

For Us the Living: Lamentation in Euripides' *Ion*

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Classics
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

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Date defended: Feb 8, 2008

The Thesis Committee for C.L. Wilson certifies
that this is the approved Version of the following thesis:

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Date approved: _____

Abstract

The character of Creusa in Euripides' *Ion* is rarely examined by scholars. Her repetitive narrative, the disturbing themes of infant abandonment and rape, and the abruptness of her forgiveness for Apollo have steered scholarly inquiry toward less problematic characters. Recent interest in women's lament likewise ignores the *Ion*.

Examining the speech of Creusa in the *Ion*, I first show that Creusa laments. Next, I consider the ways in which her lament forges connections between herself and her audience. Finally, I explore the effect of this reading of Creusa's speech on plot and character. I discover that, viewed through the lens of current thought on the purpose of lament, the character of Creusa displays a discrete arc. Mourning propels her development and allows her to reconcile her unhappy past and the happy future foretold in the prologue.

For the modern reader of the classics, tragedy, with its characters mourning publicly over horrific personal circumstances, is often discomfiting. The tragic αἶαί or οἶμοι is rendered uncomfortably as “Alas!” or a perfunctory “Ah me!,” perhaps ornamented with a titter. Even in the era of talk shows and tell-all books, our society still values a stiff upper lip. The nature of lament for the modern American is above all intensely private.

Margaret Alexiou, in her book *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, discusses the nature of lament for the ancient Greeks. For the Greeks, lament was either *thrênos*, a composed dirge or lament sung by someone unrelated to the deceased and answered with a refrain, or *góos*, the unscripted or improvised wailing of the deceased’s kinswomen. Whether painstakingly composed or an extemporaneous expression of grief, the lament was shared with family members and community, who listened and participated. Over time, the refrain was abandoned as the unscripted lament developed into a poetic form.¹

The *kommós*, a lament sung by actor and chorus, re-established, with its alternating lines and collective refrain, the ancient form of lamentation on the tragic stage.² While laments do survive in written form, they reflected, to varying degrees, actual funerary custom. The most direct evidence for spoken lament is epic, lyric, and tragic poetry; for the practice of funerary, ritual lament, it is the legislation concerning these practices, much of which attempts to restrain the excesses of a

1. Alexiou 2002, 12-13.
2. Alexiou 2002, 13.

grieving family.³ For the purposes of this study of the *Ion* of Euripides, I focus on the identification of mourning speech and the analysis of this mourning speech and its importance, in order to draw attention to the *Ion* and to place it within the tradition of tragic lament.

Sources

A few scholars in particular have grappled with lament in recent years. Alexiou covers lament tradition from the ancient world through the post-classical and Byzantine eras into modern lament, tracing the modern lament back to its earliest recorded form, in the epics of Homer. She offers a categorization of lament and a list of characteristics shared by lament, but also a definition. Alexiou defines ritual lament primarily on the basis of its function, according to what it does, rather than how it sounds or the form in which it is usually expressed. What she says it does is to connect. It connects the past with the present, the dead with the living, and the living with one another.⁴ Casey Dué and Nicole Loraux have explored lament in tragedy, and the significance of lament to tragedy, concluding that tragic lament is also connective; both speak of the connections forged by tragic lament.

Dué, in *The Captive Woman's Lament*, focuses on the lament of the captive woman in Athenian tragedy, which explicates for the Athenian audience a connection between Greek and Other. This connection sometimes reinforces the audience's belief in Athenian superiority and sometimes persuades the audience to identify with

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3. Alexiou 2002, 14-23, contains an excellent and very interesting breakdown of common legal restrictions on funerary practices, along with speculation regarding the reasons for these restrictions.
 4. Alexiou 2002, 10-11, 21-22.

the Other and experience her sadness.⁵ In the first chapter of her book *The Mourning Voice*, “Greek Tragedy: Political Drama or Oratorio?,” Loraux compares the mourning song of tragic women to modern expressions of grief in which lament is a weapon for the unarmed. In questioning whether tragedy is political or personal, she finds tragedy to be both political *and* personal: in essence, a link between the two.⁶

Alexiou identifies lamentation for the dead as an activity inseparable from the ritual practices surrounding the dead and their honors.⁷ As the work of Dué and Loraux shows, however, while the function of lament begins in the cultural context of the actual burial ritual, it does not end there. The occurrence of lamentation on the stage, shows that the verbal act of mourning can itself convey meaning to the audience, and scholars have written on the lamentation of traditional mourners such as Andromache, Hecuba, and Electra, as well as on lamentation in *The Persians* and the lament of Cassandra in *The Trojan Women*. Creusa and her lament in the *Ion* fall into a gap in the study of tragic lament. Although scholars do mention Creusa, sometimes at length,⁸ there has not yet been a careful examination of her speeches in the *Ion* in the context of lamentation. I believe that there are two factors that are largely responsible for this gap.

First, the lament in the *Ion* is not as straightforward as the lament of Hecuba in *Hecuba* or *The Trojan Women*, the chorus of Persian elders in *The Persians*, or Electra in *The Libation Bearers*. Second, the *Ion* contains themes disturbing to the

5. Dué 2006, 6-7.

6. Loraux 2002, 11-13.

7. Alexiou 2002, 22-23.

8. Chong-Gossard 2003, Conacher 1959, LaRue 1963, Rabinowitz 1993, Wick 1992, and Zacharias 2003, as well as brief mentions in Foley 2001 and Loraux 1987.

modern audience, such as child sacrifice, infant exposure, and sexual violence. Further, the *Ion* obscures these disturbing topics with a layer of issues of ancient cultural importance such as Athenian attitudes toward the claim of autochthony, inheritance issues and *epiklêroi* (female heirs), and the relationship between humans and gods. These more palatable topics have received the majority of the scholarly attention given to the *Ion*.

