The Marriage of Tragedy and Comedy in Euripides' Ion

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The Marriage of Tragedy and Comedy in Euripides’ Ion*

Already in antiquity the interweaving of tragic and comic elements in the Euripidean plays posed a general interpretative problem. For instance, in the fourth century BC Aristotle in his Poetics finds Euripides τραγικώτατος τῶν ποιητῶν, because by ending his plays ‘with affliction’ he makes the most tragic impression. Yet Euripides is also credited with being a predecessor of New Comedy. Satyros, a Peripatetic biographer of the third century BC, in his Life of Euripides emphasises the indebtedness of New Comedy to the dramatic and stylistic devices of the poet.2

The Ion has often been felt a problematic play to classify in terms of genre. Scholars have tried to reject or qualify the label ‘tragedy’, and several have

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1 Poet. 13, 1453a 29.

2 Frg. 39 vii, 8-22, 3rd c. BC: ‘... or in the reversals of fortune, violations of virgins, substitutions of children, recognitions of means of rings and necklaces. For these are the things which comprise the New Comedy, and were brought to perfection by Euripides, Homer being the starting point in this and in the colloquial arrangement of verses (?)’. On lines 23-27 and the reference to Homer, see Arrighetti, 1964, 122-124; Wilamowitz objects to Homer being brought in here and suspects a corruption; but Hunt has no doubt that Ὀμήρος stands in the papyrus. Menander’s indebtedness more specifically to Euripides’ Ion may be better exemplified by a fragment of what has been identified as his play Leucadia; see Pap. Ox. vol. LX, 42-46, no 4024 and plate III. I should like to thank Dr. Colin Austin for drawing it to my attention and for providing me with an early copy of this new papyrus. P.J. Parsons assumes a dialogue between the priestess (Ζακαρός) and child (a girl), perhaps representing the first meeting between the heroine and the priestess; he then remarks that if frg. 258, a soliloquy in anapaests, is followed by this scene in the papyrus, ‘the structure shows a clear likeness with Euripides’ Ion, both dramaturgically (the scenic solo, the sacred place, the fetching of water) and in plot (parent and child, one a new arrival, one serving the temple — Leukadia reversing the age-roles)’. Professor Handley in his Hellenic Society forthcoming Presidential address (3/6/95) will argue that ‘the new iambic piece comes first as the beginning of the play, and the anapaests follow it; the sequence iambic-anapaests, if so, follows the sequence in the Ion, which Menander surely had in mind; the rocky background is very expressly present in the remains of Leucadia, as it is in the Ion’ (extract from his personal letter of 6/12/94). Cf. Katsouris, 1974, 175-205; 1975, 137ff.; he sees Ion 517f. in the background of Men. Hiereta; so first A. Koerte, Herm. 75, 1940, 113-115.
wanted to incorporate the term 'comedy' somewhere in their alternative label.\(^3\)

In this article I will re-examine the nature and function of the 'comic' elements in the \(ion\), and suggest that what has traditionally been seen as an issue of genre and classification should rather be understood in terms of the internal dynamics of the play.

I shall begin by reviewing the range of dramatic motifs and effects that have led scholars to the classification of the \(ion\) as in some sense a 'comic' play, and then I shall consider how these contribute to the overall tone, meaning, and dramatic effect, closing by addressing the problems of calling the play anything but a tragedy. At the very outset of this discussion, I should like to make the distinction, following Seidensticker, between the 'elements of comedy' and the 'comic elements' in this play. The latter is taken as 'a general term for the "laughable" (τὸ γέλοιον) in its manifestations and tones'. The former stands for 'structural forms, characters, dramatic situations, motifs, themes, and story patterns which were already [sc. in Old Comedy]\(^4\) or were soon to become typical elements of comedy [sc. in Middle and New Comedy]\(^4\). Such elements are not "necessarily comic" when part of the tragic texture.\(^5\) More specifically in the \(ion\) some motifs which I would consider as 'elements of comedy' are the rape of a virgin (10f., 338, 891, 939, 1494; cf. 1596); rape at a festival (552f.);

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\(^3\) See Owen (1939), xvii. 'The \(ion\) has been generally classified as a romantic play; some have called it a tragi-comedy. ... It can be grouped with the \(I.T.\) and \(Helen\): all three are plays with exciting incident, and all have a happy ending. ... All three also, like the \(Electra\), ... contain recognition scenes, and herein Euripides sets the pattern for Menander'; Lucas, 1949, I: 'In so far as it ends happily after threat of disaster the \(ion\) is a tragi-comedy; in so far as its purpose is to provide a series of thrills, to mystify the audience and hold them in suspense, it is a melodrama. ... the \(ion\) is a hybrid. The form, language, and convention are still appropriate to the old stately tragedy of heroic life, but the spirit is tending towards something which did not yet exist, a contemporary social comedy. Even the ancients ... saw that the \(ion\) was half way to the New Comedy of Menander'. The \(ion\) is amongst Burnett's seven Euripidean plays of mixed reversal, the others being \(Afc.; I.T.; Hel.; Andr.; Her.;\); Or. See Burnett, 1971, I: 'Some of the seven ... have been called the "happy-ending plays", or again, the "tyche plays", and all are usually classed as melodrama ... they are certainly all non-Aristotelian ... for these are dramas whose multiple plots revolve in both directions at once, mixing actions of catastrophe with others of favourable fortune ... the chief characteristic of these dramas is a meeting of conflicting moods'; see also 1970, 7: 'the \(ion\) is a play that breaks tie first Aristotelian rule, for its action is not single but double: worse still, its two plot streams have opposite tendencies, one following an improvement in fortune, the other a decline'. See Knox, 1979: \('I.T., Helen, Ion\) ... are clearly a radical departure from Euripidean tragedy ... they have been called romantic tragedy, romantic melodrama, tragi-comedy, romances, romantic comedy, drames romanesques, Intrigenstucke ... what everyone would like to call these plays is comedy ... provided the word "comedy" is understood in modern, not ancient terms ... Euripides, ... is the inventor, for the stage, of what we know as comedy' (p. 250); 'Ion... is full-fledged comedy — a work of genius in which the theatre of Menander... stands before us in firm outline' (p. 257).

\(^4\) Mutual borrowing between tragedy and Old Comedy would be a matter of conversion within contemporary genres. On the 'infiltration' of tragedy by elements of comedy in later Euripides, see Taf. 1986, 165f.

