 301). As such, the production's visual program denotes these differences through categories of costumes. The gods in their divinity don elegant formal wear accented by hints of the attributes with which they appear in visual art.

\(^{16}\) Throughout Hermes' introductory speech, I have given this mischievous deity a verbal tic that does not entirely appear in Euripides' Greek text. In the Greek, Hermes is occasionally didactic (see note 15 below, for example; I extrapolate from that occasional self-referentiality a full-blown habit of breaking the fourth wall. Such behavior can be read as another marker of the god's divinity, the ability to see beyond the construct of the medium within which he exists. I give that flavor to what is, in the Greek, a mere one word (“Ἄτλας,” l.1), the first word of the play, to attenuate the emphasis placed by Euripides on lineage and to introduce as quickly as possible the sort of narrator Hermes will be.
HERMES (cont’d)
to Hermes, lackey of the Gods. That’s me.  

Hermes slides off the altar, coming to center. He smiles, and the universe responds with music, the first trilling notes of a score written for trumpet, flute, bass, cello, and percussion.

I’m here in Delphi, where the world was cut from its womb.
Where Phoibos Apollo sings his hymns in praise
of all that is and chants to mortals all which soon will be.

That single beam of sunlight widens and expands, bathing the entire shrine in a soft morning glow.

I’ll tell you a story.

Hermes comes downstage right and crouches down, directly addressing the first row of the audience.

There’s a town in Greece that has a touch of fame—
it gets its name from Pallas with her gold-tipped spear:
you’d know it best as Athens, where Apollo wed
with force the child of Lord Erekhtheos, first king of
Athens, at the place where North-facing rocks
beneath the Attic Akropolis are called Makrai.

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17 Again, I expand a single word of Greek (“μ’,” l.3) into the didactic gesture of a confident and self-aware god.

18 Music for this production has been written by Hannah Livant and Theo Lowrey. Consult the Appendix, beginning page 120. The composers and I have chosen this instrumentation to reflect the aulos and lyre that would have accompanied Greek tragedy while maintaining a modern musical theater atmosphere.

19 As Ion notes near the end of the play, the dramatic action occupies the timespan of a single day (l. 1517). The production’s lighting shifts as the play goes on to mimic the movement of the sun.


21 Euripides writes, “ἔστιν γὰρ οὐκ ἄσημος Ἑλλήνων πόλις,” (l. 8; “For there is a city of Hellas that is not obscure,”). The double negative, used to describe the most famous of all the Hellenic cities, is ironic and gives an impression of Hermes’ character. I use understatement to the same effect.

22 As this text is a performance translation, I compose it to stand on its own without accompanying footnotes or glosses. References to mythology instantly parseable to Euripides’ audience have been expanded upon here and elsewhere for the benefit of a modern one.

23 The name of this hill, Makrai (“Μακρὰς,” l. 13) comes up again and again. I choose to retain it when it does because of the emotional significance Kreousa has attached to it (ll. 284-6).
Hermes rises, and any levity that might have been on his face before is gone.

**HERMES**  (cont’d)

I won’t couch it in words. That is the place where Kreousa, daughter of the king, was raped, assaulted by the Delphic god Apollo.24

She couldn’t tell her father as within her womb she bore to term the fruit of hidden godly lust.25 When her time had come, she bore a boy and stole him away to the cave in which this all began.26 She exposed him by its mouth so he would die, setting him within a hollow wicker cradle. She dressed him in accordance with tradition set down in her father’s day. My friends, those born in Athens swaddle their children, in their custom, in pairs of snakes of gold.27 This is how Kreousa dressed her child to die.

Then Apollo, dearest brother, said to me:

Leaping up, Hermes climbs upon the altar, doing an impression of Apollo.

---

24 These four lines are my first significant interpolation into Euripides’ text. In describing the act of Apollo, the playwright says that the god “ἔζευξεν γάμοις / βίᾳ Κρέουσαν,” (ll. 10-11; “yoked in marriages / Kreousa with force”). Hermes remains coy about what his brother did to Kreousa. In fact, he specifically does couch the act in words. However, my interpretation of Hermes allows him access to a referential space that breaks the fourth-wall and intimately engages the audience. The play makes it clear that Kreousa has suffered psychological repercussions from this show of force and explicitly condemns what Apollo has done. I encourage Hermes to leave behind his brother and stand in for the audience.

25 Euripides writes that Kreousa’s labor “τῷ θεῷ γὰρ ἦν φίλον,” (l. 14; “was dear to the god,”). I interpret the baby, Ion, to be the thing which is dear to Apollo, as much of the point Hermes (and later, Athena) is trying to make revolves around Apollo’s care for his offspring.

26 The *Ion* is full of euphemistic, symbolically loaded language that Euripides and his characters use to refer to the rape. Here, Hermes refers to the cave as “οὗπερ ηὐνάσθη θεῷ,” (l. 16; “where [Kreousa] lay with the god,”). I substitute Euripides’ euphemism for one closer to common English idiom.

27 For the sake of performability, I have excised certain passages of the Greek in this performance translation. That Ion is left wearing these bracelets is important to the plot; the origin of this Athenian tradition, a myth about the daughters of Kekrops entrusted with the care of infant Erekhtheus, is not.
Hermes, going to the *homegrown* people, to the city of the goddess, you know it well, bring from the cave the newborn child and lead him to my Delphic seat of truth, and set him by the doorway of my shrine—”

the very one before you now!—

Hermes raps affectionately on the altar with his knuckles.

“all else will be arranged by me. The child, as you know, is mine.”

I did this favor for Apollo, *Who Speaks His Sideways Truths,* lifting up the wicker cradle, and brought it and child to the doorway that you see.

I even opened up his basket so he might be found;

The god stays sitting on the altar. The music swells and a Dancer enters. She will echo and communicate with Hermes’ story, pantomiming its violences and discoveries.

---

28 *Autochthony* is a concept that comes up again and again in *Ion,* the quality of indigeneity that distinguishes Athenians from all others. The word appears in the play first here, describing the city of Athens as “αὐτόχθων / κλεινῶν,” (ll.29-30, “autokhthonos and famous”). It is a word whose implications affect Xouthos and his marriage to Kreousa, Ion as he considers moving to Athens, and the Khoros as it judges and interprets the action of the episodes (Walsh 301). In presenting this play to a modern audience, I have compressed that entrenched and complicated political sensibility into one word, having Hermes with characteristic humor describe the λαός of Athens as “homegrown.”

29 Euripides is didactic; Apollo instructs Hermes to deposit the child “πρὸς αὐτὰς εἰσόδοις δόμων ἐμῶν,” (l.34, “near the very entrance of my home”). By using εἰσόδοις, Euripides invokes both the doorways of buildings and the theatrical entrance used by the chorus; by denoting it αὐτὰς, Euripides has Hermes directly reference the stage set.

30 The Delphic god is referred to by three names by Euripides: Ἀπόλλων (ll. 66, 93, 248, 424, 946, 952, 1275, 1556, 1560, 1595), Φοῖβος (ll. 6, 10, 28, 136, 306, 357, 371, 437, 541), and Λοξίας (ll. 67, 425, 531, 728, 773, 781, 1347, 1531, 1340). For the sake of clarity, I call him Apollo, though occasionally (for flavor) refer to him as Phoibos Apollo. Λοξίας, used here (l. 67) by Euripides and Hermes, is a cult epithet for the god whose exact meaning is unclear. As it has been interpreted to mean “crooked,” referring to Apollo’s difficult-to-parse oracles, I render it here and several other locations as “Who Speaks His Sideways Truths.”

31 In addition to its other eccentricities, Euripides’ play has exceptional moments of ekphrasis. This emphasis on the visual has inspired me to craft a production just as lushly visual as the text, and having a dancer in non-verbal dialogue onstage during moments of thematic importance does the job. Discovery and obfuscation are two important and intertwined themes of the play, and the Dancer’s presence at this point serves to highlight them. Already dance serves an important function to Greek tragedy: on a structural level, the Khoros’ job is to sing and dance. I have a soloist dance to the words of others, as opposed to a group of dancers accompanying themselves, to allow a different and stronger emphasis to be placed on the underlying themes present in these sections of text. I would like to note that I am not a choreographer; all dances, including odes, will be left undescribed in this text.
—Which happened as the ring of sun began its daily climb, and Pythia, seer of Apollo, began her morning cultic ritual.

She wondered, when she saw the child, if some silly Delphic girl had dared to leave the proof of her secret labor pangs within the holy precinct of the god. She moved to cast the child out. But pity banished her cruelty; the god worked through her, lest the child be abandoned, and she took the boy to raise him, though she did not know Apollo was his father, and did not know his mother, and so the child never learned from whom he came.

When the boy was young, he passed the days by playing games about the shrine that weaned him; as he matured, the Delphic people made him keeper of the gold and worldly matters of the god. Within this holy place he always leads a sacred life.

At last, Hermes rises from the altar and begins to climb the steps of the temple, stopping short and turning back to face the audience before reaching the platform.

Meanwhile, in Athens—
Kreousa, Athenian mother of a Delphic youth, had married Xouthos through a certain twist of circumstance; the stranger came to the city’s aid and stopped a wave of war; because of this, he earned the worthy gift of marrying the daughter of the king, though he was foreign to their land.

---

32 I expand the contrasting “δ’,” in line 57, underlining Hermes’ sense of humor.

33 Euripides denotes Kreousa as “ἡ τεκοῦσα τὸν νεανίαν” (l. 57, “she who bore the young man,”) but I choose to highlight the contrasting national identities that exist between herself and her son, while also reminding the audience of how Kreousa relates back to what they have just heard, before Hermes moves on to introduce Xouthos.

34 Euripides gives greater detail on the conflict in which Xouthos aided Athens, an explanation that includes a slew of names unfamiliar to a modern audience (ll. 59-60); I have condensed it for brevity.
HERMES (cont’d)

Despite the long duration of their union, both marriage and Kreousa have waited barren; because of this, in longing for children of their own, they have sought out the Delphic prophet of Apollo.

Hermes finishes his ascent; he stands at the platform’s center, framed by the temple doorway.

He Who Speaks His Sideways Truths now sets their fortunes toward it—nothing has escaped his gaze, no matter how it seems.\(^{35}\) He will give to Xouthos, when the man comes upon the gate of the shrine, his own child, and will say the boy was born instead of mortal flesh, so when this happy pair returns to Athens, child can be known by mother. Her union with Apollo will stay a secret. The youth at last will enjoy the dues he’s owed. Apollo will give to him the name which he will soon be called, father of the Greeks in Asia Minor:

Ion.

Light floods the doorway, and thunder booms from the heavens.\(^{36}\) Hermes, completely backlit, throws his head up to the sky for a moment. The light fades, and he gives his attention to the audience once more.

In Greek, this means:
The one who goes, the “Going” one.
A boy in motion, a man in transit, a state of being without beginning or end.\(^{37}\)

---

\(^{35}\) The degree to which Apollo remains in control of the situation as the play develops remains debated by scholars. Whether Apollo’s will is completely served by the end of the play (Burnett 93), or the power of the god can be usurped by the passions of humans (Mastronarde 164), Hermes proclaims his brother to be mindful of it all.

\(^{36}\) Athena’s appearance at the end of the play suggests the approval of Apollo’s plans by the entire Olympic pantheon (Burnett 98). I invoke this suggestion at the start of the play so as to create thematic bookends.

\(^{37}\) Euripides does not define a name for which the implications would be understood by a contemporary Greek audience. It would be easy either to allow the audience to miss out on the connotations or to spoon-feed it to them by translating every instance of the name (like renaming Polyphemos in Homer’s *Odyssey* “Song-Famous”). I opt for a middle ground, calling attention to it here and several other potent places, and then letting it breathe.
The god takes a moment to relish this, and then bounds down the steps, coming to the downstage left edge of the stage.

**HERMES**  
(cont’d)

But I’m getting ahead of myself.  
For now, I’ll hide inside a nearby glen  
to learn how all this comes to pass.  
I see him now, coming from the temple.  
His name, which soon he will obtain—  
I, Hermes, am first of the gods to call him it:  
Ion!

Satisfied with himself, Hermes appraises the audience one last time, and (taking the Dancer by the hand) exits left. The music fades to silence.

**ACT I SCENE II — ION**  
(lines 82-183)

Ion enters from the doorway of the temple. He is a sprightly and adorable boy between the ages of 16 and 20. He wears an ensemble entirely of rubber-duck yellow: a cotton bucket hat, a fisherman’s jacket buttoned all the way up to the neck, and knee-high rain boots. A bow and quiver of arrows are strung across his back, and he brandishes a rustic broom in his hand. He hits his mark, right at center on the platform. Light hits him, and music for the monody buttons. The boy begins to sing, like the Disney princess that he is. Bless him.

---

38 In the Greek, Hermes describes Ion as carrying his attributes, the bow and broom. Since the audience will see this, and since Ion will spend a good portion of his monody singing about one or the other, I have excised Hermes’ description.

39 Delphi is a place of rain, per note 5, and it is to be expected that one of its most faithful servants would dress accordingly. Like a Roman priest, Ion keeps his head covered as well as practically protected from the rain. I dress Ion in yellow to craft a visual connection between him and his father, Apollo the Sun God, from the get-go.

ION

The sun in its horse-drawn wagon
shines upon the Earth!
The stars in their fear of its fire
run into the night.\[41\]

The peaks of Mount Parnassus,
beginning to warm with the Sun,
accept the disk of morning—
herald of day for us mortals.

Vivacious, Ion leaps from the platform to turn back and gaze up at the temple, just upstage left of the altar. He stands with body raked, turning his back mostly to the front. The audience is given a full view of Ion’s weaponry, slung across his back.

Several Delphic Attendants enter from left. They, like Ion, wear rain-gear in Earth tones, cementing Delphi’s visual aesthetic.

The smoke of the burned dry myrrh of
Apollo fills up the sky.

He turns demurely to face the audience.

Now the Delphian Maiden
sits at the holy tripod and sings
to all of Greece
what Apollo knows.\[42\]

The boy takes center stage, boldly crying out his invitation.

Delphic attendants serving Apollo, come:
go to the whirlpool, shining like silver.

for the monody, composed by Theo Lowrey, is intentionally evocative of Menkin’s tunes, subliminally hammering home the point to the audience that Ion deserves their support.

\[41\] One of the Ion’s recurring images is celestial order, a sterile structure that provides a parallel for the Delphi shrine (Mastronarde 166). Ion seems to fixate on it, perhaps identifying with it. This is the image with which Euripides introduces the hero of the play, and it returns at key moments in the boy’s development.

\[42\] What the Pythia actually sings is “ἂς ἄν Ἀπόλλων κελαδήσῃ,” (l. 93; “what Apollo sounds out like a flowing river”). I place weight on Apollo’s knowledge to highlight the mental connection between god and prophet.
ION  (cont’d)
Wash yourself in its holy dew, then return
back to the temple, ready for service.\(^{41}\)

Ion turns inward, addressing his broom with a touch more sweetness than is palatable.\(^{44}\) The Delphic Attendants exit stage right.

\begin{quote}
Now I’ll do what I’ve done since I was just a boy,
sweep the temple’s entrance spotless clean,
broom of laurel saplings
a garland in my hand—
dripping water on the ground
to keep it nice and damp.
\end{quote}

He lifts the broom, holding it as though it were the riser of his bow. With his other hand, Ion mimes pulling back the string.

\begin{quote}
And I’ll scare the birds away with my trusty bow and arrow,
keeping sacred offerings clean and safe.
I was born without a
family to my name—\(^{45}\)
so I serve Apollo, in whose
temple I was raised.
\end{quote}

Ion releases the “string.” Suddenly moved by his affection for even the lowliest of laurel branches, he lowers the broom, slowly rotating with it as though at a formal dance.

\begin{quote}
So, come my lovely little boughs of laurel,
a servant of the god I love.
\end{quote}

\(^{41}\) Euripides’ monody is 101 lines. In order to make it palatable to the audience and performable for the actor, I have both condensed and excised. The section immediately following Ion’s command to the other Delphic servants, in which Ion reminds himself how to behave to supplicants, has been excised. This passage reiterates the boy’s philosophy of life already introduced in his commandment to his fellow servants.

\(^{44}\) Over the course of the monody, I intentionally exaggerate Ion’s characteristic likeness to an ingenue. I want to give him space to grow as a character, and I do so by initially pushing him to the far side of believability.

\(^{45}\) In the Greek, Ion says that “ὡς γὰρ ἀμήτωρ ἀπάτωρ τε γεγὼς,” (l. 109; “I have been born motherless and fatherless,”). I shift the focus out to the broader issue of his family in general; the conclusion of the play will prove the importance of the boy’s extended family, including the goddess Athena and ancient king Erekhtheus.
ION (cont’d)

You are from a garden where,
from a stream that never stops,
holy water wets the myrtle leaves.

The broom shifts down in the boy’s grip so that its bristles tap the floor loudly; Ion begins to sweep, still circularly dancing.

I tidy up the floor
with you, the daily work I do all day,46
while on its beating wings the sun is in the sky.

Distracted by his perceived beauty of the task, Ion halts his sweeping and boldly addresses the sky.

Oh Apollo, Healer, Healer,
I hope that all your days
are blessed and happy— so ours are too.
Oh child of Leto, my lord.

Ion realizes that he’s stopped and recommits to sweeping with a new vigor.

The work I do for you,
Apollo, such lovely things I get to do,
I carry out before your home to honor you.47

I’ll never tire from
my work, auspicious as it always is,48
since who I serve is my parent, my father—

Ion pauses, looking directly at the audience.

46 Ion humorously calls attention to the repetitive nature of his servitude when he says, “παναμέριος ... / λατρεύων τὸ κατ’ ἦμαρ,” (l. 122-124; “All day... working throughout the day,”). I use a similar repetition with “daily” and “day” to capture the boy’s self-effacing tone.

47 In the subsequent excised section (ll. 131-3), Ion continues to extol the virtues of his menial labor. I am comfortable that the theme has been established well enough to move on without it.

48 Ion’s existence as a self-possessed and contented servant who performs basic and yet holy tasks allows him to sit at the center of several paradoxes. He is well-born yet ignorant of it, sweet and violent, lowly and reverent, all at the same time (Hoffer 289; 291). His intangibility makes him a character with whom it is easy for an audience to identify.
ION  (cont’d)

Well— not exactly father.
But be who was my friend
at the time when I was most in need,
I’ll always honor with that word.49

Oh Apollo, Healer, Healer,
I hope that all your days
are blessed and happy— so ours may be too.
Oh child of Leto, my lord.

As he sings the following stanza, Ion makes his way back up to the temple doorway and deposits the broom within, returning with a vase. He finishes the stanza from the platform.

Now it’s time I pause from working with my broom,
and pour out water from this golden vase—
Gaia’s water which came
out from the sacred eddy.
It’s a job I can do since I’ve never
lain with man or wife.

Ion begins to make his way back down the steps when just on the horizon he catches sight of—50

Ea! Ea!51
Birds from Mount Parnassus are
making circles above the shrine!
Already you’ve left your nests to come here,
but I forbid you from nearing to land
on the golden cornices of the shrine!

---

49 Euripides uses Ion’s awkward backpedaling, made funny by dramatic irony, to establish Ion’s feelings for Apollo (ll. 136-140).