The modern conception of lament, into which the funerary speeches of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen in Book 24 of the *Iliad* easily fall, may not as easily encompass the idea of a mourning dialogue, but Alexiou points out that from the fifth century on, dialogues often occur in epigrams and funerary inscriptions, and that these dialogues take the form of a brisk question and response pattern, leading the interlocutor through the details of the life and death of the deceased.⁹ This is precisely the pattern of many of Creusa's dialogues in the *Ion*. The story of her life, from her escape from sacrifice as a babe in arms to her childless marriage with a foreigner, is told in dialogue form. It seems useful, therefore, to examine both Creusa's longer speeches and the dialogues in which she engages for the characteristics of lament.

Does Creusa Lament?

Alexiou identifies the key characteristics of lament as being ternary structure, collectivity, repeated lines and phrases, reiterated cries, antiphony, statements of

9. Alexiou 2002, 138.

death, and appeals by name.¹⁰ While it is not necessary that a given lament include all of these features, these are the general characteristics that typify lament. Alexiou gives the laments for Hector in Book 24 of the *Iliad* as examples of ternary structure. In each lament, the mourner first addresses Hector, then offers a narrative concerning Hector and the effects of his death, and then a renewed address to Hector.¹¹ As an example of collectivity as well as repeated lines and phrases, she offers a passage from the *Persians* in which Xerxes mourns the Persian land and dead and the chorus answers, both with appropriate sentiments and with wailing cries.¹² Reiterated cries and antiphony are seen in the *Choephoroi*, when Elektra's libation to Agamemnon is accompanied by the shouts and wailing of the chorus.¹³ Statements of death and appeals by name occur in the ancient *epodé* and in the refrain of Byzantine and modern lament.¹⁴

Just as Creusa's situation is unusual, so too is her form of mourning, but she expresses herself in tripartite speech, invokes the collective nature of lament through repetition and reiteration as well as appeals to her female audience, and makes statements of death and appeals by name as she speaks of her troubles and how the god has wronged her. In order to demonstrate that Creusa's speech in the *Ion* can be characterized as lament, and that her lament is intended to allow her a voice and an identity with which the audience might sympathize and identify, I will first discuss the characteristics as listed by Alexiou and their use in Creusa's speeches and

10. Alexiou 2002, 132-37.

11. Alexiou 2002, 133.

12. A. *Pers.*, ll. 1066-77; Alexiou 2002, 135.

13. A. *Choe.*, ll. 156-9, Alexiou 2002, 136.

14. Alexiou 2002, 145-46.

dialogue in the play, and then examine in more detail a few of the key speeches and show how they contribute to the development of Creusa as a character and to the audience's acknowledgement of her and her experience.

Creusa does not use a strictly ternary structure as defined by Alexiou, but her speeches are often broken into thirds structurally. In her introductory speech at lines 247 to 254, for example, she first addresses Ion (ll. 247-248), then hints at a painful memory from her past (ll. 249-251), and finally (ll. 252-254) addresses the women of the chorus—or perhaps all women everywhere. Her second long speech, at lines 384 to 400, is likewise divided into three parts. She addresses Phoebus (ll. 384-385), offers a past and future narrative (ll. 386-391), and then addresses Ion, imploring him to keep silent (ll. 392-400). She finishes this speech with a restatement of the wretched condition of women.

In Creusa's monody (ll. 859-922), Lee suggests a five-part structure in which Creusa asks if she should speak out (ll. 859-69), decides to speak (ll. 870-80), calls on Apollo and "[evokes] the rape" (ll. 881-896), relates the birth and death of the infant (ll. 897-904), and condemns Apollo (ll. 905-22).¹⁵ Lee's breakdown of the monody's structure does pay strict attention to the specific topics Creusa addresses in her speech, but I see a more general division into thirds (ll. 859-80, 881-906, and 907-922), each third beginning with an exclamation of distress and the first and second ending with a brief transition into the next division. Rather than using only the content of the lines to form divisions within the monody, which does yield Lee's five

15. Lee 1997, 257.

structural elements, I consider the narrative arc of the entire speech as well in breaking the speech into three segments.

Although Alexiou is careful to state that this ternary structure is not an unfailing indication of lament, as some ternary speeches do not include lamentation and some lament is not expressed in this symmetrical tripartite structure, she seems to feel that it is one of the important features of ritual lament, in part because it is a link from the very earliest recorded forms of lamentation down to later recorded lamentation.¹⁶ In the speeches cited above in which Creusa does use a tripartite division, often the first and last sections both address a specific audience, whether an individual or group. Her introductory speech addresses Ion and then the women of the chorus, her speech reproaching Phoebus addresses Phoebus and then Ion. Each contains an intervening narrative section, just as the funerary speeches in Book 24 of the *Iliad* do. Though this does not appear to be the classic ternary structure of lament described by Alexiou, the first and third sections of the speeches perform the same function, even though Creusa addresses two different characters or group of characters in each.

Collectivity is expressed throughout Creusa's speeches and the dialogues in which she takes part. Her introductory speech and dialogue with Ion take place in front of the chorus, made up of her Athenian attendants. This dialogue, in which we discover Creusa's identity, her reason for coming to the oracle, her "friend's" sad situation, and Ion's own upbringing, is answered by a statement from the chorus,

16. Alexiou 2002, 132-33.

expressing a platitude regarding life's misfortunes.¹⁷ Alexiou states that the most common Homeric formula following a lament is ἐπὶ δε στενάχοντο γυναῖκες (and the women groaned in answer).¹⁸ This Homeric formula describes the reaction of the chorus. In Creusa's speech to her manservant, she explicitly states the role of collectivity in tragic lament when she says:

σὺν τοῖς φίλοις γὰρ ἡδὺ μὲν πράσσειν καλῶς: 730
ἄ μὴ γένοιτο δ', εἴ τι τυγχάνοι κακόν,
ἐς ὄμματ' εὖνου φωτὸς ἐμβλέψαι γλυκύν. (730-732)

(For it is pleasant to do well in the presence of friends;
but if—let it not be so!—some evil should befall,
it is sweet to look upon the face of a kindly man.)

