

EARTHBORNS AND OLYMPIANS: THE PARODOS OF THE *ION*

The action of Euripides' *Ion* takes place in front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The chorus, maidservants of Kreusa who have come with her from Athens, enters at 184, admiring the temple and commenting on a series of mythological scenes which they see represented before them: (i) Herakles slaying the Hydra with the help of Iolaos (190–9); (ii) Bellerophon mounted on Pegasus slaying Chimaira (200–4); (iii) a Gigantomachia¹ (205–18) which includes the figures of Athena brandishing her Gorgon shield against Enkelados (209–11), Zeus laying Mimas low with a thunderbolt (212–15), and Bakchos slaying another Giant with his thyrsos (216–18). The chorus's description recalls the temple of Apollo which stood in Delphi in Euripides' day. Archaeological evidence shows that on that temple the Gigantomachia was represented on the west (rear) pediment, and it is a reasonable assumption that the violent Herakles-Hydra and Bellerophon-Chimaira scenes described by the chorus were metope sculptures associated with the Gigantomachia on the same west side rather than on the east side whose pedimental sculpture depicted Apollo's tranquil triumphal entry into Delphi.² Euripides then has taken liberties with his material by transferring these scenes from the west (rear) side of the temple to its east (front) side where they can be seen by the chorus. Scholars, it is true, have, with few exceptions, been reluctant to accept the possibility that the chorus describes the back of the temple, and numerous alternative decorations and monuments have been proposed as subjects of their description.³ There is, however, no reason to believe that Euripides' 'mistake' of transferring details from the rear to the front of the temple would be any more disconcerting to the audience than the numerous anachronisms found throughout Greek tragedy, including the chorus's description here of a temple built only in the last half of the previous century.

Yet simply to say that Euripides could have transferred these scenes from the back of the actual temple to the front of the temple described by his chorus does not explain why he chose to do so. It is worth noting that Euripides was under no obligation to portray the temple on stage at all. There is general agreement that in the standard version of the *Ion* myth the play's actions took place in Athens, and that the change of setting to Delphi is an innovation of Euripides intended to emphasize Apollo's role in the play.⁴ Once Euripides decided upon this special Delphic setting he would naturally pay particular attention to its representation in the theatre. This would be true both of the actual stage décor

¹ The words κλόνων ἐν τείχεσι λαίνοισι Γιγάντων (206–7) clearly imply that the Gigantomachia is portrayed as a single group, and not as three separate scenes.

² On the pedimental sculptures on the Alcmaeonid temple of Apollo see Ch. Picard and P. de la Coste-Messelière, *Fouilles de Delphes*, iv, fasc. 3, pp.16–32 (west pediment), pp.33–62 (east pediment). The Herakles-Hydra and Bellerophon-Chimaira scenes are identified as metope sculptures

on the west side of the temple by T. Homolle, 'Monuments figurés de Delphes', *BCH* 26 (1902), 591–2; note also the identical use of the verb ἐναίρει in Euripides' descriptions of all three scenes (191, 203, 218).

³ A. S. Owen, *Euripides: Ion*, pp.82–3, provides a brief survey of several such alternatives.

⁴ See A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' Plays of Mixed Reversal*, pp.103–4.

and of its description given by the chorus since the details of the décor would not be visible beyond the first few rows in the Theatre of Dionysos and the larger part of the audience would have to depend on the chorus's description.¹ Euripides' attention to this description is evident, for example, in the triadic structure which he has given to the parodos, with three scenes depicted and three figures in each scene except the last which has three pairs of figures.² I would suggest that this same attention was present not only in the arrangement but also in the selection of scenes to be described. As the general setting of the *Ion* before the temple of Delphi emphasizes the role of Apollo in our play, so the description of the specific mythological scenes on that temple may be seen as part of a pattern of images which underlines the play's central event, the triumph of Apollo over the opposition of Kreusa. For the sake of this pattern then Euripides would have transferred the scenes which were on the back of the actual temple of Apollo at Delphi to the front of the Delphic temple which he recreates on stage through the words of his chorus.

The first scene described by the chorus (190–9) shows Herakles slaying the Hydra by cutting off its heads while Iolaos stands by with a torch to cauterize the wounds in order to prevent new heads from growing.³ Not only is Hydra a snake, as her name implies, but she is also, according to Hesiod (*Tb.* 313 ff.), the offspring of Typhon and Echidna who are themselves partially serpentine in form.⁴ Typhon is a child of Earth and Tartaros (*Tb.* 820–2, Apollod. 1.6.3),⁵ and Echidna, a true chthonian living in a cave underground (*Theog.* 301), is either another direct offspring of Earth and Tartaros (Apollod. 2.1.2) or the child of Phorkys and Keto (*Tb.* 295 ff.) who are themselves offspring of the union of Earth with Sea (ibid. 233 ff.). Thus Hydra is surrounded by the whole complex of serpentine and chthonic associations: she is a snake-like being, born of snake-like beings and ultimately descended from Earth. Herakles, on the other hand, is the son of Zeus, a point recalled in the present ode (200), and he co-operates with Zeus and the other Olympians in overcoming the earthborn Giants in the

¹ In their song the chorus repeatedly uses words for seeing (190, 194, 201, 206, 208, 209, 211, 214), reminding us that they are describing scenes which they are viewing at the moment they describe them; these words for seeing also suggest that the audience is to 'see' these same details too, i.e. it is to imagine them on the stage backdrop.