50 In the subsequent excised section, Ion wishes to never be released from his service to Apollo, unless a better opportunity should arise. Though the dramatic irony crafted by Euripides is nice, but the monody remains chock full of it even without the passage that I have removed.

51 The syllabic cries endemic to Greek tragedy are kept transliterated in my translation. They are woven into the fabric of the song; more on my interpretation of the cries in a context other than monody to follow.
He slides the bow off his back and notches an arrow with practiced skill. ION  
(cont’d)
*I will catch you with my bow,*  
*swan who is approaching here:*  
*Find a different place for your red feet!*

Slowly navigating down the steps, Ion keeps his arrow aimed as he charts a path toward downstage left.

*Apollo’s lyre may sing with you,*  
*but it can’t shield you from my bow.*  
*Instead, change course and fly to Delos!*  
*You will stain all your gorgeous song with blood*  
*if you don’t obey me and leave.*

The bird flies away. Relieved, Ion relaxes his bow.

*I’d only feel pain to kill you,*  
*who bring us signs from the gods,*  
*but I am the aide of Apollo.*  
*I’ll do what’s expected of me.*

One more grandiose gesture toward the audience:

*I would never betray*  
*those who kept me fed and secure.*  
*I’d never betray*  
*all the gods above.*

Ion retreats within the temple.

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52 The first bird to approach the shrine is actually an eagle (ll. 159-62). The swan connects quite strongly to Apollo, so I choose to move right to its “entrance.”

53 There is in fact a third bird who appears after the swan (ll. 170-8); when Ion addresses it, he suggests multiple places it ought to go instead of Delphi, and the location names might confuse a modern audience.

54 Ion does not specify to whom he is loyal, describing them as “τοὺς βόσκοντας,” (l. 183); I translate the final line of the monody faithfully, then interpolate one last line reminding the modern audience that Ion lives in service of the gods.
ACT I SCENE III — PARADOS
(lines 184-218)

Khoros A, one member of a retinue of Kreousa’s servants, enters from right.\(^{55}\) She, like the rest of the Khoros, is from Athens, biggest and best city in the whole world, and she knows it. Each member of the Khoros wears business casual in dark shades of blue and grey, and a brightly-colored scarf is tied around her waist.\(^{56}\) She also carries an umbrella, which shields her head with its clear plastic canopy.\(^{57}\)

As she comes in, the size, grandeur, and ornateness of the temple take Khoros A by surprise.

**KHOROS A**

So look at this!\(^{58}\) It turns out that not just in Athens are bright courts with shining columns.

Three more members of the Khoros (Khoros B, Khoros Γ, and Khoros Δ) come in, all bearing umbrellas identical to that of Khoros A. As a group, they join their leader center stage.\(^{59}\)

\(^{55}\) This is technically the first choral ode of Euripides’ *Ion* and would have been sung in antiquity. I have chosen that my parados be unsung, however, for several reasons. Ion’s monody directly precedes this passage, and I want to break up the singing and non-singing portions of the show so as to not deluge the audience. Additionally, the parados features a conversation between individual members of the Khoros. Though musicals often feature sung dialogue, this is not a musical, and I want the distinction between Ode and Episode to remain. Presenting this as a scene instead of a song allows the firm establishment of the Khoros as a communal character made up of its individual members, each of whom has a personality. They are a group of lively young girls, self-professed storytellers who bubble and burst with energy, as the explosive recreations of the frieze mural demonstrates. This vivacity makes an important point to the audience: the household of Kreousa comes to Delphi with hope. The importance of the journey is not lost on Kreousa’s closest confidantes; instead of the pressure making these young girls dour, it inflates them with cheerful and lively optimism.

\(^{56}\) If Athens is the center of the universe, so to speak, it has gained its position through its association with divinity. Athenian pride in their *autochthony* stems directly from this belief (Walsh 303). I make explicit the Athenians’ overtures at godliness by codifying their desire to emulate divinity in their clothing. If the gods wear attire appropriate to a black-tie gala, the Athenians wear the next step down: business casual blouses, chinos, skirts, and dresses. If the gods wear black, the Athenians wear dark blues and greys, in stark contrast with the Earth-tone Delphians. The scarves give a shock of color, and will be used to establish character for actors not in the chorus.

\(^{57}\) Unlike Delphi, Athens is relatively dry. Whereas preparedness for contact with the divine and the damp is woven into the headwear and rain gear of the Delphic costume program, it is an easily discarded afterthought for those who come from Athens.

\(^{58}\) The parados is full of exhortations to look and affirmations of images being seen. The first reference to this comes a few lines down, but I give it to Khoros A, my translation’s version of the Chorus Leader, so that she can establish her position as *princeps* of the chorus.

\(^{59}\) Khoros A also expresses her wonder at the “ἀγυι-/ ατιδες θεραπεῖαι,” (ll. 186-7; “services to Apollo-of-the-Traveler,”). Euripides uses this specific cult reference to flesh out Apollo’s characteristics, but would most likely be confusing to an audience member not already familiar with the system of Greek cultic worship.
Khoros A (cont’d)
Look at the temple, dear.
I see the light of twin faces,
with eyes that shine with life.

Khoros B
And look there at the mural, friend!

Khoros B gestures up toward where the frieze would stretch above the doorway.

Lernaian Hydra finds
its death from golden Herakles,
who’s armed with golden hook.

As she speaks, Khoros A, Khoros Γ, and Khoros Δ imitate the menacing hydra and use their umbrellas as the snapping dragon heads. Khoros B, now Herakles wielding umbrella as golden hook, lops one of the heads off.60

Khoros Γ steps away from the pack in her delight, downstage left and casts her gaze back up at the frieze. As she speaks, another group of girls (Khoros E, Khoros Z, and Khoros H) enters, each with their own umbrella. They gaggle together upstage right and examine that portion of the frieze.

Khoros Γ
I see it! Who’s there beside him,
raising up a torch?

Khoros Δ
It’s just like in the tales we weave
when working at the loom—
it’s Iolaos, with his shield,
who shared in Herakles’ woes.

Before they can re-enact the dreadful fate of Iolaos, the second Khoral group grabs the attention of the audience and the rest of the Khoros. Khoros B joins them.

60 The story of Herakles represents the triumph of civilized man over disordered nature; a similar trajectory is followed at Delphi, as clarity overtakes confusion (Mastronarde 166).
Khoros E mounts her umbrella as though it were Pegasos. Khoros B and Khoros H gently lift her up, and the three arc toward center, at Khoros A, like Bellerophon descending upon the Khimera.

Khoros Z
I can’t even take it all in!\textsuperscript{61}

After the landing, Khoros H wanders upstage left.

In the doorway of the shrine, Ion reappears. He does not yet move out into the shrine but hangs back, unnoticed, observing. The Khoros continues their joyous reenactments.

Khoros H
The clash of giants, look,
is carved into these walls of stone.

Khoros B joins her.

Khoros B
My friend, I see it too!

Khoros Γ
And see who hits Enkelados
with her Gorgon-faced shield?

Khoros Δ
I see Athena, my goddess!

The Khoros now forms an Athena tableau. Khoros A acts as the goddess and swings her fully-opened umbrella like a shield. As she sweeps it in a large arc, the rest of the Khoros falls down as though all of the girls together formed the monstrous Enkelados.

\textsuperscript{61} Khoros Z says, in the Greek, “πάντα τοι βλέφαρον διώ-/κω,” (ll. 205-6; “My eyelids flit on all of it,”). Euripides’ language paints a person who tries to view something large but cannot move beyond its smallest parts.
The Khoros climbs back up onto its feet.

**Khoros E**
What’s here? The mighty flaming bolt
of Zeus clutched in his hand?

**Khoros Z**
About to strike down raging Mimas!

**Khoros H**
And Bakkheus with his ivy staff,
a weapon that was never
meant for war, annihilates
Bromios, son of Earth.

Before they can make a tableau of this story, Khoros A notices the boy in the doorway of the temple. The entire group snaps to attention.

**Act I Scene IV — Interlude**
(lines 219-236)

Khoros A calls out to the boy who lingers in the doorway.

**Khoros A**
Hey, you there, standing by the shrine:
are we allowed to step inside with feet
unclothed and pale as ours—?

Ion steps forward, onto the platform.

**Ion**
It’s not allowed, my friends.62

---

62 The word Ion uses to address the Khoros is “ξέναι,” (l.222), which may more accurately be translated at “guest” or “stranger.” However, later in the play (l. 641), Ion takes pride in the way he makes supplicant guests to the shrine feel welcome and at ease. I wanted to give this behavior precedence in one of the only scenes we see him do his job by adopting a looser reading of the word.
Khoros A
Am I allowed to ask a question?

Ion
Yes!\textsuperscript{63}

Khoros A
Does Apollo really dwell at the place
where the Earth was severed from its womb?

Ion comes down off the platform to meet Khoros A at center.

Ion
It’s right inside, adorned with garlands and Gorgons!

Khoros A turns back to her companions, giddy with the news.

Khoros A
It’s as the stories said.

Gently, Ion takes Khoros A by the elbow and leads her a bit downstage, tempering his joy at sharing his knowledge with the steady calm permitted by his station.

Ion
Listen— if you offer honey cakes
and wish to learn some oracle from Apollo,
come approach the hearth. But stay outside the sacred walls unless you make your sacrifice.

Khoros A
I understand. We won’t trespass the home of the god. My eyes are thrilled enough by what’s out here.

Ion
You’re free to look as much as you’d like!

\textsuperscript{63} In the Greek, Ion responds by asking, “τίνα τήνδε θέλεις;” (l. 223; “What is it that you wish [to know]?”). The essence of his response, however, is that Khoros A should feel free to ask whatever she likes, and his innocent enthusiasm can be rendered with the monosyllabic “Yes!”
KHOROS A
That’s what our mistress said.

ION
Whose house do you serve?

KHOROS A
The goddess called Pallas Athena
lives in the same house as my mistress.

Khoros A turns her attention back to the Khoros, and in doing so, looks offstage right—

Ah, here she comes now!

The Khoros gathers by the stage right entrance. Four of them form a semi-circle facing downstage center, leaving a hole in the middle of the two pairs. The outermost girls crouch and hold their umbrellas at waist-level close to their bodies, canopies pointing out and away from their bodies at obtuse angles to the semi-circle. The inner girls stand tall and hold their umbrellas at face-level close to their bodies, canopies pointing in to the hole in the center. Two of the remaining three Khoros members kneel in front of this semi-circle, flush with the outermost girls, creating a small space in the middle of them all. These two girls hold their umbrellas directly in front of themselves, canopies facing downstage center. The last girl, Khoros A, stands just upstage of the semi-circle and projects the canopy of her umbrella into the gap.

ACT I SCENE V — KREOUΣA
(lines 237-400)

Behind that central umbrella, Kreousa enters, her visage distorted by the clear plastic of the canopy. The Khoros twirl their umbrellas for a moment, then Khoros A lifts hers to protect her mistress’ head and reveals Kreousa to the audience. Kreousa is a lady of understated elegance, in her late fifties, wearing a dark blue dress and a colorful scarf over her head. One golden ring adorns a finger on each hand, but other than these she wears no jewellery. She bears herself with perfect posture, and though her temperament is kindly, she is unmistakably a queen.

64 Like the Khoros, Kreousa is dressed within the Athenian program, refined but several steps removed from divinity. Her clothing, however, is just slightly nicer than that of her retinue. She is restrained enough to communicate her royalty not through decadence but through composure. The scarf over her head suggests a knowledgeable deference to the holy space into which she has come.
Upon entering, Kreousa stands without motion, framed by her retinue, face frozen as she gazes upon the temple. Ion, across the stage, is similarly frozen, shocked at and awed by her appearance. He recovers before she does and takes a hesitant step in her direction.

**ION**

You look noble—I can see it witnessed in your face, whoever you are, lady guest.\(^65\)
You can tell, just by looking, if someone was raised well.\(^66\)

Kreousa takes no note of the boy. Beholding the temple, she has moved from stupor to grief; her eyes clench shut, she draws a hand up to her face, and several tears roll down her cheeks.

_Ea!_\(^67\)
You shock me, squeezing shut your eyes and flooding your cheeks with tears when you look at the holy shrine of Apollo my god. What sadness strikes you? How can what brings others joy make you cry?

Kreousa composes herself and smiles at the boy. She steps toward him, and the Khoros folds away from her; they come into a clump upstage right from which they observe the proceedings.

---

\(^65\) Ion breaks from the tradition he has established for himself, and addresses Kreousa not as ξένη but as “γύναι,” (l.238). In the Greek, he uses only this word to address her, instantly elevating her beyond merely another supplicant at the shrine.

\(^66\) Ion’s point about the visibility of internal qualities concerns whether someone is “εὐγενής,” (l. 240; “well-born,”). More generally, this word can be taken to mean “noble,” Ion’s reference to upbringing rather than birth implies his internal shame at the question surrounding his own birth.

\(^67\) As a culture, we struggle with outward expressions of pain. To witness someone cry is an uncomfortable experience, and shouts of agony or misery or even joy invite judgement. Yet for the Greeks, ritualized and formulaic cries of emotion were part of an established dramatic vocabulary. To exclude them from a translation would be disingenuous, and yet to include “Oh”’s and “Ah”’s in a performance might encourage the audience to take the characters less seriously. My solution is something of a middle ground. It is said that in musicals, characters sing when their emotions expand beyond the capability of mere words to express them. In that vein, each categorical cry used in _Ion_ (ἐα, φεῦ, οίμοι, ἰώ, ὤμοι, αἰαῖ, ὠή, and that one beautiful ὀττοτοῖ) is given a melody and sung. I have attempted to render the foreign Greek tongue of grief in a modern dialect.
KREOUSA
Stranger, you are kind to ask.\textsuperscript{68}
When I saw Apollo’s temple,
I retraced the paths of an old memory.
Although I’m here, it seems
that I left my mind at home.

Her composure suddenly cracks.

Miserable women! Shameless gods!
What now? What can we call justice,
when crushed by the cruelty of the strong?

Ion is moved by this abrupt cry, and takes another step toward Kreousa.

ION
You seem to grieve at nothing, ma’am.\textsuperscript{69}

Kreousa wipes her eyes and composes herself once more.

KREOUSA
I’m fine. I’ve said what I meant to, or more.\textsuperscript{70}
I must stay silent. You don’t need to worry.

\textsuperscript{68}Kreousa tells Ion, “ὦ ξένε, τὸ μὲν σὸν οὐκ ἀπαιδεύτως ἔχει / ἐς θαύματ’ ἐλθεῖν δακρύων ἐμῶν πέρι,” (ll. 247-8; “Oh, stranger, it isn’t uncouth of you to arrive at wonder regarding my tears,”). As elsewhere, I pare away Euripides’ double negative to more succinctly express her intention in English.

\textsuperscript{69}Though I translate Ion’s initial “γύναι,” (l.238) as “lady guest” to highlight the ritual nature of their initial relationship, here (l.255) and everywhere else I translate it as “ma’am.” This deferential address of respect accomplishes two interpretive tasks. It highlights Ion’s personality, showing him as someone who understands decorum and is good at his job. Perhaps more importantly, however, is that “ma’am” often sounds only slightly different from “mum,” an auditory pun that reinforces the reality of their relationship foretold by Hermes in the prologue.

In the Greek, Ion asks Kreousa, “τι χρῆμ’ ἀνερμήνευτα δυσθυμῇ, γύναι;” (l. 255; “Why do you mourn for inexplicable things, woman?”). I push Ion’s logic a step forward: if he cannot interpret something, as someone whose job it is to interpret things, then it must not exist.

\textsuperscript{70}Kreousa says, “μαθῆτα τὸξά,” (l. 256, “I have shot my bow.”) Euripides’ dialogue is full of beautiful and dense metaphorical language like this. However, in the stichomythic back-and-forth between characters, I have opted where necessary to prioritize meaning over metaphor to keep the scene moving at an appropriate pace.
Ion does not quite know what to make of this whirlwind of responses. He hesitates for a moment, wondering if she might have more to say. But Kreousa stays true to her word and keeps her silence, so Ion launches himself into a shpiel, with which he formally receives her at the shrine.

**ION**

Then who are you? Where are you from?
What is your homeland? What do they call you there.

The barrage of questions does not faze Kreousa. In fact, in the face of it she stands up straighter.

**KREOUSA**

My name is Kreousa. I am of Erekeus’ line.
The city of Athens is the home of my fathers.

Ion grows more impressed with her, if that is possible.

**ION**

Whoa! A dweller in a famous land, a child at the knee of noble fathers! I marvel at you, ma’am.

**KREOUSA**

My prosperity lives and dies with those facts, stranger.

This admission confuses the boy; how can a woman as blessed as Kreousa not feel fortunate? However, Ion knows that it is not right to pry, and decides to change tack instead of pressing further.

**ION**

Alright, tell me... is it true, like they say—?

**KREOUSA**

What would you like to know, stranger?

**ION**

Did Erekhtheus your father sprout up from the Earth?

---

71 Euripides uses “ὦ,” (l. 262). “Whoa” not only retains the vowel-sound of the Greek, but captures its reverential tones without the stiffness of a Shakespearean “O!”

72 In the Greek and in my translation, Ion acts as a faltering interlocutor (l. 265), a character trait made charming by his age and the dramatic irony of his relationship with Kreousa.
KREOUSA
He did. But don’t assume that my family—

Fascinated, Ion interrupts her without meaning to, taking another step toward her.

ION
Did Pallas Athena harvest him from the ground like a crop?

Kreousa stops trying to push her point and resolves to merely answer the boys question, amused more than anything by his intensity and genuine nature.

KREOUSA
With virgin hands— she was not his mother.

ION
How about this: is it true— or is it just gossip—?

Kreousa steps toward Ion once more, and the two meet at center stage. Gently, Kreousa lifts Ion’s chin so that their eyes meet.

KREOUSA
Speak up.

Ion pulls away without stepping back, suddenly self-conscious before her.

---

73 Kreousa gets further into her response in the Greek, saying, “τὸ δὲ γένος μ’ οὐκ ὄφελε,” (l. 268; “My kin does not help me,”). The sort of help Kreousa refers to is metaphorical and concerned with the quality of her existence; I find it better to let this thought sit in subtext by having Ion interrupt. This behavior is not out of character for the boy, and repeating it helps establish it as a recognizable pattern for the audience.

74 What follows in the Greek is another retelling of the Kekrops myth, first introduced by Hermes in the prologue (see note 18). As there, I excise it for the sake of a modern audience’s ability to follow the plot of this story.

75 In the Greek, Kreousa says, “τί χρῆμ’ ἐρωτᾷς; καὶ γὰρ οὐ κάμνω σχολῇ,” (l. 276; “About what matter do you enquire? In my leisure I do not labor,”). In saying this, Kreousa maternalistically indicates her willingness to be party to Ion’s inquiries. I attempt to capture that firm and loving maternal tone in my translation.

76 These two characters instantly feel a strong connection; they both initially misinterpret the chemistry as sexual, to Kreousa’s amusement and Ion’s mortification. This chemistry gives the two of them an immediate empathy, without which their long conversation might fall flat (Hoffer 303).
ION
Well... did your father, Erekhtheus, sacrifice your sisters?\textsuperscript{77}

KREOUSUA
He steeled himself to kill them, offerings for our land.