The manner in which Creusa tells her story—as though it had happened to some friend—also expresses collectivity. While she is ashamed to repeat the events if she herself is connected too closely to them, by delivering the narrative as though it had happened to someone else, she distances herself from the narrative, as well as gives the story an added layer of collectivity. By placing the events at a remove in speaking to Ion and to the chorus, she implies that she was the first audience for this story: it seems that the experience and the narration are made more valid as they are shared with others. The reinforcement of the chorus validates Creusa through the intermediary of her friend.

17. *Ion* ll. 381-83.

18. Alexiou 2002, 135.

This collectivity is even more pronounced in the passage in which the chorus of Athenian women and the aged servant report the oracular response to Creusa.¹⁹

Creusa first addresses the chorus at lines 747-751:

γυναῖκες, ἰστῶν τῶν ἐμῶν καὶ κερκίδος
δούλευμα πιστόν, τίνα τύχην λαβὼν πόσις
βέβηκε παίδων, ὥνπερ οὐνεχ' ἤκομεν;
σημήνατ': εἰ γὰρ ἀγαθὰ μοι μηνύσετε, 750
οὐκ εἰς ἀπίστους δεσπότης βαλεῖς χάριν.

(Women, trusted servant of my loom and shuttle,
what outcome concerning our children—
the reason we came—has my husband taken away?
Tell me! For, if you give me good news,
you will not waste a favor on an ungrateful mistress.)

Creusa addresses the women directly, and involves them in the outcome of the oracle, echoing the sentiment from lines 730-732 above. The chorus answers her “ὦ δαῖμον!” (O fortune!),²⁰ and when she responds that this introduction does not seem favorable, they cry again “ὦ τλαῖμον.” (O wretched one!)²¹ The content of the oracle, and Xuthus’s response and recognition of Ion, his “son,” is told in alternating lines by the aged manservant and the chorus: Apollo has given to Xuthus as a son the first male he sees as he exits the temple. That young man was Ion, and Xuthus has joyously claimed him and is performing the sacrifices attendant upon the birth of a child.²²

Creusa’s aged manservant tells her:

δέσποινα, προδεδόμεσθα — σὺν γάρ σοι νοσῶ —

19. *Ion* ll. 747-858.

20. *Ion* l. 752.

21. *Ion* l. 754.

22. *Ion* ll. 780-807.

τοῦ σοῦ πρὸς ἀνδρός, καὶ μεμηχανημένως
ὕβριζόμεσθα δωμάτων τ' Ἐρεχθέως
ἐκβαλλόμεσθα. καὶ σὸν οὐ στυγῶν πόσιν
λέγω, σὲ μέντοι μᾶλλον ἢ κεῖνον φιλῶν: (808-812)

810

(My queen, we—for I am as sickened by this as you—
are betrayed by your husband and, being schemed against,
we are wronged, and exiled from the halls of Erechtheus.
And I say this, not out of hatred for your husband,
but because I love you more than I love that man.)

The chorus, however, is more direct.

οἴμοι, κακούργους ἄνδρας ὡς αἰεὶ στυγῶ,
οἱ συντιθέντες τᾶδικ' εἶτα μηχαναῖς
κοσμοῦσι. φαῦλον χρηστὸν ἂν λαβεῖν φίλον
θέλωμι μᾶλλον ἢ κακὸν σοφώτερον. (832-835)

(Alas! How I continually despise wicked men,
those who contrive injustices and then with plots
embellish them! I would prefer to have as a friend
a person foolish and good over someone wiser but evil.)

The manservant, having speculated that Xuthus had all along known of the child and had been plotting to supplant Creusa's offspring with his own,²³ suggests that Creusa deprive her husband of his son just as she has been deprived of her own children.²⁴

The chorus, however, rather than specifically endorsing the manservant's plan of murder, instead responds to his declaration that he is willing “θανεῖν τε ζῶν τε φέγγος εἰσορᾶν” (to die or living, see the light of day):²⁵

κάγώ, φίλη δέσποινα, συμφορὰν θέλω
κοινουμένη τήνδ' ἢ θανεῖν ἢ ζῆν καλῶς. (857-58)

(And I too, dear mistress, taking common cause
in your misfortune, I wish either to live nobly or to die.)

23. *Ion* ll. 816-29.

24. *Ion* ll. 843-56.

25. *Ion* l. 853.

The chorus conveys information and responds to and participates in Creusa’s feelings of dismay and anger, but it does not suggest a course of action for Creusa or attempt to interpret the actions of others in the way that the manservant does. This response and participation, receptive but passive, is at the core of the collectivity of women’s lament.

Alexiou states that repetition, reiteration, and antiphony are elements of traditional lament that work to build tension and sometimes function as a refrain.²⁶ There is not a great deal of repetition of lines and phrases in Creusa’s speeches, although she, like many lamenting women, uses several words meaning “wretched” or “miserable” repeatedly.²⁷ Reiteration and antiphony survive from traditional ritual lament into tragic lament in stichomythic dialogue.²⁸ Choral passages, or passages where the chorus answers a character or engages in internal debate also shows these reiterated and repetitive cries, but Creusa’s monody uses repetition and reiteration, particularly at lines 859-75.

ὦ ψυχά, πῶς σιγάσω;	
πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω	860
εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ’ ἀπολειφθῶ;	
τί γὰρ ἐμπόδιον κώλυμ’ ἔτι μοι;	
πρὸς τίν’ ἀγῶνας τιθέμεσθ’ ἀρετῆς;	
οὐ πόσις ἡμῶν προδότης γέγονεν,	
στέρομαι δ’ οἴκων, στέρομαι παίδων,	865
φροῦδαι δ’ ἐλπίδες, ἅς διαθέσθαι	
χρήζουσα καλῶς οὐκ ἔδυνήθην,	
σιγῶσα γάμους,	

26. Alexiou 2002, 136.

27. For example, τλήμων at 252, 905; ταλαίπωρος at 320, 364; ταλαινά at 324, 764; δύστηνος at 348, 897, 941, 979; μελέα twice at 900.