\(^5\) Terms as defined in Seidensticker, 1978, 305.
exposure of illegitimate child (18, 27, 965, 1494; cf. 1186); lost baby found; substitution of children (Xouthos is duped and accepts as his son the offspring of Apollo and Krousa's union); 'ignorance of identity' as the cause of the false recognition between Ion and Xouthos⁶; incongruous application of rhetoric with comic effect⁷; tension between the world of the myth and contemporary attitudes (5th century attitudes seem to challenge the mythical version of divine births and Athenian autochthony); conversational tone⁸; theatrical self-reference.⁹ One should not fail to notice, though, that some of these 'elements of comedy' were also found in the tragic myths. For instance, in Sophocles' O.T., exposure of the child and lost baby found are elements of the prehistory of the drama, whereas 'ignorance of identity' is at the very heart of the play. Perhaps, also, one could go even further, following Satyros,¹⁰ and claim that such elements were part of the heroic epic inheritance of stories common to both tragedy and comedy, or even more of folktales and rituals.

Yet it is the 'comic elements' which have formed the main argument of all those scholars who attach a 'comic' label to the play, basing their verdict on the light tone of the play, the avoidance of catastrophe and the comic innuendoes in scenes such as the false recognition scene between Xouthos and Ion.¹¹ I shall now examine more closely these elements and the co-existence of the tragic and the comic mood in the play.

⁶ See Knox, CHCL, esp. 83-85; there he claims that like the Clytemnestra-Achilles scene, the false recognition scene in the Ion 'depends on 'agnoia', ... the mainspring of New Comedy; in fact in Men. Peric. the goddess Agnoia delivers the prologue'.

⁷ See Goldhill, 1986b, esp. 165f.; 'It is in part by adopting rhetorical postures that Euripides fragments the epic paradigm of character and its understanding' (p. 167); 'these techniques of misapplied rhetoric are, of course, close to the techniques of comedy and result in a generic intermixing often discussed with regard to Euripides' late tragedies' (p. 33).

⁸ Cf. Stevens, 1976, 66, on Ion 517-562: 'This lively passage of dialogue in stichomythia has a flavour of comedy and eight, perhaps nine colloquialisms contribute something to the liveliness and conversational tone of these exchanges'.

⁹ On Orestes, see Zeitlin, 1980; on Bacchae, see Foley, 1980; on Electra and Bacchae, see Goldhill 1986a, ch. 10: Genre and transgression, 244-264; see also Taplin 1986, on a comparison between the two genres. In the Ion, we may find theatrical self-reference in Hermes' dramatic exit in the prologue (see below p. 48); he assumes the role of the spectator in the grove, having a peculiarly close bond with the audience, waiting to see whether his predictions will be realised, thus admitting that he, as well as the audience, may have a partial vision of the reality. As part of the world of drama Hermes will remain in the grove as a silent eavesdropper, but as a member of the world of the theatre, he is needed to play other roles (probably Xouthos, Pythia and Athena) and therefore he will physically leave the scene. Cf. also 457-464, where the chorus call upon the goddess Athena to fly to 'the land where the altar of Phoebus proclaims his oracles, beside the cavel-stone of the earth, by the tripod round which the dancers circle' (trans. Lucas), an expression to be taken perhaps as an example of choral self-reflectiveness and at the same time as looking forward to the time that a joyful dance may welcome an auspicious oracular response.

¹⁰ See above n. 2.

¹¹ See above n. 3.
Euripides chooses as his prologue-speaker Hermes, who provides all the necessary information about the events preceding the dramatic action and welcomes the audience into the fictional reality of the play. In the first four opening lines of his speech he introduces himself, giving his brief family history and finally labelling himself as διαμονων λάτρην (4). This self-characterisation has a "hint of something not wholly serious effected by the bathetic drop from "Atlas" to "lackey" in four lines and three generations"; on the other hand, as Knox remarks, such characterisation makes Hermes the best possible spokesman 'to explain the situation... that involves rape (11), concealment (14) and deceit (71)'.

Hermes, by doing Apollo the favour of carrying baby Ion in his cradle from the Μακρος Πέτας, where it was exposed, to the Delphic temple’s steps (38), fully justifies his role as διαμονων λάτρης; at this point his mission is completed. And yet, after his report of the prehistory of the play, he passes his personal judgement on the course of the events (67f.), presenting Apollo as having been in absolute control of the situation; then, he ventures even further into offering a preview of the events to be dramatised (69-75), which is not, however, infallible; the recognition between mother and son will not occur in Athens as Hermes presumes, but in Delphi.

The playful treatment of the god covers the incongruity between his foretelling and the actual dramatisation of the story. Hermes makes a bold dramatic exit into the laurel grove (76), where he will supposedly remain as a silent eavesdropper, 'waiting to learn what has been accomplished by Apollo's will concerning the child', as one would literally translate τὸ κρανθέν ὡς ἐν ἐκμαθίῳ παιδὸς πέρι, (77), or, as I paraphrase it 'well, I'll go and see what happens, as it unfolds'.

The playfulness in the treatment of Hermes is a dramatic device employed by the playwright, who manipulates the audience by stirring their interest in finding out the outcome of the play, and in due course, it serves to heighten the suspense and to surprise the spectators with the premature realisation of the recognition between Kreousa and Ion within the actual time-span of the drama, on stage, in Delphi and not at a later date in Athens as predicted by Hermes (1020f.).

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13 Knox, 1979, 259. Hermes seems to have been frequently connected with comic elements; even as psychopompos he is more consolatory than tragic; e.g. Homeric Hymn to Hermes.
15 Of course overhearing scenes do occur in a few other tragedies; see Orestes in Aesch. Cho. 212f. and its parody in El. 216f.; Odysseus in Phil. 974-82.
Ion appears on stage visually as a 'replica' of Apollo,\textsuperscript{16} carrying with him a bow and arrows, but also a broom. We should not forget that he is the son of Apollo, but also a simple temple servant, who comes out with the morning sun to sweep the portals of the temple, stained by bird droppings. Apart from the awkward coupling of these stage props, a slightly teasing tone may lurk in the fact that this monody is the result of Ion's 'thinking aloud' about rather trivial matters (cf. \textit{El.} 54f.); such a mode of speech usually serves as a means for the release of heightened emotions of despair, as in the subsequent tragic monody of Kreousa (859-922).