ION
And you were the only one spared?

KREOUSUA
I was a newborn, crooked in my mother’s arm.

ION
And does he lay now covered in the dirt?

KREOUSUA
The Sea-God did it to him.

ION
And that’s the place called Makrai?

Kreousa turns away, looking back in the direction of her sympathetic retinue.

KREOUSUA
Why do you ask? Something stirs—

ION
Pythian Apollo honors it with lightning.

With sudden anger, Kreousa whips her head at Ion.

KREOUSUA
Honor? \textit{Honor}?\textsuperscript{78} I wish I’d never seen that place!

\textsuperscript{77} There is some muddling of the relationship between Erekhtheus and Kreousa in Euripides’ text. Was she his granddaughter? His daughter? Or some even more distant relative? For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to use the father-daughter model, as it is the one which gives the wretched scene recounted here the most sense.

\textsuperscript{78} Euripides often uses repetition and asyndeton to render grief. I follow his lead as Kreousa calls out, “τιμᾶ τιμᾶ” (l. 286).
She immediately draws back within herself, going so far as to take a physical step away from Ion. For his part, the boy is genuinely confused by her.

**ION**
How can you hate what Apollo loves?

**KREOUSHA**
I share some shame with those caves.

Ion pauses, wondering if perhaps she might elaborate. She doesn’t, and the boy cannot bring himself to ask. Ever the gracious host, he changes the topic of conversation as smoothly as he can. Inadvertently, he moves from one sensitive subject to another.

**ION**
So... has an Athenian married you, ma’am?

Grateful for the tact, Kreousa steps in toward center once more.

**KREOUSHA**
Not a citizen, no. A migrant from another land.

The Khoros casts disapproving glances amongst one another, which Ion notes.79

**ION**
Who? Someone noble, I imagine.

**KREOUSHA**
Xouthos, born to Aiolos son of Zeus.

**ION**
Why was a stranger allowed to marry you?

---

79 The separation between Kreousa, a native *autochthonous* Athenian, and Xouthos, her foreign husband, provides much tension for the play (Mastronarde 167). The problem of Xouthos’ alien status is communicated mostly by the Khoros in their odes. I include their attitude toward the man before he even appears onstage to prepare the audience for the explicit xenophobia that will be displayed a little later in the play.
KREOUS A
He came to the aid of Athens in a violent war.  

ION
So he arrived as an ally and then took your hand?

KREOUS A
He claimed me as his war prize.

ION
Do you come with him to the oracle, or are you alone?

KREOUS A
He just stopped off for a moment at Trophonios’ shrine.

ION
And is he there as sightseer or supplicant?

KREOUS A
He wishes to hear an oracle, both there and here.

ION
Are you asking about harvest or children?

KREOUS A
We are childless, though married for many years.

ION
You have no children? Υου are not a mother?

Kreousa looks up at the stained glass window of Apollo.

---

80 In the following lines (l. 294-6), Euripides more specifically explains the war and its circumstances, referencing a geography and politic familiar to his Athenian audience. In my pursuit of writing a text that does not require a gloss and maintains a tripping pace, I have not included these lines.

81 In the Greek, Kreousa says, “φερνάς γε πολέμου καὶ δορὸς λαβὼν γέρας,” (l. 298; “Seizing me as a dowry of war and the prize of his spear,”). The violence in this line suggests the tenor of Kreousa’s marriage, and I trim it to its bare bones for emphasis.

82 Ion is so shocked that this maternal woman has no children that he stammers out his disbelief twice in both the Greek and my translation (l. 305).
KREOUSJA
Apollo knows I have no children.

Kreousa breaks her gaze as though she has lost a staring match and wanders away downstage right, holding her arms close to her body. Ion follows slowly, staying a few steps behind her. He makes his remark both to her and to the audience.

ION
Poor woman, to be fortunate in all things but this!

Kreousa turns back to face the boy. Now it is her turn to prove herself a tactful statesman, capable of steering a conversation.

KREOUSJA
But who are you, child? Your mother must be proud.

ION
I am only a servant of the god, ma’am.

KREOUSJA
How were you sold?

Ion shrugs sheepishly.

ION
I know nothing—I am called Apollo’s.

Kreousa steps in, gently touching Ion’s elbows.

KREOUSJA
Then I must pity you as well, stranger.

The two share a beat charged with motherly affection and strange sexual energy, before Kreousa breaks away, crossing slowly to stage left as she speaks.

Do you live in this temple, or under another roof?

Confused and blushing, Ion retreats toward the upstage platform and the safety of the temple.
ION
The whole of the god’s precinct is mine, wherever sleep takes me.

KREOUSA
And did you come here as an infant or a boy?

Ion reaches the platform and climbs, sitting on the top step with a casual air which affirms what he has just said about his relationship with the shrine.

ION
Those who seem to know say I was a newborn.

KREOUSA
Which Delphic woman weaned you at her breast?

ION
I never weaned. She who raised me—

Kreousa rushes to the altar; she clutches it as though it were the only thing holding her back from attacking Ion in her visceral reaction to his story.

KREOUSA
Who, you poor thing? I feel for you! Our pains are parallel.

ION
Apollo’s Prophet Pythia. I think of her as my mother.

KREOUSA
Your birth mother must be miserable. Who is she?

ION
I might be the proof of some girl’s poor judgement.

Ion’s casual dismissal of a situation that echoes her own does not sit well with Kreousa, who immediately changes the subject.

KREOUSA
But you have substance! You dress well!
ION

I wear only what belongs to the god.

KREOUSHA

And you’ve never wanted to find your family?

Ion stands; of course he has! How could she think he hasn’t? Of course, the situation is more complicated than just his wishes.

ION

I don’t have a lead to follow, ma’am.

KREOUSHA

Fêu!

Unable to contain herself any longer, Kreousa peels away from the altar to join Ion at the steps.83

I know of a girl who suffers like your mother.

ION

Who? Let me learn from her.84

Kreousa ascends the stairs and pulls Ion to the far stage left side of the platform to conference quietly with him.

KREOUSHA

I’m actually here ahead of my husband for her sake.

ION

What do you need? Let me help you, ma’am.

KREOUSHA

I seek to learn from Apollo a... secret oracle.

83 Kreousa is a character torn in two different directions, the reserved shame her position demands, and the tragic audacity to which her trauma moves her (Hoffer 290). These sudden movements away from decorum, in stage direction and speech, indicate her internal turmoil.

84 Ion says in the Greek, “εἰ πόνου μοι ξυλλάβοι, χαίρομεν ἄν,” (l. 331; “If she should assist me with my pain, I would rejoice,”). The conditional is clunky in English; I move Ion’s evident pleasure at being released from his troubles out of text and into subtext.
ION
Tell me, please. I’ll act as your patron.

KREOUSA
One of my friends says that she slept with Apollo.

Ion takes a few steps back in toward center stage, immediately repulsed by the accusation.

ION
A woman with my god? Don’t say this to me, stranger!

KREOUSA
And she bore to him a child in secret.

Before he can reach the altar, Ion stops.

ION
Impossible. She’s lying in her shame.

KREOUSA
She says otherwise. She tells me she’s suffered terribly.

Ion turns to face Kreousa. To him, joining in that sort of marriage with a god would constitute the highest honor, not suffering.

ION
How could she have suffered if she slept with a god?

KREOUSA
The child—she left him to the beasts.

Despite his loyalty to Apollo, Ion is moved by the story, and returns to Kreousa’s side. When he speaks, he does so quietly.

ION
Did the boy live?

KREOUSA
No one knows. That’s why I’m here.
KREOUS A (cont’d)
She returned to where she left him, but found nothing.

ION
Not even a single drop of blood on the path?

KREOUS A
She didn’t say. She tore the place apart.

ION
How long has it been since he was killed?

KREOUS A
If he were alive, he’d be your age, child.

Ion clasps one of Kreousa’s hands in his own.

ION
My god has treated her unjustly. This poor mother!

Gingerly, Kreousa pulls her hand away.

KREOUS A
And she still has yet to have another child.

ION
But— what if Apollo took the boy and raised him in secret?

KREOUS A
Then he alone does what ought to be enjoyed together.

Ion leaves the platform and walks downstage left as he sings.

ION
Oimoi!

---

85 Euripides does not specify that Ion refers to Apollo as his god, only as “ὁ θεός,” (l. 355, “the god”). However, I want to remind the audience of the connection that not only exists between Apollo and Ion, but of the connection Ion feels between himself and the god that he is privileged to serve. For him, this conversation is as personal as it is for Kreousa.
ION (cont’d)
Her misfortune harmonizes with mine!

As Kreousa takes the stairs down to join him, Ion looks back at her.

There’s just one problem. 86

Kreousa reaches Ion.

KREOUSΑ
That miserable woman has more than one.

ION
How could my god make clear what he wishes to hide?

KREOUSΑ
He would do it if he really serves the public.

ION
Clearly this shames him—don’t prosecute him for it!

KREOUSΑ
But his victim is in pain from what he’s done.

Ion turns his body so that he delivers his speech to both the audience and Kreousa.

ION
No one here would bring this up before the god.
If you wish to make Apollo look a villain in his home,
the god would justly bring some harm upon the head
of he who helps you do it. Let the matter rest, ma’am.
One can’t divine in opposition to the god of prophecy.
We’d stumble into massive sin if we’d pester reluctant
gods to show the things they do not wish to show—
no altar-sacrifice of sheep, no feathers of augury rites.

He shakes his head and turns to Kreousa.

86 In the Greek, Ion says, “οἶσθ’ οὗν ὃ κάμνει τοῦ λόγου μάλιστά σοι;” (l. 363; “Do you know which part of your story is most disastrous?”). His point is that there exists one barrier higher than the others to Kreousa accomplishing what she wishes.
ION (cont’d)
What we coerce from unwilling gods will only be half-truth at best. 87 We gain from what they mean to give.

Over in the upstage right corner, Khoros A makes a remark meant mainly for her companions.

KHOROS A
Many mortals suffer many miseries! 88 I’m hard-pressed to find even a single good thing in the life of a man.

Kreousa casts a glance over at the Khoros, who fall silent. Kreousa knows not to press the matter with Ion, though it breaks her heart. 89 She takes center stage, and though she looks out to address the audience, the line of symmetry running through her and the Apollo Window indicates to whom she really intends her words.

KREOUS A
Apollo— both here and home you are unjust to her, whose story is here in place of her body. You neither helped the son you should have saved, nor consoled his mother with an oracle— who asks if her son is dead and can be given memorial, or if he is alive—

Kreousa’s breath hitches, and as a tear rolls down her cheek she looks at Ion, whose face is contorted with pity.

But I’ll let this be, if I am stopped from learning what I wish to learn.

There is a commotion offstage right, and Kreousa looks over in a panic. She rushes to join Ion downstage left.

I see my noble husband coming near,

87 In the Greek, Ion says, “ἄκοντα κεκτήμεσθα τἀγάθ;,” (l. 379; “we procure as involuntary goods,”). His point is that forced prophecy cannot necessarily be trusted to be true.

88 Euripides’ Greek is highly alliterative: “πολλαί γε πολλοῖς εἰσι συμφορᾶι βροτῶν,” (l. 381).

89 Decorum and internalized blame both act upon Kreousa in this moment, compelling her to keep her silence a little longer (Hoffer 290).
KREOUS A (cont’d)
finished at Trophonios’ shrine; please, keep quiet
about the things I’ve told you, so I’m not shamed for my
secret errand and won’t retread with him the path
that we began to step down. The affairs of women
are only an irritant to men— and good women, when mixed
up in wicked things, end up hated. We are born unlucky.

Ion nods. He’ll keep her secret. Grateful, Kreousa wipes her eyes.

ACT I SCENE VI — XOUTHOS
(lines 401-451)

Xouthos, Kreousa’s husband, enters right. He is the epitome of the cultured barbarian and has clearly
adapted to his Athenian life. He wears blue trousers, a neatly ironed grey shirt, a brown coat, and his
scarf like a sash.90

Xouthos sees Kreousa and brushes past the Khoros on his way to her.

XOUTHOS
First:
Let the god accept my official sacrificial salutations and rejoice?91

As he draws close to his wife and kisses her cheeks, Xouthos notices the redness of Kreousa’s eyes.

And you as well, my lady. You weren’t frightened in my absence, eh?

Kreousa pulls back from her husband and smiles through her frustration; of course he had to arrive in a
moment of vulnerability— and worse than that, make light of it.

90 Though Xouthos has married into the most Athenian family in Athens, his status as an outsider is crucial to Ion’s plot.
His costume reflects that fact— he wears the blues and greys of his wife and her city, but draped over that is the earth-tone
betraying the nature of his birth. That he wears his scarf like a sash is a nod to his slightly pompous personality and to his
status as acting king of Athens.

91 Euripides introduces Xouthos as a well-meaning but ridiculous man, the sort of fellow who uses a word like
“προσφθεγμάτων” (l.401). To capture the flavor of that lengthy and specific word, I translated it with as many English
syllables as I could make feasible.
Of course not. Your timing is merely impeccable.\textsuperscript{92}

She lands hard on this word and through it communicates much of the unsaid details about her marriage.

Tell me, what kind of prophecy do you bring with you?
What did Trophonios say on the subject of our children?

Grinning baldly, Xouthos leads Kreousa downstage center.

**XOUTHOS**

He wouldn’t take the oracle before Apollo, but he told me one thing:
I and you will not be childless when we leave the shrine for home.\textsuperscript{93}

Kreousa falls to her knees and prays.

**KREOUSA**

Oh, Mother Queen of Apollo, please,
let our coming bear good will.
Let what went down with him before
now fall away for better things.

Xouthos kneels next to his wife and places a kind hand on her shoulder.

**XOUTHOS**

It will happen.

He stands and steps toward the temple building.

Who here interprets the word of the god?

\textsuperscript{92} Kreousa says, “ἀφίκου δ’ ἐς μέριμναν,” (l. 404; “You came upon my care,”) by which she means that he entered at the very moment she succumbed to her thoughts.

\textsuperscript{93} I have retained the order of με and σέ used by Xouthos in the Greek (“οὐκ ἄπαιδά με / πρὸς οἶκον ἥξειν οὐδὲ σέ ἐκ χρηστηρίων” (ll. 408-9)) in order to emphasize that, although he is well-meaning, Xouthos is a little domineering and more than a little self-centered.
Ion comes over; he greets Xouthos and shakes his hand.

ION
I do out here, though others do inside,
who sit by Apollo’s holy tripod, the best
of the Delphians, voted into their sacred job.

XOUTHOS
Lovely. I have everything I need. I’ll enter now,
since, as I hear, a common offering was already made
for the travelers who come. I hope that on this day—
and what a day!—I can take the forecasts of the god.

Xouthos smiles at Kreousa, then climbs the steps and exits through the temple doorway. Kreousa watches him go, then rises from her position on the floor.

KREOUUSA
This will come to pass. It will. If Riddling
Apollo⁹⁵ makes up now for what he did—
what ought to give him guilt—⁹⁶ though he could
never earn a place inside my heart, I’ll welcome
whatever he—who after all, is a god—calls truth.⁹⁷

Kreousa nods at Ion, glances over at her retinue, and exits right to an unseen part of the precinct. Ion turns to face the audience.

ION
Why does this stranger speak dark riddles,
with meanings cloaked by covert words,

⁹⁴ In a parenthetical, Xouthos qualifies the day, “αἰσία γάρ,” (l. 421; “for it is auspicious,”). I try and capture his gaudy and reverential tone.

⁹⁵ For Hermes, Λοξίας (l.36) is “He Who Speaks His Sideways Truths.” To Kreousa (l.425), who treats the god with much less reverence, he is only “Riddling Apollo.” Such an appellation draws out out the god’s qualities of shifty machinations.

⁹⁶ Kreousa calls Apollo’s act “ἁμαρτίας,” (l. 426), a word which can mean a “failure,” an “error of judgement,” or “sin.” It is yet another example of Euripides’ treatment of the rape with euphemism, and I translate it both ways. I first give it as a euphemism, and then expand it to explore the connotations of the word Kreousa uses.

⁹⁷ Kreousa’s complicated feelings regarding Apollo are reflected in her complicated syntax, in which she twists her words around the idea of potentially forgiving her abuser.
abuse against my god?
Is she in love with the woman who
has sent her here with a secret mission?
Does she keep quiet on things which force her silence?

He shakes himself out of his reverie and begins to exit left.

But why am I concerned for her?
It’s not my business.
I’ll go and pour from golden jugs
some drops of water into holy vessels—

Before he can make it all the way offstage, however, Ion stops himself short. He turns back to address the Apollo Window.

But I must take Apollo to task.
What is his deal?
Do you betray maidens and rape them?
Do you bear children in secret
and leave them to die without a second thought?
You hold power, so strive for excellence.
You gods penalize any mortal who happens to be bad.
How can you, the gods, the rulers, the presidents,
write the laws that dictate our live
when you are proven to be reckless and amoral?
Allow me a hypothetical—
If you paid the price of your violence
back to us as we pay for ours to you,
you and Poseidon and even Zeus, power of the heavens,
would find all your temples emptied in reparation.
You do us wrong when you seek your... pleasures

---

98 As in the Greek, Ion shifts from a 3rd person address to a 2nd person. At first, he tries to distance himself from the potential wrong-doings of the god, but finds that he cannot help but involve himself.

99 The Greek refers merely to “those who write the laws;” I have expanded that language and included the anachronistic “presidents” in order to highlight the significance this speech in particular has in this current political moment.

100 Ion says of his imaginary scenario, “οὐ γὰρ ἔσται, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ χρήσομαι” (l. 443; “For it is not so, but I will entertain the story anyway,”). I slim this down into idiomatic English.
ION (cont’d)
without stopping to think.
It can no longer be right to speak poorly of mortals,
if all we do is imitate your example.
Instead, condemn our teachers.

Ion stands staring at the window as though expecting a response. When none comes, he sighs and continues his trajectory off stage left.

ACT I SCENE VII — ODE A
(lines 452-509)

The Khoros, lead by Khoros A, assembles at center, just downstage of the altar, where they will sing and dance each of their odes.101

KHOROS
You, born without the pangs
eased by midwife, my Athena,
I am your supplicant— you,
born by the Titan Prometheus
down from the top of Zeus’
head, oh blessed Victory,
come to the Pythian homestead
from the golden sanctums
of Olympos, flying to the paths
where, in the navel of the Earth,
Apollo’s sacred hearth— at the
tripod danced about in celebration—
brings its oracles to pass, you
and the daughter of Leto,
two goddesses, two virgins,
augest sisters of Phoibos Apollo.
Maidens, be yourself supplicant
so that the ancient race of Erechtheus
may find clear oracles about the

---

101 As per note 22, I leave choreography out of the description in this text.
Khoros (cont’d)

long-awaited arrival of children.¹⁰²

Oh, seats of Pan and
the rocks that lie near
cavernous Makrai,
where the three girls
dance on their heels,
daughters of Aglauros,
over verdant courses
in front of the
temples of Athena,
under the spell of the
fleeting wail of flutes
and hymns when you
play in your sunless caves,
Pan, where some woman,
so miserable,
bore a child to Apollo
and exposed it as a
feast for the birds
and a grisly gourmet
for the beasts, the
bitterness of the rape.
Neither at the loom
nor in reports have I
heard of children
of gods born to mortals
who partake in prosperity.