28. Alexiou 2002, 137.

σιγῶσα τόκους πολυκλαύτους;
ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ Διὸς πολύαστρον ἔδος
καὶ τὴν ἐπ' ἔμοῖς σκοπέλοισι θεῶν
λίμνης τ' ἐνύδρου Τριτωνιάδος
πότνιαν ἀκτάν,
οὐκέτι κρύψω λέχος, ὡς στέρνων
ἀπονησαμένη ῥάων ἔσομαι. (859-75)

870

(O my soul, how will I be silent?
How will I make known my dark marriage bed,
And leave behind my shame?
What still hinders me?
Against whom am I set in a contest of virtue?
Has my husband not become my betrayer?
I am bereft of house, I am bereft of children,
My hopes proved false, and the things
I wished to accomplish I could not,
Though I kept silent about the rape,
Kept silent about my much-lamented child.
But, by the starry seat of Zeus
And the goddess high upon my cliffs
And the shore of watery Triton,
I will no longer hide the rape, so that
casting it from my breast I might be easy.)

In the initial lines of the monody, Creusa repeats some key words: forms of *σιγᾶω* three times (ll. 859, 868, 869), and three different words indicating her bed or marriage bed (*eunê* l. 861, *gamos* l. 868, *lekhê* l. 874), as well as two different words for child (*pais* l. 865, *tokos* l. 869). She also uses repetitive or parallel phrasing at points in the opening of this monody: “πῶς σιγάσω; πῶς δὲ...ἀναφήνω;” (How will I be silent? How will I make known...? ll. 859-60); “στέρομαι δ' οἴκων, στέρομαι παίδων” (I am bereft of house, I am bereft of children, l. 865); “σιγῶσα γάμους, σιγῶσα τόκους” (Kept silent about the rape, kept silent about my much-lamented child, ll. 868-69).

The repetition of words for silence and the words for bed or marriage bed, signifying, not her marriage to Xuthus, but her rape by Apollo, emphasizes these concepts, which are key to the play. The initial repetitive questions, by showing her great distress and focusing that distress on specific elements of her situation, increase the sense of Creusa as a woman in an unbearable situation. The repeated parallel phrasing also emphasizes Creusa's plight and contributes to the audience's sense that Creusa is lamenting her situation: the rape, her childless marriage, and her equivocal feelings about the loss of her only child. Euripides's use of antiphony, reiteration, and repetition, particularly in dialogue, allows a pattern of statement, restatement, and elaboration that can function as exposition or emphasize important themes.

The tropes that Alexiou refers to as "statements of death" and appeals by name also appear in Creusa's speeches. Alexiou says that these elements, unlike antiphony, which recalls the refrains of early lament, are tied to the ritual function of lament. Specifically, she notes that statements of death and appeals by name were in part an incantation intended to summon the deceased.²⁹ Calling the name of the dead person is intended to attract his attention, and statements of death may have been intended to orient the deceased and provide context for his relative's prayers and offerings.³⁰ Creusa does not call out to her son by name—this would be difficult, since she exposed him unnamed—but she frequently appeals to the god Apollo, particularly during speeches expressing anger.

29. Alexiou 2002, 136-37.

30. Alexiou 2002, 136; see also n. 14 to ch. 7.

Statements of death are easily found in a play that concerns itself with the rape of Creusa and her subsequent decision to expose her child. At lines 344-352, Creusa tells Ion about the exposure of her “friend’s” son, saying that he has been put out of the house (l. 344) and that he was presumably killed by wild animals (l. 348). In the speech of Creusa which ends that dialogue, she says at line 386 that Apollo has not saved what he should have saved, and at 897-901, she repeats that she exposed her infant son at the site of her rape, in fear of her mother. In her monody Creusa says:

ὁ δ' ἐμὸς γενέτας καὶ σὸς γ', ἀμαθής,
οἴωνοις ἔρρει συλαθείς,
σπάργανα ματέρος ἐξάλλάξας. (916-18)

(O my offspring and yours, unknown,
is gone, snatched by birds,
having lost his mother’s tokens.)

Also in this monody, Creusa states baldly “τέθνηκεν, ὦ γεραιέ, θηρσὶν ἐκτεθείς.” (He is dead, old man, having been exposed to wild beasts.)³¹ Although the statements of death during Creusa and Ion’s first dialogue seem rather tepid, the awkwardness of the emotional distance made necessary by Creusa’s transfer of the sad experience to her “friend” could account for that. When she relates the story to the aged servant and chorus, her statements regarding the death of her child are much stronger and more poignant. These statements of death, occurring as they do on stage, are ritually null but certainly contributed to the fulfillment of the audience’s expectations about lament.

31. *Ion* l. 951.

The elements of lament as identified by Alexiou—ternary organization, collectivity, repeated lines and phrases, reiterated cries, antiphony, statements of death, and appeals by name—all figure in Creusa’s speeches and dialogues in the *Ion*. Because dialogue does not lend itself well to multipart organization, the ternary structure that Alexiou identifies as a distinctive characteristic of lament appears only in the longer speeches. Collectivity, repetition, and reiteration, statements of death, and appeals by name occur in dialogue as well as in Creusa’s speeches. Collectivity in particular, encompassing as it does responses from the speaker’s audience, is expressed in the dialogues of Creusa with the chorus of Athenian women, the old manservant, and even in her dialogues with Ion.

Lament, particularly in tragedy, need not rigidly follow the form of the ritual lament in order to perform its function. Even in literal, rather than literary, lament there is a place for *goos*, unscripted wailing, and Creusa’s lamentation—organized, impassioned, and persuasive—has a great deal more in common with the formal *thrênos*, particularly when considered as a whole across the breadth of the play. Given the presence of these identifying characteristics and the function of her speeches and dialogues in the play, it seems obvious that Creusa is indeed engaging in lamentation in the *Ion*.

If we accept that what Creusa is doing in the *Ion* is in fact lament, if non-standard lament, we must ask what function it serves to the play. Alexiou, Dué, and Loraux have made it clear that the function of lament is not to be a static retrospective on loss, but to make connections: between the dead and the living, Greek and Other,

and public and private. In the case of Creusa, the connections she makes during the course of the play are not just between her and her listeners, as she weeps and they respond. She also forges a link between her past and her present that allows her to acknowledge her history, have it validated by others, and move beyond it into the happy future foretold by Apollo.

