

ATHENS IN A BASKET: NAMING, OBJECTS, AND IDENTITY IN EURIPIDES' *ION*¹

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As irresistible to adults as it is to children, MUJI's New York in a Bag comes with nine wooden city structures and six wooden cars. Included are New York City icons such as MoMA's original 1939 building, the Chrysler Building, the Statue of Liberty, and the Guggenheim Museum. The wood is from sustainable forests. Recommended for ages 4 and up.²

Imagine that becoming Athenian were as simple as opening a basket and finding therein the objects needed to secure your citizenship. This is the fantasy dramatized by Euripides' *Ion*, where things in a basket—a woven aegis, golden snakes, and an olive wreath—reunite the hero with his long-lost mother and his native city. There is something paradoxical, however, in “re-cognizing” what one has never known. Recognition presupposes familiarity, whereas *Ion*'s story is that of a foundling baby, abandoned at birth, then rescued and raised by Apollo in a foreign city. How is he to know his

1 In citing Greek passages of the *Ion*, I have used the Oxford Classical Texts edition of *Euripides Fabulae*, vol. II, edited by J. Diggle (1981); my translations of *Ion* are adapted from those of Lee 1997.

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2 http://www.momastore.org/museum/moma/ProductDisplay_New%20York%20City%20in%20a%20Bag_10451_10001_26625_-1_11451_11628_null (accessed April 20, 2009).

mother when he finds her? This essay sets out to explore the cultural agency of the tokens that enable this unusual kind of recognition. Recent studies have turned to Euripides' *Ion* as fundamental for understanding constructions of individual subjectivity and collective identity, both ancient and modern.³ But the material agents behind *Ion*'s fashioning of his Athenian self, the *symbola* exposed with him at birth, have gone largely unremarked, even as materiality and object studies gain firmer ground within classics.⁴ I will examine here how the *Ion*'s recognition tokens affirm an intimate bond between two strangers on stage and how they simultaneously draw the audience in the theater into a conversation about the nature of Athenian identity.

Traditional myths of autochthony deprived Athenian women of any semblance of political authority by ascribing the birth of citizens to the Earth, thereby negating the importance of human motherhood.⁵ But Euripides' *Ion*, as Arlene Saxonhouse argues, "calls the autochthony myth into question" (1986.259) and rewrites the female role: "Not only is the woman brought back into the foundation myth, but she is also placed squarely at its center in this play that primarily extols the unity of the mother and the child" (267). In *Ion*, the privilege of autochthonous ancestry is transmitted through the maternal line. We can extend Saxonhouse's insight even further, however. For by naming the heirlooms concealed in *Ion*'s birth basket, Kreousa effectively displaces her husband, Xouthos, as "father" of her son. Her recognition re-scripts the father's tenth-day naming (*dekatê*) of his infant son into a semi-ritualized viewing of the child's birth tokens by mother and adult son. Moreover, as replications (*mimēmata*) of Athenian icons, the recognition tokens present an intensely personal scene of recognition that is at the same time generic: whoever recognizes the tokens in the basket as *Ion* holds them up to view *is* *Ion*. Each member of the audience engages in an act of autopsy, whether actual or internal, that, in turn, becomes a moment of self-recognition.

3 See, especially, Zeitlin 1996.285–338 and Pedrick 2007, who reads *Ion* as a dramatic investigation of "the choices that bind a family together and form a romance of belonging" (186). Also Zacharia 2003, on the repressed violence at the heart of late fifth-century B.C.E. Athenian imperialism to which Euripides' *Ion* is a pointed response.

4 E.g., Bassi 2005 and Grethlein 2008. See, too, Taplin's (1978.97–98) brief but incisive comments on the recognition tokens in *Ion* and on tragic stage props more generally (77–100).

5 On the autochthony theme, see Loraux 1993.184–236 and Saxonhouse 1986.

OBJECTS AND INTERPELLATION

Souvenirs never go out of fashion, as the endless miniature replicas of Athena Parthenos sold in tourist shops throughout Greece will attest even today. The replica makes it possible for the tourist to take home a little piece of the city she has visited. And in case tourism seems a distinctly anachronistic lens through which to view *Ion*'s birth tokens, we should recall the play's Chorus pointing to the figures on the frieze of Apollo's temple (190–92): "See! Look there: Zeus's son killing the Lernean hydra with his golden sickle," says one member of the Chorus to another, excited to see a familiar mythological scene in a foreign city. Today's Manhattan tourist can carry away her own memories of the city's iconic structures, reproduced in miniature and niftily packaged as "New York in a Bag" by the Japanese design company MUJI (see the epigraph above). Neither *Ion* nor the Athenian Chorus will leave with concrete tokens of Delphi in hand, for it is Athens whose icons take center stage in the final recognition scene. But by setting the scene in Delphi, the play invites its mostly Athenian audience to see their city as if for the first time through the starry-eyed gaze of the tourist.

Is the tourist who carries away these trinkets an active agent of her own memories, or is she rather a vehicle for the cultural paraphernalia and myths that the city seeks to propagate about itself? The question of agency is important but elusive when we consider the links, both concrete and metaphorical, between place, subject, and memory. In both the ancient and modern contexts, things provide the concrete medium through which individuals activate their personal reminiscences via collective acts of spectatorship and/or consumerism. The tourist who purchases "New York in a Bag," for instance, participates collectively in a certain kind of consumerism but, at the same time, acquires an individual possession onto which to project her personal memories of the city she has visited. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart writes that "the souvenir is by definition always incomplete" requiring the "supplementary narrative" of its owner to activate its meaning (1993.136):

The plastic replica of the Eiffel Tower does not define and delimit the Eiffel Tower for us in the way that an architect's model would define and delimit a building. The souvenir replica is an allusion and not a model; it comes after the fact and remains both partial to and more expansive than

the fact. It will not function without the supplementary narrative discourse that both attaches it to its origins and creates a myth with regard to those origins.

Stewart's reflections on the plastic miniature of the Eiffel Tower apply to "New York in a Bag" and any other type of generic souvenir. But her comment about the mythmaking potential of such souvenirs is particularly suggestive for interpreting the "souvenirs" of Athens with which the action of Euripides' play culminates. Souvenirs, again to quote Stewart (1993.136), are the "point of origin for narrative." They authenticate and externalize the personal experiences to which they allude, making it possible to transform an immaterial event into a performable narrative. When Kreousa names each of the recognition tokens at the end of *Ion*, she reactivates personal memories that, at the same time, speak to the assembled audience in the theater of Dionysus. In so far as the trinkets through which *Ion* is authenticated are also symbols of the Athenian collectivity, they offer the audience "souvenirs" of a shared past. For the items in the basket materialize iconic moments of Athens' mythical history, from the ageless olive wreath symbolizing its foundation by Athena, to the golden snakes (modeled on those of Erichthonios) that protected the baby *Ion* until the Pythia rescued him on the temple steps of Delphi.

I introduce the concept of "interpellation," developed by the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, in order better to analyze the cultural mechanism whereby theatrical experience and spectatorship engender a collective Athenian ideology.⁶ For Althusser, interpellation is a central feature of how ideology (or an "ideological state apparatus") constitutes subjects. In a passage from "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (reprinted in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*), Althusser explains the performative effect of ideology through the metaphor of "hailing" (1971.174):

I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing,

6 See Wohl 1998.xxxi–xxxiv for a lucid and more expansive account of Althusserian "interpellation" and its applications to Greek tragedy.

and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!" (emphasis in original)

Althusser's example highlights the deictic interplay between the voice of the authority figure (the policeman) summoning the potential subject and the "interpellated" individual's corresponding recognition of himself in the pronoun "you." By turning around when he is "hailed," the individual acknowledges the authority of the recruiter to subject him (or her) to the law: he becomes, at that moment, a subject.⁷ But the same reflexive recognition can be achieved when a thing rather than a person "hails" an individual. Xouthos's naming of "Ion" in the first of two recognition scenes is an act of verbal hailing that fails, whereas Kreousa's subsequent recognition of Ion through his birth tokens attests to the power of these things to interpellate him as an Athenian subject.

NAMING AND PATERNITY

Only those children who had acquired a name were beyond the risk of infanticide in classical Athens.⁸ Fathers typically named their children on the tenth day after birth, the *dekatê*.⁹ Mothers no doubt had some say in the matter,¹⁰ but from a legal point of view, fathers were the namegivers and naming was a male-gendered practice.¹¹ Naming episodes from cosmogonic poetry also depict male gods in the role of namegivers; their speech acts in this context assume generative force. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, for example, the gods' collective creation of the ancestor of

7 Cf. Wohl 1998.xxxi: "The theory also suggests a mode of power that is generative, that creates subjects, rather than one that simply manipulates or represses preexistent subjects."

8 See, further, Pedrick 2007.46–50 and *passim* on the emotional repercussions of infant exposure in classical Athens.

9 For the tenth-day naming, Deubner 1952 and Garland 1990.94–95; see Dunbar's note (1995) on line 494 of *Birds*, also 922–23 for sacrifices and feasting. Primary sources for the *dekatê* include: Demosthenes 39.22, 40.28; Euripides *El.* 654 and 1124–28; and Eur. *IT* 499, on the father being the one to name.