² The arrangement is Euripides' and was not dictated by the actual ornamentation of the temple which had on its west side more than two metopes and more than six pedimental figures, none of which was paired in the same way in which we find them in this ode (see Picard and de la Coste-Messelière, op. cit., pp. 16–32).

³ The use of ἀρπαις (192) shows that Herakles is amputating the heads (on ἀρπη as an amputating instrument see M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony*, ad 175). The use of αὐτοῦ (194–5) shows that Iolaos and Herakles are part of the same scene and not in two separate scenes. For the slaying of Hydra see Apollod. 2.5.2 and additional sources cited by J. G. Frazer, *Apollodorus:*

The Library, ad loc. Here and elsewhere sources for the different myths discussed in this paper are cited by way of illustration, and no attempt has been made at exhaustive documentation which may be found in the standard handbooks of Greek mythology.

⁴ The upper half of Echidna's body was that of a young girl, the lower half that of a snake (*Tb.* 297 ff.); according to Hesiod (ibid. 823 ff.), Typhon had snakes growing from his shoulders (for other serpentine representations of Typhon see West (above, n.3), ad 306).

⁵ According to the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (3.305 ff.) Typhon was the son of Hera. In this account Typhon still has serpentine associations (Hera gave him to the Pythian serpent to be reared) and chthonic associations (his conception resulted from Hera's invoking Earth, Heaven and the Titans underground, and from her striking life-giving Earth with her hand). Something of this version was also known to Stesichoros (see frag. 62 Page).

Gigantomachia (cf. Apollod. 1.6.1–2). He is also an inveterate snake killer: long before slaying the Hydra¹ he had, in his infancy, killed two serpents which had attacked him in his crib.²

The second scene which the chorus describes (200–4) is that of Bellerophon seated on Pegasus and slaying Chimaira. Chimaira is either the offspring of Hydra or, like Hydra, a child of Typhon and Echidna;³ in either case she too is ultimately descended from Earth.⁴ Like Typhon and Echidna, Chimaira is also part snake in form (Hom. *Il.* 6.181–2, Hes. *Th.* 321–2), a point to which oblique reference is made in the present ode (*τρισώματον ἄλκάν*, 204). As Chimaira here parallels Hydra in the first scene, so Bellerophon parallels Herakles as slayer of the monster. Moreover, Bellerophon may be considered, like Herakles, as the son of an Olympian. Homer, it is true, gives Bellerophon a strictly mortal ancestry, making him the son of Glaukos son of Sisyphos son of Aiolos (*Il.* 6.154–5, followed by Apollod. 1.9.3). Hesiod, however, makes Bellerophon the son of Poseidon and of Glaukos' wife who passed the child off as Glaukos' own (*Cat.* frag. 43a Merkelbach-West 70 ff.).⁵ This second version of the myth was well enough known for Pindar (*O.* 13.67–9^b) to call Poseidon Bellerophon's father with no further explanation.⁶ Curiously, Pegasus, according to Hesiod, is part of the same chthonic family as Hydra and Chimaira, having sprung forth with Chrysaor from the neck of the Gorgon Medusa, Echidna's sister (*Th.* 274 ff.), when Medusa was decapitated by Perseus (ibid. 280–1; cf. Pind. *O.* 13.63–4). But while Chrysaor continues the race of monsters by begetting three-headed Geryoneus, another one of the savage forces to be subdued by Herakles (*Th.* 287 ff.), Pegasus is a benevolent creature both in the assistance he lends to Bellerophon and in the role Hesiod assigns him of dwelling in the house of Zeus and transporting his lightning and thunder (ibid. 285–6).⁷

¹ According to Hesiod (*Th.* 316–18), the slaying of Hydra also had Olympian associations, being accomplished *βουλῆσιν Ἀθηναίης*; cf. Athena standing by Herakles as he shoots his bow at Hydra on the chest of Kypselos, as described by Paus. 5.17.11.

² On the infant Herakles and the serpents see Apollod. 2.4.8 and the sources cited by Frazer, *op. cit.*, ad loc. These serpents, like Hydra (cf. *Th.* 314 ff.), were sent by Hera against Herakles. We are told that Hera did so out of jealousy for the infidelity of Zeus which produced Herakles, but it is also possible that these snakes were, in the first instance, the instruments of the less than Olympian Hera whom we have seen elsewhere (above, n.5, p.285) associated with snakes, and that they were only later rationalized by the tale of jealousy.