Lament in the *Ion*

The play opens with a prologue delivered by Hermes, who gives us the story in brief: some years ago, Creusa, a young girl raped by Apollo, found herself pregnant, concealed the pregnancy, and exposed the infant. She left him in the cave under the Long Rocks where she was raped, furnished with the ornaments of a daughter of her father's house, where Hermes, sent by Apollo, found him. Hermes conveyed the child to the sanctuary at Delphi, where Apollo inspired pity for the infant in his priestess, and she adopted the infant and raised him to manhood. Hermes has returned to Delphi in order that he might see Apollo's lengthy plan come to fruition: that Creusa and her husband Xuthus, having come to Delphi to inquire of the god concerning their childless state, might encounter the young man, whose name will be Ion.³² The action of the play begins with a monody from Ion reflecting on his role in the temple and his joy in fulfilling it.³³ Ion's monody is followed by the parodos of the chorus, establishing that the chorus is made up of women of Athens, servants in the household of the king.³⁴

32. *Ion* ll. 1-81.

33. *Ion* ll. 82-183.

34. *Ion* ll. 184, 235-37.

Creusa arrives onstage heralded by the chorus of Athenian maidservants at line 236, and has already begun to weep.³⁵ Ion asks her why she weeps at the sight of the god's shrine when it gives pleasure to other viewers, and she addresses him:

ὦ ξένε, τὸ μὲν σὸν οὐκ ἀπαιδευτῶς ἔχει
ἐς θαύματ' ἐλθεῖν δακρύων ἐμῶν πέρι:
ἐγὼ δ' ἴδοῦσα τούσδ' Ἀπόλλωνος δόμους
μνήμην παλαιὰν ἀνεμετρησάμην τινά: 250
ἐκεῖσε δὲ τὸν νοῦν ἔσχον ἐνθάδ' οὔσα πού.
ὦ τλήμονες γυναῖκες: ὦ τολμήματα
θεῶν. τί δῆτα; ποῖ δίκην ἀνοίσομεν,
εἰ τῶν κρατούντων ἀδικίας ὀλούμεθα; (247-54)

(O stranger, your amazement at my tears shows that you are well brought up. It is just that I, seeing these halls of Apollo, retraced a certain old memory, and found my mind there although my body is here. O wretched women! O, the undertakings of gods. What now? Where do we obtain justice if we are overcome by the injustices of our overlords?)

This speech, Creusa's first words in the play, introduces elements that the play will continue to expand upon and grapple with: memory, the suffering of women, and the misdeeds of the gods. Creusa, addressing the young temple servant before her, begins by complimenting his bearing and manner, observing that his concern for the tears of a stranger shows him to be "not uneducated."³⁶ She next mentions the memory which caused the tears that Ion asked about. In the prologue, Hermes has already told us that Phoebus "yoked the child of Erechtheus in marriage by force: Creusa;"³⁷ Creusa's tears and her hesitation in mentioning the "old memory" show

35. *Ion* ll. 241-42.

36. *Ion* l. 247, "Ὀὐκ ἀπαιδευτῶς."

37. *Ion* ll. 10-11.

that she is still troubled by it. The final element of Creusa's introductory speech is an exclamation concerning the injustices women suffer at the hands of κρατούντων, directly addressing the women of the chorus and then announcing the specific form of injustice with which she is concerned. Even in this brief introductory speech, Creusa explicitly claims the collectivity of lament when she exclaims “ὦ τλήμονες γυναῖκες...ποῖ δίκην ἀνοίσομεν, / εἰ...ὀλούμεθα;” (O, wretched women...where do we obtain justice if we are overcome...?)³⁸

Her appeal to the chorus of Athenian maidservants, which has been present since line 184 and the end of Ion's monody, consists of more than just her exclamation “O wretched women!” Although first person plural is often used in tragedy as a more dramatic or grandiose form of self-reference, here Creusa seems to use it to voice a more general female complaint, as she will several times throughout the play. Her concern is not only with her own experience, variously described as a μνήμην παλαιᾶν, αἰσχύνην τινᾶ, an ἀδίκημά, and herself as νοσοῦσα, ταλαιπώρω, for example,³⁹ but also with the experiences of other women who have suffered as she has.⁴⁰ Also, her use of the word κρατούντων suggests that she is speaking more generally. In Creusa's case, οὐράνιων or οὐράνιου might be more accurate, but the women of the chorus, to whom she is speaking, will presumably have suffered injustice at the hands of husbands or masters of the

38. *Ion* ll. 252-54.

39. *Ion*, ll. 250, 288, 325, 320, 364.

40. In addition to her exclamation in ll. 252-54, the dialogue between Ion and Creusa contains a number of such references, such as when she remarks at line 320: “How I, ailing, will find ill!”

households in which they live rather than at the hands of a god. Creusa's use of the more generally applicable term gives her words greater weight.

After Creusa's opening speech, Ion responds, and she and Ion engage in a lengthy stichomythic dialogue⁴¹—the longest in Greek tragedy—in the presence of the chorus, which interjects only once.⁴² Throughout the dialogue Creusa addresses Ion as “stranger” and Ion addresses Creusa as “madam” or “lady,” a common feature of recognition scenes.⁴³ The length of this stichomythic passage heightens the audience's anticipation of the recognition scene they have been led to expect from the stichomythia as well as the prologue of the play, when Hermes says at lines 71 and 72 *μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους / γνωσθῆ Κρεοῦση*, (...after coming to the halls of his mother, he will be recognized by Creusa...) Much of the exposition that drives the rest of the play occurs during this lengthy dialogue. If this information had been simply baldly recounted, as Hermes lays out the shape of the play briefly in his prologue, this passage might have dragged. When it is conveyed instead in this very rapid stichomythia, however, the dialogue informs without boring the audience. The swift changes of subject, driven by Creusa's discomfort as well as Ion's eager curiosity, hurry the audience through the conversation, and the signposts pointing to an imminent recognition scene make the longer passage of dialogue acceptable to the audience.