10 As in the case of the paradoxically named Pheidippides (Aristophanes *Clouds* 62–67).

11 A father may even have had the right to revoke his son's name through *apokêruxis*, a practice to which Euripides alludes at *Alc.* 737–38, although it remains uncertain whether this right was ever actually exercised; arguing that it was, Harrison (1968–71.75–78) cites Demosthenes *Boiot.* 39.1.39.

mortal women is only complete when, at Zeus's command, Hermes names her "Pandora" (80–82). Likewise, in Pherekydes of Syros's cosmogonic poem, Zas renames the primordial goddess Gê—originally she was called Chthoniê—in honor of his "gift" to her of the earth.¹² Naming in both of these cases is an exercise of authority that subordinates the named (female) to the namegiver (male).¹³

In *Ion*, male characters (Hermes and Xouthos) perform acts of naming on another male figure (Ion).¹⁴ But they encounter resistance from both the named subject (Ion) and from Kreousa, who will appropriate the practice of naming to her own ends. In the course of the play, Ion is named twice. The first time is in the prologue, when Hermes exercises his privilege to be the first to use the name that Apollo will establish for his son. But by implicating himself in the naming process, in a sense even stealing the thunder of Xouthos and Apollo, Hermes forecasts the onomastic troubles to come.¹⁵ Confusion ensues in the later scene where Xouthos tries to claim Ion as the boy whom the oracle of Apollo has promised him. As Hermes also relates in the prologue, Apollo will give Ion to Xouthos when the latter seeks the oracle's advice about his childlessness, telling him the fiction that Ion is his child by birth (69–72). The subsequent encounter between Xouthos and Ion reveals the comic repercussions of the god's lie and of Xouthos's ignorance.

In his first dialogue with Kreousa, Ion refers to himself as the property of Apollo, stating the ownership that would normally be established by the father's naming. "I know only one thing," he says, "that I belong to Loxias" (Λοξίου κεκλήμεθα, 311). Ion here claims to be the son of Apollo, for the god's name in the genitive case, together with *keklēmai*, is akin to a patronymic.¹⁶ Although it was Apollo's oracle that promised Xouthos the first person coming out (ἐξιόντι, 535) of the temple as his son, a comic misunderstanding undermines the effectiveness of Xouthos's naming. When

12 The naming occurs in F14 Schibli (= B1); for a text and commentary of the fragments, see Schibli 1990.

13 Cf. Arthur 1982.73–74 on Zeus's solidification of his power in the *Theogony* by "giving gifts" to female deities, such as Hecate and Styx.

14 *Ion* 80–81 and 661–63; it is Apollo's design that his son should be given the name Ion (74–75).

15 On Hermes as a disordering force, see Kahn 1979.203: "Hermès est un brouilleur de piste, un trafiquant, un brigand. S'il peut représenter l'ordonnancement d'un espace, il peut aussi bien en être le désorganisateur. Il est à la fois l'ordre et le désordre."

16 See, e.g., Pindar *Pyth.* 3.67 for the same construction (genitive of the name with κέκλημαι).

he sees him exiting the temple, Xouthos greets Ion triumphantly as *teknon* (517), an appellation that Ion rejects along with the older man's attempt to embrace him.¹⁷ The comic misfiring of Xouthos's greeting is symptomatic of larger problems. Apollo's riddling language has complicated the issue of paternity, which is famously difficult for men to verify even under normal circumstances.¹⁸ Xouthos has been misled by what is, in fact, a false oracle. And for Ion, no sooner has the issue of paternal origin been set aside, then he longs to know more about his mother (563–65).

Beyond merely duping Xouthos, Apollo's oracular speech prods Ion into seeking more concrete clues to the mystery of his birth. Ion's interrogation of Xouthos points up the latter's striking absence of memory and stokes the hero's zeal to uncover the past as it really happened. At line 533, Ion assumes that Xouthos has not understood the oracle correctly—ἐσφάλης αἰνιγμ' ἀκούσας. Reassured about Xouthos's aural comprehension, Ion then asks him to repeat the oracle word for word, interrupting every half line of Xouthos's response with demands for further clarification. When the god promised a son, did he mean "your son by birth, or a gift"? (σὸν γεγῶτ' ἢ δῶρον ἄλλων; 537), Ion wants to know. In his reply, Xouthos neatly conflates the two categories: Ion, he says, is a gift but also his own (δῶρον, ὄντα δ' ἐξ ἐμοῦ). But Ion is not Xouthos's son by birth. Moreover, he is not really Apollo's to give away either. The deception works on Xouthos, who has no recollection of Ion's conception. Her rape by Apollo, however, is still very much present in Kreousa's mind, and this will lead her to contest the god's gift to Xouthos with her own "gift" (of poison) to Ion.

Ion questions Xouthos pointedly about the circumstances of his birth, but Xouthos can remember nothing, an amnesia that contrasts markedly with Kreousa's mnemonic sensitivity to her past. With Kreousa, a single word, *Μακραί*, was all that was required to revive the memory of her encounter with Apollo (283–84). The reconstruction of events from Xouthos's past falls to Ion. Xouthos acknowledges that he might have conceived Ion during the Bacchic festivities in Delphi in which he participated

17 Knox 1979.260, following Wilamowitz 1926.111, suggests that Ion misreads Xouthos's greeting as a homosexual advance, even though, as Lee 1997 ad loc. points out, "τέκνον is not a word regularly used in sexual approaches (contrast παῖς, παιδικά, 'boy, darling boy'), and it can be taken simply as an affectionate term between an older man and someone whom he looks on as his 'child.'"

18 E.g., Homer *Od.* 1.215–16: μήτηρ μὲν τ' ἐμέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε / οὐκ οἶδ'· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἐδὼν γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω.

before he married Kreousa.¹⁹ But there is no specific memory behind his words. In the end, Ion accepts Xouthos as his father because, in his own words, “it is appropriate not to distrust the god” (557).

Ion’s pursuit of the details of his birth is not simply a matter of intellectual curiosity. He is concerned primarily with his social status in Athens and with the circumstances of his birth in so far as these will impinge on that status. At Delphi, Ion is anonymous but well integrated into the aristocratic network of reciprocity. In Athens, however, his foreign-born father would make him a *nothos* (591–92).²⁰ Ion understands that not being native born would be especially difficult among “the renowned people of Athens [who] are autochthonous and not a foreign race” (589–90), for the identity offered him by Xouthos’s paternity would not be recognized in Athens: “And if I live there with this shameful burden steering clear of public life, I shall be called a “nobody” (καὶ τοῦτ’ ἔχων τοῦναιδος ἀσθενῆς μένων ἴμῃδεν / καὶ οὐδὲν ὦν† κεκλήσομαι, 593–94).²¹ While it might offer him superficial relief from anonymity, Ion predicts that his name would have little currency within Athenian social networks.²²

The irony, of course, is that far from being “nobody,” the fortuitously named Ion will, in fact, bestow on Athenians their illustrious *Ionian* heritage.²³ We know from the start (74–75) that the hero of the play will be named as the eponymous ancestor of the Greeks of Asia Minor (or *Ionians*).²⁴ As Carol Dougherty (1996) argues, Euripides reconciles two competing strands within Athenian civic ideology—autochthonous birth in Athens

19 See Zeitlin 1996.300ff. on Dionysus’s pervasive presence in the play.

20 Patterson 1990.67 observes that Euripides appears especially interested in the heroic *nothos* (e.g., Ion or Theseus) who exposes the “ironies of Athenian social conventions and pretensions.” On bastards in tragedy, see Ebbott 2003.

21 There are not enough syllables at to make up a whole line at 594; Kovacs 1999 prints: <αὐτὸς τὸ> μῃδὲν κούδένων κεκλήσομαι (following the conjectures of Badham and Scaliger), and Lee 1997 ad loc. argues for the correctness of Seidler’s (very similar) correction: <καὐτὸς> μῃδὲν κούδένων (“I shall be called a nobody, myself sprung from nobodies”).

22 Ion conceives of his social relations in Athens in negative terms only: he will incur mockery (*gelôta*) and a reputation for stupidity (*môrian*) from other citizens (600).

23 Walsh 1978.312 speculates that “in presenting the Ionians as the kin of Athens and the progeny of Apollo, Euripides elevates their status, and suggests perhaps that they deserve better treatment than they are getting from the Athenians.” In line with his political reading of the play, Walsh favors a later date (411, i.e., after the Ionian revolt of 412), so that the play would be performed before an audience that was actively engaged with the issue of relaxing the requirements for citizenship, on which see Ogden 1996.70–77.

24 See Lee 1997.38–39 on pre-Euripidean references to Ion. The name Xouthos appears in Hesiod frag. 9 M–W, and Xouthos and Ion are convincingly restored by conjecture in

versus connections with Ionia—by making Ion the son of Apollo Patrôos and Kreousa.²⁵ Whereas Apollo Patrôos is the mythical ancestor of both Athenians and Ionians, Kreousa represents her family's autochthonous and exclusively Athenian heritage. For the Athenian audience, therefore, much rides on Ion's acceptance of his "chance" identity. But he must do so only on terms favorable to the autochthonous, maternal line to which he is materially linked. And his resistance to leaving Delphi is considerable.

In defense of his life at Delphi, Ion asserts that he would much rather live as a fortunate commoner (*démotês*, 625) than as a king with base men as friends, fearing death at the hands of noble men (626–28). It is in his rejection of a potential life in Athens, ironically, that Ion shows himself to be most Athenian: his rhetoric is anti-tyrannical and he seems to be familiar with Perikles' citizenship law of 451–50 B.C.E. in so far as he recognizes that lack of Athenian parentage from both sides would render him ineligible for full citizen rights. Xouthos offers to persuade Kreousa to turn over the rule of the land (*skêptrâ*) to Ion (659–60), but these words of consolation underscore instead Xouthos's own powerlessness. The scepter is not his to give, just as Ion is not Apollo's alone to pass on to Xouthos. Nevertheless, Xouthos proceeds with his naming of Ion, once again undermining his authority to name as he speaks (661–63):

And I name you Ion (Ἴωνα δ' ὀνομάζω σε) as is befitting
of chance since, on my way out of the god's sanctuary
(ἐξῆτόντι μοι), you were the first one to cross my path.

The etymology of Ion's name captures well the deceit and intrigue in which Ion's parentage is heavily embroiled. What Xouthos calls "chance" (*tuchê*), we know to be the work of Apollo. Moreover, Ion, too, at line 539, recognizes the work of "chance" in bringing about his meeting with Xouthos. He asks pointedly where this *tuchê* has come from, in this way hinting that if *tuchê* has a source, events are not as random as they might appear.²⁶ By giving Ion a name, Xouthos tries to confirm that the boy is his. From the

frag. 10a M–W. Cole 1997.88 notes that in Euripides' genealogy, Erechtheus has replaced Deukalion's son Hellen as the proto-founder of all the Greeks.