³ The text of Hes. *Th.* 319 ff. is ambiguous and open to either interpretation (cf. West *op. cit.*, ad 319). Apollodoros' interpretation (2.3.1) is that Hesiod said the parent was Echidna.

⁴ Cf. the genealogy of Hydra given above.

⁵ Cf. *schol. vet. ad Pind. Olymp.* 13.69^b which cites the similarity of Bellerophon-Poseidon-Glaukos and Herakles-Zeus-

Amphitryon. Glaukos' wife, Eurynome, was the daughter of Nisos, son of Pandion, and so an Athenian like Kreusa. This is but one of several parallels between the stories of Bellerophon and Ion. Both Bellerophon and Ion are children of Olympians, and both are passed off as sons of their mothers' mortal husbands (in Ion's case this occurs in the course of the play), and both husbands are themselves descendants of Aiolos (for Xuthos, cf. *Ion* 292).

⁶ In the same passage Pindar calls Bellerophon *Αἰολίδα βασιλεῦ* since he was accepted as the son of Glaukos and his successor in the royal line.

⁷ There are also some associations of Poseidon with Pegasus. According to Hesiod (*Cat.* frag. 43a M.-W., v. 84) Poseidon gave Pegasus to Bellerophon (Hesiod does not explain how Poseidon came by Pegasus). Again, just before describing the 'birth' of Pegasus and Chrysaor (*Th.* 280–1) Hesiod tells how Poseidon had lain with Medusa (278–9). Apollodoros (2.4.2), paraphrasing and expanding on Hesiod's account, apparently concludes from the juxtaposition of these statements that Poseidon was the father of Pegasus. If Poseidon is his father,

The final scene described by the chorus (205–18) is the Gigantomachia depicted on the western pediment of the temple at Delphi. As the temple's metope sculptures with their portrayals of the sons of Olympians overcoming monsters echoed and underscored the principal theme of the pedimental sculpture, the Olympians' victory over the Giants, so too in our ode the briefer descriptions of Herakles and Hydra, of Bellerophon and Chimaira, anticipate the lengthier description of the Gigantomachia. The parallelism between the earlier scenes and the Gigantomachia depends primarily on the fact that Hydra, Chimaira, and the Giants are all, directly or indirectly, descendants of Earth, a point recalled in the closing line of our ode when the Giants are called Γᾶς τέκνων (218).¹ But the Gigantomachia also introduces a new element, the notion of fighting against the gods. Whereas the earlier combats were initiated by the sons of the Olympians² seeking to purge the savage manifestations of nature, the Gigantomachia was initiated by the Giants themselves in wilful opposition against the Olympians (cf. 987–8). In both cases the results are the same: the earthborns are destroyed.

Embedded in the description of the Gigantomachia is a passing reference to one more chthonic serpentine creature, the Gorgon Medusa whose head Athena wears on her shield. The Gorgon³ is either a snake herself (Hes. Sc. 229 ff.) or, more usually, she has snakes for hair (Pind. P. 10.46–7, A. P. V. 794). In the Hesiodic version recounted above, Medusa is Echidna's sister (Th. 274 ff.) and thus a descendant of Earth, and she is slain by Perseus (280–1). Later in our play Euripides has Kreusa retell this story (989–91), and her version differs significantly from that of Hesiod.⁴ According to Kreusa, the Gorgon is a direct offspring of Earth (989), begotten by Earth to be an ally of the Giants in their war against the gods (990), and she is slain not by Perseus but by Athena herself (991). Through these changes Euripides removes the slaying of the Gorgon from the 'taming of savage nature' category of the Herakles-Hydra and Bellerophon-Chimaira scenes, and brings it closer to the Olympian vs. rebellious chthonian theme of the Gigantomachia itself.

The chorus thus describes three scenes in which serpentine creatures and/or creatures born of or descended from Earth are overcome by Olympians or their offspring. This pattern further suggests Apollo's own victory over the serpentine chthonian Python here at Delphi⁵ and establishes the temple itself, the dominant element of the stage setting, as a symbol of Olympian, and especially Apolline,

this would account for Pegasus' horse shape since the horse is regularly associated with Poseidon.

¹ Unlike Hydra, Chimaira, *et al.*, however, the Giants were not serpentine. The notions of earthborn and serpentine are frequently reciprocal, and later sources do attribute snake-like lower extremities to the Giants, but the earliest evidence for such attribution is a lekythos dated to the beginning of the fourth century (see F. Vian, *La Guerre des géants*, pp. 13–16).

² Although perhaps with prompting from some Olympian; see above, nn. 1 and 7, p. 286.

³ Our play follows the more primitive tradition of the single Gorgon (cf. 989) from which the tradition of the three

Gorgones developed. On the origin of the Gorgon(es) see J. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*³, pp. 187 ff.

⁴ This version may well be Euripides' own invention. Elsewhere it is not found at all before Euripides, and after Euripides it occurs only, in a slightly varied form, in Diod. 4.70.3–6.