Finished singing, the group moves to form a clump upstage left.

¹⁰² I have removed the gnomic second stanza of the ode, lines 472-491. In it, the Khoros talk about the benefit of having children. Since this translation prioritizes Kreousa and an exploration of her trauma, when it came time to trim the ode down to a length that would be performable by the Khoros, I knew the third stanza would stay. The mythological confluence between the first and third stanza meant I was inclined to keep the first over the second.
Ion returns from stage left, bow once more slung across his back, and stops to speak with the Khoros.

ION
Servant women, acting as warden of your mistress, tell me:
Has Xouthos yet left off the holy and oracular tripod, or does he remain within, still asking about his childless house?

KHOROS A
He is inside, stranger. He hasn’t yet crossed the threshold. —but he’s in the doorway, I can hear a crashing thud! And I can see our master coming now!

Xouthos appears within the doorway of the temple. His face is troubled, but when his eyes land upon Ion, a massive grin spreads across his face.

XOUTHOS
Hello, my son!

He bounds down the steps, and Ion hesitantly crosses to meet him.

Yes, the excellence of what I’ve said is clear to me.

Xouthos attempts to hug Ion, who sidesteps him and walks away.

ION
Good for you—calm down and we’ll be fine.

Xouthos advances at him once again.

---

103 In response to Xouthos’ entrance, Ion tells him, “χαίρομεν,” (l. 518; “We [i.e., I] am well,”). The implication is that in this moment, Xouthos’ mood has no bearing on Ion’s, and the boy wishes for it to remain this way.

104 Just as the familial connection was misread by Ion and Kreousa a few scenes earlier, so too does Ion misunderstand Xouthos’ advances in this scene; he thinks the man is pederastically interested in him (Hoffer 298). His suspicions are seemingly verified as Xouthos proceeds to accidentally strip him!
XOUTHOS
Let me kiss your hand and wrap you in an embrace!

ION
Is some god to blame for your madness?

XOUTHOS
I’m fine! I just can’t keep my hands off you after what I’ve learned.

Xouthos grabs at Ion once more, snagging the sleeve of the boy’s jacket.

ION
Stop! You’ll muss the god’s garlands with your rough touch.

XOUTHOS
Let banks clutch their collateral;¹⁰⁵ I’ve found a dear!

The man refuses to let go of the sleeve and manages to pull the jacket off of Ion,¹⁰⁶ just as the boy draws his bow and notches an arrow aimed right at Xouthos’ heart.¹⁰⁷

ION
Cut it out, or I’ll send an arrow through your lung.

XOUTHOS
Once you’ve learned—

Ion presses forward, pushing the point of his arrow into Xouthos’ chest.

ION
I won’t play teacher to uncultured and crazy strangers.

¹⁰⁵ Xouthos says, “κοὐ ῥυσιάζω,” (l. 522; “I do not treat you like compensation for robbery,”). I attempt to keep the contrast between the embrace of family and fingers clutching to money.

¹⁰⁶ Beneath his shiny yellow Delphic clothing, Ion wears a neutral beige linen ensemble. As layers of clothing begin to be removed from the boy, so too are layers of obfuscation lifted from his eyes. The arc of this play follows Ion’s development and enlightenment, and his costume reflects this (Walsh 305).

¹⁰⁷ As with the birds in his monody, Ion quickly moves into violence when he feels the sacred boundaries of his world are threatened.
XOUTHOS
Then kill me; it is your father you’d murder.

Ion wavers, lowering the bow just a little.

ION
How can you be my father? Is this some kind of a joke?

XOUTHOS
No! Let me speak, I’ll explain.¹⁰⁸

Ion indicates with the bow for Xouthos to go on.

I am your father. You are my son.

Ion begins to walk. Xouthos backs away from him and they make a slow, tight, dance-like circle around the altar.

ION
Says who?

XOUTHOS
Apollo who raised you.

ION
So you invoke your own authority?

XOUTHOS
Only after learning the god’s oracle.

Ion stops short. He thinks he gets it now.

ION
Ah, then you trip on his riddle!

XOUTHOS
Then my ears don’t work.

¹⁰⁸ Xouthos says, “τρέχων ὁ μῦθος ἄν σοι τἀμὰ σημήνειεν ἄν,” (l. 529; “If my story runs along, it would show this to you.”). I keep the sentiment but give the agency of the line to Xouthos for clarity’s sake.
Apparently, he still does not get it. Frustrated, Ion lowers the bow.

ION

What did Apollo say?

Seizing the opportunity to put some distance between himself and Ion while the bow is lowered, Xouthos stumbles backward toward the steps. Ion, however, relentlessly pursues.

XOUTHOS

That the first person who encountered me—

ION

Encountered? 109

XOUTHOS

—as I exited the temple—

ION

What would happen?

XOUTHOS

—would be my child. My son.

The duo reaches the stairs and Xouthos falls back upon them. Ion hovers over him, bow still at the ready.

ION

I was the first you met?

XOUTHOS

There was no one else, son.

Ion turns away to face the audience in amazement. Xouthos stands up.

ION

How is this possible?

109 Stichomythia often involves short back-and-forths such as this, in which one character interrupts the other in order to prod them to get to their point. In most cases, I remove this formal feature. However, in beats like this the redundancy and pace not only fulfil a formal requirement but add to the rising dramatic tension of the scene.
XOUTHOS
We wonder the same thing.

Ion steps a little downstage.

ION
Whoa! But who is my mother? Did Apollo tell you?

XOUTHOS
I was so excited I forgot to ask.

ION
Maybe I was grown from the Earth.

Xouthos joins Ion downstage.

XOUTHOS
The Earth doesn’t sprout children.

ION
Then how could I be your son?

XOUTHOS
I don’t know. I defer to the god.

Ion pauses in thought. Xouthos uses his son as an armrest for a beat. When Ion is struck with an idea, he shakes his “father” off of him.

ION
Is this your first time in Delphi?

XOUTHOS
No. I came once for the processions of Bakkhos.

ION
You stayed with a public host?

In the Greek, Ion cries out, “ἔα,” (l. 540). I translate instead of transliterating because he shouts in joy and wonderment.
XOUTHOS
My host, with Delphic girls... they did to me...

ION
He initiated you. How else would you put it?\textsuperscript{111}

XOUTHOS
Along with the Bakkhic Mainads.

ION
So it was then that I was...

Xouthos coughs and changes the subject; unable to do so as tactfully as his wife or child.

XOUTHOS
Your destiny has found you, son!

ION
I’m free at last!

XOUTHOS
Come hug your father, child.

ION
It isn’t right to doubt the god.

Ion quickly joins Xouthos on the platform, where they embrace.

XOUTHOS
You finally see reason!

ION
And what else could I want—

XOUTHOS
You see what you needed to see!

\textsuperscript{111} Ion only says, “ἐθιάσευσ᾿,” (l. 552, “You were initiated,”). My interpolation calls attention to yet another Euripidean euphemism for sexual activity.
ION

Than to be son of Zeus’ son?

XOUTHOS

Which you are!

ION

Do I really hold the man who gave me life?

They pull apart, but Xouthos keeps Ion at arm’s length.

XOUTHOS

If you trust our god.

ION

Papa,¹¹² I’m so happy!

XOUTHOS

That word makes me smile.

ION

This day—

XOUTHOS

—has given me happiness.

The pair stands there for a beat, aglow in their happiness. Ion dislodges from Xouthous’ grasp and wanders to the far right side of the platform.

ION

But dearest mother: when will I also be lucky enough to see you?
I long now to see you more than ever before, whoever you might be.

KHOROS A

We too are blessed by the affairs which bless your household!
But still, I must also hope for our mistress to be blessed with children— her, and the whole of the family of Erekhtheus.

¹¹² Ion calls Xouthous, “πάτερ,” (l. 563). I translate it as “Papa” instead of “Father” to imbue it with the warmth natural to Ion and his Disney Princess sensibilities.
Xouthos joins Ion and, standing slightly raked upstage left behind him, places a paternal hand on his shoulder.

**XOUTHOS**

The god has cleanly brought about my finding you, child, and brought us together, you and me, at long last. And you in turn have learned of our dearest bond, unknown to you before. That which you eagerly wish for, I have longing for as well—

Gently, Xouthos turns Ion to face him.

that you, my son, will find your mother, and that I too will find my long-lost lover. In time, we may come to learn the truth of these things. But see— after you leave behind the sacred grounds of your god, walk in companionship with your father to Athens, where his scepter of power awaits you, and gold, too. Even though you ail from one of these two plagues, you will not be called either low-born or a day-laborer, but will be regarded as a man born from a noble stock, from roots full of riches.

Xouthos takes his coat off and helps Ion into it, then steps back, admiring his handiwork.\(^{113}\) Ion, however, says nothing, his face unreadable.

You’re silent? Why do you cast your eyes to the ground? You’ve abandoned me for some deep rumination, and your sudden turn from delight strikes fear into your father. You worry me, child.

Ion shuffles his feet, not wanting to irritate his newfound father, but his need to speak his mind wins out. He faces the audience.

**ION**

Clearly, the appearance of affairs viewed from afar doesn’t match its true face seen up close. I do welcome this new circumstance with arms opened wide, learning that you are my father, but hear out what I’m thinking, Papa.

Gathering his words, the boy crosses to the center of the platform.

---

\(^{113}\) Just as earlier in the scene the removal of Ion’s raincoat hinted at the beginning of his enlightenment, Xouthos gifting his knock-off Athenian jacket to Ion puts the wool back over the boy’s eyes.
ION (cont’d)

They say the well-known natives of Athens are proudly native to their land, so I would stumble in upon them with two plagues: I, child of a foreigner, a bastard son to boot!\(^{114}\) With this sort of blame from the start, if I end up insignificant, I will be called nothing and indeed will be no one at all—but if I race toward power, and seek to be somebody, I would be hated by all oppressed. The rich will block me in the votes. This is how it goes. The powerful wage the cruelest wars.

He comes down the steps and joins the Khoros in their clump upstage left. In this following section, it is with them whom he converses. They are, for the most part, agreeable to his points.

And if I come into a foreign house a foreigner myself, the house of a woman who is childless at that, who has shared in her misfortune with you up ‘til now, and would, going forward, bear the lot she drew from fate bitterly alone—how couldn’t she hate me, and rightly, whenever I am by your side and under her foot, she who keenly looks at those you call kin, since she is without?

Ion looks back at Xouthos.

You will either look to your wife and betray me as you do, or shake up your home as you strive to do me right. After all, women and their poisons can be fatal.

He shakes his head, looking back at the Khoros and again to Xouthos.

Besides, Papa. I pity your wife. She grows old without a child of her own. She doesn’t deserve it—comes from a good family, yet still suffers the illness of barrenness.

And more than that, the realm of public life is filled with fake friends and glances over shoulders. It’s not for me.

Ion comes downstage left, toward the Khoros, but addresses Xouthos.

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\(^{114}\) With “καὐτὸς,” (l. 592) Ion places such an emphasis on himself that I felt compelled to hyperbolize with “to boot!”
ION  (cont’d)
Hear me out, Papa, listen to the good deal that I have here.
I serve those who are joyous, not those bemoaning.
I send the latter back where they came, while to those
who come like guests I am a welcome surprise.
Considering all of this, it’s better for me here than there.
Allow me to stay. My goodwill is equal, whether
I rejoice in greatness or find sweetness in the small.

KHOROS A
You have spoken nobly.

Xouthos, however, does not agree. He comes to the stage left edge of the platform to speak to Ion.

XOUTHOS
Quit your yapping,\(^{115}\) and learn to be lucky— I wish
to start a communal table at the very place that I
discovered you, son! I’ll turn out a feast for everyone,
and enact the burnt offerings I couldn’t make at
your birth. I’ll cheer you with dinner when I lead you
as a guest to my table, as a spectator of the
Athenian land, and not as my own flesh and blood.

He looks off right as though he could see Kreousa just offstage.

I don’t wish to make my wife ache, who— although
I have happened upon happiness— remains childless.
In time, seizing the perfect moment, I’ll convince
my wife to let you hold with me the scepter of the land.

Xouthos comes to center.

Ion— I will call you Ion, a name that fits your fortune.
After all, as I came out from the innermost sanctuary
of the god, you were the very first to “come” upon me.\(^{116}\)

\(^{115}\) Xouthos says to Ion, “παῦσαι λόγων τῶνδ’,” (l. 650; “Cease from your speech,”). I render this with a pompous English
translation as befits the tone of Xouthos.

\(^{116}\) Euripides at last offers an etymology of “Ion,” but does so glibly in the mouth of pompous Xouthos.
XOUTHOS (cont’d)

So, Ion, gather up a full reserve of those closest to you, and greet them with a smile at the sacrifice, since you’re about to say goodbye.

Suddenly struck with a thought, Xouthos returns to the stage left end of the platform to leer over the Khoros.

And as for you, servant women, I’ll ask you to keep quiet about all this, or to find yourselves an undertaker.¹¹⁷

Ion nods, conflicted beneath the weight of his new name and the reservations he feels about his new life.

ION

I’ll go. But one piece of my fortune is still missing—Unless I can find my mother, Papa, I will be miserable forever. If it is alright for me to pray, let her, my mother, be a woman from Athens, so from her I’d have what Athenians claim as their right: an open, outspoken tongue. A freedom to speech. Someone who happens to come into the city without a drop of native blood, even if he’s called urbane, must enslave his mouth and hold his tongue.

Xouthos smiles and comes down the steps; the two depart off left.

ACT I SCENE IX — ODE B
(lines 676-724)

The Khoros again comes toward center to dance.

KHOROS

I see tears and mourning,
and an attack of crying,
when my mistress learns

¹¹⁷ Xouthos threatens the Khoros, “ἢ θάνατον εἰπούσαι πρὸς δάματ’ ἐμήν,” (l. 667; “or there will be death for those who tell this to my wife,”). I attempt to preserve the high register of his ultimatum.
her husband is blessed
and has a child, while she
should be barren and childless.
What, prophet child of Leto,
have you sung in oracle?
From where did this child, nurseling of your
shrine, come? Who is his mother?
The oracle doesn’t make me
happy; there may be some trick.
I’m afraid of what’s at hand,
thanks to what will come.
It’s a strange thing which
brings strangeness to me,
but the boy keeps his lips
sealed as a monk’s, tricks and fate...

Raised by others’ blood!¹¹⁸

Who could argue?

My friends, is it better that
we shout into the ear
of our mistress about this?
Her husband, with whom
she shared all her hopes...
Miserable woman!

Her troubles destroy her, yet he prospers.

¹¹⁸ The Greek text does not specify that the Khoros breaks into different speakers (as it does a few lines later). However, the elliptical nature of the end of line 692 (“δόλον τύχαν θ’, ὁ παῖς —”) coupled with its fragmentary follow-up in line 693 (“ἄλλων τραφεῖς ἐξ αἱμάτων”) makes my reading tenable.
KHOROS Γ
She falls into gray old age, and her husband—

KHOROS Δ
Forgets to honor to his friends!

KHOROS E
He was miserable, but after he came
to the door of our home, found riches,
and does not think her equal to his fate.
Let him die, die! He cheats my lady!

KHOROS Z
And let him fail when he
gives to the gods his
bright-burning offering;
and he will know me,
and know my love for my queen.

KHOROS H
But the new son and his father
come near the just-set table.

KHOROS
O mountain ridges of Parnassos,
which hold up the lookout rocks
and the seat of Heaven, where
Bakchos, raising high pine torches
in the evening, nimbly dances
with the Bakchant women,
don’t ever let the boy come to my city.
May he die and leave behind his young life!\textsuperscript{119}

The Khoros finish their song and remain center stage.

\textsuperscript{119} I end this ode at line 720, one and a half lines before a lacuna. That line and a half begins a political thought, concluding with a mention of Erekhtheus’ military might in the last line of the ode. Without the missing line this thought is difficult to contextualize and would be a distracting and confusing note upon which to end the song.
Kreousa returns from stage right; on her arm hangs the Old Man, her childhood tutor. He walks with the assistance of a cane, and wears a dark-blue patterned shirt with neat grey trousers. His scarf loops around his wrist and ties to his cane, a sort of fail-safe against losing it.120

**KREOUSA**

Wizened friend, the tutor of my father Erekhtheos while he still saw the light of day, walk toward the oracular shrine of the god, so that we can celebrate together — if Riddling Apollo says anything about my children. One enjoys good news better in the company of friends, and if something bad should happen — let it not be so! — it is sweet to look into the kind eyes of a friendly face.

Even though you serve my house, just as you once did for my father, I care for you as though you were family.

**OLD MAN**

My child, you guard and keep the worthy customs of your worthy ancestors. You bring only pride to your forbearers, the native race of Athens.

Come, guide me toward the temple, and bring me in. The shrine is high and hard to reach, so be a dear and lend a helping hand to help my aging limbs ascend.

The pair begins their journey downstage center, toward the altar.

**KREOUSA**

Follow me. Careful, watch your step.

**OLD MAN**

Hey— I am slow in step, but quick up here.

He raps his head a couple of times with his free hand. The pair reaches the Khoros at center.

---

120 Though he is a slave, Kreousa treats those around her well. His clothing and indeed even his posture provide a tension between personality and standing that Euripides mined for comedic effect and especially used to point out the fallacy of the revenge fantasy that occupies the second half of the play (Walsh 304).
KREOUS A
My dears, my backbone, trusted weaving companions,
what news of children did my husband hear?
What news of that for which we’ve come to Delphi?
Say it! Show me! If what you tell me is good news,
know that I will love you 'til the end of time itself.\textsuperscript{121}

KHOROS B
Oh, god.\textsuperscript{122}

Khoros B separates from the group, falling away and to the ground in fear.

OLD MAN
That doesn’t inspire confidence.\textsuperscript{123}

KHOROS H
Io, oh, oh— misery!

Khoros H as well falls down and away.

OLD MAN
I’m suddenly filled with dread.\textsuperscript{124}

KHOROS Γ
Should we tell her?

KHOROS E
What else can we do?

These two fall as well.

\textsuperscript{121} Kreousa says, “οὐκ εἰς ἀπίστους δεσπότας βαλεῖς χάριν,” (l. 751, “you will do a favor for not untrustworthy masters”). I have taken this to mean that Kreousa’s reciprocal devotion to those who do this favor can be trusted to last forever.

\textsuperscript{122} This line, “ἰὼ δαῖμον,” (l. 752), is another example of translating rather than transliterating the Greek cry, because in this instance the straightforward translation is actually idiomatic English.

\textsuperscript{123} The Old Man says “τὸ φροίμιον μὲν τῶν λόγων οὐκ εὐτυχές,” (l. 753; “The start of your speech is not well-omened,”). He expresses this to indicate his worry about where the Khoros will go after such a dreadful beginning.

\textsuperscript{124} The Old Man says, “ἀλλ’ ἦ τι θεσφάτοισι δεσποτῶν νοσῶ;” (l. 755, “Why am I plagued by the prophecies for my masters?”). To keep the scene moving, I have boiled the line down to its essence: the Old Man vocalizing the unease he feels.
KREOUS A
You are frightened. Why?