Few scholars have failed to detect the comic undertones in Ion's apostrophising his broom (112f.); Winnington-Ingam imagines Ion performing 'a broom-dance that mimics the sweeping of the stylobate' (1965, 135); Knox notes the similarities with Electra's entry (\textit{El.} 54f) with her water jug,\textsuperscript{17} as well as with Silenos and his iron rake (Cycl. 32f.). Aristophanes has not missed the opportunity for ridicule; in \textit{Frogs} (1331-64), Aischylos parodies Euripidean monodies.\textsuperscript{18} Yet, in Ion's mind, it seems that working as he does on earth is his way of expressing his reverence and of worshipping Apollo in heaven. The repetition of the verb λατρεύω (123, 129, 152), recalls Hermes' role as λάτρης (4); both are in the service of Apollo; their juxtaposition, it seems to me, instead of marking the major gap between the world of mortals and immortals, somewhat bridges the distance between them, on the Homeric pattern of \textit{Iliad} I.\textsuperscript{19} What, however, is potentially comic in all the above cases is that all the characters give us a report of their regular domestic task within the dramatic context of a tragic plot.

Again, when birds 'attack' the Delphic temple in order to build their nests, Ion, who has just cleaned the place, strives to keep the birds away so that they

\textsuperscript{16} Phrase borrowed from Burnett, 1970, at line 82. The similarities between the figures of Ion and Apollo were first noticed by F.M. Wassermann, "Divine Violence and Providence in Euripides' \textit{Ion}," \textit{TAPA} 71, 1940, 601; more recently, see Zeitlin, 1939, 149f., on Ion-Apollo and other family resemblances. Ion's appearance with Apollo's bow may be echoed in the scene of Orestes and his bow in \textit{Orestes} and his bow in \textit{Or.} 268f.; on the Orestes' scene, see Zeitlin, 1980, 54f.

\textsuperscript{17} On Euripides parodying Aesch. \textit{Cho.} 16-18 in this scene, and on other comic elements in the play, see Hammond, 1984, 373-387.

\textsuperscript{18} He begins with a 'tragic' address to black night and gives as the reason for the monody the anxiety created by an ill-omened dream; then, there is a sudden change to a lighter tone, when he asks the handmaids to light up the lamps and warm up some water, so that he may wash away the effects of the bad dream (1538-40). This crude coupling of tragic and comic mood would presumably generate laughter amongst the Aristophanic audience. See also \textit{Therm.} 1065f., for an Aristophanic parody of Andromeda's lament. For some interesting remarks on the Aristophanic parody of Euripidean monodies, see Barlow, 1971, 44-5, and notes 4-6, 9-13; 1986, 10-13: 'The elevation and solemnity of that cosmic address to Night are set against the trivial incident of petty theft which realizes those premonitions' (1986, 12); also, W.B. Stanford's comments in his edition of the \textit{Frogs}, 1958, 184f.

\textsuperscript{19} Hom. \textit{Il.} 1 536-611; the quarrel between Zeus and Hera may be seen as a reflection of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles.
may not dirty the statues with their droppings! He now lifts his bow and arrows to scare away the visiting birds. Yet his ‘obsession’ with keeping the sanctuary free from impurities is controlled by his sense of ritual purity, which later prevents him from committing the impious act of shedding blood in the sacred precinct (αἰ δομαί, 179f.).

The light tone of the prologue is maintained throughout the parodos. The chorus are Athenian women, attendants of the Athenian queen, who has allowed them to look around the sanctuary (230f.). Their song contains a poetic description of selected sculptural details of the Delphic temple; the evocation of the heroic past sounds somewhat distant on the lips of the Athenian simple folk; the glamour is lost. This group of handmaidens is the third in the series of servants from the beginning of the play (Hermes, Ion). Aristophanes in Frogs 949f. criticises Euripides for giving humble characters more significant parts20 (cf. Eur. El. 367-40021; Nurse in Med. and in Hipp.). In this play, as in the Electra, there are two sets of characters22; we might distinguish between ‘low’ characters, such as Hermes, the Chorus, the old paedagogue, Xouthos (though Xouthos ought, being a king, to be ‘high’); and ‘high’ characters, such as Kreousa, Athena. Yet this distinction falls short in respect of the figure of Ion, which is more problematic and shares characteristics with both groups.23

The lighter tone of the play is interrupted by Kreousa’s entry. After the announcement of her arrival by the chorus (236), she may be imagined as solemnly advancing towards the centre of the orchestra. While she is not yet in full contact with the characters on stage, Ion has enough time to make his observations on the noble outward appearance of the Athenian queen (237-40); but his admiration comes abruptly to an end when, at a closer distance, Ion notices the tears in her eyes. Whereas the usual visitors to the temple are joyful, in much the same way as the chorus women were ‘content to delight their eyes with the outward beauties of the temple’ (δυμα τέφρει, 232), in marked contrast, Kreousa at the sight of the oracle closes her eyes (δυμα συγκλησασσα, 241f.) and her cheeks are wet with tears. The shift to a more tragic mood becomes apparent. Ion questions Kreousa, first about her mysterious sorrow and then about her identity; Kreousa, resuming her momentarily shaken self-control, closes the matter (256) without sharing the cause of her grief and proceeds by revealing her heroic ancestry and patiently answering Ion’s questions about the house of the Erechtheids, her husband and the reason for her arrival at the

20 At Frogs 945f., Aeschylus contends that Euripides ought to have died for giving humble characters more significant parts, but Euripides retorts that what he did was to offer a more democratic solution.
21 On the manipulation of contemporary rhetoric see Goldhill, above n. 7.
23 See Zeitlin, 1980, 55f., on the ‘fusion and divergence of categories’ in the creation of Euripidean characters: ‘Change (metabelo) is sweet in everything, says Electra (in Or. 234; 976-981), and we might add, nothing is more changeable than personality’.
oracle. It is now Kreousa's turn to question the temple slave about his status and family background; before long a mutual sympathy is soon established (ὦ τλήμον, 307; αὐτόκτιρομεν, 312; 320) between the motherless child and the childless mother. Kreousa proceeds in drawing the similarities between Ion’s mother and her alleged friend whom, she claims, Apollo raped, leaving the illegitimate child of that union to die. Such an implication is at once refuted by the pious temple servant (341); and, yet, after an investigation of the matter, Ion is so drawn into Kreousa’s story that in a sudden flash of understanding he passes his verdict against Apollo: ἀδίκει καὶ νῦν ἔσται ὁ θεὸς, ἦ τεκουσά τ’ἄθλια (355). Soon, though, Ion regains his rational thinking and objects to Kreousa’s intention to question Apollo about a story he wishes to keep secret (365). A brief agon takes place between the defendant and the prosecutor of the god (cf. 363). But Kreousa’s insistence on challenging the god has a distancing effect that leads gradually to a disruption in the communication between the two figures, as is clearly marked by the abrupt end of the stichomythia and the shift to longer speeches (Ion 369-80; Kreousa 384-400), separated by the chorus’ gnomical comment. This shift to longer speeches has as a result a decrease in the episode’s tempo.