⁵ For Apollo slaying the serpent Python cf. *b. Ap.* 3.300 ff., Eur. *I. T.* 1244 ff., Apollod. 1.4.1, Paus. 10.6.5–6. Pausanias says only that Python was a serpent set by Earth to guard the oracle, but at *I. T.* 1248 Python is called γᾶς πελώριον τέρας. Earth preceded Themis who preceded Apollo as holder of the oracular seat at Delphi.

triumph over the forces of Earth. This particular effect of Olympian victory, it may be noted, is the result of Euripides' choice and arrangement of his material, and was not dictated by the actual temple decorations. Indeed, the playwright could have developed these materials in a quite different direction, emphasizing the divine parentage of Herakles and Bellerophon for example, and thus have them prefigure Ion whose divine parentage is discovered in the course of the play.¹ Or he could simply have followed the natural dictates of his material and described the front of the temple instead of its rear. Since he has not done so, we may safely conclude that these descriptions are not accidental but are a conscious pattern which Euripides has designed to prefigure, as we shall see, the triumph of Apollo over Kreusa.

Like the monsters in the sculptures, Kreusa is descended from the offspring of the earth, and she is repeatedly associated with snakes in the course of the play. First, Kreusa is an Athenian. In a moment of unconscious irony Kreusa's son Ion says γῆς ἄρ' ἐκπέφυκα μητρός (542). The non-Athenian Xuthos replies οὐ πέδον τίκει τέκνα (542), but he is wrong, for the Athenian race is sprung from the earth (λαὸν . . . αὐτόχθονα κλειών 'Αθήνων, 29–30; αὐτόχθονας κλειῶς 'Αθήνας, 589–90). More importantly, Kreusa's own paternal grandfather Erichthonios² was born from the earth, a point of which we are reminded by Hermes shortly after the play begins (γηγενοῦς 'Εριχθονίου, 20–1; cf. γηγενῇ μάχην, 987, referring to the Gigantomachia). Hermes relates how Athena set two snakes to protect the baby Erichthonios when he was handed over to the care of the Aglaurides, the daughters of Kekrops who was himself an earlier earthborn semi-serpentine king of Athens (cf. 1163–4). This association with snakes is then extended to Kreusa as Hermes tells how she took an ornament of golden snakes which she herself was wearing and, following an ancestral custom commemorating Erichthonios, placed it on the baby Ion before exposing him to die (24–7).

When Kreusa herself enters, Ion begins almost immediately to question her about her ancestry (258 ff.). Ion's questions confirm the impression of charming *naïveté* created by his initial monody (82 ff.), and his dialogue with Kreusa serves to reinforce the link, made by Hermes in the prologue, between Kreusa and the earthborn royal line of Athens. In their conversation Ion and Kreusa speak of the chthonic birth of Erichthonios (ἐκ γῆς . . . γῆθεν, 267–9), and Ion uses language which emphasizes the close family ties between Kreusa and her grandfather (ἐκ γῆς πατρός σου πρόγονος ἔβλασεν πατήρ, 267³). Ion and Kreusa allude to the tale of the Aglaurides (270–4), mentioning Kekrops as their father and adding the detail, not given by Hermes in the prologue, that the Aglaurides disobeyed Athena's instructions and were punished with death for their disobedience (270–4; cf. Apollod. 3.14.6). Ion and Kreusa then move on to Kreusa's father

¹ See also above, n.5, p. 286.

² The normal genealogy (given, e.g. by Apollod. 3.14.6 ff., *marm. Par.* 10–15) is Erichthonios-Pandion-Erechtheus-Kreusa. I would suggest that Euripides eliminated Pandion since he could contribute nothing chthonic or serpentine to the play. See also following note.

³ The simplest interpretation of πατρός σου πρόγονος . . . πατήρ is '(your) ancestor, the father of your father.' Note also the direct transmission of the Gorgon's blood

from Erichthonios to Erechtheus to Kreusa (1007–9). Both these passages could be construed, albeit somewhat unnaturally, to allow room for Pandion between Erichthonios and Erechtheus (cf. Owen, *op. cit.*, ad loc.). However, since Pandion is never mentioned in the play, there is no need to accommodate him in the genealogy, and both these passages may be taken in their more natural sense which makes Erichthonios father of Erechtheus.

Erechtheus and allude to two incidents in his life, his sacrifice of Kreusa's sisters in obedience to an oracle,¹ in order to obtain victory over the Eleusinians (277–8; cf. Apollod. 3.15.4), and his punishment at the hands of Poseidon for slaying Poseidon's son Eumolpos (281–2; cf. Apollod. 3.15.5). According to some versions (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 2.546 ff., Hdt. 8.55) Erechtheus was himself born from the earth,² but Euripides gives him a different set of chthonic associations, making him meet his end by being swallowed up in the earth (281).³ In this conversation of Ion and Kreusa then, we are reminded that Kreusa's grandfather was born from the earth, and that her father, at the end of his life, went beneath the earth. Moreover, the stories of the Aglaurides and of Erechtheus, as they are told here, imply a moral: obedience to the gods, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, will bring success (Erechtheus), but resistance to the will of the gods will bring punishment (the Aglaurides).⁴ It is appropriate that the conversation turns immediately, albeit briefly and indirectly, to Kreusa's encounter with Apollo (283–8), and that reference is made both to the god (285) and to Kreusa's rejection of his will (286, 288).