KHOROS Z
Should we speak or stay quiet?

KHOROS A
Or what...

And these two fall, too. Khoros A is the only member of Kreousa’s retinue left standing.

KREOUS A
Tell me! So be it if it brings misfortune.

KHOROS A
Alright. I'll tell you, even if it brings me double death. There’s no child for you to hold in the crook of your arm, nor, Miss, to hold close to the warmth of your breast.

Kreousa falls to her knees, directly center.

KREOUS A
Omoi!
Let me die!

The Old Man puts a hand on her shoulder.

OLD MAN
Oh, my daughter.

KREOUS A
Oh, wretched wretch
am I! This tragedy! This pain I have,
I suffer—! Unbearable! My dears...
We are cleanly killed by this.125

125 In the Greek (ll. 763–5), the line breaks are strange and signal the emotion carried by Kreousa; a line is shared between Kreousa and the Old Man, before Kreousa’s lamentation moves across four metrically unequal “lines.” I have attempted to replicate this fragmentary effect by playing not with line length but sentence length, having Kreousa speak in short halting phrases that interrupt one another.
OLD MAN
My child—

Kreousa jerks her body violently and the Old Man pulls his hand away.

KREOUSA
Aiāt, aiāi!
A keen pain cleaves right through
me, through heart and lung!

OLD MAN
Don’t mourn yet—

KREOUSA
Can’t you see my tears?\[126\]

OLD MAN
—until we have learned—

KREOUSA
What?\[127\]

OLD MAN
—whether our Xouthos shares this disaster
with you, or if you are alone in your misery.

KHOROS A
Old Man, Apollo has gifted him a son. He is
split apart from his wife by his private fortune.

Kreousa grabs at Khoros A, and uses the leverage to pull herself to her feet.

---

\[126\] Kreousa tells the Old Man, “ἀλλὰ πάρεισι γόοι,” (l. 778; “But mourning is here!”). I choose to have her call attention to a physical marker of her mourning, instead of the mourning itself.

\[127\] This scene too benefits from keeping some of its stop-go stichomythia; later on, Kreousa expresses her frustration at the Old Man’s inability to let her speak.
KREOUZA
You dash the wickedest words against
me— the pain, I weep!128

The Old Man steps forward to intercede, separating Kreousa from Khoros A. He is practical; all the
details must be known before he allows panic to set in.

OLD MAN
And is this child already born? Or must
her husband now become a new adulterer?

KHOROS A
He’s already grown into a young man—
the child given by Apollo; I was there, I saw.

Kreousa resists against the grip of the Old Man.

KREOUZA
What are you saying? Strange, strange: strangle
the words in your throat—129 these things you say!

OLD MAN
Listen to me. How is the prophecy destined to be
enacted? Tell me, without riddle: who is the child?

Though the Old Man acts as interlocutor, Khoros A addresses Kreousa.

KHOROS A
Whoever your husband might happen upon
on leaving the shrine— that was his god-given child.

Kreousa collapses again.

128 Kreousa cries out in highly metaphorical language (ll. 776-7), bewailing the “κακὸν ἄκρον” (“acme of evil”). For the sake of the audience’s ability to empathize with Kreousa, I keep her lofty and melodramatic tone while dialing back the metaphor.

129 Kreousa says “ἄφατον ἄφατον ἀναύδητον / λόγον” (ll. 782-3); I have attempted to replicate the emotion carried by Euripides’ consonance, repetition, and asyndeton in her cry of grief.
KREOUSA

Ottotottotoi!

Then the god thunders my childless childless childless life! I will dwell in the wilderness of an empty home.

The Old Man immediately hoists her back up to her feet, though his attention remains on Khoros A.

OLD MAN

Who was it? Whose path did her wretched husband cross?

Khoros A, however, stays fixated on Kreousa.

KHOROS A

Do you remember, Miss, that youth who swept the shrine steps? It is him. He is that child.

Kreousa leans heavily on the Old Man.

KREOUS A

If only I could fall into the soft sky, far from the land of the Greeks, to the western stars, such awful aching pain I suffer, friends!

OLD MAN

And what is his name? Did you hear it?

KHOROS A

“Ion,” the going one, the first his father came upon.

In the beat of silence this revelation prompts, the Old Man helps Kreousa to stand up on her own feet.

OLD MAN

Who is his mother?

---

130 Again, Euripides provides a current through Kreousa’s emotional response by using word repetition and similar sounds: “τὸν δ’ ἐμὸν ἄτεκνον ἄτεκνον ἔλακεν / ἄρα βίοτον” (ll. 789-90).

131 Kreousa says, “οἷον οἷον ἄλγος ἔπαθον,” (l. 799), and Euripides again communicates her grief through a combination of repetition and asyndeton. I strive to replicate this effect through assonance and a driving iambic rhythm.
KHOROS A
I don’t know. I’m telling you this
so that you know all I do, Old Man:
her husband’s gone away to sacrifice for
the stranger-rites and birth rituals of his son,
to the holy tents, a secret from her, his wife,
a public communion feast for his new son.

OLD MAN
Miss, we are betrayed by your husband—
I along with you. By his shifty machinations
we are mutilated and thrown from the house
of Erekhtheus. I don’t hate your husband,
but I love you more than I love him;
this foreigner who came to the city as a stranger,
after marrying you and scooping up your home
and estate, has been revealed a secret adulterer!
How secret were these affairs, you ask? I’ll tell you.\textsuperscript{132}

The Old Man takes Kreousa downstage right.

When he learned you were barren, he did not
wish to share your fate and bear it equally.
He seized a slave and slept with her, he made
this child and gave him to a Delphic man
to raise. His son grew up like a sacred animal
roaming the precinct, dedicated to the god, all so
his plot would escape your notice. Then,
Xouthos persuaded you to come here, and he
said that it was for the sake of your childlessness.
So it’s not the god who lied to you but your
husband, long ago, when he made the child and
contrived such plots; if caught, he can offer the god
as an explanation. He intends to make his son ruler.

The Khoros has been listening in from upstage.

\textsuperscript{132} The pompousness of the Old Man is much noted (Walsh 304; Mastronarde 168). I have heightened the didactic flavor of
his dialogue, present in Euripides’ text (for example, here, l. 816) to highlight this characteristic.
**KHOROS A**

*Oimoi!*

I loathe mischievous men who scheme up injustice,  
then dress up their deeds with machinations.

With a look, the Old Man silences her.

**OLD MAN**

And, if you will believe the most terrible of all these things:  
Motherless, a nobody, some slave girl’s son, this is  
the boy your husband leads into your house as master.  
You’d have suffered only one evil, if after talking it over  
with you he brought in the son of a well-to-do mother.  
But he turned instead to wicked tricks.  
Thanks to this, it’s necessary for you to do what women  
do best: you must kill your husband and his child,  
before death comes for you. If you give into this,  
you will lose your life. When two enemies gather under  
a single roof, one or the other falls. And as for me,  
I wish to assist you. I’ll help and kill the boy with you,  
heading over to the tent where he prepares the feast.

**KHOROS A**

And I as well, dear lady, wish to share with you  
your fate, whether you die or survive triumphant.

A spotlight comes upon Kreousa as the rest of the stage fades into darkness. As she speaks, she seems to  
deflate inward — she is contending now with internal forces long repressed within her.

**KREOUSA**

Oh, my soul, how can I stay silent?  
But how could I illuminate the  
clandestine assault, that hidden union,  
and be left standing with my dignity?

---

133 Though some critics dismiss Kreousa’s outpour of emotion as inaccessible psychology (Burnett 94), I fall into the  
tradition that views it as a deftly characterized aria of heightened emotion (Conacher 35-7; Walsh 290). In many ways,  
Kreousa’s speech acts as the *Ion*’s centerpiece, providing a real emotional heart at the core of what is otherwise an often  
farcical melodrama. In translating it, I aim to take Kreousa and her words seriously. Onstage, all else but her fades away.
KREOUS A  (cont’d)
What barrier still obstructs my path?
Who judges me in this trial of virtue?
Does my husband not become a traitor,
do I not lack house, lack children? And
are my hopes, which I wanted to arrange
but was kept from doing, not wiped away,
when I keep silent on what was done to me,\textsuperscript{134}
silent on that birth that made me weep?

That inward-turning energy now bursts outward; Kreousa stands defiant.

But by the star-shine throne of Zeus,
by my own goddess Athena upon the rocks,
and by the queenly promontory of
Triton’s deep-waters, I no longer will hide
what happened. I will unburden
my heart and be without turmoil.
My soul is torn apart by the pain I suffer
from the plots of men and gods, whom I will
prove to be ill-intended rapists of my bed.\textsuperscript{135}

Kreousa returns to the platform and climbs the steps, her body angled toward the center so that she
addresses both the Apollo Window and the audience. The spotlight follows her.

Oh, you who sing out the sounds
of your seven-tone lyre,
I will name this blame of yours,
Child of Leto, before this very sunlight.

Though telling the story that she has repressed these long years makes Kreousa weak in the knees, she
stays standing. Though tears fall down her face, her voice remains steady. Though she is frightened, she
is strong.

\textsuperscript{134} I expand on the word Kreousa uses, “\textit{γάμους},” (l. 868; “marriages,”), exchanging one reference to the rape for another.

\textsuperscript{135} The precise terms of Kreousa’s outrage and hurt are much discussed by scholarship. Euripides uses language that strongly
indicts Apollo for sexual misconduct, suggesting that it is not merely (as suggested in Burnett 90) the abandonment of the
child which has caused Kreousa grief. A “forced marriage” is a layered euphemism that can be interpreted away from the
question of rape; specifying that what Apollo has done is act as a “\textit{λέκτρων προδότας ἀχαρίστους},” (l. 880; “ungracious
traitor of beds”) situates his violence in a sexual realm. I reflect this explicit invective in my translation.
KREOUS A  (cont’d)
You came to me, wreathing your hair
in gold, as I plucked saffron flowers
into my lap to strew about my cloak
and make it shine yellow.
Gripping my pale wrist in your hand,
without shame you took me to my bed
in that cave, though you heard me cry:
“Mother! Mother!”
You indiscreetly enacted the rites
of Aphrodite.
And I bore, wretched me, I bore to you
a son, 136 whom in fear of my mother
I threw upon the bed where I had lain
uselessly, wretched while you took me.

She wraps her arms around her body to protect herself.

Oimoi, oh me!
And now, gone— snatched up as
a meal for the birds— is my son...
And yours too, miserable god.
So make your racketing paeans,
and sing with your lyre. 137

Kreousa extends her arms out to their farthest reaches, exposing her vulnerable self, raising her left arm
and pointing in strongest accusation, physically point away from (and yet symbolically pointing
toward) the Apollo Window that still looms above.

Oe!
Son of Leto, I speak to you,
who send out your voice
from your golden throne,
your seat at the center
of the Earth—

136 I adhere to Euripides’ word order (ll. 897-8), which fragments the sentence in a way which highlights Kreousa’s emotional state.

137 Euripides uses the indicative mood (ll. 905-6), not the imperative. The sentiment is almost exactly the same in English however. The change mostly involves swapping Euripides’ “But” for my “So.”
KREOUSΑ  (cont’d)
I’ll tell it in your ear.
Io, cruel bedfellow!
Though you received no favor
from my husband, you send
his son to live in my house.
Our son, mine and yours, fool, is gone, stripped by the crows
of the swaddle-cloth I left him in.
The island of your birth
hates you, and so does the laurel sapling near the verdant palm beneath which your mother gave birth to divine children among the fruits of Zeus.

Gradually the lights return to normal, reflecting mid-afternoon at the shrine. The Khoros and the Old Man all appear stunned, frozen in place.

KHOROS A
Oimoi!
A great trove of wickedness is uncovered, which all would weep at when they saw.

OLD MAN
Oh, my child, I cannot stop myself looking at your face, and I’m at the mercy of my wits. For just after I’d bailed out my heart from one wave of wickedness, another catches me off-guard in what you’ve said, a new traveler along a terrible path of other miseries. What are you saying? What are you accusing Apollo of doing? What sort of child do you say you gave birth to? And where did

138 Euripides’ decision to have Kreousa say “ὁ δ’ ἐμὸς γενέτας καὶ σός,” (l. 916) instead of just “our son” is a strong choice; in her rage and grief, Kreousa is moved to an exactitude of language to which I have attempted to do justice.

139 The Old Man says, “ἔξω δ’ ἐγενόμην γνώμης ἐμῆς,” (l. 926; “I come out from my mind,”). I take this to mean that he is overwhelmed by his thoughts and reactions to Kreousa’s story.
OLD MAN (cont’d)
you expose him, a tomb dear to hungry beasts?

Neither Kreousa nor the Old Man move to join the other; they converse instead from across the stage.

KREOUSA
I burn with shame, old tutor,
but I’ll tell it all the same.

OLD MAN
I know how to genuinely mourn with my friends.

KREOUS A
Then listen. Do you know the cave of
Athenian rock which we call Makrai?

OLD MAN
I know the place.

KREOUS A
There I fought a terrible fight.¹⁴⁰

OLD MAN
What fight? I’m brought to tears...

KREOUS A
Phoibos Apollo forced me,
unwilling,
to join him in painful union.

OLD MAN
Oh, my child. How did you keep his advances a secret?

KREOUS A
I gave birth— just listen to me, Old Man.

¹⁴⁰ The cognate accusative in “ἐνταῦθ’ ἀγῶνα δεινὸν ἠγωνίσμεθα,” (l. 939) places special emphasis on the conflict; I use a similar English construction to carry the flavor.
OLD MAN
Gave birth where? Who helped? Or did you labor this toil alone?

KREOUS A
I did it myself, in the cave where I was bound by his desires.

Upon hearing this, the Old Man is struck with a sudden hope: perhaps Kreousa is not childless!\(^{141}\)

OLD MAN
And where is the boy?

KREOUS A
He’s dead, Old Man. I set him out for the beasts.

OLD MAN
He’s dead? That coward Apollo did nothing for him?

KREOUS A
Nothing. He grows up in the halls of Hades.

OLD MAN
How could you dare to do this?

KREOUS A
By flinging tearful words of lamentation from my mouth—

OLD MAN
Feu!
You were reckless in your daring, but more so the god than you.

KREOUS A
If only you’d seen him reaching out his little hand to me...

OLD MAN
What did you expect would come from this?

\(^{141}\) The Old Man says as much after asking after the boy’s whereabouts: “ἵνα σὺ μηκέτ’ ἄπαις,” (l. 950; “so that you will no longer be without children,”).
KREOUSHA
I thought the god would save his son.

The grief is finally too much for the Old Man to bear. He staggers under its weight, and would fall to the ground if not for the Khoros, which crowds him and keeps him standing.

OLD MAN
Oimoi!

At last, Kreousa comes o the platform and goes to her tutor’s side.

KREOUSHA
My tutor, why do you cry and hide your face?

OLD MAN
Because I see how unfortunate you and your family are.

KREOUSHA
This is how it goes for mortals. Nothing remains.

The Old Man wipes his tears and pulls away from the Khoros, standing on his own again.

OLD MAN
You must make the god who did you wrong pay.

KREOUSHA
How can I beat a god, so much stronger than a mortal?

The pair walk slowly to downstage left.

OLD MAN
Destroy his holy temple!

KREOUSHA
I shiver with fear; I have enough calamity already.

OLD MAN
Then dare to be brave. Kill your husband!
KREOUS A
I still honor our marriage, to which he once was faithful.\textsuperscript{142}

OLD MAN
Then kill his son.

KREOUS A
How? If only I had the courage; how I wish I did!

OLD MAN
Bear it out, come up with some plan.

They reach the far end of the stage. Kreousa turns to face the audience.

KREOUS A
I have one... full of tricks, effective. Listen up.
Do you know the War of the Giants? At that time,
the Earth gave birth to the Gorgon, a terrible monster.
And daughter of Zeus, Pallas Athena, killed it

OLD MAN
But how, my child, does this harm your enemies?

KREOUS A
Do you know Erekhtheus, or— oh, but why shouldn’t you?

OLD MAN
The one the Earth spat out as our ancestor?

KREOUS A
When he was young, Athena gave to him
two drops of Gorgon blood.

OLD MAN
What power do they have?

\textsuperscript{142} The revenge portion of this scene is all about the struggle between Kreousa’s nobility and her need for rebellion (Burnett 98; Mastronarde 164). Here we see the side of her that trends toward decorum win out, even though her marriage seems by all accounts to be loveless.
KREOUSA
One is fatal; the other, medicine.
Athena gave them to her child in
golden bands; he gave them to my father.

OLD MAN
And when your father died, he passed them on?

KREOUSA
Yes. Even now, I wear them on my hand.

OLD MAN
Do you wear them separately or together?

Kreousa holds out her hand, displaying the two thick golden rings on her finger.

KREOUSA
Separately! Good and evil don’t mix.

OLD MAN
My dear child, this is everything you’ll need.

Kreousa slides one of the rings off and brandishes it reverentially.

KREOUSA
With this, the child will die. And you will kill him.

OLD MAN
Where should I do it?

KREOUSA
In Athens, once he arrives at my home.

OLD MAN
That’s not a good idea, Miss.¹⁴³
You’ll appear to have killed him,
whether you murdered him or not.

¹⁴³ The Old Man says, “εὖ τὸ χαίδε σ’ αὐτὸν;” (l. 1022; “You don’t speak this well,”). Since he is actually critiquing her plan, not just the way she voiced it, I translate it thus.
KREOUS A
True. They say that stepmothers hate their stepchildren.

OLD MAN
Kill him now, here, where you can easily deny your involvement.

KREOUS A
And get my sweet pleasure sooner.

OLD MAN
You will hide from your husband what he hastens to hide from you.

KREOUS A
Do you know what you need to do? Take from my hand this golden ring, made long ago by our goddess Athena, and go to where my husband prepares the sacrifices. When they finish their feast and begin to pour libations to the gods, take this in your robe and let the fatal drop fall into the young man’s drink— but only his, not everyone’s, keeping the drink separate, a punishment for the one who wishes to rule my house. It will pass down his throat, and he will never come to glorious Athens. He’ll die and stay here forever.

OLD MAN
Go off now to your hosts. I’ll see this through.

The Old Man takes the ring. Kreousa nods and they embrace. Kreousa and the Khoros exit to the right.

Come then, my aching foot, be young in your deeds, even if you aren’t in years. Go with your master as he moves against his enemy, kill him with me, help me take him from the house. In peacetime, it’s a noble thing to revere the gods, but when one wishes to do harm to his enemies, no law lies in the way.

The Old Man slips the ring into his breast pocket, and exits left.

END ACT I.
**ACT II**

In the darkness, one of the two gnomic signs appears again:

**ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ**  
(KNOW YOURSELF.)

**ACT II SCENE I — ENTR’ACTE (ODE I)**
(lines 1048-1105)

Under the sign’s red glow, the Khoros re-enters. They take center stage to sing and dance around the altar. The lights come up (late afternoon at the shrine at Delphi) but the sign stays lit.

**KHOROS**

Daughter of Demeter at the crossroads,  
Persephone,  
guide this pain-filled fatal cup to be  
against whom my queenly master  
sends it, death at the hands of the drops  
from the earth-born throat-slashed Gorgon—  
against the one making overtures toward  
the house of Erekhtheian Athenians.