41. 143 lines long, ll. 237-380 ; Lee 1997, 186.

42. *Ion* ll. 381-83, expressing a common Greek sentiment and response to human suffering.

43. *Ξένοι* at lines 247, 264, 266, 312, 360, and 392; Lee 1997 notes the use of “stranger” as a foreshadowing of the recognition scene at 187.

In this dialogue, the audience discovers three important pieces of information: the precise identity of Creusa and her family history, the circumstances surrounding Ion's residence at the temple of Apollo, and that Creusa herself relinquished a child many years ago. Each part of this dialogue is punctuated by a statement by Creusa concerning her suffering. First, we learn Creusa's name, and that she is the daughter of Erechtheus, and hails from the city of Athens. We know from Ion's reaction at lines 262-63 and line 265 that Creusa's family and she herself are of some note. Upon hearing Creusa's name, Ion answers: “ὦ κλεινὸν οἴκουσ' ἄστῳ γενναίων τ' ἄπο / τραφεῖσα πατέρων, ὡς σε θαυμάζω, γύναι.” (O dweller in a famous city and from well-born ancestors born, lady, how I honor you!)⁴⁴ Creusa's answer, far from accepting his respectful sentiment, makes it clear that she has more weighty matters to consider. “τοσαῦτα κεύτυχοῦμεν, ὦ ξέν', οὐ πέρα.” (So far am I fortunate, O stranger, but no farther.)⁴⁵

Ion pursues the question of her identity with an eager request for further information: “πρὸς θεῶν ἀληθῶς, ὡς μεμύθευται βροτοῖς . . .; ἐκ γῆς πατρός σου πρόγονος ἔβλασταν πατήρ;” (By the gods, is it truly as the story is told by men...that the father of your father, your ancestor, sprang from the earth?)⁴⁶ Creusa confirms this story, adding “τὸ δὲ γένος μ' οὐκ ὠφελεῖ.” (...but my ancestry does not help me.)⁴⁷ Ion continues to ask for details about her family, including about the sacrifice of Creusa's sisters, and about the death of

44. *Ion* ll. 262-63.

45. *Ion* l. 264.

46. *Ion* ll. 265, 267.

47. *Ion* l. 268.

Erechtheus, which Creusa also confirms. At line 280, having been asked by Ion the reason why she alone of her sisters was spared, she reveals that as a βρέφος νεογνόν, a new-born babe, she was safe in the embrace of her mother. This statement regarding the “safety” of a mother’s arms will be recalled later in the play, as we discover the safety that Creusa’s arms afforded her son.

The portion of the dialogue from line 269 to 282 allows Creusa, and the audience, to step back from Creusa’s previous distress, but at line 283, Ion brings up the Long Rocks, which visibly upsets Creusa at 284: “τί δ’ ἰστορεῖς τόδ’; ὥς μ’ ἀνέμνησάς τινος.” (Why do you inquire about this? You remind me of something.) Ion’s response, “The Pythian and Pythian bolts honor them,” provokes Creusa to wail “τιμᾶ τιμᾶ: ὥς μήποτ’ ὠφελόν σφ’ ἰδεῖν.” (Honors, honors! I wish I had never seen them!)⁴⁸ but she quickly regains control over herself “οὐδέν: ξύνοιδ’ ἄντροισιν αἰσχύνην τινά.” (It is nothing; I share with the cave some certain shame.)⁴⁹ Ion politely passes on to a less upsetting subject.

From 289 to 302, Creusa and Ion discuss her husband Xuthus in barely more detail than Hermes gave during his prologue.⁵⁰ From Hermes we learn that Xuthus, a son of Aiolus in the line of Zeus, fought on the side of the Athenians in the recent war, and was afterward married to Creusa, the *epikleros*⁵¹ of Athens, as a reward for

48. *Ion* l. 286.

49. *Ion* l. 288.

50. *Ion* ll. 57-64.

51. An *epikleros* is, in the simplest sense, an heiress. She comes to her marriage “with the goods” of her father, as an only child or the only surviving child, and her genetic duty is not to her husband but to the *oikos* of her father. When possible, the *epikleros* would be married to her nearest male relative (or to an adopted, unrelated male heir), even if she were already married. The fact that Creusa is an *epikleros* has obvious implications for her marriage to Xuthus and

his loyalty; Creusa tells Ion that Xuthus had sacked Euboia and won her hand.⁵² Ion, naturally, asks if she has come alone or with her husband, and she answers that they have come together.⁵³ Knowing that they are the king and queen of Athens, Ion inquires as to the nature of their question for the oracle: is it public business, concerning the fertility of the land, or private, concerning children?⁵⁴

Creusa answers “We are childless, having been married a long time.” Ion asks her, very specifically, “Have you never given birth—are you childless?” Creusa answers evasively “Phoebus knows my childlessness.” This statement, both bitter and pathetic, allows Creusa to speak truthfully. Ion seems to interpret the form of her answer as further evidence of her devout nature, and is diverted from his line of questioning. He exclaims, “Oh wretched woman! Though fortunate in some things, you suffer regardless.”⁵⁵ This evidence of Ion’s sympathy for even that part of her misfortunes of which he is aware seems to touch Creusa, and she inquires in more detail about his own circumstances, discovering that he knows nothing about his birth or ancestry except that he belongs to the temple. Creusa remarks “ἡμεῖς ζ’ ἄρ’ αὖθις, ὦ ξέν’, ἀντοικτίρομεν.” (I likewise feel pity for you, O stranger.)⁵⁶ Ion, at line 313 as at line 305, very precisely reiterates the source of her pity: “ὥς μὴ

its childlessness, as well as for the substitution of Ion for a child not of her father’s bloodline. Foley 2001, 68-70, contains a brief but informative discussion of *epikleroi* and their use as a thematic element in Greek drama.

52. *Ion* ll. 296; 304.

53. *Ion* ll. 299-300.