Kreusa also alludes to the fact that her meeting with Apollo took place in a cave (288). This cave is mentioned several times in the play as the place where Ion was conceived (17, 892 ff., 936 ff.) and born (948–9).⁵ Conception and birth in a cave, i.e. underground, befit Ion as a true member of Athens' chthonic royal line. The cave was also the place where Kreusa exposed her newborn child⁶ (16 ff., 958, 1398 ff., 1494 ff.) and the place from which the child was resurrected in a new birth from the earth⁷ when he was rescued by Hermes and transferred to Delphi on the instructions of Apollo (cf. 28 ff.). The specific location of this cave is also important, near the Pythion on the northern slope of the Acropolis (cf. 285–8), for it was most probably from this Pythion that the

¹ One thinks naturally of the oracle at Delphi (the oracle is so identified by Lyc. in *Leocr.* 99, introducing a quotation from Euripides' *Erechtheus*; Apollod. 3.15.4 does not specify).

² There is considerable confusion in our sources between Erichthonios and Erechtheus arising from the fact that Erichthonios was, in origin, merely a doublet of Erechtheus (who had himself evolved from an epithet for Poseidon); see J. Harrison in *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, pp.lix–lx.

³ Euripides' language can be read to suggest that Erechtheus did not die but continued to live underground. Such an interpretation would dovetail nicely with the belief that the *οικουρὸς ὄφις*, the snake which guarded the Acropolis, was Erechtheus/Erichthonios (re)incarnated (on the confusion between Erechtheus and Erichthonios see preceding note; on the *οικουρὸς ὄφις* see *RE* s.v. *οἰκυρος* 2).

⁴ Erechtheus may also be considered something of a *θεομάχος* in that he slew Poseidon's son, for which transgression he

was punished. The details of this myth are rather obscure, and it is far from certain that Erechtheus was required to slay Eumolpos in order to defeat the Eleusinians.

⁵ Somewhat inconsistently, Hermes says that Kreusa gave birth *ἐν οἴκῳ* (16). Given its context, *ἐξέθηκε δωμάτων* (344) means nothing more than 'exposed', and does not imply that the child was born at home.

⁶ At 964–5 Kreusa says that she expected Apollo to care for Ion after she exposed him, but at this point Kreusa is only transferring as much blame as possible from herself to Apollo, thus subjectively justifying her attempt, against Apollo's will, to slay Ion. Later Kreusa herself will confess that she intended Ion to die (1494 ff.), as Hermes had already told us in the prologue (18, 27). On Kreusa's different versions of the exposure of Ion see also Burnett, *op. cit.*, p.124.

⁷ Cf. Kreusa's identification of Ion's death with going 'beneath the ground' (1441–2) to be 'reared in the house of Hades' (953).

procession of Pythaistai would set out from Athens to Delphi.¹ Realizing this, we may see this later procession prefigured, in terms of our play, both in the transfer of Ion from the near-by cave to Apollo's temple and in the journey, much longer in time, which brings Kreusa from the same cave to Delphi.

Having linked Kreusa to her chthonic ancestors in the opening scenes of the play, Euripides continues to remind us of this association by references to Kreusa as 'daughter of Erechtheus' (433, 546; cf. Kreusa's 'Erechtheus, my father', 725–6)² and by mentioning the royal family of which Kreusa is a part (469–70; 567; τοὺς σοὺς [sc. Kreusa's] παλαιούς, ἐκγόνους αὐτόχθονας, 737; 810).³ Erechtheus is also invoked by the chorus as a defender of Athens against an earlier invasion (723–4), parallel to Kreusa who will shortly attempt to defend Athens against the 'invasion' of Ion.⁴

At 987 ff. Kreusa announces to the Old Man her plan for slaying Ion. Their conversation involves the whole series of motifs which we have been studying, the battle of chthonians against Olympians, the serpentine creatures, and the royal family of Athens. Kreusa begins by mentioning the γηγενῇ μάχην fought by the Giants against the gods (987–8). While this is a logical enough place for Kreusa to begin her description of the Gorgon's blood with which she will attempt to poison Ion, it also recalls the parodos whose major element was a description of the Gigantomachia which the present scene very clearly defines as an act of rebellion against the gods (987 ff.). By evoking the Gigantomachia the present passage becomes, in effect, an extension of the same pattern seen in the parodos of θεομαχία on the part of the earthborns, in this case of Kreusa against Apollo. To underscore the parallel Kreusa's chthonic nature is emphasized through references to her close family ties, both with Erichthonios whom the earth brought forth (1000) and with Erechtheus, Erichthonios' son and Kreusa's father (1006). Chthonic too is the instrument Kreusa has chosen for murder,

¹ Strabo 9.2.11; J. Bosquet, 'Delphes et les Aglaurides d'Athènes', *BCH* 88 (1964), 663–4.