But if Kreousa fails, if her efforts  
remain unfulfilled, ineffectual,  
and the right time for her plots,  
though now there seems to be hope,  
stays absent, a god will either  
run her through with a sharpened sword,  
or toss a noose around her neck,  
and ending her calamity with calamity,¹⁴⁴ send her to another form of life.  
For she could not endure seeing  
strangers, foreigners, ruling her house

---

¹⁴⁴ Euripides writes, “πάθει πάθεα δ’ ἔξαντον,” (l. 1066) and I mimic his repetition.
KHOROS  (cont’d)

*in the radiant sunlight!*\(^{145}\)

*You, who, looking to music, sing in shrieking hymns
of our bed and the unlawful marriages
of Kypris, see how we surpass in piety the unjust
procreations of men.*

*Let the song recant; let discordant music
go against the beds of men! For this child of Zeus,
Xouthos,\(^{146}\) shows us his poor memory, when he
doesn’t produce children for this house, with my
mistress—he makes instead a bastard child,
placing his favor with a different Aphrodite.*

ACT II SCENE II — ATTENDANT
(lines 1106-1228)

An Attendant bursts breathlessly onstage from the right as the song concludes. She dresses within the Athenian program, though her clothing is a grade beneath that of the Khoros’. The Attendant is a servant of Kreousa but not a part of her personal retinue.\(^{147}\) She wears her scarf around her neck. The gnomic sign flaters and switches off. The Attendant approaches the Khoros, greeting them with a hasty yet friendly salute.

**ATTENDANT**

*Renowned women,\(^{148}\) where might I find
our mistress, daughter of Erekhtheus?
I’ve searched throughout the entire city,
but I can’t find her anywhere.*

---

\(^{145}\) I have removed a stanza, lines 1074-1089. In it, the Khoros express their disgust with Apollo in terms of a specific religious festival. As a modern audience would not understand the reference without the Khoros pausing in their narrative to explain it, I simply excised it. Their anger and disgust is adequately explored in the subsequent stanza.

\(^{146}\) Euripides does not include Xouthos’ name, referring only to “ὁ Διὸς ἐκ / παίδων” (ll. 1099-1100; “the one who came from Zeus’ children”). I have included both Euripides’ poeticism and Xouthos’ name for clarity’s sake.

\(^{147}\) For this reason I have interpreted the attendant to be a woman, even though the Greek “Θέραψ” is a masculine word. Kreousa’s tutor is a male servant, but his service carries forward from the days of Erekhtheus.

\(^{148}\) Though the Khoros is made up of servants, the Attendant oddly addresses them as “κλειναὶ γυναῖκες,” (l. 1106). I interpret it as a gesture of familiarity from one servant to another.
Khoros A separates from the pack to greet her friend with the same salute.

**Khoros A**
What is it, fellow servant?

Exhausted, the Attendant nearly collapses, leaning on Khoros A for support.

**Attendant**
We are hunted! The native rulers of this place search for us, to kill us with stones!

The two girls cling to one another.

**Khoros A**
Oimoi! I suppose they’ve found us out about the crime that we contrived against the boy?^{149}

**Attendant**
You’ll be first in line for punishment.\(^{150}\)

**Khoros A**
How were our hidden schemes discovered?

**Attendant**
The god showed them the injustice, not wanting his precinct stained red.\(^{151}\)

Already fairly close to the ground, Khoros A now finishes her descent, clasping the Attendant’s hand.

**Khoros A**

---

^{149} Euripides crafts this thought with the Khoros as the subject (ll. 1113-1114); by shifting the agency onto the Delphians pursuing Kreousa and the Khoros, I introduce a sense of claustrophobia that comes into fruition with Kreousa’s entrance in the subsequent episode.

^{150} The Attendant says, “μεθέξεις οὐκ ἐν ὑστάτοις κακοῦ,” (l. 1115; “You won’t be among the last to partake in the wickedness on its way”). By canceling out the negative construction, I have attempted to clarify the meaning of the line.

^{151} Euripides is more verbose here (ll. 1117-1118); what I translate as “injustice” is actually “μὴ δίκαιον τῆς δίκης ἡσσώμενον” (l. 1117; “the unjust thing which is lesser than the just”).
Khoros A (cont’d)
I could die happily, so long as I knew.

The Attendant nods and takes downstage right. Music begins beneath her, punctuating the speech.

Attendant
After Kreousa’s husband departed to the feasts and sacrifices that he was preparing, Xouthos went to where the Bakkhic flame leaps, so he could drench the double rocks of Dionysos with sacrificial blood, a gift for his child. He said:

The Attendant slips into a mimicry of Xouthos and his over-affected nature.

“Now, my son, while I’m gone, make like a carpenter and put up a well-secured tent. If I’m too long, sacrificing to the God of Birth, begin the feast for those who are at hand!”

As the Attendant recounts the next stanza, the Khoros begins to “construct” the tent themselves, using their umbrellas to build an awning that stretches above the relatively stationary Attendant.

Then he left, taking the cattle. The young man reverently raised the unwalled tent on pillars, nobly keeping in mind the rays of the sun, and setting it neither in the path of noon-beams or the sunset, measuring a length of 100 feet to make a square, 10,000 square feet inside, as the wise say it should be, so that he could call all the Delphic people to the feast.

---

152 I attempt to render Euripides’ alliteration and consonance, “πέτρας διπλής δισσάς” (ll. 1126-7) with “drench the double rocks.”

153 As in Act I, the second scene of Act II reminds the audience the divine order in place at Delphi. Euripides first does so by having the Attendant lay out in specific detail the measurements of Ion’s tent.
ATTENDANT  (cont’d)
Taking holy fabric from the stores, he covered over
the tent with awnings, a wonder for men to see.
These threads were woven in the picture:

As before, this moment of ekphrasis is punctuated by the Khoros. They break their “tent” apart and
use their umbrellas to create tableaus imitating the art being described.

Ouranos the Heavens gathering up the stars in the hollow of the sky;¹⁵⁴
Helios the Sun driving on his horses to the last flames
of daylight, dragging out the light of the Evening Star Hesperos;
Black-robed Night shaking her yoked chariot, stars by her side;
One of the Pleiades running through mid-air, and the sword of Orion,
and from above, the Bear Ursa Major, spinning on the axis of its golden tail;
The circle of the full moon, which splits in two the months,
shining its rays from above, and the Bull, which for sailors
is the clearest mark, and at last, light-bringing Dawn causing the stars to flee.

The Khoros re-erects the canopy of the tent above her in a quick fluid movement.

In the middle of the tent, Ion set up golden goblets.
Moving on swift feet, a herald invited the natives to come.
When the tent was full, they crowned themselves
with garlands and ate their fill of the rich food
This pleasure sated, an Old Man came and stood
in the center of the floor, and caused ripples of laughter
among the guests, because of the offering he made:
he sent out water from pitchers as washing-up, and
burned the myrtle incense, and lorded it over
the golden cups, since he assigned this labor to himself.

When it came time for revelry and libation, the Old Man
said,

The Attendant slides into a parody of the Old Man. The Dancer returns. She highlights the stark
violence of the passage, especially when the Attendant comes to the matter of the doves.

¹⁵⁴ Euripides uses the Attendant’s description of the tapestry as the second reminder of divine order. The imagery is similar
to that within Ion’s Act I monody, which strengthens the parallel (Mastronarde 169).
ATTENDANT (cont’d)

“We must snatch away the small wine glasses and bring out the large ones, so we’ll all get drunk and find our pleasure faster.” Then there was the hassle of bringing out the wrought-silver and golden cups; grabbing one, as though he did a favor for his new master, the Old Man gave Ion a full cup— after dashing into the wine the deadly drugs they say his mistress gave him to kill her new son. Nobody noticed. While the child had the libation in his hand, some servant muttered blasphemy; Ion, as befits one who was raised at the shrine in the company of the very best seers, urged that a new cup be filled; he cast his first libation onto the floor, and he instructed everyone to do the same.

Silence came over us; we filled up the holy cups with sacred water and wine from Byblos.

As we were doing this, a merry band of doves crashed into the tent— for they fearlessly live in the house of Apollo— and landed where the wine fell. Craving the drink, they lowered their beaks, and lapped up the libation down their beautifully-plumed throats.

The Khoros use their umbrellas to mimic the drinking birds; the Dancer takes on the role of the bird who drinks Ion’s abandoned wine.

For the other birds, the offering to the god was harmless, but the one who sat where Ion had dumped out his wine tasted the drink— and immediately his well-plumed frame shook in a frenzy— he clashed his voice in unintelligible shouts; the whole throng of guests stared in mute astonishment at the bird’s suffering. It died gasping, letting its red talon fall still.

---

155 In this scene, two instruments of blasphemy (the servant with an errant tongue and the birds who threaten to desecrate the shrine in Act I’s parallel scene) become Ion’s salvation (Walsh 306). The presence of the Dancer will help to make these reversals clear to the audience.
For a moment, the Attendant pretends to be Ion and embodies the intensity of his anger.

**ATTENDANT**  
(cont’d)  
The boy held the Old Man down by his arm  
and shouted: “Who intended to kill me? You were  
eager, Old Man, and I took the cup from you!”

Quickly in his search he grabbed the withered hand  
to find some proof of murderous poison. They found  
it on him, and tortured him until he revealed  
what Kreousa had dared to do, the trickery of the drink.

The Khoros shatters the tent, scattering away from center.

Right away, the young man gathered up the guests  
and led them all outside, and standing amongst  
the Pythian kings, told them what had happened.

The lords of Delphi decreed that Kreousa must die,  
thrown from the rocks— a unanimous verdict, since  
she’d planned to kill a holy man, committing murder  
inside the temple precinct. The whole city hunts  
er down as she hurries on her miserable way.  
She came to Apollo searching for children.  
She loses both life and progeny in one breath.

Grabbing the Dancer and pulling her along as though it were their lives in danger, the Attendant hurries off left.

**ACT II SCENE III — ODE Δ**  
(lines 1229-1249)

Alone, still center, the Khoros reacts to the news.

**KHOROS**  
*There is nothing, there is no  
way for me to turn back  
from death, wretched me—*
KOROS (cont’d)
the swift snakes mixed in
murder with the wine drops—
The necessary offering to
the gods down below is clear,
a disastrous life for me, and
death by stoning for her.
What escape is there, by flight,
or creeping through the
darkened alleys of the land, to flee
ruinous death?
Climbing onto the swift slack
of a chariot, the stern of a ship?

We won’t escape, unless some
god is willing to carry us away.
What, miserable Kreousa,
remains for you to suffer?
Will we, who intended to do
wrong, be punished as is right?

ACT II SCENE IV — INTERLUDE B
(lines 1250-1260)

Kreousa crashes in from the right. Her dress is torn, revealing the linen slip she wears beneath it. Khoros A rushes over to meet her.

KREOUSHA
My dears, we are chased to deadly slaughter,
decree by votes from the Pythian council.
I am exposed!

156 Euripides uses the word “μυχῶν,” (l. 1239), which refers generally to the innermost nook of a thing. Since this interpretation of the play focuses on architecture and the contrast between urban Athens and rustic Delphi, I wanted to capture a sense of the claustrophobic city.

157 Just as at the end of Act I, Ion loses one of his clothing layers to symbolize the first layer of his obfuscation lifting, Kreousa too has begun to have the smoke lifted from her eyes.
Khoros A

We know, unhappy lady. We know where your fate stands.

Kreousa

Where will I go? When I fled the house,
I only barely escaped with my life.
I’ve snuck here, avoiding my enemies.

Khoros A

Where else can you go? The altar.
It’s against the law to kill a supplicant.

Kreousa

But it’s the law that destroys me.

Khoros A

Now is the right time time to sit at the altar.
If you die here, your blood will cry out
for vengeance against the murderers.
Either way, your fate must be endured.

Kreousa sees the reason of this, and goes to the altar. She sits at its base on the downstage side, back pressed up against it.¹⁵⁸

Act II Scene V — Hieros

(lines 1261-1319)

Ion runs in from stage right, armed with his bow and arrows. He has lost Xouthos’ jacket, and merely wears his linen shirt and pants.

Ion

Oh bullish Kephisos,¹⁵⁹ this harpy’s ancestor,

¹⁵⁸ The audience sees Kreousa as completely vulnerable as she sits at the altar. She acts in complete opposition to her initial role as stable matriarch, yet she remains sympathetic in the face of her wrongdoings (Hoffer 300).

¹⁵⁹ Euripides calls Kephisos “ταυρόμορφον” (l. 1261), literally “with face of bull.” I avoid the deeper mythological connotations while still attempting to capture the flavor of such a colorful adjective.
ION (cont’d)
such a viper your seed created!\textsuperscript{160} Or a snake
who looks up to the bloody flame of the fire.
She has dared much, and is no less than the
Gorgon blood with which she meant to kill me.
Grab her, so that the flats of Mount Parnassos
can comb out her beautiful locks of hair.\textsuperscript{161}

He climbs onto the platform and comes to center stage, raising his bow. He seems to tower
threateningly above Kreousa, who sits on the same axis.

A god came to my aid, before I made the mistake of
going to Athens, where I would have fallen into your hands.
With my allies, I’ve taken the measure of your mind,
which bears such hostile calamity in my direction.

Neither the altar nor the temple of Apollo
will save you; your pity for me should be greater
for my mother. If her body is not here,
then at least allow her name to have its place.

Ion looks out to address the audience and make it his accomplice.

Look at this wicked bitch,\textsuperscript{162} who wove artifice
out of artifice. Now she cowers by the altar
of the god, as though she wouldn’t pay for her deeds.

KREOUSA
You cannot kill me here!

\textsuperscript{160} In the climax of this speech, Ion refers to Kreousa as a “πανοῦργον” (l. 1279). As I note below, I translate this as an
expletive. To justify this in the rising dynamic of the speech, I include invective in its first line.

\textsuperscript{161} The audience sees Ion in this scene as a violent, force acting against Kreousa (Mastronarde 170; Burnett 99). This shift is
not a departure from Ion’s earlier characterization, however. From his introduction onward, Ion has always been willing
and ready to turn to violence to protect the sacred order of the shrine.

\textsuperscript{162} Here is the invective mentioned in note 88. The word “πανοῦργον” (l. 1279) can be translated more conservatively as
“knave,” or “rogue,” but neither of these definitions capture the heat of Ion’s anger.
KREOUΣΑ (cont’d)
Obey your god!¹⁶³

ION
What do you and Apollo have in common?

KREOUΣΑ
I am his supplicant.

In disbelief, Ion bounds down from the platform to stand upstage left of the altar.

ION
But you tried to kill his servant!

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

ION
I may have been born to my father,
but I’ll always be dear to the god who raised me.¹⁶⁴

KREOUΣΑ
You no longer are. Now I am Apollo’s, and you are not.

Childishly, Ion stamps his foot.

ION
You don’t live piously! I do.

¹⁶³ In the Greek, Kreousa says, “ἀπεννέπω σε μὴ κατακτείνειν ἐμὲ / ὑπὲρ τ’ ἐμαυτῆς τοῦ θεοῦ θ’ ἐν’ ἔσταιμεν” (ll.1282-3; “I order you not to kill me, on behalf of myself and your god, upon whose place I stand.”) This scene, which serves as a climax for the conflict between Kreousa and Ion, is full of stichomythia, and I have condensed much of it to keep the tension rising.

¹⁶⁴ Ion says that he refers to the “οὐσίαν” (l. 1288), a word without a precise English translation. The Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon defines it as an “immutable reality,” the “substance” or “essence” of a thing; Euripides uses it to elegantly contrast the difference between the biological chance of Ion’s genetics and the long loving relationship the boy has shared with the god. Euripides shows that this contrast is moot, because both sides of the equation are one and the same. So I craft that contrast through the use of “born” in one line and “raised by” in the next, intending to clarify the separation of those two concepts.
Angrily, Kreousa almost stands. Realizing this would mean her death, she instead awkwardly scoots so that she is up against the stage left side of the altar, facing Ion.¹⁶⁵

**KREOUSKA**
I tried to kill you because you’re an enemy to my home!

**ION**
I would have gone to your country unarmed!

**KREOUSKA**
You would’ve burned the house of Erekhtheus to the ground.

**ION**
With what torches? The flames of what fire?

**KREOUSKA**
You would’ve lived in my home after wrestling it from me.

Ion shakes his head and paces across the stage, landing upstage right of the altar.

**ION**
My father gives to me the land he rightfully possesses.

**KREOUSKA**
What does a foreigner share with the Athenians?

**ION**
What he shares he earned with his sword.

**KREOUSKA**
He’s an ally, yes, but not a citizen.

**ION**
So you tried to kill me in fear of what I might do?

Pursing her lips, Kreousa again scoots around the altar so she can face Ion.

---
¹⁶⁵ Here, and once more below, I insert comedy into an otherwise melodramatic scene. I do so in order to delay the tension; it builds and breaks, builds and breaks, until it explodes in Ion’s speech and is diffused by the entrance of Pythia at the beginning of the following scene.
KREOUS A
To save my own life, yes.

ION
You hate me only because you have no children.
You envy your husband for finding me!

KREOUS A
So you admit you’re happy to ransack a childless house?

ION
Why shouldn’t I get a share of what belongs to my father?

KREOUS A
His shield, his spear — that is all you have a right to.

Ion climbs the platform, ready to strike.

ION
Abandon the shrine, the seat built for a god.

KREOUS A
Admonish your mother, wherever she is!

ION
Pay the price for your crimes!

KREOUS A
Slaughter me where I sit!

ION
Would that please you?

Kreousa directs her gaze toward the Apollo Window.

KREOUS A
I’ll give him pain.166

166 Euripides does not condense his line-length in this section the way I do. My innovation, in which I pare down the lines to their simplest meanings, is intended to ramp up the energy and pace of the scene as it careens into its end.
The tension between Kreousa and Ion breaks; instead of striking her, Ion deflates, straying off center but remaining on the platform.

ION

Feu!

It’s terrible that the gods set down laws for men that are ignoble, unwise; it isn’t right for the criminal to sit at the altar— they should be driven off! It’s no noble thing for a wicked hand to touch divinity; for those who are righteous, if they sit at the shrine after they’re wronged, that is right. The noble and the wicked should not come like equals to the shrine, enjoying the same treatment from the gods.

ACT II SCENE VI — PYTHIA
(lines 1320-1368)

Like a sign from the very gods just referenced by Ion, Pythia enters from the temple building. She stays within the doorway, a divine vertical on the stage’s central axis. Closer to Kreousa’s age than Ion’s, she wears a long green poncho as a dress and matching thigh-high boots. In her arms, she holds a wicker cradle.

PYTHIA

Restrain yourself, child; now I’ve left the seat of prophecy, stepping out from beneath that cornice.

Pythia comes out from the doorway and addresses Kreousa and the Khoros.

Strangers, I am the High Priestess Pythia of Apollo. I preserve the ancient customs of prophecy, chosen out of all the Delphic women.

167 Like the silent Delphians and Ion himself (at the start of the play), Pythia is dressed for rain. Her connection to the physical ground and the vapors within the temple necessary for prophecy is reflected in the green tones of her costume.
ION
Hello, dearest mother I’ve ever known.¹⁶⁸

Pythia comes to him. She kisses his cheeks and takes his shoulders.