Xouthos’ arrival somewhat eases the tension, by refocusing the lens upon the oracular answer the royal couple have come to seek. Perhaps a subtle comic touch may be detected in Kreousa’s answer to Xouthos’ question whether his delay has worried her. She gives a clear-cut answer: οὐδέν γὰρ ὅτι (404) and then adds in an ambiguous phrase that she has reached a state of anxiety, possibly referring to her own private affairs.

When Ion is left alone on stage, he tries to overcome the disquieting effect Kreousa’s last words had on him by engaging himself in his daily manual task of filling the stoups with holy water, another task that fits awkwardly in the tragic texture, due to the contrast ‘between the tragic-mythical and the realistic’. But then on a sudden impulse he decides to admonish Phoebus for being so lightheartedly unjust to humans (439f.). Quite frequently Euripidean characters in their effort to reach understanding venture even further to impugn the wisdom of the gods themselves. What makes Ion’s criticism strikingly significant is that it comes from a pious servant and is directed towards the god he has been serving all his life. And yet a subtle comic touch is possibly detectable in his intention to ‘teach the god a lesson’, to admonish him.27

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24 See Diggle, 1994, 111.
27 I would not go as far as Gellie in claiming that this speech ‘can only be an extension of the initial joke on which the play is based: gods must sin in order to become our ancestors’, an argument that follows from his claim that the play is a comedy; Gellie, 1984, 95 and n. 11.
In the first stasimon, the chorus pray for the fecundity of the Erechtheid race and a successor to the Athenian throne (468-471). Yet in the epode the chorus change theme and setting. They are no longer accompanying in their minds the royal couple who seek an oracle, but they suddenly switch to the wild scenery of Pan’s cave where Kreousa’s alleged friend is thought to have exposed the fruit of her illegitimate union with Apollo. However, the connection they have made in their minds is quite peculiar, since Kreousa has never mentioned before the cave of Pan as the place of her friend’s sexual assault by Apollo.

Why, then, did the chorus, or more precisely the dramatist, make this connection between the maiden’s rape and Pan’s cave? Pan, one of the ἥδει νεώτατοι (with Heracles and Dionysus, Hdt. 2.145), started being worshipped in Attica after the battle of Marathon (Hdt. 6.105). His real home, though, is Arcadia. Burnett notes that Euripides, by introducing Pan in this scene, ‘brings a breath of Arcadia into his fiction, forcing a touch of the satyresque upon our imagined versions of the erotic encounter between Kreousa and Apollo, and even upon the scene of the child’s exposure’. 28

Yet this ‘touch of the satyresque’ is not the only result achieved by Pan’s introduction to this myth of the autochthonous origins of the house of the Erechtheids; it fulfills another more serious function. Pan is the god of natural love; or, ‘rather of the sudden kind (of love) that strikes one at first sight, the kind mentioned in the prologue’ of Menander’s Dyscolos, which was spoken by the god himself. 29 The god is also associated with merrymaking (Ar. Thesm. 978; Men. Dysc. 261-263, 407-434; Ar. Lys. 911f.), dancing (Soph. Ajax 693f.), seduction (Ar. Lys. 998) and violent sexuality (Eur. Hel. 187-190), the result of which is, usually, an illegitimate union (Πανὸς... γάμους, Eur. Hel. 190). Thus, Pan brings wildness to the heart of the polis and offers in his cave a place for the seduction of the Athenian princess by the divine seducer and a place for the exposure and abandonment of the illegitimate child of that union. As Borgeaud notes, ‘the grotto, which collects what has been rejected, is also a sacred space where things begin’. Indeed, the cave functions as the chthonic womb and from there Ion is carried to the other well-known ‘womb’, the navel of the earth at Delphi. 30 The rejected child will in the end be accepted within the boundaries of the city as the autochthonous-Olympian successor to the Athenian throne, ‘filling the ἥδει χιόνιος with light and receiving an inheritance of wealth, which he will in turn bestow on children of his own’ (475f.) 31

Xouthos on seeing Ion utters the affectionate greeting ὃ τέκνον, χαῖρε’. This reaction comes in marked contrast with Xouthos’ abrupt dismissal of the temple servant in the previous episode. just before his entrance to the temple (417f.).

28 Burnett, 1970, at line 492.
29 Photiades, 1958, 105-122; see also, A. Schäfer, Menander’s Dyskolos, 1968, 28.
30 For Pan’s chthonic powers, see Photiades, 1958, n. 18, 116f.
31 On textual problems in this passage see Diggle, 1994, 112f.
The change is immediately noticed by Ion, who ‘bristles at the stranger’s premature effusiveness and suspects his intentions’, and thus urges Xouthos to recover his wits. However, Xouthos ignores the hint and, overcome by emotion, embarks on an even more affectionate approach, asking Ion to let him kiss his hand and fold him in his arms. At this open display of affection, Ion wonders whether a god has deranged the wits of the stranger, who hastens to ask in return how could he be considered insane for not wanting to let go of the person who is the dearest to him in the world. The meaning of Xouthos’ peculiar behaviour still evades Ion, who warns him not to touch the emblems of the god that he himself bears. Xouthos, though, forcibly embraces him, and Ion, breaking away quickly, threatens him with his bow and arrow. Xouthos wonders why Ion avoids recognising his nearest and dearest (τὰ φιλτατα); Ion steadfastly dismisses the question, answering firmly that he is not fond of putting raving strangers in their place, verbally counteracting Xouthos; Ion’s οὐ φιλῶ φρένον... ξένους neutralises Xouthos’ complaint τί... δεύτερα... γνωρίζω τὰ φιλτατα; Xouthos, noticing the rupture in communication, realises that he has to disclose his identity to his suspicious son; he humours Ion’s aggressive behaviour, urging him to go ahead and kill him, but he adds that if he does so, he will be the murderer of his own father. Ion, of course, is not prepared at this point for this revelation and takes Xouthos’ claim as a joke played on him.