² Whereas in the prologue Kreusa is referred to more frequently by her own name (11, 18, 57, 63, 65, 72), after she identifies herself to Ion (260) her name is not mentioned again until the messenger speech (1123, 1216), and she is identified instead only in terms of her family relations. Later she is also addressed by name by Athena (1572).

³ A similar effect is produced by the analogous references to the Athenians as *Κεκροπίδαις* (296), to *αὐτόχθονας* . . . 'Αθήνας (589–90), and to the cave where Kreusa lay with Apollo as *Κεκροπίας πέτρας πρόσβορον ἄντρον* (936–7; cf. *Κέκροπος ἐς ἄντρα*, 1400). It is possible that the whole group of caves on the north slope of the Acropolis was said to be 'of Kekrops' inasmuch as they were in the 'Kekropian cliffs' (cf. Owen op. cit., ad 1400), while the cliffs may have been called 'Kekropian' because they were in the general vicinity of Kekrops' tomb (on the

locations of the Long Rocks and the Kekropeion see I. T. Hill, *The Ancient City of Athens: Its Topography and Monuments*, pp. 99 ff., 177 f.).

⁴ The text at 721 ff. is corrupt and something has probably been lost (for some suggested emendations see Owen, op. cit., ad loc.). Whatever the exact reading of 721 ff. may be, it is clear that the chorus wishes Ion, the foreigner, to die (719–20), and that in this context the particular event in Erechtheus' life to which the chorus alludes must be his repulse of the Eleusinian invasion of Attica (indirectly referred to above at 277–8). Unfortunately the corruption of our text and our imperfect knowledge of this myth prevent us from telling whether Euripides intends the chorus's allusion to imply a contrast between Kreusa *θεομάχος* and Erechtheus who operated in accord with the oracle, or if he means it to suggest an ill-omened parallel between Kreusa who would slay Apollo's son Ion and Erechtheus who slew Poseidon's son Eumolpos (cf. above, n.4, p. 289).

the poisonous blood of the serpentine earthborn Gorgon (989, 992–3,¹ 1015) handed down from generation to generation in the Athenian royal line (1001 ff.), a possession so close to Kreusa that she habitually wears it upon her wrist (1009).² Thus the poison's history as set forth by Kreusa serves to define her intended act in its fullest terms, for while Kreusa would see her attempt on Ion's life merely as an attack on a mortal intruder (cf. 1286 ff.),³ by her evocation of the Gigantomachia and of her own chthonic nature she unconsciously places her actions before the audience in the broader framework of chthonic rebellion against the gods. The Giants failed in their rebellion and were destroyed, and the symbol of that failure is the head of their ally, the Gorgon (cf. 990), which Olympian Athena wears upon her shield (cf. 995–6). Given this precedent, it is inevitable that Kreusa's rebellion must fail too.

Kreusa's attempt to slay Ion is not her first act of opposition to Apollo. This occurred when she resisted the god's advances in the cave and had to be forcibly restrained (cf. 891 ff., 941).⁴ It is also possible to see in Kreusa's exposure of Ion another act which runs counter to the plan of Apollo, albeit not intentionally so.⁵ In this sense her abandoning of the newborn Ion would parallel the failure of the Aglaurides to tend properly the newborn Erichthonios (cf. 270–4),⁶ but with the difference that the act of the Aglaurides is one of simple disobedience while Kreusa's culpability is reduced by her inability to perceive the broader scope of Apollo's divine plan until it is revealed by Athena at the end of the play (1569 ff., esp. 1595 ff.). Three times then Kreusa acts in a way which would frustrate Apollo's plan. Twice already her acts have come to nought: her resistance was overcome by Apollo in the cave, and Ion was rescued by Hermes at the command of Apollo. As we have seen, the locale of Kreusa's earlier acts, a cave, provided these acts with certain chthonic associations. The chthonic/serpentine/Athenian nature of her final attempt is now underlined both by the chorus as it sings of blood from the slain chthonian Gorgon used by Kreusa to defend the house of the Erechtheids (1053–60; cf. 1233–4)⁷ and by Ion himself when he calls Kreusa a viper (ἔχιδνα) and a serpent (δράκοντ') equal to the poison with which she sought to kill him (1262–5). And the earthborn is once again defeated by the Olympian as Apollo again intervenes, this time through the birds which

¹ Following Kirchhoff's transposition, 992–3 are to be read after 997 so that they describe the snaky appearance of the Gorgon on Athena's aegis (θώρακ', 993).