PYTHIA
You’re sweet to call me that.¹⁶⁹

ION
Have you heard? She tried to kill me.

Ion pushes out of her embrace and crosses to center. Kreousa keeps her place at the altar.

PYTHIA
I have. But your cruelty makes you stray from the path.

ION
Isn’t it right to reciprocate my would-be murderer?

PYTHIA
Wives are always grieved by their husbands’ prior children.

ION
But we suffer terribly for our stepmothers.

Stirred up by his own words, Ion starts to come down off the platform; Pythia catches his arm and holds him.

PYTHIA
Don’t you dare. Leave this temple and go to your father.
Go to Athens while you’re still pure, heralded by good omens.

¹⁶⁸ Ion addresses Pythia as “ὦ φίλη μοι μῆτερ, οὐ τεκοῦσά περ,” (l. 1324; “Oh dear mother to me, though in fact you did not bear me.”) The sentiment is clunkier in English than it is in Greek; that Ion considers Pythia to be a parental unit without her having actually carried him to term is more elegantly captured in the phrase “I’ve ever known.”

¹⁶⁹ Pythia says to Ion, “ἀλλ’ οὖν λεγόμεθ’· ἡ φάτις δ’ οὔ μοι πικρά” (l. 1325; “But let me be called so anyway. The name is not bitter to me.”), agreeing that she is not his birth mother. Euripides articulates her pleasure at Ion naming her thus through another double negative; I condense the sentiment.
Ion tries to pull himself out of her grip. However, he is unable to break free from the iron vice of the ancient prophet.\footnote{As does Michelangelo in his art, I translate the ephemeral quality of divine strength into tactile physical strength.}

**ION**

Killing my enemy wouldn’t ruin my purity.

Pythia tugs on Ion’s arm, spinning him to face her.

**PYTHIA**

You mustn’t! Listen to me.
Do you see this cradle in the crook of my arm?
I found you in it when you were a child.

Ion slackens, the impact of her words shocking him.

**ION**

You hid it from me?\footnote{Ion asks “πῶς οὗν ἔκρυπτες τόδε λαβοῦσ’ ἡμᾶς πάλαι;” (l. 1342; “How did you hide it, when you so long ago took hold of me?”) Ion’s inquiry is not concerned with Pythia’s methodology, but rather he seeks to learn “How could you hide it from me?” I attempt to capture his tone of incredulity and hurt.}

**PYTHIA**

The god wished to have you as a servant in his temple.

**ION**

But now he doesn’t? How do you know?

**PYTHIA**

He revealed your parent. He sends you away.

**ION**

He told you to hide the cradle from me?

**PYTHIA**

Apollo put it in my mind to save what I’d found until this very moment.
ION
But why? To help me or to hurt me?

PYTHIA
In here is the swaddle-cloth your mother left you in.

Ion draws away from Pythia and comes to the far left edge of the platform as though lost in thought.

ION
A way to find my mother...

PYTHIA
The god now wills it. He didn’t before.

Ion sits and dangles his legs off the edge of the platform.

ION
Oh, this is indeed a day of amazing mysteries!

Pythia joins him. She drops a tender hand onto his shoulder and places the cradle gently next to him.

PYTHIA
Take it. Find your mother.

ION
I’ll search all of Asia, all of Europe.

PYTHIA
You will learn all you want to know. By the will of Apollo I raised you; by his will now I give to you the things he commanded I keep until this moment. His reasons, I cannot claim to know. Goodbye, my child, though this farewell hurts me like it would a parent. Look for your mother at the start of it all.172

172 Pythia says “ἀρξει δ’ ὅθεν σὴν μητέρα ζητεῖν σε χρή· / πρῶτον μὲν εἴ τις Δελφίδων τεκοῦσά σε / ἐς τούσδε ναοὺς ἐξέθηκε / παρθένος, / ἔπειτα δ’ εἴ τις Ἑλλάς” (1364-1367; “Begin where it is necessary to look for your mother. First, find out if some Delphian maiden bore you and set you out in the shrine, and then turn your attention to the rest of Greece.”) Her encouragement is for Ion to return to his roots in a logical procession. I have attempted to encapsulate that sentiment without exploring the details of her plan.
PYTHIA  (cont’d)

Now I've given you everything I can, and so has Apollo, who I hope you know took part in your fate.

Pythia kisses Ion’s forehead. They stay connected for a beat. Pythia exits within the temple building.

ACT II SCENE VII — KREOUSAE B
(lines 1369-1552)

When Pythia is gone, Ion leaps down from where he sat, directly in front of the platform.

ION

Feu! Feu!173
What a tear I shed, when I think of how my mother, after a hidden marriage sold me in secret. Anonymously,174 I lived the life of a slave in the temples of the god. What Apollo gives is good, but my fate is troublesome. When I should have napped in her arms and lived each day with joy, instead I was deprived of the dear love of my mother. And she too must have been miserable!

173 In Euripides’ Greek, Ion’s second monody is written in long lines of trimeter. I have opted for this passage to be delivered as a speech and not as a song to keep the pace of the play as swift as possible while it moves toward its conclusion. To give the speech a song-like lilt, however, I have constructed short and sprightly lines.

174 As per the Greek, “ἀνώνυμος,” (l. 1372).
Think of how
she suffered, losing
the joys of a child.

Ion picks up the cradle and places it atop the altar, standing just upstage of it.

But now I'll take
this cradle and dedicate
it to Apollo,
so I won’t find out
anything I don’t
wish to find.
If my mother happens
to be a slave,
I would rather hear
only silence, no answer.

He comes to his knees, praying beside the altar.

Oh Apollo,
here in your temple,
I set this down
as an offering—

Ion halts, and stares in intense silence at the cradle for a beat. Then he comes back up to his feet, resolved.

what am I doing?
Will I wage a war
against the desires
of Apollo?
He saved these tokens
of my mother for me.
I must dare—
I am the one who
must open this.
I can’t step over
what’s fated for me.
He takes the cradle off the altar and holds it close to him, like a father would his child.\textsuperscript{175}

\textbf{ION} (cont’d)

Oh holy garlands,  
what have you long concealed, 
holding things dear to me? 
Look how the round cover 
of the cradle hasn’t aged, 
no mold in the weave— 
it’s the work of some god. 
Many years have passed  
since these treasures saw light.

Kreousa seems to wake from a reverie as Ion cracks open the cradle.

\textbf{KREOUSA}  
What? What apparition do I see, out of  
all the things I’d never dared to hope for?

\textbf{ION}  
Silence, you. You know you’ve said enough—

Kreousa stands, though she keeps one hand on the altar.

\textbf{KREOUSA}  
I can’t be silent; don’t you dare give me advice. 
I’m looking right now at the cradle in which I  
one once exposed my child— you, my child—\textsuperscript{176} as a  
baby, under the hills of Kekrops in a cave near  
Makrai. I’ll leave this altar, even if it means I’ll die.

With intention, she steps stage left away from the altar.

\textsuperscript{175} Euripides has developed Ion over the course of the play so that when the boy reaches this moment he is ready for it (Walsh 306). The Ion at the start of the play might have succumbed to his cowardly impulse not to open the cradle. The dramatic action has prepared him to leave the ordered safety of the shrine.

\textsuperscript{176} In the Greek, too, Kreousa emphasizes that that the object of the sentence, “ὦ τέκνον μοι,” is the same person as “σέ γ’,” by means of that ellided emphatic particle.
ION

Grab her; she is driven to madness by the god.
She leaves the carved altar; bind her arms!

Several of the Delphi Attendants enter from stage left. Kreousa rushes to Ion.

KREOUS A

Kill me, if you can’t stop yourself.
But I claim this cradle and its hidden tokens,
and I claim you.

With one hand, she grabs the cradle.

ION

You try to swindle me.177

KREOUS A

No. But you are dear to me, child.

Ion draws away from her; the cradle clatters to the ground between them.178

ION

Dear to you? You tried to kill me!

KREOUS A

You are my son, endearment enough for any parent.

Ion grabs the cradle and walks with it stage left, where he is flanked by the attendants.

ION

Stop weaving your lies, I’ll find you out!

An idea comes to him. He cracks open the cradle and peeks inside.

---

177 Ion says, “ῥυσιάζομαι λόγῳ,” (l. 1406; “I am seized by your words.”) The verb he uses, however, has connotations which involve personal property and compensations taken for wrongful theft. I attempt to bring that subtext into the English by switching the subject of the verb from Ion to Kreousa.

178 In a play full of reversals, the revelation of the cradle’s contents represents the final turn of fate (Conacher 21). I drop the cradle to the ground so that it can hold the audience’s attention on its own for a moment before Kreousa uses it to reunite with her son.
ION (cont’d)
Is this cradle empty, or does it hold something?
Can you say what’s in there without looking?

Kreousa steps toward him.

KREOUSA
If I can’t, kill me.

ION
Alright, speak. Your audacity fascinates me.¹⁷⁹

KREOUSΑ
There’s a cloth that I wove when I was young—

ION
What kind?

KREOUSΑ
A scrap I practiced on.

ION
What does it look like?

KREOUSΑ
There’s a Gorgon embroidered down the middle.

Though he doesn’t fully open the cradle yet, Ion can see the Gorgon inside. He pales.

ION
Oh Zeus! Does some dark destiny hunt me down?

KREOUSΑ
And like Athena’s armor, it’s bordered with snakes.

---

¹⁷⁹ Ion says, “λέγ᾽· ὡς ἔχει τι δεινὸν ἥ γε τόλμα σου,” (l. 1416; “Speak; how your daring contains something strange!”) Though Euripides articulates Ion’s sentiment beautifully, any strict English rendering would be too clunky to parse. That there is something strange to Kreousa’s daring is evident in that Ion feels compelled to vocalize his interest.
Now Ion pulls out the cloth, which looks exactly as Kreousa described.

ION

Look! Here it is, that very robe! Just as the oracle said.

Kreousa takes it from him.

KREOUSA

Oh, look at you! The long-lost work of childhood pursuits!

Ion looks deeper into the cradle—maybe Kreousa merely made a lucky guess.

ION

What else is in the cradle?

Kreousa thinks, straining to go back all those years.

KREOUSA

Serpents! Some ancient gift from Athena, cast in gold, in which she tells us to dress our children; an imitation of Erekhtheus.

Ion peers at her suspiciously. He’s so overwhelmed that it’s hard for him to form a sentence.

ION

What do you do, what does she tell you to do, say it to me, with the ornaments?¹⁸⁰

Kreousa steps closer and places a gentle hand on Ion’s elbow.

KREOUSA

Our newborns wear them as necklaces, child.

Ion takes them out and rests them atop the cradle. He seems unable to take his eyes off of Kreousa now, but there is still one more thing he can ask her.

¹⁸⁰ Euripides invokes this urgent and fragmentary rush of emotions in the Greek: “τί δράν, τί χρήσθαι, φράζε μοι, χρυσώματι;” (l. 1430). I have followed his choices concerning word order in order to accomplish the same.
ION
Here they are! But tell me this: what is the third thing in the cradle?

Kreousa no longer needs to think about it.

KREOUSA
The olive-branch wreath I crowned you with, a branch from the tree of Athena drawn up out of Athens’ hill. If it’s in there, it’ll still be green, thriving, taken from a holy tree.

Ion lets the cradle fall and grabs Kreousa into a tight hug.\textsuperscript{181}

ION
Oh, my dearest Mama! My heart soars to see you, to embrace you!

KREOUSA
Oh, my child. Oh, light dearer to your mother than the sun— may the god forgive me— I hold you now in my arms, a discovery I’d hardly dared to hope for. I thought you lived in Hades, with Persephone and the dead.

ION
But oh, my dear mother, in your arms it seems I am both alive \textit{and} dead.

Kreousa pulls away to face the audience,

KREOUSA
\textit{Io, io!}
Wide fields of the shining sky, what cries should I shout? How should I celebrate? From where did this unexpected happiness happen upon me?

\textsuperscript{181}The scene in which Ion questions Kreousa is punctuated on either end by the cradle falling to the ground.
ION
I could have expected anything at all to happen
in this world, Mama, except this: to be your son!

KREOUSΑ
But I still shiver with fear.

Ion takes her into another hug, this one gentler.

ION
Because even as you hold me, you worry you don’t have me?

KREOUSΑ
I’d flung these hopes
far away.¹⁸²

She pulls away from the embrace and lunges at the altar.

Io, prophet—from whom, from whom
did you take my child into your arms?
Whose hand brought him here?

Now it’s Ion’s turn to place a consoling hand on Kreousa’s shoulder.

ION
It was an act of god; may what lies ahead for us
be as happy as what came before was not.

Kreousa turns to face him.

KREOUSΑ
My son, you didn’t come into this world without tears.
You were separated from your mother’s arms with cries.
But now, my breath on your cheek, which even now
grows its first hairs, I find the greatest joy I’ve ever known.

¹⁸² Euripides uses inconsistent line length, allowing Kreousa to discuss her past in two short lines before switching immediately to a longer-line dochmiac bewailing.
ION

The same goes for me, Mama.¹⁸³

She cups his cheek.

KREOUSÁ

I am no longer childless.
My house is established; Athens has a king.
Erekhtheus returns to his youth,
and his earthborn home no longer
stares into the night. His home
turns toward the rays of the sun.

Ion kisses Kreousa’s cheek.

ION

Mama, let my Papa share in the joy
I’ve given you, since he’s here, too.

Kreousa realizes that Ion still thinks Xouthos is his father. She draws into herself and raises a hand to her mouth.

KREOUSÁ

Oh, my child, what are you saying?
Such ways you find to convict me!

ION

What do you mean?

KREOUSÁ

Another man is your father, another.¹⁸⁴

Ion too lifts a hand to his face.

¹⁸³ Ion says, “τοὐμὸν λέγουσα καὶ τὸ σὸν κοινῶς λέγεις,” (l. 1462; “When you speak, you speak mine and yours in common,”). As elsewhere, I abbreviate the thought down to its intent.

¹⁸⁴ In Kreousa’s answer to Ion, “ἄλλοθεν γέγονας, ἄλλοθεν,” (l. 1472), Euripides communicates her shame through the emphasis placed on “another.” Her child was not born from the husband whom he should have been, in her mind.
ION

Oimoi!
I’m the bastard of your childhood antics?

KREOUSA

No marriage rites accompanied
my wedding,
child, when I gave birth to you.

ION

Aiat!
Who was he, Mama?

Kreousa sharply turns her face to the sky.

KREOUSA

The Gorgon-killer knows—!\(^{185}\)

ION

What do you mean?

Kreousa raises a hand to point to the heavens.

KREOUSA

You, sitting on the hill where my olive-tree grows—!

Ion takes a step toward her.

ION

You’re scaring me, Mama.\(^{186}\)

Kreousa doesn’t seem to hear him.

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\(^{185}\) Kreousa cries out, “ἴστω Γοργοφόνα...” (l. 1478; “Let the Gorgon-killer know!”) Euripides’ usage of the imperative introduces Kreousa’s personal address of Athena, which she continues in her subsequent line. I indicate the address through staging and excise the referential language.

\(^{186}\) Ion says in the Greek, “λέγεις μοι δόλια καὶ σαφῆ τάδες,” (l. 1481; “You say things which are to me treacherous and unclear.”) This is the sort of Euripidean line an English-speaking actor might trip over. I cut it to down to its meaning in the interest of performance.
KREOUSĀ
Near the nightingale’s rock... Apollo—

ION
What does this have to do with him?

Like waking from a dream, Kreousa turns to look at her son. Gently, she presses one of his hands into both of hers.

KREOUSĀ
Secretly he took me to bed.
In the tenth month, with hidden labor pangs, I bore you to Apollo.

Ion is oblivious to the pain that hangs off of Kreousa’s words; instead, he is elated at the prospect of being the child of the god he has loved like a father all his life.¹⁸⁷

ION
Is this really true?

Kreousa comes to her knees, keeping hold of Ion’s hand like a supplicant asking him for forgiveness.

KREOUSĀ
I wrapped you all around in the cloth I’d woven as a young girl, hiding this from my mother. I offered you no milk, didn’t bathe you in my arms. Instead, I left you in that desolate cave, a slaughtered meal for the beaks of the birds.

ION
You dared a terrible thing.

KREOUSĀ
In fear, my child, bound by it, I cast away your life.

¹⁸⁷ Euripides makes this interpretation explicit whenIon says, “λέγ· ὡς ἐρεῖς τι κεδνὸν εὐτυχές τέ μοι,” (l. 1485; “Speak, as what you say is some cherished fortune for me.”) I choose to move Ion’s emotional response from text to subtext; doing so keeps the scene flowing, while removing the stichomythic pattern of interruption.
KREOUSA (cont’d)
   Unwillingly I killed you.

Ion helps Kreousa back to her feet.

ION
   And here I was, ready to kill you.

KREOUSA
   Io!
   My fortunes were terrible back then,
   but these affairs here are just as bad.
   I’m tossed here and there, to misery and back
   again to delight, but these winds are changing.
   Let it be! There were plenty evils before.
   Now, let a fair wind guide us out of trouble.

Khoros A, who has been silently observing, gives her opinion to the rest of the Khoros.

KHOROS A
   Nothing should ever be unexpected to anyone
   again, after the things which have happened here.

The full force of the afternoon’s events has settled on Ion, who wanders to center stage in a daze.

ION
   Oh Fate, who has thrown about the lives
   of countless mortals, casting them into
   misfortune and setting them upright again!
   Look what sort of boundary I’d reached
   in my life, ready to kill my mother and
   suffer unduly! Fete!

Though he stays where he is, Ion looks back at Kreousa.

   Could I really have learned all this
   in the shining embrace of one day’s sun?
   You are a beloved discovery, Mama,
   and I find no fault in your lineage.
ION  
(cont’d)
But can we discuss the rest of it privately?

He beckons to her.

Come here. I’d like to whisper in your ear and keep what I say covered by darkness.

Kreousa hesitates for a moment before she joins Ion downstage center.

So, look, Mama, you must have stumbled into a secret affair, the sort of thing which happens to girls, and now you feel the need to blame the god, trying to avoid the shamefulness of my birth.

Kreousa shakes her head in disbelief. She takes Ion gently but firmly by the chin and angles his face so that they maintain an intense eye contact.

KREOUSUA
By Athena Victory, who brandished her shield with Father Zeus when they fought the giants, I swear your father is no mortal, my child, but the very god who raised you, Lord Apollo.

ION
Then why would he give me to another father, and tell us all that I am son of Xouthos?  

Kreousa drops her hand.

KREOUSUA
You weren’t born to Xouthos, no, but Apollo gives you to him— as is his right! Like a friend can give to a friend his son to be master of the house.

---

188 In the Greek Ion frames his thought in a slightly different manner, saying, “μὴ σφαλεῖσ’,” (l. 1523; “Did you not stumble...”) I keep his patronizing tone but mitigate potentially confusing syntax.

189 This line is another example of Ion asking “πῶς οὖν” (l. 1532; “how could he...”) while really asking “why.”
Ion takes a step away from her.

**ION**

The god must *always* tell the truth,
or prophecy is done in vain.