25 See Walsh 1978.310–12, Dougherty 1996.261–62, and Zacharia 2003.44 on the relevance of the cult of Apollo Patrôos at Athens for Ion's paternity in Euripides, and Zeitlin 1996.338 and Dougherty 1996 on Ion as a proto-colonist.

26 See, further, Giannopoulou 2000 on divine agency and *tuchê* in the *Ion*.

outset, Xouthos has approached Ion with the intention of claiming what he believes to be his own. Turning back again to the start of the dialogue, we see that Xouthos repeatedly says that he is touching what belongs to him. “Am I insane for wanting to kiss (*philein*) what is dearest to me (*ta philtata*) after I have found it?” (521). And at 523: “I will grasp you. It’s not as if I’m seizing another’s property, but I have discovered what is my very own.” Yet Xouthos and Ion share nothing in common. They have no memories, places, or history to refer to, nothing apart from the ambiguous words of the oracle and the “chance” encounter that brought them together.

By contrast, Kreousa’s “naming” (1414) of Ion’s birth tokens at the end of the play puts her in a position to challenge the father’s claim to paternity and all that it entails. As part of her concerted effort to protect her family line from external corruption, the very conditions of subjectivity undergo a dynamic shift from the realm of speech to that of things. Her recognition not only resolves the mystery of Ion’s identity, it underscores both the material and gendered aspects of the self.²⁷ *Ion* demonstrates that the creation of a human subject, an Athenian citizen in this case, requires much more than the simple act of voicing a man’s name—as important as the performance of that public appellation certainly was.

ANONYMOUS RECIPROCITY: THE POLITICS OF *CHARIS* AND *TROPHÊ*

It is a cultural topos in ancient Greece that parents, having provided *trophê* (food and nurture) for their children, expected to be repaid in kind.²⁸ The Pythia and Apollo are Ion’s surrogate parents at Delphi,²⁹ and he construes his relationship with them as one that is based on a sustainable *tropheia*, renewed on a daily basis through such seemingly trivial tasks as sweeping the temple grounds or shooing away birds from the god’s dwelling. These activities are also in keeping with Ion’s presentation of his life at Delphi as a utopia of purely aristocratic *xenia* where neither gold nor money stored in the temple treasury corrupt the social interactions among

27 For different approaches to the play’s gender dynamics, see, e.g., Dunn 1990, Hoffer 1996, Loraux 1993, Rabinowitz 1993.189–222, Scafuro 1990, Segal 1999, and Zeitlin 1996.285–338.

28 Cf. Plutarch’s *Solon* 22.1 and 22.4 on legal exemptions for sons whose fathers had not taught them a craft (*technê*) and sons born from a *hetaira* rather than a betrothed wife.

29 Ion refers to the priestess as his mother at 321 and 1324; compare also 49.

philoï or introduce the element of fear that corrupts individual wealth and fosters tyranny.

Although technically an orphan and slave before Xouthos encounters him, Ion is nevertheless part of an extended family that includes Apollo, the priestess, and even the temple building itself.³⁰ From the *trophê* of this “family,” Ion is fed, housed, and clothed, and, in return, he hosts visitors and sweeps the grounds clean.³¹ He represents the upkeep of the temple as if it were a duty being performed for living parents (τοὺς θρέψαντας / Φοίβου ναοὺς θεραπεύω, 110–11), and calls Phoibos his birth father (Φοῖβος μοι γενέτωρ πατήρ, 136). As *chrysophylax* at Delphi (54), Ion oversees the gold and money that constitute Apollo’s wealth.³² When Xouthos, however, presents Ion with the prospect of possessing his own riches in a city “where your father’s rich *skêptron* and much wealth (*ploutos*) await you” (578–79), Ion reacts scornfully. After discussing the problematic issues of autochthony and legitimacy in Athens in the earlier part of his speech (585–620), Ion takes on the trials of tyranny and wealth in the last part (629–31):

You might say that gold overcomes all these things and that it is a pleasure to be wealthy (πλουτεῖν τε τερπνόν). But I myself do not want to be slandered even with wealth in my hands (ἐν χερσὶ σώϊζων ὄλβον), nor do I want to have troubles (οὐδ’ ἔχειν πόνους).

Ion aligns gold, *ploutos*, and tyranny with having bad friends and painful trials (*ponous*).³³ What he has at present—moderate economic resources (*metria*, 632), good friends, and a “democratic” way of life—appears infinitely preferable to Xouthos’s wealth.

Ion presents his life at Delphi as enacting an ideal form of *xenia*. He has the leisure in which to enjoy the company of those who come to visit the sanctuary (634–35). Moreover, all of his guests are aristocratic and

30 Synodinou 1977.91 emphasizes Ion’s relief at 556 at being able to escape his slavery; Hoffer 1996.294 notes Ion’s ambivalent attitude towards his slavery.

31 See *Ion* 55, 315 (on the temple as Ion’s house); 52, 323 (on altars and visitors feeding Ion); and 326–27 (on clothing).

32 See Strabo 9.3.4 on dedications of various kinds, including money (*chrēmata*), at Delphi; Miller 1990.31 notes that silver coins were also found dedicated in the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea.

33 Wohl 1998.86–91 examines the slippage between the aristocratic, “enchanted” *agalma* and the more pedestrian *ploutos* in Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*.

noble, not the sort who would “push one off the road” (636–37).³⁴ Visitors to the sanctuary keep Ion cheerfully occupied as a host, as he explains to Xouthos, for “as soon as I’ve sent one group off, another group of guests arrive, so that I am always pleasantly renewed among new arrivals” (640–41). The constant circulation of temporary visitors to the god’s sanctuary at Delphi offers an idealized representation of the coexistence of short- and long-term transactional orders, to borrow the socio-economic terminology of J. Parry and M. Bloch (1989).³⁵ Money and dedications from individual visitors contribute to the more lasting wealth of the sanctuary itself, wealth of which Ion is the *chrysophylax*. This, in turn, enables the hosting of both new and returning visitors, thereby projecting the cycle of hospitality into eternity. Ion stands at the threshold between the two “spheres” as the permanent host to Apollo’s transient visitors at Delphi; in return for his services, he enjoys the long-term hospitality of the god and his temple.³⁶

In explaining his decision to remain at Delphi, Ion sets in play against one another the *ploutos* that Xouthos has promised with the network of aristocratic *charis*, “gratitude,” no amount of money can buy. “You might say that gold overcomes all these things” (629), says Ion, anticipating Xouthos’s objection and clearly stating his own belief that it does not compensate at all. Ion does not repudiate Delphi’s gold, which sustains and is sustained by the flow of visitors to the god’s precinct, but rather *ploutos*, the gold that is disembedded from the positive social relations of *philia* and *xenia*.³⁷ If one is living as a *tyrannos*, surrounded by base friends and constantly plagued by fear and suspicion (621–26), the pleasures of gold are small recompense.

Ion’s preference for *trophê* over *ploutos* harmonizes well with the Chorus’ praise of children in the first antistrophe of their first stasimon. A safeguard (*alkar*, 481) in bad times, a dear possession (*philon*, 482) in

34 Parallels to Ion’s “middling” ideology may be found in Pindar *Pyth.* 11.52–54 and *Nem.* 8.35–39, where the poet mentions transmitting *kleos* to his children (cf. the διαδέκτορα πλοῦτον, “inherited wealth,” praised by the Chorus at *Ion* 478).

35 See Parry and Bloch 1989.23–30 on transactional orders as a way of conceptualizing the co-dependence (but also conflict) between short-term and long-term exchanges, the former motivated by individual appropriation and profit, while the latter aim at sustaining “the ideal order of an unchanging community.”

36 Cf. *Ion* 109–11, 182, 683–84, and 1190 on reciprocity between Ion and the temple building. On reciprocity between divinities and mortals in this play, see Yunis 1988.123–38.

37 See Von Reden 1995 and Kurke 1999.5 on “embedded” vs. “disembedded” wealth; on the opposition between elitist and middling ideologies, see Morris 1996 and 2000.155–91.

good times, children are more precious than either wealth or royalty, the Chorus conclude (485–87):

ἐμοὶ μὲν πλούτου τε πάρος
 βασιλικῶν τ' εἶεν θαλάμων
 ἥ τροφαὶ κήδειοι κεδνῶν γε τέκνων†.

May the *trophai* of children, at any rate, be preferable to wealth and royal palaces, for me.

The *ploutos* mentioned above is the excessive wealth that sits in royal homes. As such, it stands in clear contrast to the διαδέκτορα πλοῦτον (“inherited wealth,” 478), mentioned by the Chorus a few lines earlier, that is passed on in succession from father to children and “on the promise of children to come” (ἐτέροις ἐπὶ τέκνοις, 480)—wealth that does not interfere with but rather perpetuates the family.³⁸

The Chorus pit one kind of *ploutos*—that which consists of children, familial succession, and “moderate” wealth (κτεάνων μετρίων, 490)—against the kind of *ploutos* that is traditionally associated with negative reciprocity and the hoarding of resources. In this way, they both anticipate and offer support for Ion’s later rejection of Xouthos’s *ploutos*. As Ion recognizes, his acceptance of Xouthos’s wealth would cause strife in his adoptive father’s household and disembody Ion from his “family” at Delphi.³⁹ These various issues of wealth, citizenship, and reciprocity hang in the balance, awaiting decisive resolution from Apollo and his public face, the Pythia. But there is another kind of problematic *charis* to which the play gives voice and that will similarly depend on the basket of props for effective closure; it is to Kreousa’s side of the story that I turn next.

38 See Mastrorade’s related discussion of *Phoenissae* 549 (1994 ad loc.), with references to Archilochus 19 West, Solon 32, 33 West, and Herodotus 5.92; also Kurke 1991.214–18 (on *Pyth.* 11.52–54 and *Nem.* 8.35–39). For the argument against having children, see the Chorus at Euripides *Med.* 1090ff.