² We must assume that she habitually wears the poison since there is nothing in the play to suggest that she had put it on for this special occasion. The fact that Kreusa has the poison so ready to hand and is actually wearing it would suggest to the audience that the poison is almost a part of herself. The poison was originally fastened by Athena to Erichthonios' body with golden bands (1006–7), just as it is now fastened to Kreusa's body in a golden bracelet (1009, 1030). Besides the parallel with Kreusa's attire, the golden bands of Erichthonios also indirectly suggest the golden snakes worn by later Athenians in his honour (cf. 20 ff.).

³ This she does despite the evidence of

the oracle that Xuthos' 'discovery' of Ion is Apollo's will.

⁴ See further A. P. Burnett, 'Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' *Ion*', *CPh* 57 (1962), 97.

⁵ Although Kreusa may not see that exposing Ion is against Apollo's plan, the audience at least should recognize this when they are informed by Hermes in the prologue (67 ff.) of Apollo's intention to propagate the Ionian race through Ion.

⁶ This similarity between Kreusa and the Aglaurides may account for the prominence of the Aglaurides in our play (they are mentioned three times in all, 23–4, 270–4, 1163).

⁷ Cf. also Kekrops, half-snake king of Athens, like a silent witness to the attempted murder, embroidered with his daughters on a tapestry at the entrance of the tent erected by Ion (1163–4).

live in his temple (1196 ff.). The appearance of the birds is no accident, for the messenger told us, in the preface to his account, that the god himself had found a way to set things right and avoid the pollution which Ion's death would have brought to his sacred precinct (1116–18; cf. 1563 ff.).

Nor is Kreusa the only earthborn Athenian who would act contrary to the will of Apollo. Ion, Kreusa's son, threatens to kill his mother despite the protection which, as Ion himself recognizes, Apollo's altar has conferred upon her (1275 ff.). But when the moment comes to act, Ion cannot bring himself to violate the altar. Instead, he orders Kreusa to leave the altar (1306),¹ and when she refuses he threatens her again (1310) and complains of the unjust institution which grants this refuge to a murderer (1312 ff.). Ion, however, does not for the moment follow through with his threat to kill Kreusa, although one suspects that, given his emotional state, if he is left on his own for much longer, his desire for vengeance will certainly overcome his religious scruple.² In order to prevent this Apollo will now have Ion learn that Kreusa is his mother; mother and son will thus be reunited and Kreusa's death will be prevented.³ Apollo accomplishes all this through his priestess, the Pythia.

The Pythia is Apollo's agent: she comes from his oracle and she is his chosen spokesman (cf. her opening words, 1320–3). Now, in accord with Apollo's wish (cf. 1353), she produces Ion's cradle containing his birth tokens which, the Pythia tells Ion, she had been inspired by Apollo to preserve (1346–7, 1359–60). Up to now, she says, Ion's life has been ordered by the wishes of Apollo (1343 ff., 1357–8), and now it is the god's wish that Ion use these tokens to discover his real mother (1355, 1364–8). Despite the Pythia's numerous invocations of Apollo, Ion refuses at first even to unwrap the cradle. Still believing Xuthos to be his father, Ion fears that his mother may be a slave (1383–4), and lest his fear be confirmed by the tokens, he proposes to dedicate the still-wrapped cradle to Apollo, its contents left unseen (1380–1). But then Ion himself recognizes that his refusal to examine the tokens is an act of rebellion, of *θεομαχία* against Apollo's design (*καίτοι τί πάσχω; τοῦ θεοῦ προθυμία πολέμῳ* . . ., 1385–6). Repenting of this rebellion, Ion unwraps the cradle. Kreusa recognizes the cradle and identifies the tokens, Ion accepts Kreusa as his mother and spares her life, and Apollo's design is thus accomplished.

Kreusa and Ion are alike in that they both undertake actions which would interfere with Apollo's plans only to have their resistance (conscious or unconscious) to those plans overcome by the intervention of Apollo. Kreusa's actions, however, do not seem to involve any real choice. She does not deliberate on right and wrong; she simply does what she does and then the god or his agent intervenes after the fact to prevent the harmful result Kreusa had intended. Ion, on the other hand, is brought by divine intervention to the point where he himself chooses to put aside his own inclinations and to do the will of Apollo instead. It is almost as if Ion can be trusted to make the proper choice and Kreusa cannot. This difference between Ion and Kreusa is significant, and we shall suggest a reason for it once we have briefly considered two other aspects of the *parodos* song of the chorus.

¹ We have been prepared for Ion's unwillingness to pollute Apollo's shrine with Kreusa's blood by his unwillingness in the prologue to shed the blood of the birds on Apollo's temple (cf. 179–80). There, as here, he tries threats to get the offenders to

leave (158 ff.).

² Note that even after the entry of the Pythia and up until 1334 Ion continues to contemplate killing Kreusa on the altar.

³ That this is Apollo's plan is in effect confirmed by Athena at 1563 ff.