**KREOUSA**

Listen to what I’ve just thought of, my son.
Apollo shows you kindness, placing you into
Xouthos’ noble house; if you were known to be
born from a god, you’d never hold a wealthy home
or bear the name of your father. How could you,
when I hid the marriage and then tried to kill you?
He does right by you, giving you to another.

Ion is almost convinced but turns away and starts to walk toward the platform.

**ION**

I can’t pursue these questions so thoughtlessly.
I’ll go into the temple of Apollo,
and ask in there if my father is mortal or divine.

A sudden blinding light appears from within the altar.\(^\text{190}\) It washes out the entire stage and makes it impossible to see the altar, or really much of anything at all.

*Ea!*

Is this some god, rising over the house of incense?
We need to run, Mama, so we don’t see the gods before our proper time to do so.

Kreousa and Ion begin to run away: Kreousa goes upstage right of the altar and Ion upstage left of it.

---

\(^{190}\) Ion describes the appearance of the god as “ἀντήλιον πρόσωπον” (l. 1550; “a sun-like radiant face”). I move the didactic language out of the character’s dialogue and into stage direction.
ACT II SCENE VII — ATHENA
(lines 1553-1624)

The light cuts out; Athena, radiant goddess, stands tall upon the altar. She wears a well-fitting black pantsuit and stiletto heels. Her hair is styled up, evoking but not explicitly referencing the helmet she often wears in depictions. Ion and Kreousa freeze where they stand, faces turned to stare in awe.

ATHENA

Don’t run! You wouldn’t flee from your enemy, but from someone who looks kindly upon you, whether you are here or home in Athens. I’ve come from there, the one who gave that city its name: Athena. I was urged here by Apollo, here in his place. He was worried that if you saw him, you would blame him even more than you already have. He sent me to say this:

Athena angles her body toward Ion, upstage left, and extends a hand in his direction.

You are the child of Apollo. The god is your father, and he gives you as a gift to Xouthos, who is not, so he can set you into a house of fine standing. Ion slowly walks to Athena and the altar. He comes to his knees just downstage left of it.

When this affair was blown open and secrets revealed, Apollo was worried that your mother’s plans would kill you, and yours her. He made contrivances to protect you— he intended to reveal the matter upon your

---

191 Athenae’s Epilogue balances out Hermes’ Prologue in many ways; in my production, the two gods would have been portrayed by the same actor.

192 Euripides has Athena call herself “Παλλάς,” (l. 1556). A contemporary audience would know to recognize Athena from her physical attributes and indeed by her cult title specific to their city. For a modern audience, “Athena” works well enough. Like Hermes in the Prologue, Athena reminds the audience of Athens’ genealogy.

193 Euripides writes, “ὡς ἐς μὲν ὄψιν σφῷν μολεῖν οὐκ ἠξίου, / μὴ τῶν πάροιθε μέμψις ἐς μέσον μόλῃ,” (ll. 1557-8). These lines are controversial (Conacher: 33; Burnett 94). I choose to emphasize here Apollo’s knowledge of his own wrong-doings, with which Euripides imbues absent Apollo with much of the personality he is shown to have in the play. Athena passes no judgement of her own on the censuring conducted by Kreousa and Ion, conveying only her brother’s wish not to incur any more of it.
ATHENA  (cont’d)

arrival at Athens, the truth of your real parentage.

But I’ll end this story now, so listen up. Here are the oracles of
Apollo, for which I’ve climbed aboard my chariot and come.

Now Athena angles toward Kreousa, upstage right. The goddess extends her other hand toward the
queen.

Taking your child, Kreousa, return to the land of
Athens, and set him on the throne of the king.
He is of Erekhtheus’ stock— my own line— and therefore he is fit to rule my land. He will be
famous throughout all of Greece.
He’ll have four children, and they will give
their names to the land and peoples upon my hill.
Their sons, when the time comes, will settle
on the plains of the two lands split by ocean.
Asia and Europe. Their race will be famous,
known as the Ionians, in honor of you, boy.

Kreousa now walks toward the altar and drops to her knees downstage right of it.

And you, my daughter, you will have children
with Xouthos. A son named Doros, for whom
the Doric state will be celebrated in the Peloponnese.
Your second, Akhaios, will be king near the shore
of Rhion, and a famous people, the Akhaians,
will be named for him. You see, Apollo has fixed it all.

---

194 Erekhtheus’ family is also Athena’s, but this fact is not something that would need to be restated to an Athenian audience. Euripides does not include it. However, the importance of the tangible genetic connection between goddess and boy is an important factor in his eligibility to rule Athens, and a modern audience deserves to have this explained.

195 In Euripides’ text, Athena gives more details regarding Ion’s progeny. The names she offers would have been meaningful to an Athenian audience, in service of this play’s patriotic (whether straight or satiric) ending. In a performance, especially a performance for a modern audience, retaining the names would clutter an already dense proclamation.

196 I condense several lines of Greek (ll. 1581-1587) in which Athena references the specific islands Ion’s descendants will colonize, islands that will lend political prowess to the Athenian empire. Her point is that Greek power spreads across the Mediterranean under the helm of the Ionians.

197 I preserve these names, as “Doric” and “Achaean” are well known terms.
With an elegant finger, the goddess bids Kreousa and Ion to rise. They do, and each take one of the goddess’s hands to help Athena step down off of the altar. The trio comes effortlessly to the center.

ATHENA (cont’d)

Now, you must stay silent. Do not reveal that Ion is your son, so Xouthos stays content in his belief. Your house will therefore remain stable and happy.

Athena kisses Kreousa on the cheek and helps her out of her torn dress.

Go on, Kreousa, and take with you your blessings. Farewell— with this reprieve from your troubles, I pronounce that there are good fortunes ahead!

ION

Oh Pallas Athena, daughter of Mightiest Zeus, I welcome your words without disbelief.

He joins Kreousa on her side of the altar.

I believe that Apollo is my father, and you my mother. And of course, I never really doubted it at all.

Kreousa, though she loves her son, doesn’t buy his attempt to slough off criticism.

KREOUSA

Hear me as well, goddess. I will be content with Apollo.

---

198 In the Greek, Athena quickly recapitulates what Apollo has already done (ll. 1595-1600). The long and famous generations of the family to come are proof enough that Apollo has had foresight enough to arrange Kreousa’s affairs.

199 To clarify why Xouthos’ happiness matters to Kreousa (beyond just whatever familial love may exist), I insert this brief extension of Athena’s logic.

200 I use physical action and affection between these characters as a tool to reinforce Kreousa’s (and Ion’s) close relationship between herself and the divinity of her family line and city. By removing her outer dress, leaving Kreousa in the linen slip she wears beneath, Athena undoes the final level of confusion. Both Kreousa and Ion will go to Athens in their linen underclothes, fully aware of the truth at long last.

201 Kreousa tells Athena, “αἰνῶ Φοῖβον,” (l. 1609; “I will approve of Apollo.”) Compared with the word Athena uses a few lines down (“εὐλογεῖς,” (l. 1614; “you praise,”)), Kreousa’s verb lacks intensity. She remains somewhat reserved. I interpret her diction to mean that, though Apollo has for all intents and purposes made things right, and although Kreousa has come to terms with her trauma, she will never fully forgive the god.
KREOUSKA (cont’d)
whom I could not bear to think of before, when
I thought he had neglected the child he now gives back.

She places a hand on the altar.

I appreciate these structures, and the oracles of the god,
even though they once were both bitter to me.

Athena joins the two, standing behind them and forming something like a family tableau.

ATHENA
I’m pleased you change your mind and speak well of my brother.
The god’s gifts may always be late, but they are mighty in the end.

KREOUSKA
My son, let’s go home. You will sit on the throne.

ION
And I’ll do it honor.

They all, Kreousa, Athena, and Ion, exit off right. The Khoros comes to center stage and forms a semicircle that flanks Khoros A at center. She looks upward, indirectly addressing the Apollo Window.

KHOROS A
Oh, son of Leto and Zeus, Apollo— rejoice!

Khoros A now looks to the audience. Music comes in beneath her speech.

---

202 Kreousa references the “πύλαι,” (l. 1611; “gates,”) of the shrine. The clean aesthetic of the set necessitates that I translate her gesture more generally.

203 Euripides gives Kreousa a didactic ending to this little speech, in which she sweetly touches the handles of the doors and speaks to the gates. Instead, I have Kreousa tenderly touch the altar, in contrast with her frenzied clinging to it a mere few scenes before.

204 In the Greek, Athena only refers to Apollo as “θεὸν,” (l. 1614; “the god,”). I take this opportunity to remind the audience of the relationship between Athena and the god on whose behalf she has come. In doing so, I especially attempt to craft a parallel from the Prologue with Hermes and this Epilogue with Athena, both of which suggest divine approval of Apollo’s plan (Burnett 98).
Khoros A (cont’d)

If your house has been driven into disaster,
remember: honor the gods, keep your courage.205
At the end of it all, good people will always be
dealt with well, and as for bad people—
by their very nature, they will always fare poorly.

The Khoros begins to dance as they make their way offstage. The lights dim: evening at Delphi at last. The two neon signs once more come to life, a reminder that Delphi will stand longer than any of the individuals who pass through it.

END ACT II.

205 The Khoros speaks of the man whose house has been driven into disaster. I slip into second-person address to conclude the play with a Shakespearean flare.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX: Sheet Music
Prologue

"She couldn’t tell her father as within her womb she bore to term the fruit of hidden godly lust."

Hannah Livant
1994-

She exposed him by its mouth so he would die.
She dressed him in accordance with tradition set down in her father’s day.
“Hermes, going to the people, to the city of the goddess that you know, bring from the cave the newborn child....”

"Then Apollo, dearest brother, said to me:"

"string slap with bow"
I did this favor for Apollo, Who Speaks
His Sideway Truths,
lifting up the wicker cradle,
and brought it and child to the
doorway that you see....

In silence "Is mine"

ff
pizz
—Which happened as the ring of sun began its daily climb and Pythia began her morning cultic ritual.
When the boy was young, he passed the days by playing games about the shrine which weaned him; as he matured in body and in years the Delphic people made him the keeper of the gold and worldly matters of the god.
Despite the long duration of their union, both marriage and Kreousa have waited barren;
MONODY
ACT I SCENE II

Theo Lowrey
words Jay Jacobson

\[ \text{\textit{Sun in its horse-drawn wagon shines up on the Earth!}} \]
\[ \text{\textit{The stars in their fear of its fire run into the}} \]
\[ \text{\textit{Monody}} \]

Ion
Flute
Trumpet in B-
Percussion
Violin
Cello
Double Bass

\[ \text{\textit{Theo Lowrey}} \]
\[ \text{\textit{words Jay Jacobson}} \]
night. The peaks of Mount Per-nas-sus, beginning to warm with the Sun, accept the disk of morning.

The herald of day for us mortals. The smoke of the burned dry myrrh.
of Apollo fills up the sky. Now the Delphian Maiden sits at the holy tripod and sings 

to all of Greece what Apollo knows.

Del
phic at-ten-dants serv-ing Ap- pol-lo, come; go to the whirl-pool, shin-ing like sil-ver.

Wash your self in its ho-ly dew, then re-turn back to the tem-ple rea-dy for ser-vice. Now, I'll

like sil-ver.
do what I have done since I was just a boy,
swipe the temple's entrance spotless clean,
broom of laurel saplings a

garland in my hand dripping water on the ground to keep it nice and damp.
And I'll scare the birds away with my

I was born without a family to my name, so I serve Apollo in whose temple I was sacred offerings clean and safe, keeping trusty bow and arrow.
So, come my love-ly lit-tle boughs of lau-rel, a ser vant of the god I love.

You are from a gar den where, from a stream that ne-ver stops, ho-ly wa-ter dam-pens myr-

---

53

Ion

Fl.

So, come my love-ly lit-tle boughs of lau-rel, a ser vant of the god I love.

You are from a gar den where, from a stream that ne-ver stops, ho-ly wa-ter dam-pens myr-
I ti dy up the floor with you, the daily work I do all day, while on its beating wings the sun is in the sky.
Oh Apollo, Healer, Healer, I hope that all your days are blessed and happy so ours are too.
Oh child of Le-to, my lord. The work I do for you, A-pol-lo, such love-ly things I get to do. I carry out be-fore your home to hon-or you. I'll ne-ver ti-re from my work, aus-pi-cious-as it al-ways is, since
who I serve is my parent; my father. Well, not exactly father. But he who was my friend at the
time when I was most in need, I'll honor always with my word.
Oh Apollo, Healer, Healer, I hope that all your days are blessed and happy so ours are too.
Oh child of Le-to, my lord. Now it's time that I cease from working with my broom, and pour out water from this golden vase, Gay-a's water which came out from the sacred dy. It's a job I can do.
since I've never laid with man or wife.

E - a!  E - a!

E - a!  E - a!

E - a!  E - a!
Birds from Mount Per-nas-sus are making circles above the shrine! All ready you've left your nest to come here, but

I forbid you from nearing to land on the golden cornices of the shrine! I will
cath you with my bow, swan who is approaching here: Find a different place for your red feet!

A-pol-lo's lyre may sing with you, but it can't shield you from my bow. Instead, change course and fly to De-lo's!
MONODY

You will stain all your gorgeous song with blood_ if you don't obey me and leave.

I'd only feel pain to kill you, who bring us signs of the gods, but
I am the aide of Apollo. I'll do what's expected of me. I would never betray those who kept me fed and secure. I'd never betray all the
ODE A

ACT I SCENE VII

Theo Lowrey

words Jay Jacobson

You, born with out the pangs eased by mid-wife,

You, born without the pangs eased by mid-wife,
Vox.  

Ode A

D.B.

Vln.

Vc.

Fl.

B♭ Tpt.

Perc.

down from the top of Zeus's head,
ob bles sed Vic tor y,
come to the Py thian home stead
from the gol den sanct ums

A-then-a, I am your supp li cant you, born by Tit an Pro me the us
Phoebus's sacred hearth, at the

tri-pod danced around in celebration, brings its oracles to pass,
you and the daughter of Le-to, two goddesses, two virgins,

august sisters of Phoibos Apollo
Maidens, be yourself supplicant so that the ancient race of Ereklelus may find clear or
Vox.

- - a - cles a - bout the long

Fl.

"mp"

B♭ Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

"mp"

Vc.

"mp"

D.B.

For i is the in - vi - ol - ate

a - wait - ed ar - ri - val of child - ren.
start-ing point of sup-er - sed-ing hap-pi-ness for mor-tals to have,
when the youth of child-ren

for which bears fruit shines in a fath-er's halls, an in -
her- it-ed for-tune from their fath-ers in the form of o-th-er chil-dren

For it is aid in ill-ness and joy in pros-

mP

vibrato

p

vibrato

mP
per - it - y, a sav - ing might that bears the spear  
in def - ense of one's home - land.

For me, bet - ter than wealth or hav - ing king - ly halls,  
I would pre -
fer the belov-ed rais-ing of cher-ished child-ren. I viol-ent-ly loath the child-less life, and

fault the one who thinks it good; May I have a life with reason-able wealth, blessed with
ODE A

Vox.

Fl.

B♭ Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
Oh, seats of Pan and the rocks that lie near cavernous Makrai where the
three girls dance on their heels, daughters of A - glour - ous,
over verdant courses in the front of the temples of Athena,

Oh, seats of Pan and the rocks that lie near cavernous Makrai, where the

under the spell of the fleeting wail of flutes and hymns when you play in your sunless caves,

three girls dance on their heals, daughters of A glorious,
Pan, where some woman so miserable bore a child to A-

over verdant courses in the front of the temples of Athena,

pollo and exposed it as a feasts for the birds

under the spell of the fleet ing wail of flutes and hymns when you play in your sun less caves,
and a grisly gourmet for the beasts, the bitterness of the rape.
Neith-er at the loom nor in the re-port

have I heard of child-ren of gods

neither at the loom nor in the reports have I heard of children of gods
born to mortals partake in prosperity
ODE B

ACT I SCENE IX

Theo Lowrey
words Jay Jacobson

Khoros

Flute

Trumpet in B♭

Percussion

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

 halftime

I see tears and mourning, and an invasion of crying.

bass drum cymbal

Open

mp

mf
when my mistress learns her husband is blessed and has a child, while

she should be barren and childless

husband is blessed and has a child, while
Khor.

13

What, prophet child of Leto, have you sung in oracle?

Fl.

13

B♭ Tpt.

13

Perc.

13

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

16

Where did this child, nourished around your shrine come from?

Fl.

16

B♭ Tpt.

16

Perc.

16

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

16
Who is his mother_

or a cle does n't make me hap py; there may be some trick_ I'm a -
fraid of what's at hand, thanks to what will come. It's a strange thing which brings strange-ness to me, but the boy keeps his lips sealed as a monk's, tricks and fate...
Attendant

Cues are marked above the music where each section of speech occurs and lines up with the music. If there is text not written that occurs in between cues it is implied the speaker continues speech as music continues.

Vamp: start on "Now, my son while I’m gone, make like a carpenter and put up a well-secured tent." repeat till...

Tom-tom

p

CL
2

"...start the feast for those who are at hand!"

Steady and mischevious, like something is in the works.

5

"Then he left, taking the cattle."

---

[Music notation and text from the sheet music]
9 "Ouranos the Heavens gathering up the stars in the hollow of the sky;"
13

Fl.

Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

Vc.

CL

"In the middle of the tent, he set up golden goblets."

14

Fl.

Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

Vc.

CL

string slap with bow

string slap with bow

side of tom

pp
cresc

pp
When it came time for revelry and libration, the Old Man said,
“We must snatch away the small wine glasses and bring out the large ones,
so we all might become drunk and find out pleasure faster....”

"after dashing into the wine the deadly drugs
they say his mistress
gave him to kill her new son,
though nobody noticed"
"urged the new cup be filled"

Fl.

Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

Vc.

CL

"he cast his first libation upon the floor, and he told everyone else (speak with trumpets) to do the same as well"

Fl.

Tpt.

Perc.

Vln.

Vc.

CL
"Silence came over us, we filled up the holy cups with sacred water and wine from Byblos."

"As we were doing this, a merry band of doves crashed into the tent--"
"Who intended to kill me? You were eager old man,"

52
(as loud as you can)
In the silence: The lords of Delphi decreed that she must die, thrown from the rocks—a unanimous decision, since she planned to kill a holy man, enacting murder within the temple precinct. The whole city hunts for her as she unhappily hurries on her miserable way.
Start really slow (temp up to conductor) then each section is faster and faster every time till the speech finishes. Then start slow again at rehearsal mark and speed up each repeat till fastest at end

"Oh, son of Leto and Zeus, Apollo— rejoice!"

let cymbal ring always super slow at first
If your house has been driven into disaster

"If your house has been driven into disaster"

remember: honor the gods, keep your courage

"remember: honor the gods, keep your courage"
"At the end of it all, good people will always be dealt with well, and as for bad people—"

In the silence: "by their very nature, they will always fare poorly"
Each note slightly louder than before.
each note a bit louder.
pizz

sf

pizz
Fl.
Tpt.
Dr.
Vln.
Vc.

let cymbal ring always
bass drum

Fl.
Tpt.
Dr.
Vln.
Vc.
Fl.
Tpt.
Dr.
Vln.
Vc.

45

a brief beat

U3

1'56.4"