39 Loraux, commenting on the paradox that the real father plays the role of foster parent, remarks (1993.202): “It is true that one of Apollo’s attributes is that of *kourotrophos*, but this function presupposes a fictive paternity; thus, in respect of his own son, it is precisely a role that Apollo ought not to be able to assume.”

DIALOGUES ON *CHARIS*

Adele Scafuro (1990) argues that Euripides invented a new discourse about rape in this play, a topic that afforded women little opportunity to speak in their own voices.⁴⁰ Kreousa frames her rape by Apollo (881–922) in terms of *charis*.⁴¹ Like Ion, Kreousa puts a high premium on reciprocity. Her complaint against Apollo focuses on his failure to uphold his side of the *charis* relationship entailed by the birth of their child. Kreousa has kept silent for years about her liaison with Apollo, and Xouthos knows nothing of his wife's connection to the god. When Kreousa does finally speak about her rape, first indirectly (under the guise of reporting a "friend's" misfortune) and then directly, her speech is hedged with shame.⁴²

Seeking information from the Chorus about her husband, Kreousa appeals to both their subordinate status as her slaves and their shared experiences as women (747–51):

Women, faithful servants of my loom and shuttle, what fortune has my husband found on the subject of children, which is why we are here? Tell me: for if you relate good news, you will not waste your *charis* on an untrustworthy mistress.

The women to whom she speaks are her slaves (*douleuma*), but Kreousa avoids simply issuing commands. Rather, she refers to a common source of female solidarity—the loom and the shuttle—and hopes that these *things* may persuade them to choose loyalty to her over her husband. She calls her slave women “trustworthy” (*douleuma piston*), hoping that they will be, and promises that she will not be *apistos* in receiving their *charis*. Kreousa's appeal to *charis* with the Chorus achieves its desired effect: she gets

40 Scafuro 1990.140–49; see, too, Omitowaju 2002.185–86 on the emotion-laden adjectives that punctuate Kreousa's bitter critique of Apollo at *Ion* 891–901.

41 LaRue 1963.130–35 discusses unreciprocated *charis* in Kreousa's monody, especially the replacement of the typical *hypomnēsis*, recalling the god's favor in the past, with the scene of Apollo's rape (133).

42 Cf. *Ion* 336 (αἰδοῦμεθα) and 860–61 (πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφίηνω / εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ' ἀπολειφθῶ;).

the information she wants about her husband's visit to the oracle, and the women remain loyal to her throughout the rest of the play.⁴³

For Kreousa, each "husband" has violated the unwritten rules of *charis* in a different way, and upon learning that Apollo has given Xouthos a child, she openly characterizes both of them as "ungrateful traitors to her bed" (λέκτρων προδότας ἀχαρίστους, 880). Apollo she depicts as a god who both in the past and the present returns *charis* where it is not due. Later in the same monody, Kreousa confronts Apollo directly with the secret from her past (891–96):

Grabbing me by my white wrists, you led me as I was
shouting, "Oh, mother," into the lair of the cave; you,
my god-lover, shamelessly doing a favor (*charin*) to
Aphrodite.⁴⁴

When he raped her, Apollo gave "*charis* to Kupris," excluding Kreousa from the gratitude that was her due.⁴⁵ From her sexual relations with Apollo, Kreousa is left with only the worst imaginings of what has happened to the son that was "snatched" from her and left as prey for the birds. The verb she uses to convey this imagined horror—ἀρπασθείς, 903—is also appropriate for victims of rape.⁴⁶ Kreousa underlines the similarity between what she and her son have suffered at Apollo's hands. This child—παῖς μοι καὶ σοί (904)—is the material product of the *charis* that Apollo took from Kreousa. The child's imagined destruction, therefore, serves as a vivid reminder of the god's failure to reciprocate.

Apollo gave "*charis* to Kupris," while Kreousa gave him a son (τίκτω δ' ἅ δύστανός σοι / κοῦρον, 897–98), and now the god gives a son to Xouthos, although he had received no previous *charis* from him (χάριν οὐ προλαβών, 914). The appearance of this new child (the god's

43 When they break their promise to keep silent and misinform Kreousa that she will remain childless forever, the Chorus express their solidarity against men (832–34) and try to goad her into taking action against her future stepson.

44 On the overlapping visual imagery of rape and marriage, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1973 and Jenkins 1983.140, who emphasizes the similarity of the bride's experience with that of the abductee.

45 The term *prassôn* may indicate Apollo's participation in a commodity rather than gift exchange.

46 Compare Herodotus 1.1: ἀρπασθῆναι of the capture/rape of Io.

gift) reminds Kreousa of what Apollo still owes her, and forces her finally to seek repayment for this *charis* directly. When Kreousa's thoughts turn from injury to revenge, they trace a path similar to that of another Euripidean heroine in a conjugal crisis. Both Medea and Kreousa point to their children as material proof of the marital *charis* that has been exchanged between themselves and their "husbands."⁴⁷ Each heroine, moreover, stresses what she has given to her male partner in the past, thereby offering a direct calculation of the debt that has not been paid. Revenge becomes a way of addressing this imbalance.

OBJECTIFYING THE PAST: AN AEGIS AND GORGON BLOOD

In an attempt to avoid a misunderstanding with her husband, Kreousa asks Ion to keep silent about her "friend's" distress, "lest the conversation move in a direction in which we did not send it" and she incur shame (395–97). She fears that her words may wield unexpected force, just as Ion's utterance of *Μακραί* shocked her into painful recollection earlier. This is a striking admission in the first person of a speaker's lack of control over her own speech act. Silence, Kreousa suggests, is the only way to overcome the subversive potential of language—its ability to undermine the speaker's intention—but silence alone lacks a certain agency.⁴⁸ Objects, on the other hand, offer a way of answering speech with silence without closing down the conversation.

Kreousa's hidden transfer of poison to Ion sparks a dialogue with Apollo on the subject of *charis*, forcing him to answer for his past actions in a way that her words could not. Given under the false pretense of *charis*, the poison paves the way toward recognition between Ion and Kreousa. Apollo intervenes to prevent Ion's death, and then again to prevent Ion from killing Kreousa. The basket's arrival on stage interrupts this second murderous subplot and initiates the final recognition through objects that, in addition to bestowing identity, have exerted a protective, almost talismanic force over Ion.

A talisman's special power to endow its owner with political and

47 On children, cf. *Ion* 904, 916, and *Medea* 490. Notice that Medea (*Med.* 508) and Kreousa (*Ion* 897) both use the ethical dative (σοι).

48 E.g., Kreousa at 859: ὦ ψυχά, πῶς σιγήσω; ("Oh, my soul, how am I to keep silent?"). Cf. 868, 869.

religious authority derives from its divine origin and consecration through ritual (Faraone 1992.3–17). An example of what Louis Gernet termed “hereditary talismans” is the Golden Vine that belonged originally to Dionysus but then brought about the recognition between Hypsipyle and her two sons (Thoas and Euneos) in Euripides’ lost *Hypsipyle*.⁴⁹ As a “symbol” of the family (γένους σύμβολον, *Anth. Pal.* 3.10) to which it was given as a gift, the vine is revealed at a critical moment in order to save Hypsipyle from death (Gernet 1981.139). In much the same way, the tokens in *Ion* effect a recognition at the moment when Ion is intent on killing Kreousa.⁵⁰ Ion even refers to the objects in the basket as μητρὸς σύμβολα (1386), the “symbols of his mother” that Apollo has saved for him and that Ion intends to rededicate to him.⁵¹ These hereditary talismans are the things that truly qualify Ion for living in Athens; as symbols of investiture, moreover, they constitute an interesting mixture of the divine and human.⁵² The tokens do not qualify as *agalmata* according to Gernet’s strict criterion of divine craftsmanship.⁵³ But the basket (*antipêx*) in which they are kept remains miraculously invulnerable to the effects of time. The tokens themselves, moreover, reflect the history of Athens as seen through the bloodline of the Erechtheids.

Two categories of heirlooms come into play in the ultimately successful recognition of Ion.⁵⁴ The first consists of the inheritance that Kreousa wears on her own body: two drops of Gorgon blood that have been passed down through her family line and are at present contained in a golden bracelet worn around her wrist. Second are the gifts enclosed in the *antipêx* in which she exposed Ion.⁵⁵ These include Kreousa’s weaving sampler (with

49 As also recorded in *Anth. Pal.* 3.10 (Bond 1963.148): . . . Εὔνοος γεγλυμμένος καὶ θόας, οὓς ἐγέννησεν Ὑψιπύλη, ἀναγνωρίζομενοι τῇ μητρὶ καὶ τὴν χρυσὴν δεικνύντες ἄμπελον, ὅπερ ἦν αὐτοῖς τοῦ γένους σύμβολον, καὶ ρυόμενοι αὐτὴν τῆς διὰ τὸν Ἀρχεμόρου θάνατον παρ’ Ἑυρυδίκῃ τιμωρίας.

50 Bond 1963.19 posits that the golden vine (mentioned in *Anth. Pal.* 3.10) is referred to at *Hyps. frag.* 765 *TrGF*: οἰνάνθα τρέφει τὸν ἱερὸν βότρυν and *frag.* 759a.1632 *TrGF*, where the words οἰνωπὸν βότρυν appear.

51 Cf. συμβόλαια at 411, also noted by Loraux 1993.187 n. 14.

52 See Gernet 1981.132–34 on the myths of the Golden Fleece (of Atreus and the Argonauts) as reflecting investiture ceremonies.

53 On *agalmata*, see Gernet 1981.114–19 and Wohl 1998.61–63 and passim. The *agalma* par excellence can be found in Euripides’ *IT*, where the cult statue of Artemis is said to have “fallen from the sky” into the Taurian temple (87–88).