As we have seen, the parodos describes a series of sculptured scenes depicting the victories of Olympians and their sons over various earthborn and/or serpentine creatures. These scenes are part of a broader pattern, which we have studied in some detail, of chthonic and serpentine images associated with Kreusa. In this sense, the scenes described by the chorus can be said to prefigure Apollo's defeat of Kreusa when she attempts to frustrate the Olympian's will by killing Ion. Now when the chorus describes these scenes on Apollo's temple, they do not do so in the august tones we normally associate with choral odes. The women of the chorus are simple folk and they speak in simple terms framed by their own limited experience. Thus they liken Apollo's temple to temples they knew in Athens (184–9), the sight of Iolaos aiding Herakles recalls stories they would tell while doing their weaving (196–7), and Athena in the Gigantomachia is called 'my goddess' (211). The chorus does not simply describe the temple: the personal analogies which they use and the repeated commands which they give one another to look at this and that character or scene also make us aware of the chorus's own open and unsophisticated reactions to what they see. Since the chorus is composed of servants of Kreusa it serves to prepare us for their mistress so that we extend their simplicity and *naïveté* to Kreusa herself. In particular their tone of dazzled wonder anticipates the dazzled wonder now turned to scorn of Kreusa's description of Apollo with his gleaming blonde hair, come to make love to Kreusa as she gathered flowers and he shamelessly indulged his sexual desires (887–96). In the prologue of the play Hermes had described Apollo's grand plan to propagate the Ionian race (67 ff.), a plan reaffirmed by Athena at the end of the play (1569 ff.). But Kreusa does not recognize (as Ion does) that Apollo has his plan, for like the chorus in the parodos she is too naïve and narrow. She sees Apollo only in her own limited terms, as a playboy seducer in a scene of idyllic beauty, and she fails to grasp the grandeur of the god and the broader import of his action.

The chorus's introduction of their native Athens into their description of the Delphic temple may also be viewed in terms of another element underlying our play, the mingling of Athenian Kreusa and Delphic Apollo in their common offspring Ion. As the play nears its end, Ion recognizes first that he is the son of Kreusa. Among the instruments of this recognition are the serpentine Gorgon woven into his baby blanket (1421–3) and golden snakes recalling those of Erichthonios (1427–31).¹ These birth tokens correctly identify Ion, not merely as the son of Kreusa, but as the new incarnation of the chthonic royal line of Athens, a point underscored by Kreusa when she sings ἀνηβὰ δ' Ἐρεχθεύς, ὃ τε γηγενέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτα δέρκεται, ἀελίου δ' ἀναβλέπει λαμπάσιν (1465–7). Thus the play comes full circle, and the baby who had been decked out in the prologue like a new Erichthonios (cf. 20 ff.)² now becomes the new Erechtheus (1465) who will regain in Athens his ancestral throne (1572–4, 1618). But Ion is also the son of Apollo. Yet when Kreusa tells him this (1477 ff.), Ion refuses to believe (1523 ff.), insisting instead that he will question Apollo himself (1547–8). As Ion turns towards the temple³ Athena appears, declaring that she

¹ The distribution of these lines seems to be faulty in the manuscripts which continue the stichomythia down to 1432. The best sense for these lines is obtained by following Grégoire, who transposes 1428–9 to after 1431 and assigns all three verses to Kreusa.

² On Ion as a second Erichthonios see also Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived*, p.105.

³ Ion must actually turn towards the temple in order to see Athena on the μηχανή attached to the rear stage building. Ion's movement visibly emphasizes his choice to rely on divine guidance.

has been sent by Apollo (1556 ff.), and convinces Ion that he is indeed the god's son (cf. 1606–8). As chthonic means led Ion to accept his Athenian ancestry, so now only the Olympian Athena can convince Ion that he is part Olympian as well.

Ion then is both Delphic and Athenian, Olympian and chthonic. Three times in the closing lines of the play we are reminded that Ion is the son of both Kreusa and Apollo (1560, 1568, 1607–8). This mingling of ancestry may explain, on the one hand, Ion's similarity to Kreusa, brutally seeking to kill her as she had sought to kill him,¹ and it may account, on the other hand, for the ability which Ion possesses (but Kreusa does not) to step back from his own inclinations and to do the will of Apollo instead. As Kreusa, near the end of the play, tries to convince Ion that Apollo is his father she swears by Athena, *μὰ τὴν παρασπίζουσιν ἄρμασιν ποτε Νίκην Ἀθανᾶν Ζηνὶ γηγενεῖς ἔπι* (1528–9).² We are reminded once again of the parodos and its theme of Olympic victory over the forces of Earth. But the pattern of images speaks of Ion as well. Kreusa's son will return to Athens from Delphi, his earthborn heritage which he received from his mother now tempered and shaped to the destiny willed for him by his father, the Olympian Apollo.

Fairfield University, Connecticut

VINCENT J. ROSIVACH

¹ Cf. also 1500 where Ion parallels his own actions to Kreusa's earlier attempt to kill her son by exposing him at birth.

² Cf. also her invocation of Athena as *Γοργοπόνα* (1478).