The comic connotations of this scene have long been noticed by scholars. Already Menander detected its comic flavour, and in his Misoumenos (210-215) shaped the recognition scene in a way recalling the false recognition scene in the Ion. In Mis., it is again the father who recognises the child, who in this case is a daughter. The girl is informed by the nurse about the identity of the man in front of her, and her reaction is: ταχύροι ἐμὸς; πῶς; The use of πῶς shows incredulity in both passages (Ion 528). Only in Mis. Krateia, the girl, as soon as the father calls her "my child, welcomes the news and greets him χαῖρε... φιλτατα; both words used in the greeting are reminiscent of the language used by Xouthos (cf. 517, χαῖρε... τὰ φιλτατα). Demeas, the

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32 Lucas, note on line 517.
33 Compare Ion 520 with Med. 1129 and also with Ion 1402 in the true recognition scene.
34 Compare Hel. 567 (μὴ βῆγεις ἐμὸν πετάλων); I.T. 798ξ.; Hipp. 607.
35 Just as he has done in his monody in order to put the birds to flight and thus keep the temple from being defiled by their droppings. It is again because of the same concern for ritual purity that he picks up the bow, in order to punish the one who had dared to profane Apollo’s laurel wreaths, which he himself was wearing, by trying to embrace him perfecely.
36 Note that the word ξένους is in the same position as φιλτατα of the previous line.
37 See Wilmotowicz on line 517. Also Knox, 1979, esp. 260-263; Knox emphasizes the ambiguity of the word τέκνος: the word could mean not only ‘son’, but also simply ‘child’ or ‘boy’. Hartigan notes that ‘in the 1979 production at Epidaurus, Xouthos’ seductive παῖδε ἰὼ received much laughter’. K.V. Hartigan, Ambiguity and self-deception, The Apollo and Artemis plays of Euripides, 1991, 76, n. 19.
girli’s father, now calls her teknon, as Xouthos does in 517. In Mis. the recognition scene is brief and without complications between the two relatives, unlike the one in the Ion (it takes Ion 45 lines before he greets Xouthos as his father in 561). But, there is some confusion created when the slave Getas enters the scene at the moment father and daughter embrace and mistakes Demeas for Krateia’s secret lover, just as Ion mistook Xouthos’ advances as of a homosexual nature.

Although an effort to reconstruct ‘the reaction of the audience’ is vain, since such an approach ignores the fact that there are different audiences and different reactions and that even within the same audience there is always a variety of possible reactions to the events that are performed on stage, there seems to be some indication in the text pointing to a possible reaction of the original Athenian audience, as it was anticipated by the dramatist, during the false recognition scene in question. When Ion in 528 says: tau't oiv ou gelaoi kluvei emoio, it seems to me that the use of the word gelaoi in this context, preceding by the negative ou, may allude to the possibility that the members of the audience might be aware of the lighter tone of the scene — or, at least, aware of its potential for misunderstanding —, which ‘must have caused, if not outright laughter, at least a smile’. And now perhaps the dramatist, by making Xouthos reassure Ion that he is not making a fool of him, that there is no laughter (ou, 528), tells the audience that this is one of the ways of looking at this situation, perhaps in much the same way as Pentheus’ scornful laughter at the sight of the two old men dressed as Bacchanals offers one way of looking at the scene in the Bac. (170f.).

38 See Hunter, 1985, 133; n. 34. He cites Peric. 804, 813 as the only other example of the use of the word teknon in New Comedy.

39 Compare with Helen’s misunderstanding of Menelaos’ intentions in Hel. 541f. (esp. 545: de me thretca laubei; cf. 63 on Theoclymenos); cf. also Achilles misunderstanding Clytemnestra in I.A. 819f.

40 Diggle adopts the reading emoio, which appears as a variant in L above the reading emoio. Murray, in the previous O.C.T. edition (1913), preferred the original ms reading, which he translated as ludibrium mei, and, in English, ‘is this turning me into a ridicule?’ (literally), or, ‘do you seek to make a jest of me?’ (in Murray’s translation of the play, London 1954). emoio would be taken with kluvei and so directed against Ion in not quite a light-hearted way, emoio, on the other hand, would refer to the whole sentence; it would be literally translated as ‘is this not ridiculous (absurd) for me to hear’? Though the original ms reading is the ‘lectio difficilior’, the emended reading seems to offer a better meaning. In any case, my argument works fine with either reading. I would like to thank Dr R. Seaford for drawing my attention to this textual problem in the discussion that followed the delivery of the same paper on 4th November 1994 at U.C.L., and Dr C. Austin for carefully weighing the arguments on both sides with me.

41 Knox, 1979, 264.

42 Cf. also Iolaos’ scene in Heraclidae 630f., where the mocking of the attendant suggests a possible audience reaction. Seidensticker (1978, 314f.) rightly remarks: ‘An epic poet can easily indicate the quality of a scene and thus direct the emotional reaction of his audience by introducing a comment into the text: δαβδεσθος δ’ ἀρ’ ἐναρτο γέλως (Iliad 1 599). A drama-
After the false recognition scene, the tone darkens, so I shall not continue with the linear analysis of the play, but I will rather examine selectively those instances in the play where there is a mention of γελάως.43

We have seen that at 528 Ion thinks that Xouthos is mocking him, when he claims that he is his father (mild derisive tone); at 600 (γελάως...μωρίον τε ληφομαι, more hostile) Ion is afraid that, stained with the double stigma of being an illegitimate son and a foreigner, he will be considered an utter nobody, an intruder in the land of the earth-born Athenians; should he then aspire to become influential in the political arena, he will be mocked by those who, though men of noble strength, demonstrate a wise passivity and seek no part in the city's affairs. This would be a laughter of public ridicule, of denigration and scorn that would dishonour and isolate him even more.

In Ion's tent, where his birthday feast is held, a playful laughter was aroused amongst the feasters by the old pedagogue's eager bustling about in preparing the water for them to wash their hands and the wine to fill their cups (πρέσβυς ες μεσον πέδων / ἔση, γελάω δ ' ἑθηκε συνδείπνος πολῶν / πρόθυμα πρόσασαν, 1171-3). This scene strongly recalls the divine laughter of Iliad I 595-600, where Hephaestos played the role of the wine bearer in the god's symposium, a role customarily allotted to a beautiful young boy.44

Festivity and laughter are commonly associated in ancient Greek culture in the framework of the symposium, the komos and the civic festival.45 All three are to be found in Ion's tent, as we shall see. That this is a symposium is clear; there is food (βαραῖς, 1169f.), drink (1175f.), music (ἐς οὐλοῦς ἥκων, 1177). There is also a little piece of theatricality on the part of the old man who stands in the middle of the feasters, performs, in its literal sense, a brief comic episode as an entertainer and arouses laughter (1172f.); there is also unbridled behaviour,46 an ill-omened word uttered by a slave (βλασφημίαν, 1189). But

43 According to Halliwell's analysis (1991, 283) there were two kinds of laughter in ancient Greece: (a) playful laughter, which came to be associated with 'lightness of tone; autonomous enjoyment; psychological relaxation; and a shared acceptance... of such laughter by all who participate in it'; (b) consequential laughter, 'causing embarrassment or shame, signalling hostility, damaging a reputation, contributing to the defeat of an opponent, delivering public chastisement'.