54 I use the term heirloom to designate an object that is given a genealogy.

55 On the *antipêx* as a round wicker basket with a hinged lid, see Bergson 1960 and Young 1941, with visual parallels.

a *gorgoneion*), two golden snakes (made in imitation of the live snakes that Athena put inside Erichthonios's basket), and a still blooming olive wreath. These two categories of heirlooms play very different roles in Ion's acquisition of an Athenian identity. His encounter with the Gorgon blood with which Kreousa tries to poison him is a quasi-ephebic initiation rite testing Ion's heroic potential.⁵⁶ Athenian ephebes were assigned to protect the frontier regions of Athenian territory (Aeschines *On the Embassy* 167, Plato *Laws* 6, 760b), thus occupying a geographic space reflective of their social liminality.⁵⁷ Ion's time inside the tent (a liminal space from the point of view of Athens or Delphi) is thus analogous to the Athenian ephebe's journey to the frontiers of his society; when he returns, he will occupy a more central position in the civic, religious, and military life of his city. The second set of heirlooms, those hidden in the basket, are more closely aligned with tokens of investiture, which are typically not revealed until the moment when they are claimed by an heir to the throne and shown to validate his authority.⁵⁸

Nearly all the characters in the play apart from Xouthos are aware that Ion's move to Athens would threaten the purity of the Erechtheid family line. For example, the Old Man dwells on Ion's ignoble birth. It would have been a lesser fault, he says, had Xouthos decided to adopt a well-born (παρ' εὐγενοῦς / μητρός) son (839–42). But since he has used deception and adopted the son of a slave woman, Kreousa is entitled to seek revenge. The Chorus concur when, for example, they pray in their third stasimon that "no one except one of the well-born Erechtheids may ever arrive to rule the city" (1058–60). They know, too, that Kreousa will not tolerate foreign-

56 On eliciting a comparison between fifth-century tragedy and a fourth-century B.C.E. institution, see Vidal-Naquet 1986.106: "Everyone would now agree that the ephebia of the fourth century B.C. had its roots in ancient practices of 'apprenticeship,' whose object was to introduce young men to their future roles as citizens and head of families—that is, as full member of the community." See also Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1990.161–79 on Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and the *ephebeia*. On terms in the play used to describe Ion's adolescence, see Loraux 1993.186 n. 8.

57 On the institution of the *ephebeia*, see further Vidal-Naquet 1986.106–28, 147–56, and, on its relationship to Greek tragedy, Winkler 1990.20–37.

58 As examples, Gernet 1981.135–40 cites the sandals and sword of Theseus, hidden under a rock by Aegeus until his son is of an age (i.e., an ephebe) to claim them, and the legends of the Golden Fleece. Cf. Herodotus 4.9–10 on the bow and girdle that Herakles leaves with the snake-woman who has conceived three sons by him; the son who is able to string the bow and put on the girdle will win the right to remain in the country that will henceforth be called "Scythia" after him (Skythes).

ers ruling in her house while she is still alive. But Kreousa's recital of the pedigree of the Gorgon blood puts into even clearer perspective what is at stake in keeping *Ion* out of the family.

When Kreousa narrates her revenge plot, she is at the same time recounting her family's history. She has rejected several unacceptable plans for revenge already, and the Old Man is annoyed by her lack of courage and resolve (984). The question she puts to him at 987 would seem to be yet a further distraction, and a pedantic one at that: ἄκουε τοῖνυν· οἶσθα γηγενῇ μάχην; ("Listen now, are you familiar with the battle of Gods and Giants?"). Why recall a mythical event from the long distant past? But from what follows, we realize that by narrating the Gigantomachy, Kreousa both seeks support from her family's mythical origins and recreates traditional mythology for the present.⁵⁹ First in its telling and later in its execution, her revenge becomes a reciprocal engagement with the past.

Kreousa puts a new spin on several details in the mythical battle of the gods and Giants and the traditional account of the Gorgon's slaying. In Hesiod's *Theogony* (274–83), the Gorgons are the offspring of the sea creatures Phorkys and Keto, and they live on a faraway island near the Hesperides; in Kreousa's account, Earth gives birth to a Gorgon who is an ally (*summachon*) to her children against the gods (989–90).⁶⁰ Traditionally, Perseus is the slayer of the mortal Gorgon (Medusa), but Kreousa says that Athena killed her (991).⁶¹ In line 994 (generally now printed following 991), the Old Man questions the ancient authority of this myth.⁶² "Is this the story of old that I have heard?" he asks. His question focuses attention on the antiquity, or supposed antiquity, of Kreousa's version.⁶³ Her response (995) should be read as an attempt to strengthen her account by

59 Rosivach 1977.290–93 compares Kreousa's Gigantomachy narrative with that of the *parodos*.

60 In Hesiod's *Theog.* 274–83, there are three Gorgons of which Medousa is the only mortal. An aegis with a Gorgon head appears at *Il.* 5.738–42. In the *Kypria*, Medousa's head is given to Athena for her aegis, and in *Aspis* 229–37, there are references to snaky locks and snakes around the waists of Gorgons; cf. snakes at Pindar *Py.* 10.46–48, 12.9–12.

61 Perseus is mentioned for the first time as the slayer of Medousa at *Theog.* 280; see also Euripides *Andromeda* frag. 123 *TrGF* and *El.* 459ff. on Perseus as the Gorgon-slayer.

62 I follow Kirchoff's transposition of lines 992–93 to follow 997, as printed by Diggle, Parmentier and Grégoire, and Kovacs. The traditional order is defended by Owen 1939 ad loc., Mastronarde 1975.174 n. 33, Biehl 1992, and Lee 1997 ad loc., in which case θῆρακ' (993) would mean "breast" rather than "breastplate."

63 Mastronarde (1975.174 n. 33) reads line 994 as an attempt to give to "a fairly recent Attic variant or even ad hoc innovation by Euripides . . . specious prestige."

providing material evidence: “[Yes, you heard] that Athena wears the skin of that creature (ταύτης) on her chest.” With her answer, Kreousa subtly revises the question. The Old Man was asking about the tradition of Athena as Gorgon-slayer, which is not older than Euripides, so far as we know. But Kreousa uses the goddess’s longstanding association with the aegis to give weight to her version of the myth.⁶⁴ The proof of the deed—that the goddess killed the Gorgon—becomes the fact that she wears the monster’s skin on her breastplate.

Kreousa caps the story of the aegis with an etymology: in 997 (τόδ’ ἔσχεν ὄνομα θεῶν ὅτ’ ἤϊξεν ἐς δόρυ), she derives aegis from the verb *aissō*, claiming that the aegis got its name when Athena leaped into battle on the side of the gods. Kreousa’s etymology of the word aegis, it should be emphasized, does more than offer a new variation on the traditional Gorgon-slaking theme. It makes Kreousa herself into a namegiver and, as such, places her in a position to compete directly with her husband for control over Ion’s identity. Focusing more closely on line 997, we might even see in the position of the word *theōn* right after *onoma* a hint that the name that Kreousa etymologizes belongs, in fact, to the language of the gods.⁶⁵ If we think of the gods using one set of names, and mortals another, then Kreousa here shows her ability to speak with words/names that belong to the divine register.⁶⁶ Kreousa etymologizes the name of the aegis just as, earlier, Xouthos gave an etymological account of Ion’s name: both etymologies are likely to be Euripidean inventions. Within its dramatic context, however, Kreousa’s etymology carries more authority in so far as it integrates both the aegis and the Gorgon drops of blood into specifically Athenian mythology. Furthermore, Kreousa’s etymology is neither authorized by “chance”

64 On Athena’s aegis, see *Iliad* 2.447–49. There are conflicting versions about who manufactures the aegis: at *Il.* 15.309–10, Hephaistos makes it for Zeus; in Hesiod frag. 343 M–W, Metis makes it for Athena. Later authors (see Ps.-Eratosthenes *Katasterismoi*) claim the aegis is made out of the skin of the goat that nourished baby Zeus or the skin of Athena’s father, Pallas, whom she killed when he tried to rape her. According to Diodorus Siculus 3.70.3–5, the aegis was an earthborn monster killed by Athena who then wore its skin, a version very similar to Kreousa’s. For further references to the aegis as the skin of Gorgo killed in the Gigantomachy, see Burkert 1983.67 n. 39.

65 See Plato’s *Cratylus* 391D on the different names used by gods and mortals in Homer for the same things, e.g., the river that the gods call Xanthus, mortals call Scamander; or the bird that the gods call “chalcis” and mortals call “cymindis.” For discussion of the phenomenon of double naming, see Rosenmeyer 1955.228 and Clay 1972.

66 Goff 1990.87–90: the speech of the gods in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* “sets up an alternative to human discourse and, simultaneously, reproduces the conditions of that discourse” (89).

(as is Xouthos's), nor does it stand in direct contradiction to Apollo's plan as forecast in the prologue.

The Homeric genealogy of the aegis records that it was made by Hephaistos and given to Zeus to wear (*Iliad* 15.308–10).⁶⁷ The scholia to these lines of the *Iliad* reiterate that the aegis was made for Zeus and did not belong to Athena, “as the more recent poets assert.”⁶⁸ Kreousa's attribution of the aegis' ownership to Athena, therefore, did have credence among post-Homeric authors. We may never know how recent this version (in which Athena acquires the aegis by defeating the Gorgon in the Gigantomachy) was or whether it is a Euripidean invention. But the revisionist history's dramatic and ideological significance is clear: by making Athena the primary owner of the aegis and slayer of the Gorgon, Kreousa has established a direct line of descent between the goddess and her people, the Erechtheids.

A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Athena passes down the monument of her victory—two drops of Gorgon blood—to the founder of her city's new dynasty. Since the Gorgon in this account is “ally” to the children of Earth and herself earthborn, the descendants of Erichthonios preserve their autochthonous heritage as well as Athena's triumph over the lower earthborn species in this liquid victory trophy. Kreousa's wearing of the Gorgon blood on her body reinforces its apotropaic function and offers a tangible focal point for the genealogy that she narrates. In particular, we should notice Kreousa's use of the present verb *didôsi* to describe the passing down of the gift from one generation to the next (999–1009).