54. *Ion* l. 303; Lee 1997, 192, notes that it is a reasonable assumption on Ion’s part that the concern which brings the royal couple to consult the oracle could be either private or on behalf of their kingdom.

55. *Ion* ll. 304-06.

56. *Ion* l. 312.

εἰδόθ' ἦτις μ' ἔτεκεν ἐξ ὄτου τ' ἔφυν.” (I do not know she who bore me and from whom I sprang.)⁵⁷

Now Creusa begins to question Ion about his circumstances:

Kρ	ναοῖσι δ' οἰκεῖς τοισίδ' ἢ κατὰ στέγας;	
Ἴων	ἅπαν θεοῦ μοι δῶμ', ἴν' ἂν λάβῃ μ' ὕπνος.	315
Kρ	παῖς δ' ὦν ἀφίκου ναὸν ἢ νεανίας;	
Ἴων	βρέφος λέγουσιν οἱ δοκοῦντες εἰδέναί.	
Kρ	καὶ τίς γάλακτί σ' ἐξέθρεψε Δελφίδων;	
Ἴων	οὐπώποτ' ἔγνων μαστόν: ἢ δ' ἔθρεψέ με . . .	
Kρ	τίς, ὦ ταλαίπωρ'; ὡς νοσοῦς' ἠῦρον νόσους.	320
Ἴων	φοῖβου προφητῆτις, μητέρ' ὡς νομίζομεν.	
Kρ	ἐς δ' ἄνδρ' ἀφίκου τίνα τροφήν κεκτημένος;	
Ἴων	βωμοί μ' ἔφερβον οὐπιῶν τ' ἀεὶ ξένος.	323
Kρ	ἔχεις δὲ βίοτον: εὖ γὰρ ἤσκησαι πέπλοις.	326
Ἴων	τοῖς τοῦ θεοῦ κοσμούμεθ', ὦ δουλεύομεν.	
Kρ	οὐδ' ἦξας εἰς ἔρευναν ἐξευρεῖν γονάς;	
Ἴων	ἔχω γὰρ οὐδέν, ὦ γύναι, τεκμήριον.	329
Kρ	τάλαινά σ' ἢ τεκοῦσα: τίς ποτ' ἦν ἄρα;	324
Ἴων	ἀδίκημά του γυναικὸς ἐγενόμην ἴσως.	325
Kρ	φεῦ:	
	πέπονθέ τις σῆ μητρὶ ταῦτ' ἄλλη γυνή. (314-330)	

(Cr.	Do you dwell in this temple, or in a house?	
Ion	All the gods' halls are mine; wherever sleep takes me.	315
Cr.	Did you arrive at the temple a child or a young man?	
Ion	As an infant, they say—the ones who ought to know.	
Cr.	And which of the Delphian women nourished you with milk?	
Ion	I never knew the breast; she who raised me—	
Cr.	Who, poor child? Oh, how, myself pained, I have found pains!	320
Ion	The prophetess of Phoebus; I am used to consider her my mother.	
Cr.	What sustenance brought you to adulthood?	
Ion	The altars have nourished me, and the daily visitors.	323
Cr.	You have a means of living; you are well clothed.	326
Ion	I am dressed in the habit of the god, the one I serve.	
Cr.	Did you not leap into the search to find your parents?	
Ion	No, for I have nothing, madam, no token.	329
Cr.	Oh, the poor woman who bore you, whoever she was.	324
Ion	Perhaps some woman's wrong produced me.	325

57. *Ion* l. 313.

Cr. Alas!
Some other woman has suffered the same as your mother.) 330

This portion of the dialogue shows the rapid-fire pattern of question and answer that occurs throughout this section of the play. As in her initial greeting, Creusa seems interested in Ion's bearing and circumstances; she is also very interested, as Lee 1997 notes, in the minutiae of Ion's upbringing, "expressive of a woman obsessed with her failure to provide for [her] own child."⁵⁸ Creusa makes exclamations of suffering three times in this section, at lines 320, 324, and 330. At line 320, responding to Ion's revelation that he never knew the breast, Creusa exclaims in pity, and then relates Ion's pain to her own. At line 324, Creusa again expresses pity, this time for Ion's unknown mother; the audience cannot fail to appreciate the irony of this, particularly after she begins to tell the story of her "friend" to Ion.

Line 330, however, is a cry of lament, introduced by the exclamation $\phi\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}$: "Some other woman has suffered the same as your mother." The sympathy for the plight of a stranger shown in Creusa's careful questioning of Ion, as well as her willingness to mourn for a woman she does not know, provide an appropriate introduction to Creusa's pity for the "friend" whose story she will tell beginning at line 332. Creusa's willing acceptance of the charge laid on her by her "friend," and her wholehearted involvement in her "friend's" problems are not inconsistent with the demeanor she displays toward Ion and his circumstances.

58. Lee 1997, 194.

At line 331, Ion asks Creusa who has suffered the same things as his absent mother, and she answers “The woman on whose account I have come here before my husband arrives.” Over the next thirty lines, Creusa relays the story of her “friend” to Ion: how she was raped by Apollo and conceived a son, which she exposed. Going afterward to the place where the child had been abandoned and finding no trace of him, she assumed that her child had died.⁵⁹ Ion, at line 357, suggests that perhaps Phoebus took the child and raised him in secret, but this idea is no more pleasing than the assumption that the child had died: “τὰ κοινὰ χαίρων οὐ δίκαια δρᾶμόνος,” Creusa says. (Enjoying alone those things that ought to be common, he acts unjustly.)⁶⁰

Ion, addressing the concern that brought Creusa to the oracle, points out that Apollo is unlikely to answer. Despite the importance of the oracle, Ion admonishes her, “αἰσχύνεται τὸ πρᾶγμα: μὴ ἕλεγχέ νιν.” ([Apollo] is shamed by the matter. Do not interrogate him.)⁶¹ Creusa retorts “ἀλγύνεται δέ γ’ ἡ παθοῦσα τῇ τύχῃ.” (But she, suffering mischance, feels pain.)⁶² Creusa has previously referred to the shame that she feels, at line 288 when she says she shares a certain shame with the cave under the Long Rocks, and again at line 336 when Ion presses her to speak and she says she is ashamed, even though she has established that the story she is about to tell is not her own. These two lines bring together the two of the

59. *Ion*, ll. 338-52.