44 See Burnett, 1971, 117; Zeitlin, 1989, 172 and n. 117. In Iliad I the quarrel between Zeus and Hera and the subsequent comic resolution through Hephaestus' intervention are contrasted with the serious quarrel, at the human level, between Achilles and Agamemnon; the playfulness of the scene in Ion's tent is a cover-up for the secret plotting against Ion's life, and for the serious quarrel between Kreousa and Apollo.


46 Such behaviour as a result of intoxicated ecstasy during the nocturnal torchlight Bacchic mysteries on the slopes of Mt. Parnassos is given as the context within which Ion was allegedly conceived by a Delphic maiden whom Xouthos raped (552f.) [note the similarities between this story of Ion's engendering according to Xouthos and Ion's tent: nocturnal; mysteries; Diony-
one of the prominent features of Old Comedy is indeed obscenity that is neutralised within the context of the civic religious festival. We should not forget that this piece of ‘Old Comedy’ is a play within the larger tragic play that is being performed in honour of Dionysus. And there is, indeed, divine agency at work behind the failure of the old man’s assassination attempt on Ion. The blasphemy is neutralised by the ritualistic emptying of the cups on the ground as a libation to the god (1192-3), and so is the murderous intention of the old man and Kreousa’s revenge. Before long, a κώμος πέλειων (1197) flies into the tent, making the Bacchic association even more clearly felt. They drink from the libation and, inevitably, the dove that tastes the poisoned wine poured from Ion’s cup, shakes in frantic convulsions (κάβδακχεινος 

47), 1204), utters unintelligible cries of pain and dies in front of the astonished feasters. Although until now there has been a series of incidents of muffled violence threatened but not carried out,48 this time, by ricochet, it hits a target, and there is a real victim, a sacred dove of the κώμος πέλειων.49 Finally, there is a civic function carried out in the tent: Ion is passing from one stage to another; he is no longer the carefree temple servant, but he has been acknowledged as a royal person, who will arrive at Athens to take up a new social role as the heir of the kingdom, the ruler of Athens and, later, the founder of the Ionian race; and so the social function of this farewell dinner is to celebrate, and indeed validate, this transition ‘from innocence to pan-Hellenic fame (1576)’.50 This transition

47 This word signifies the entrance of Dionysus himself onto the stage to perform the περι-

48 See Wolff, 1965, 169-194; ‘Though violence permeates the action, it is subordinate to an apparently providential design’ (177); also, Gellie (1984, 97f.) remarks: ‘... this god must use violence on Kreousa and deception on Xouthos, but he must not in the long run appear to be that kind of god, the brutal and dishonest kind. The same resort to double standards can be seen in the presentation of the human figures in the play... In the middle of the third episode the play turns... into violence... We want things to happen, but we do not want them to happen because Kreousa and Ion are really like that... [thus] the people and their projected crimes make no connection’. This avoidance of catastrophe, or, what Knox calls ‘hair’s breadth escape’, is considered as one of the elements that contribute to the lighter tone of the play and to its labelling as tragicomedy or proto-comedy. But in Ion’s tent a death does occur, though not of the intended, but of a substitute, victim. This is a typical ritual myth: ‘animal substituted for designated human victim’ (e.g. Iphigenieia, Isaac).

49 Contrast ‘man substituted for designated animal’ in the other notoriously triumphant komos of Dionysos which returns with Agave holding the head of the sacrificial victim (καυματι 
iou theou, trans. ‘the revel of the god of ecstasy’, Bac. 1167f.). See Foley, 1980, 119f.; see also Seidensticker, 1979, 181-190.

50 Taplin, 1979, 52-54: he defends a more serious reading of the play, which is to be found in the ‘dark struggles... of human feelings’, those of Ion and those of Kreousa; SXonhous finds the tragic content of the play in the struggle between the autochthony myth and ‘the denial of heterosexual reproduction inherent in the myth’ (1986, 267); Loraux observes the conflicts exposed within this “tragic dramatisation of the autochthony”, such as that between feminine and masculine in Kreousa as the ‘first “female Athenian”... taking up the challenge of that masculine claim to autochthony’; that between the exclusivity of Athenian autochthony and the
is also figuratively represented by means of the 'iconographical journey' depicted upon the fabrics that Ion himself has chosen to decorate the interior of the tent. Froma Zeitlin, in a recent article,\textsuperscript{51} rightly concludes that 'the tent is ...an appropriate visible sign of transition from the world of Delphi in the security of Apollo's temple with its monumental facade to the complex and composite political world of contemporary Athens'.

As the last topic in the list of comic elements in the play, I should like to briefly discuss the characterisation of Xouthos. What Northrop Frye calls the 'blocking character' in Euripides may be a barbarian (Thoas in \textit{I.T.}; Theoklymenos in \textit{Helen}) or a non-Athenian,\textsuperscript{52} as Xouthos in the \textit{Ion}, who fails to acknowledge the importance of the autochthony myth for the Athenian race and intends to foist his allegedly illegitimate son on Kreousa, the sole heiress of the Erechtheion palace. Not surprisingly, in the end the table is turned against the dupe foreigner. Real mother and exposed child are recognised, whereas Xouthos, the intruder, will remain deceived so that his δόκησις ἔνεκες ἔχη (1602). He has been deceived both by Apollo, whose oracle he took at face value, and by Kreousa, who kept her illegitimate child secret for all this time and will carry on doing so according to Athena's instructions. As Arlene Saxonhouse\textsuperscript{53} remarks, 'the credulity of Xouthos here stands in stark contrast to his incredulity of the Athenian foundation myths noted earlier... He who cared naught about the mother of his child is indeed no father'. Thus Xouthos strongly recalls the comic situation where a man rears a child that is not his own.\textsuperscript{54} Could we not, then, see Xouthos as the 'comic father', married to Kreousa, the 'tragic mother'?

In the final part of this article I shall consider the question of why and how the comic episodes are incorporated into the play's more serious and 'tragic' scenes so as to produce an integrated and satisfying overall effect.

Plato's \textit{Symposium} (223d 3-9), where Socrates in his conversation with Aristophanes and Agathon argues that comedy and tragedy could be written by the same playwright, is widely quoted to account for the comic touches in the

\textsuperscript{51} Zeitlin, 1994, 138-196, esp. 153f.
\textsuperscript{52} See Segal, 1994, 16f.
\textsuperscript{53} Saxonhouse, 1986, 271.
\textsuperscript{54} Cf. Men. \textit{Epitr.}, where the situation is similar (Murray, 1945); Charisios, like Xouthos, has accepted as his son a child which he believes to be not the child of his wife, but of another woman (but Pamphile's loyalty is contrasted to Kreousa's attempt to murder Ion).
later Euripidean plays. Even Aristophanes, in *Frogs* 391f., makes the chorus of initiands claim that a good comedy contains a mixture of seriousness and mockery.