KR. Do you know Erichthonios? Surely you do, Old Man?

PR. You mean the first of your ancestors whom the Earth brought forth?

KR. Yes. Pallas gave (*didôsi*) him, while he was still a baby . . .

PR. *What* did she give him? You're hesitant to say.

KR. Two drops of Gorgon blood.

67 In this particular context, however, Apollo wears it (309).

68 *Il. schol.* line 310: “Ἡφαίστος Διὶ δῶκε· ὅτι σαφῶς Διὶ ἐσκεύασται ἡ αἰγίς, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν Ἀθηνᾶς, καθὼς οἱ νεώτεροι ποιηταὶ λέγουσιν.

- PR. With what kind of effect on the human constitution?
- KR. One is deadly, the other has the power to heal sickness.
- PR. How did she attach it to the baby's body?
- KR. With gold fastenings. And he gave (*didōsi*) it to my father.
- PR. And when that man died, it came to you?
- KR. Yes. And I wear it around my wrist.

The gift of Athena, the symbol of her conquest of the Gorgon, in this way becomes an inalienable possession of the Erechtheids. The emphasis on the bodily proximity of the gift underlines the difficulty of separating object from owner. The poison is worn almost as an amulet, received at birth (in the case of Erechtheus, 1001) and separated from its owner only at his death so that it may be passed on to the next living heir (1008). Moreover, its existence is kept secret from all outsiders, preventing its usurpation by pretenders to the throne. The presence and power of the heirloom is made manifest only at the time at which it enters into circulation once again. The verb used to describe the heirloom's previous circulation—*didōsi*—is also significant.⁶⁹

Earlier I mentioned similarities between Medea's and Kreousa's appeals to conjugal reciprocity, or *charis*. A further point of comparison now emerges in how each heroine narrates the biography of the gifts to which she entrusts her revenge. Medea recalls that her grandfather Helios gave her the robe and crown that she intends to give in turn to Jason's wife. Although Helios's gift was made to her in the past, Medea chooses a "perfective present" of the verb for giving (*didōsi*) as if to suggest that the act of giving *still goes on*.⁷⁰ The context of Medea's speech is strikingly close to that of Kreousa's in *Ion*. Both heroines narrate the genealogy of their family heirlooms at the very moment when they are preparing to take

69 Note also *didōsi* at *Ion* 24 and 271 to refer to Athena's giving of Erichthonios to the Aglaurids. With *didōsi* at 24, the past action is shown to have continued relevance in the present, since a custom derives from it (24–26). At 271, Ion uses this verb to describe a scene from a painting where a representation (even of a past event) continues to signify in the present. The Old Man's use of *didōsi* at 821 seems to be simply a historical present (as is *paideuetai*, 822).

70 Cf. *Medea* 955 and relevant discussion in Mueller 2001.493–95.

revenge. The present tense of the verb heightens our sense of the object's readiness to summon its latent powers for immediate use. Both Medea and Kreousa tell the history of their possessions when they are about to give them away. We have the strong sense, then, that the gift's reentry into circulation—the moment when the owner “gives” the gift—revives its potency, with each new act of giving both recalling and drawing strength from a previous one.⁷¹

Athena's ambivalent gift in *Ion* is passed down in a gold container. The precious metal forms a protective barrier between the deadliness of the poison and the owner's body. It is with gold fastenings (1007) that the goddess originally gave her gift to the baby Erichthonios. Kreousa preserves this tradition in her own manner of wearing the heirloom around her wrist. She also included golden snakes in her baby's basket.⁷² The apotropaic quality of Athena's gift, its “dual nature, being protective and dangerous at the same time,” is particularly explicit.⁷³ There are two drops of blood from the Gorgon, one with the power to kill, the other to heal (1005), and they are kept together but unmixed in the same container. The drops are not allowed to contaminate one another, as Kreousa explains later in the same dialogue, for she wears them “separately” (*chôris*, 1017). This division makes possible the plot to trick Ion into drinking the poisonous drop offered to him with wine in a golden *phiale*. But by receiving the gift and at the same time diverting its dangerous power away from himself, Ion succeeds instead in claiming the heirloom as his own. Furthermore, the deadly blood has been expelled, while only the good remains. Has Ion purified the race of Erechtheids of their dark, snaky origins?

Ion's conquest of the Gorgon's blood takes place within a symbolically charged space. Ion himself sets up a tent that is large enough to hold all the people of Delphi (1140) and decorates the area inside with sacred tapestries (*huphasmata hiera*) taken from the temple treasuries (1141). Among these is a tapestry depicting Kekrops and his daughters, “the dedication,” we are told, “of some Athenian” (Ἀθηναίων τινὸς ἀνάθημα, 1164–65). It

71 On the creation of value through circulation, see Gernet 1981.116–19, who describes the tripod of the seven sages as an object that “goes from hand to hand.”

72 The baby Iamos (Pindar *Ol.* 6), also a son of Apollo, was exposed by his mother Evadne and cared for by two snakes who fed him honey or the *ios* of honey bees (47). For further parallels between Iamos and Ion and their connection to plant-gathering rituals as evinced in the *lao*-root of their names, see Ruck 1976.

73 On *apotropaia*, see Faraone 1992 and Marinatos 2000.

is here (in the tent) that Ion has been bidden by Xouthos to share in a feast celebrating his “birth” and imminent departure for Athens. As interpreted by Barbara Goff (1988) and others, the tent offers a display of some of the crucial conflicts and paradoxes of being an Athenian.⁷⁴ In particular, the tent is the place within which Ion’s oracular skills, his ability to decipher the signs that will enable him to survive, are put to the test.⁷⁵ Reported in indirect speech to the Chorus and Kreousa, this scene anticipates the final recognition between mother and son during which Ion will test his mother’s ability to remember the signs (*symbola*) that she exposed with him. Just as Ion takes the poisoned drink in his hands, he hears an ill-omened cry, a *blasphēmia*, from one of the servants (1189). Because Ion has been raised in a temple and among seers, he heeds this omen and orders everyone present to pour out their drinks. As the bowls are refilled with new wine, a flock of doves arrives and begins to taste the wine that was poured out. The messenger describes the effect of the wine on the birds, including the “Bacchic convulsions” (ἔσεισε κάβάκχευσεν, 1204) and “uninterpretable cry” (ἐκλαγξ’ ὅπα / ἀξύνετον αἰάζουσ’, 1204–05) of the bird that drinks what was intended for Ion.

Several signs attest to Apollo’s influence in this scene, although he is nowhere to be seen: first, the ominous human cry, then the silence, and, finally, the Bacchic convulsions and death cry of the bird.⁷⁶ Dionysus and Apollo haunted Delphi during alternate seasons, thus it is not surprising that Apollo should make his presence known through “Bacchic” signs.⁷⁷ Birds appeared earlier in the play during Ion’s monody, and he was reluctant to shoot them because they brought messages from the gods (180). Also, what the Old Man gave Ion to drink (ὥς . . . χάριν φέρων at 1183) is not *charis*, but wine that has been mixed with a powerful poison (φάρμακον δραστήριον,

74 E.g., Zacharia 2003.35–39 on the late fifth-century B.C.E. Athenian imperial agenda articulated in the tent tapestries.

75 Zeitlin 1996.317: “Framed in space and narrated in sequence, the tapestries possess a symbolic value that places them at a higher level of representation than the dramatic actions of the play to which they relate on a different plane of coded, even oracular, signification.”

76 See Montiglio 2000.199–204 on Apollo’s silence within the play.

77 Dionysus was worshipped every other year in mystery celebrations of maenads, and a ritual in memory of Semele was performed every eighth year (Burnett 1970.133). Xouthos supposedly engendered Ion during the ritual of Dionysus Liknites (a celebration of the baby Dionysus being placed in a basket and handed over to nymphs) on Mt. Parnassus. Nymphs (Thyiades) probably would have wakened the infant god in the Corycian cave during this ceremony (Zeitlin 1996.302).

1185). The term *charis*, however, suggests that this drink offering speaks directly to the breakdown of relations between Kreousa and Apollo. The god's lack of reciprocity—or, rather, his delayed reciprocity—is what has led Kreousa to take these vengeful measures. But responding through his own language of signs and ominous utterances, Apollo refuses to allow failed *charis* to turn into revenge. He offers Ion the chance to save himself by reading the signs. He will also intervene on Kreousa's behalf when Ion, in turn, tries to kill her.

The object with its powerful agency—notice the adjective *drastêrion* that qualifies *pharmakon* in line 1185—signifies at cross-purposes to its giver's intention. Rather than destroy its intended victim, it brings Ion closer to his mother. Of course, Ion's own skill in divination—his acculturation to the temple and its community of noble seers (1190)—is what saves him from being poisoned. Ion immediately grabs the Old Man by the arm and demands an explanation (1213–14). It is a significant gesture, for Ion recognizes that this is the hand from which he received the poisoned drink (καὶ πῶμα χειρὸς σῆς ἐδεξάμην πάρα, 1212), and searches for an explanation through contact. The Old Man confesses under compulsion the “daring” plot of Kreousa and “the machinations of the drink” (1216). Thus Ion learns of the path of his gift, which has passed through Kreousa's hands into his own via the Old Man. But originally the *pharmakon* belonged to Athena, and it is this origin that Ion will discover when he pursues his own act of revenge against Kreousa.

CONTAINING TIME: AN AGELESS BASKET

The *agôn* between Kreousa and Ion builds up to such a point of tension that Apollo must intervene to prevent bloodshed in his sanctuary. As Kevin Lee (1997.291) notes in his commentary: “The scene is structured to show that the human deadlock is complete and will not be resolved without extraordinary intervention of some kind.” The Pythia arrives on stage (1320) with a container in her hands (*angos*, 1337). Her entrance has been compared to that of a *deus ex machina* in its function, but the true resolution is to be found not in her presence but in the object that she carries.⁷⁸

78 Zeitlin 1996 notes that the *kistê* was used as a container for the sacred talismans during the Eleusinian Mysteries (306), c.f. Burkert 1983.269–74 and Kerenyi 1967.66. Loraux 1993.232 sees a connection with the *kistê* of the Arrephoroi.

“an age-old basket (*palaian antipêga*, 1338) with sacred fillets,” as Ion remarks.⁷⁹ Both the *omphalos* and altar at Delphi were described as being covered with fillets (*stemmasi*) as a sign of their sacred status (224, 1310). The *omphalos*, moreover, is surrounded by Gorgons: στέμμασι γ’ ἐνδυτόν, ἄμφω δὲ Γοργόνες (224).⁸⁰ The adjective *palaia* used to describe the basket recalls, first of all, the golden vessel containing Gorgon blood; this miniature vessel was called the *palaion organon* of Athena (1030). Even more significant is Ion’s description of the basket as *ageless* (1389–94):

Oh sacred fillets, what is it that you are hiding from me,
and you fastenings, by which my dear possessions have
been guarded? Look how the covering of the well-rounded
antipêx has not aged at all because of some divine pro-
tection, and how mildew has kept away from its woven
texture (εὐρώς τ’ ἄπεστι πλεγμάτων), even though the
intervening span of time has been great since these trea-
sures were stored.

As an ageless magical object, the basket invites comparison with the Iliadic Agamemnon’s scepter (*Iliad* 2.101–09, made by Hephaestus), as well as with Theseus’s sandals in Callimachus’s *Hecale* (236.3 Pf.), which are described as also being free of mold: πέδιλα, τὰ μὴ πύσε νήχυτος εὐρώς.⁸¹ The basket itself resists the corrupting effects of time and fends off decay from everything that it contains. While it has been suggested that the roundness of the *antipêx* is evocative of death and rebirth because it implies a cyclical notion of time, the metaphor of temporal suspension may also be appropriate.⁸² For the basket as a container seems actually to have suspended the forward movement of time, keeping it finite and static even though, in Ion’s words, “the intervening span of time has been great” (ὁ δ’ ἐν μέσῳ χρόνος / πολὺς, 1393–94). Superficially, ὁ δ’ ἐν μέσῳ χρόνος refers to the years intervening between Ion’s birth and his present discovery

79 Lee 1997 ad loc., translating *palaian* as “age-old,” notes the “miraculously preserved condition of the crib and its contents.”

80 At Aeschylus *Eum.* 39–49, Erinyes, who are also called Gorgonas, surround the *omphalos*. See, further, Strabo 9.3.6 and Irvine 1999 on Gorgons at Delphi.

81 This is fragment 11 in Hollis’ 1990 edition of Callimachus’s *Hecale*.

82 On the roundness of the *antipêx* (Ion 19 and 1391), see note 55 above. On the symbolism of this shape, Wood 2002.

of the birth tokens, but there is no reason to exclude from his words the spatial inflection implied by “in the middle,” as if the basket itself has contained this vast quantity of time.

The last two details about the basket that we are given—that it is woven (*plegmatôn*) and stored as a treasure (*thêsaurisma*)—are also important. Recalling that the tent, too, was composed of weavings taken from the temple treasuries, we can now appreciate the mirroring effect of these two media in which identity is encoded.⁸³ The weavings hung in the tent visually articulate key components of Athenian identity in a public display before the people (*laos*, 1140) of Delphi.⁸⁴ By comparison, the objects found inside and the basket itself constitute a much smaller and more private affair, although of comparable effect. An Athenian viewer of the tent textiles would be “interpellated” by seeing what position he occupied with respect to the rest of the *kosmos* as represented in the weavings. Likewise, in opening the basket, Ion finds himself silently interpellated by the objects hidden therein.⁸⁵ He discovers an identity that both he and the audience can recognize. The three objects bestow on Ion both an intimately personal and a political view of himself. For what functioned once rather mundanely as Ion's swaddling clothes (*spargana*, 1490) will presently enable the collective remembering of his Athenian audience.⁸⁶

AUTOPSY, RECOGNITION, AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Ion asks Kreousa to “name” the objects before seeing them (note the use of *onoma* at 1414).⁸⁷ If Kreousa can put a “name” to each token, then she will have a son. The language of memory is not explicitly part of the verbal texture of this scene, but remembering is, of course, key to the

83 Cf. 1141: ὑφάσμαθ' ἱερὰ θεσανυρῶν πάρα.

84 Goff 1988.44: “The images displayed on the tent, and the figures of Athenian and βάρβαροι associated with the hangings, can be seen as working towards a definition of what it means to be a Greek and specifically an Athenian.”

85 See Gibert 1995.185–89 on this scene as the climax to a series of metaphorical and literal “openings” in the play.

86 Swaddling clothes are also used as tokens of recognition (with differing degrees of success) in Aeschylus *Cho.* 231 and Euripides *El.* 539–40, as mentioned by Loraux 1993.187 n. 15.

87 I have found only one other thing being named (as a direct object of ὀνομάζειν) in Euripides besides the aegis to be discussed below: Hecuba's *sēma* at *Hec.* 1271 (*kunos sēma*), a geographical landmark rather than an object per se.

success of this “naming.” By accurately recalling the things that she placed in the basket with Ion years ago—things he is presently looking at—Kreousa will prove her maternity. And in a broader sense, Kreousa’s “naming” is what secures Athenian cultural memory about Ion. The qualitative differences between this scene and Xouthos’s naming now also clearly emerge. Xouthos had no material evidence to back up the words of the oracle on which he based his claim to Ion. Furthermore, he had no recollection at all of the circumstances of Ion’s birth. It was only with Ion’s creative questioning that he was finally persuaded to “remember” a Delphic slave girl who might have been Ion’s mother. The tokens that give Kreousa a son also act, to Ion’s benefit, as heirlooms of Athens—Athenian *symbola*—and constitute the city’s history in miniature from its foundation to the present moment. Two of the things are gifts of Athena, and the third (Kreousa’s weaving sampler) is a woven imitation of the goddess’s own aegis.

The first object Kreousa “names” for Ion is her weaving sampler: *ekdidagma kerkidos* (1419).⁸⁸ There is a *gorgoneion* woven into its center (1421), thus transforming this girlhood exercise into an aegis of sorts (*aigidos tropon*, 1423).⁸⁹ A notable feature of this object is that it is incomplete—*ou teleon* (1419)—a deficit that may symbolize Kreousa’s failure to make the transition from *parthenos* to married woman. Crucial in this regard is the unreciprocated *charis* of Apollo that has kept her childless until this point. Read in another way, however, the material incompleteness of Kreousa’s sampler is evocative of the metaphorical incompleteness that Stewart (1993.136) identifies as the source of the souvenir’s allusive authority. By its very nature incomplete, the souvenir requires a supplementary narrative. The action of Euripides’ *Ion* is, in a sense, the missing narrative that gives meaning to the sampler that has supplied a point of origin for that narrative’s resolution.

The golden snakes that Kreousa describes next belong, like the woven aegis, to the family archives. Kreousa calls them replications (*mimēmata*) of the snakes with which Athena protected Erichthonios when she

88 Weaving plays an important role also in the Eleusinian mysteries and the Panathenaia: Kore was working at a loom before the snake attacked her (Burkert 1983.272); and as an unfinished peplos, Kreousa’s weaving recalls the garment dedicated yearly to Athena at the Panathenaia (Loraux 1993.225). On the Panathenaic peplos and festival, see Barber 1992 and Neils 1992 and 1996.

89 Burkert 1983.153 n. 76 cites Harpokr. αἰγίς and Suda αἰγίς 60 for the aegis as made of plaited wool (ἐκ τῶν στεμμάτων πλέγμα).

handed him to the Aglaurids (1427–29). These golden snakes are also the “gift of Athena” (like the Gorgon blood and golden vessel that contains it) and a memento of the birth of the first of the Erechtheids, Erichthonios, who in many ways is Ion’s double. Both aegis and snakes are replications of an irrecoverable original.

It is instructive to compare the stage props, as *mimēmata*, to reproductions of famous cult statues, such as the Athena Parthenos, for each genre of replication makes visible and known what was designed in its original context to be viewed only by the select few—Pheidias’s statue because it was concealed within the inner sanctum of the Parthenon, and the aegis and snakes because they belonged exclusively to the Erechtheids. By staging the recognition of Ion through tokens that are copies of “lost” originals, Euripides’ drama implicitly suggests that what were originally exclusive family heirlooms are now inherently replicable. The tokens belong in the public domain. Milette Gaifman explains the cultural significance of replicating images of gods (2006.259): “Effectively, replications attest to the degree in which the enclosed image of the god was embedded in daily experience outside the confines of cultic spaces and ritual.” Ion’s *spargana* also translate their Erichthonian model from the confines of atemporal myth into the cultural consciousness of the here and now.

For the third token, Kreousa names the evergreen olive wreath that commemorates Ion’s birth and Athena’s victory.⁹⁰ This object recalls the gift through which Athena defeated Poseidon for possession of the city and its name—to this extent even embodying the very beginnings of Athens as a city.⁹¹ Indeed, the garland of olive that Kreousa wrapped around her infant child came from that very tree on the Acropolis. She notes that it is still green and grown from a (miraculously) ageless tree (οὐποτ’ ἐκλείπει χλόην, / θάλλει δ’, ἐλαίας ἐξ ἀκηράτου γεγώς, 1435–36). The olive branch also recalls the broom with which Ion was sweeping the entrance to the

90 It was customary to announce the birth of a male child by hanging an olive wreath outside the doorway, while the birth of a female child was announced with wool. See Hesychius s.v. στέφανον ἐξφρέειν (ἔθος ἦν, ὅποτε παιδίον ἄρρεν γένοιτο παρὰ Ἀττικοῖς, στέφανον ἐλαίας τιθέναι πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν· ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν θηλειῶν ἔρια διὰ τὴν ταλασίαν), Golden 1990.23.