Similarly, it is common in the modern interpretation of this phenomenon to resort to a comparison between the comic incidents in the Shakespearean plays and those in the Euripidean plays. Terms such as 'comic relief' or 'reciprocal intensification' are used, to explain the appearance of Aegus in Eur. *Med.* or Heracles in *Alc.* Thus, for instance, according to Rossiter's interpretation, the opening of the *Ion* with the lighter tone of Hermes' soliloquy and Ion's monody would belong to the same group as *Othello* and *Lear*, which 'open with bawdy laughter at Iago and Gloucester', where 'relief is not from but for the serious to come'.

Perhaps, though, we need not look for parallels only in Shakespearean poetry, for an answer may be found in the Euripidean plays themselves. Quite often Euripidean tragedies show awareness of the paradox of the theatrical effect, namely the aesthetic pleasure that can be derived from tragic poetry ('joy from lamentation'). A further effect to be attained is the easing of pain, an idea that is as old as Homer (esp. *Od.* I. 337f.) and Hesiod (*Theog.* 52f.; 98-103) and recurrently appears in Euripidean plays. As for the poet himself in the process of composition (τὸν θ' ὑμνοποιοῦν αὐτός ἀν τίκτη μέλη), if he is to supply aesthetic pleasure through his poetry (τέρπειν ἄν ἄλλοις), he ought to work in joy (χαίροντα τίκτειν; ἵν δὲ μὴ τίσηχη τάδε, ἢ αὐτοὶ δύναιτ' ἄν οἰκοθέν γ' άτώμενος / τέρπειν ἄν ἄλλοις, as Adrastos argues in *Suppl.* 180-181).

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57 Seidensticker, 1978, 310 and n. 38, where he refers to K.S. Guthke, 1968, 66, who 'defines the tragicomic as the synthetic mixture of the tragic and the comic by which the two reciprocally heighten each other'. I would like to thank Dr I. de Jong for pointing out to me the interesting parallel at *Iliad* I 498-600, which is often seen as mere entertainment, but in fact heightens the tragedy of the mortals; see J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford 1980, 199; G.S. Meltzer, "The Role of Comic Perspectives in Shaping Homer’s Tragic Vision", *CW* 83, 1990, 265-84.

58 See also the appearance of the Nurse in Aesch. *Cho*.

59 Rossiter, 1961, 279.

60 Cf. *Hec.* 518-9; *Tro.* 118-121, 472f., 609f.; *Suppl.* 73-82; also *Med.* 190-203, where the Nurse defines the ideal goal of poetry as the healing of grief; she dismisses the poets of old whose songs did not fulfill this condition, since they wrote songs for revels, dinners and banquets, τερπναίς ἀκοαῖς, and had not discovered how to put an end to men’s hateful griefs by means of song; the new element here seems to be the emphasis on the remedial power of poetry and not just on the peculiarity of the aesthetic pleasure that is commonly derived from this form of art. See Pucci’s analysis of this passage, 1980, ch. 1, 21-58. See also Segal, 1988, 66f. and n. 57.

61 Translated as ‘the poet bringing songs into the world should work in joy. If this is not his mood, he cannot — being inwardly distressed — give pleasure outwardly’ by F. Jones, in Grene & Lattimore, Chicago, 1958.
183. This claim, though it comes after a lacuna, seems to be following the train of thought of the previous argument, where the implied assumption seems to be that the poor should not feel poorer when looking at the wealthy, but they should learn the love of goods and aim to acquire them, and, similarly, the wealthy should not feel wealthier by seeing the poor, but they should appreciate their wealth and try to retain it. In this way both parties will benefit from the existence of each other, acquiring more noble aims by observation of the other. Similar observations about the duality of reality, often accompanied by suggestions of possible ways for a harmonious integration of contradictory forces in society, are often attested in the extant Euripidean plays. In the Ion, the Euripidean preoccupation with the mingling of contrasts is reflected in the play's very plot-construction; the comic and the tragic elements are better interpreted not if examined separately, but as part of the same theatrical experience. I would argue that Euripides integrates the comic innuendoes in his tragedies not in order to make the tragic seem more tragic, as in 'reciprocal intensification', nor, in order to supply relief from the tragic ('comic relief'). The playwright's aim is not simply to incite the audience to make generic considerations of the tragic and comic elements; rather, these elements provide a means for him to communicate and to enforce the themes to which the play is dedicated: women's role in the society and in the procreation process of the autochthonous myth, the search for identity and the transition from male adolescence to manhood and from female virginity to motherhood, etc. Euripides, just as Dionysos in the Bac., is the dramatist who controls our theatrical experience, mixing comic and tragic and not revealing the final outcome before the very end of the play. In this light, laughter ceases to be a danger for the 'concentrated emotional sequence' of an effective tragedy, since it is not con-

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62 Collard, who does not make this connection between the two passages, is forced to assume a much more serious disruption of the continuity of thought than may be necessary. See C. Collard, Euripides' Supplices, 2 vols, Groningen, 1975; here esp. vol. 2, 154-55, on lines 176-83.


64 ...standing back and assuming a position of "heavenly observation"?'. Foley, 1980, 113. Perhaps, though, even Euripides is somehow constrained in that he had to avoid anything being felt as ill-omened. Phrynichos was fined by the Athenians ὡς ἀναμηνευταίς αἰσθήμα κακὰ Ἡδι. vi 21-22; see Taplin, 1986, 167; 'that was not the function of tragedy'. Of course, in this play (as in Alc., Hel.) we know from the start that things will turn out well, rather than badly, so it is not a matter of being unpropitious.