91 See *Ion* 1480 and Herodotus 8.55 on the contest between Athena and Poseidon and the olive tree springing to life again the day after the Persians had burned the Acropolis; Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3.14.1 on Athena calling Kekrops to witness her gift; Euripides *Tro.* 801–02 on the olive tree as an adornment (*kosmon*) of Athens. On the symbolism of the olive tree in Greek culture, see Detienne 1970 and Parker 1987.198–99.

temple in his opening monody. The broom is made out of bay and was described as coming from immortal gardens (κάπων ἐξ ἀθανάτων, 116).⁹² Ion has exchanged one ageless branch for another—the bay for the olive—just as he is leaving Delphi for Athens. In fact, this “exchange of symbolic objects” could be taken further, in that Ion’s life in Delphi is identified with *three* possessions: the broom, his water jug, and his bow.⁹³ Three Delphic objects that, in leaving Delphi for Athens, Ion trades in for three Athenian *symbola*.

We have already seen how the tapestries in Ion’s tent encode Athenian identity in material form, so it should come as no surprise that the recognition tokens, like the woven *ekphrases*, also require a “reader” to decipher their meaning. The reader/viewer’s subject status will then be interpreted by his decoding of the signs. In this way, the objects interpellate their audience (internal and external) by soliciting interpretation. The decoding of the tent *ekphrasis* is left to the devices of the play’s audience. In the case of the *gnôrismata*, however, Kreousa is scripted as the interpreter and Ion as her audience within the play. They perform on one another a reciprocal interpellation: in recognizing one another, both Ion and Kreousa have their identities completed and confirmed. Ion has found the mother he needs to become an Athenian, while Kreousa has found an heir and therefore new life for her family. When mother and son at last recognize each other, Kreousa announces that Erechtheus has been “rejuvenated” (ἀννῆται δ’ Ἐρεχθεύς, 1465). Moreover, in contrast to Xouthos’s “naming” of Ion, the recognition between Kreousa and Ion has not been unilateral but simultaneous and reciprocal.

Ion looks inside the basket at things that are at first hidden from the view of the audience and Kreousa, while Kreousa “names” each object from memory. As she describes each object, Ion confirms the description through autopsy. But is the audience in a position to see what Ion sees? I believe that they are, and that their collective gaze has been scripted into the text. Let us return briefly to the moment when the Pythia emerges from the temple of Apollo, carrying the rounded basket with the tokens inside. As Kreousa begins to describe the first token—her unfinished, Gorgon-decorated weaving sampler—Ion pulls it out of the basket and exclaims (1424):

92 Cf. Kreousa’s monody, where she refers to the Delian bay’s hatred of Apollo (919–21); Leto gave birth to Apollo in a garden surrounded by palms and bay.

93 See Zeitlin 1996.292 and Hoffer 1996.295–99.

ἰδοῦ·
τόδ' ἔσθ' ὕφασμα †θέσφαθ' ὡς εὐρίσκομεν†.

“Look! Here is the weaving . . .

The textual corruption in the second half of line 1424 need not prevent us from confirming the cues to the staging of the scene that are offered by both the imperative (ἰδοῦ) and the deictic adjective τόδε. Ion's words are likely to have been mirrored by the actor's gesture of pulling the object from the basket and holding it up to the audience to witness.⁹⁴ Although definitive proof is lacking, the deictic marker τόδε lends support to such a reconstruction of the staging.

In being made witness to the material proof of Ion's self-discovery, the play's audience shares the perspective, temporarily at least, of the hero. Until he sees for himself the physical evidence, Ion is unwilling to acknowledge Kreousa's maternity; proof for him resides in the things themselves. The scene could also have been staged without props, leaving the tokens to the audience to imagine. But by inviting Kreousa—and by extension allowing the audience—to see what he sees, Ion orchestrates a theatrical event, directing all gazes to a single point in space. The props become the centerpiece of an intensely personal but also collective civic event, the audience being just moments behind Ion in recognizing themselves as Athenian. His autopsy, first performed as a private viewing of tokens hidden within a basket, then becomes a public display of the material history of Athens, a private moment of self-recognition and authentication made public.

Although Ion does not have direct memory of the tokens—he was too young when they were left to him—the viewing process that he undergoes while testing Kreousa creates the conditions for a proper recognition. Normally, for an object to function as a token of recognition (*gnōrisma*), it must provoke in the viewer a recollection of a preestablished social bond: for example, Orestes' proving to Elektra who he is by showing her a piece of her own weaving in Aeschylus's *Choephoroi* 231–32, or Orestes' verbal reference to Iphigeneia's weaving in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 814–16. The final recognition in *Ion* collapses the viewing, which creates memory, and the recognition of the heirlooms into a single event. Although

94 Compare Aeschylus, *Cho.* 231, where Orestes displays his woven token to Elektra with a similar interjection and accompanying gesture: ἰδοῦ δ' ὕφασμα τοῦτο, σῆς ἔργον χερρός.

Ion views the heirlooms for the first time, he also recognizes his mother through them, *as if*, like *gnôrismata*, they were reminding him of the long-established bond between the two of them. Consequently, the things are seen to occupy a relationship in the “perfective present” similar to the language of giving used to describe the transmission of an heirloom (or a child) from one generation to the next (*didôsi*). For as objects of memory that are firmly embedded in the past, heirlooms allow the past to recreate itself in the present (as Ion re-embodies Erichthonios and Erechtheus), while also allowing each generation to remember the past, collectively, as they have chosen to narrate it. No doubt the presentation of the Panathenaic *peplos* depicting the Gigantomachy was also an occasion for collective self-reflection.⁹⁵ And there were many others. Ion’s self-recognition merely dramatizes for us the cultural agency of iconic replicas, giving us a means to imagine the other significant objects through which Athenians remembered who they were.

ENGENDERING IDENTITY

Women in ancient Greece did not pass on their names to their children. But in taking a critical look at the patriarchal practice of naming, *Ion*, in the end, emphasizes the need for paternal authority to be complemented by a different kind of “interpellation.” The objects that accomplish this interpellation are female artifacts: they have been made by Kreousa and Athena and kept in the possession of the Delphic priestess until her arrival on stage with the basket in her arms. In this respect, the interpellation by objects radically reverses the more traditional gender dynamic of naming in cosmogonic literature, where, for example, the male gods Hermes and Zas named Pandora and Chthoniê. When compared to the comic confusion generated by Ion’s encounter with Xouthos, the recognition scene between mother and son stands out as a more persuasive and enduring engendering of identity. Ion received from Xouthos only a name that was etymologized on the basis of chance. From his mother, he receives the right to dwell in and rule Athens. The privilege of this rule is established through family heirlooms in which the history of Kreousa’s family as well as of the city itself is encoded.⁹⁶

95 See Burkert 1985.232, Deubner 1952.22–35, and Parke 1977.29–50.

96 The biographies of objects, such as Athena’s aegis, are as impromptu as the etymologies of words, but collective memory of the object (the fact, for instance, that the aegis is always associated with Athena) lends greater authority to Kreousa’s invented narrative in so far as it is immediately believed by the Old Man.

Although it begins with Athena, the line of hereditary transmission is not exclusively female. Kreousa has inherited these heirlooms because she is the only surviving member of her father's family. Kreousa's status is similar to that of an *epiklêros* and is not therefore representative of gender relations in classical Athens or even in Attic tragedy. At the same time, the strategies of resistance that she deploys against the projected intruder into her house *are* typical of her gender (in tragedy). Objects offer tragic heroines a means of redressing social imbalances as well as of making their "voices" heard when their words are not.

The structures of patriarchy that contributed to the making of this play are still discernable in the violence that Kreousa recounts having suffered. What I have been after here, however, are the rifts in that patriarchal system, the places where a woman is able to take control, temporarily, of the modes of exchange that normally serve the interests of the male community and divert these to her own ends. It just so happens in *Ion* that Kreousa's personal interest in recovering her son converges with her city's need to find an heir. The coincidence accounts for the play's "happy ending." In reaching this end, however, Apollo has had to modify his original plan and adapt his language to that of a mortal woman, even to the extent of remaining invisible throughout the play. Apollo's invisibility in itself attests to the power of Kreousa's plot diversion.

At the end of the play, the secret that has been revealed is once again encoded in silence: "So now keep it a secret that this boy is your son, so that Xouthos may remain happy in his delusion and you, too, may go on your way enjoying your blessings (1601–03)."⁹⁷ Athena speaks these words to Kreousa, but she does so knowing that the members of the audience will overhear her. Having witnessed Kreousa's naming of the objects and the reconciliation between mother and son, the audience is also made part of the royal family. *Ion* playfully closes the gap between private and public, having given the audience the hermeneutic tools to decipher the private family lore attached to the recognition tokens and, at the same time, instilled

97 Cole 1997.91 suggests that silence on the subject of Ion's parentage conforms with a prohibition against publicly speaking about either Ion's bastard birth or the prominent role that Kreousa has played in his introduction to Athens. Parker 1987.207 notes that Euripides' innovation (to make Apollo rather than Xouthos the father) was not maintained by the subsequent tradition, which saw Ion primarily as a general and an immigrant: "An Athenian was of course an Ionian, and at certain times it was important to insist on the point; but in general being an Ionian was very much secondary to the central business of being an Athenian."

in that audience, as the price of this knowledge, the moral obligation to uphold the public discourse that Ion is Xouthos's son. But the play also re-envisions the usual gendered division between *oikos* and polis. For what is represented in *Ion* as being purely family business—Kreousa's maternity and her dialogues on *charis* with Apollo—is, from the perspective of the city of Athens, mythico-political history.

The boundaries between family and city have been blurred for the duration of the dramatic action and only partially reinstated at the play's end. When Kreousa returns to Athens, she will have to hide from Xouthos the true nature of her relationship to Ion. To the extent that they accept Kreousa's duplicity, the audience is also privy to a powerful secret, one that becomes part of the civic discourse of exclusion. The city has appropriated Kreousa's means of resisting male domination as the key to preserving social privilege, defining the real Athenian as the one who knows the truth about Ion.

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