65 Taplin, 1986, 173; at the very beginning of his article he quotes Demetrius (de eloc. 169); τραγῳδία ἁρπατάς μὲν παραλαμβάνειν ἐν πολλοῖς, ὥς γέλως ἐχθρὸς τραγῳδίας ὁ θεός ἐπιτυμήςειν ἐν τις τραγῳδίαι ταῖς ὑσυναί, ἐπεὶ σάπτους ἰδρύεις ἀπίτι τραγῳδίαις. See also Seidenstücker, 1982, 259 (and n. 66), who quotes a school in Dion. Thrac. (Kaiibel, CGF, vol.ii, 1899, 112 Z 21-23): τῆς μὲν τραγῳδίας ἐκποτὸς τὸ ἐς δρήμα κυψήςας τοὺς ἀκροαταῖς, τῆς δὲ κομωδίας τὸ ἐς γέλωςα; Knox, 1979, 264: 'This laugh (i.e. in the Χουθος-Ιων scene), even the smile, is something tragedy at its most intense dare not risk.
ceived as a separate unit that interrupts, stands out and ‘spoils’ the tragic mood of the play, but as in constant interaction with it, precisely acquiring its function as part of the continuous texture of the play. Rossiter seems to be pointing in a similar direction, when he acknowledges that ‘the total meaning’ of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, a play of ‘two tones’, as he calls it,— ’of the “serious” and the “farcical”, of high relief and low’ — ‘is only grasped when the effect of comprehensiveness is reached’. In this play, as in the *Ion*, ‘a travesty of the serious action is laid beside it in juxtaposition’; only the order is the opposite of that in the *Ion*; there the tragic scene comes first, only to be parodied later by a mirror comic scene.\(^6\)

A closer examination of the arrangement of doublets in the plot-construction of the *Ion*, of which many are in the one case lighter in tone and in the other darker, may enable us to reach a more profound understanding of the function of the constant interplay between these apparently conflicting moods. For in the end the doubling of comic and tragic elements in the *Ion* is only one more example, but a particularly interesting one, of the doubleness of perspective which is typical of the way Euripides sees the world in general. What is reproduced in his plays is actually the world seen through his eyes, reduced in measure to fit into the play’s dramatic frame; to quote Friedrich Hölderlin, the poem is ‘die Welt in verkleinertem Maßstab’.

Hermes and Ion are both Apollo’s servants; the former, a λάτρας in heaven and the latter a δοῦλος in the temple of the god at Delphi.

That Ion has both divine and human blood, Olympian and autochthonous origin, we are told from the outset of the play. But, as often in tragic representation, his double origin is symbolically repeated by his birth and rebirth, first in the cave in the Acropolis, then in the temple at Delphi as the Pythia comes out with the birth tokens and, finally, in the tent, where his birthday feast is given, and he once again escapes death and celebrates his birth.\(^6\) He is also endowed with two fathers, a human foster father and his real divine father (hence there are two accounts of his birth; cf. Ion’s engendering

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\(^{6}\) E.g. Faustus raising the Devil, followed by the clown Wagner, who does the same only to be comically terrified. Rossiter, 1961, 284f.; also 286-288.

\(^{6}\) On mirror-scenes see Taplin, 1979, ch. 8 passim; Kaimio, 1988, 35-39, on the recognition scenes; Foley, 1980, 129f., on doubling in seeing in *Bac.*; Segal, 1971, 553-614, on the two worlds of Euripides’ *Helen*; Zeitlin, 1980, 62f., on double-speak in *Orestes*. Other interpretations of the function of the doublets are offered by Wolff, who argues that they convey a sense of the legendary (1965, 172, n.6, 7), and by Immerwahr, who interprets these repetitions as dramatic devices whose function is to underline the main ironies of the play (1972, 282f.).

\(^{6}\) See Zeitlin, 1980, n. 39: ‘The maintenance of identity through repetition of real or symbolic action is a characteristic feature of the economy of tragic representation’.
according to Xouthos); and with a foster mother, Pythia, and a real mother, Kreousa (cf. also the unknown Delphian maiden in Xouthos' account).

There are two recognition scenes, with clear verbal and indeed structural correspondence (frustrated first attempt, misunderstanding). 69

Ion draws his bow and refrains from using it twice; in his monody he threatens to kill the birds and, then, in the false recognition threatens to kill Xouthos. 70

Kreousa reports for the first time her rape as the story of a friend (330f.) and then as her own (881f.); Kreousa's tragic monody is contrasted with Ion's lighter monody (82-183).

Ecphrasis in the parados corresponds to the ecphrasis in the messenger speech. 71

Pythia's embrace (1363) prefigures Kreousa's embrace (1324).

Pythia saves Ion from death at 47f., but saves him from inflicting death at 1320.

Ion twice orders his attendants to seize Kreousa (λαβήνθε, 1266; 1402); the first time she seeks asylum at the altar, the second she clings to Ion and the cradle. 72

Apollo never appears on stage, but only sends his emissaries, Hermes in the prologue and Athena in the exodos. There are two images of Apollo that coexist in the play. These are conveniently expressed by the parallelism between the two monodies. In Ion's monody Apollo is the god who has cared for him all his life, the god he worships; in Kreousa's monody the god is accused of not caring for his child, and it is clear that Kreousa is a theomachos (note: μισεί σ' ά Δαλάος, 919, seems to be a substitute for her personal hatred). Yet, even in Kreousa's monody, both these images co-exist in the language used to describe the scene of rape. 73

In closing, I would suggest that the arrangement in doublets as a way of representing reality is not just an artistic device; the dramatist might want to signal for the audience the co-existence of different perspectives of vision (see Ion's speech, 585-586), without supplying a clear-cut answer. 74 And if the dramatist strove to keep matters open to a variety of possible interpretations, it seems to me that one should refrain from attaching labels to this play —

70 See above n. 35.
71 See Zeitlin, 1994, 147-156, on the use of ecphrasis in the Ion.
72 See Kaimio, 1988, 65.
73 See Barlow, 1971, 48-50; LaRue, 1963, 126-136.
74 See Segal, 1986, 261, on the doubleness in Helen between illusion and reality: 'The point is not that we have to decide between a positive and a negative interpretation but rather that Euripides himself refuses to decide. There is ultimately no total reconciliation between the play's two worlds'.
labels of the kind that I quoted at the very outset of the paper—since that would result in an oversimplification of a much more revealing play. Labelling the play is over-crude and too cut and dried; the moods and the tones seem to intermingle, rather than exist as separate units; the lighter tone is all the time in counterpoint with something more sober and there seems to be an intentional undercurrent, of a strategic kind, to maintain the interaction between the two, not so much in a relation of 'reciprocal intensification' but as alternative ways of looking at reality from varied vantage points and levels of understanding. The conventional distinction between plays which have a happy ending and those which end in disaster may be not all that strict; the problems emerging from the peculiar nature of the relationship between Apollo and Kreousa are not necessarily dealt with by the happy ending. Any crude label attached to the play, classifying it as anything else besides tragedy, misses the point; the logic of the play, with its doublessness, is not just there in order to lead to the happy ending, but has a thought-provoking function of its own.

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75 See above n. 3.
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