60. *Ion*, l. 358.

61. *Ion*, l. 367.

62. *Ion*, l. 368.

play's themes that dominate this section—shame and suffering—and identify shame with both Creusa and Apollo, but suffering with Creusa alone.

After Ion cautions Creusa about demanding answers from the gods against their will, the chorus utters a platitude about the difficulties of a mortal life.⁶³ Here Creusa begins her second long speech:

ὦ Φοῖβε, κάκεῖ κἀνθάδ' οὐ δίκαιος εἶ
 ἐς τὴν ἀποῦσαν, ἧς πάρεισιν οἱ λόγοι: 385
 ὃς οὔτ' ἔσωσας τὸν σὸν ὃν σῶσαί σε ἔχρῃν,
 οὔθ' ἱστορούση μητρὶ μάντις ὣν ἔρεῖς,
 ὡς, εἰ μὲν οὐκέτ' ἔστιν, ὀγκωθῆ τάφῳ,
 εἰ δ' ἔστιν, ἔλθῃ μητρὸς εἰς ὄψιν ποτέ
 ἀλλ' ἔἴην χρὴ τάδ', εἰ πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ 390
 κωλυόμεσθα μὴ μαθεῖν ἃ βούλομαι.
 ἀλλ', ὦ ξέν', εἰσορῶ γὰρ εὐγενῆ πόσιν
 Ξοῦθον πέλας δὴ τόνδε, τὰς Τροφωνίου
 λιπόντα θαλάμας, τοὺς λελεγμένους λόγους 395
 σίγα πρὸς ἄνδρα, μὴ τιν' αἰσχύνῃ λάβω
 διακνουῦσα κρυπτά, καὶ προβῆ λόγος
 οὐχ ἥπερ ἡμεῖς αὐτὸν ἐξειλίσσομεν.
 τὰ γὰρ γυναικῶν δυσχερῆ πρὸς ἄρσενας,
 κἀν ταῖς κακαῖσιν ἀγαθαὶ μεμειγμέναι
 μισούμεθ': οὕτω δυστυχεῖς πεφύκαμεν. (384-400)

(O Phoebus, both here and there you are unjust
 to her who is not present, whose story is told.
 You who neither saved what should have been saved,
 Nor gave an oracle to the mother who asks,
 So that if the child no longer lives, he might receive burial,
 And if he lives, he might then come within view of his mother.
 But such things are necessary, if we are hindered
 From knowing what I wish to know by the god.
 But, O stranger, for I perceive my wellborn spouse
 Xuthus near us, having left the Trophonian chambers.
 Keep silent from my husband what I have said,
 Lest I take some shame, helping in secret, and lest the story
 Not proceed as we unfolded it.
 For the affairs of women are annoying to males,

63. *Ion*, ll. 381-83.

And good women are mixed up with the bad,
And hated: thus we are by nature unfortunate!)

She begins by addressing Phoebus, and complaining that he is unjust, though still through the filter of the friend. She details his wrongs: he did not save the child, and now he refuses to provide an answer to the mother, even so that she might provide a proper burial for her son. After the recitation of Apollo's injustices, she addresses Ion again, and cautions him not to reveal what she has told him to her husband, again in fear of the shame that will accompany general knowledge of the circumstances around her query. This speech, which was introduced with a platitude from the chorus, ends with another platitude. Where the chorus's statement speaks of the general human condition of misfortune (συμφοραῖ), Creusa's specifically refers to the suffering of women (τὰ [πράγματα] γυναικῶν), a suffering in which she partakes.

She makes this clear as she exits after the arrival of Xuthus from the Trophonian oracle and his departure for the oracle of Apollo. Xuthus announces “Ἐν δ' οὖν εἶπεν: οὐκ ἄπαιδά με πρὸς οἶκον ἥξειν οὐδὲ σὲ ἐκ χρηστηρίων.” (But he has said one thing: neither you nor I shall go home childless from the oracle.)⁶⁴ After a brief exchange with Ion concerning the particulars of his question for the oracle, Xuthus exits, urging Creusa to take laurel branches to the surrounding altars, and to pray that the oracle will return a favorable answer.⁶⁵

Creusa says:

64. *Ion*, ll. 408-409.

65. *Ion*, ll. 422-24.

ἔσται τάδ', ἔσται. Λοξίας δ' ἐὰν θέλη
νῦν ἄλλὰ τὰς πρὶν ἀναλαβεῖν ἀμαρτίας,
ἅπας μὲν οὐ γένοιτ' ἂν εἰς ἡμᾶς φίλος,
ὅσον δὲ χρήζει — θεὸς γὰρ ἔστι — δέξομαι. (425-28)

(These things will be done, they will be done. And Loxias,
if he wishes now to repay those previous wrongs,
would not become a friend of mine completely,
but I will accept what he wishes—he is, after all, a god.)

These lines show a brief softening of Creusa's attitude toward Apollo.

Although she will display grief and anger again later in the play, after telling her story and having her audience acknowledge and sympathize with her friend's suffering, she seems less bitter toward Apollo. He will not become her friend completely, she says, but she will not spurn an olive branch, should he offer one. After Creusa, in turn, exits, Ion asks rhetorically “τί ποτε λόγοισιν ἢ ξένη πρὸς τὸν θεὸν κρυπτοῖσιν αἰεὶ λαιδοροῦς' αἰνίσσεται;” (Why then does this strange woman always riddle the god, attacking him with secretive words?)⁶⁶

He goes on to say, however,

νουθετητέος δέ μοι
Φοῖβος, τί πάσχει: παρθένους βία γαμῶν
προδίδωσι; παῖδας ἐκτεκνούμενος λάθρα
θνήσκοντας ἀμελεῖ; μὴ σύ γ': ἄλλ', ἐπεὶ κρατεῖς,
ἀρετὰς δίωκε. καὶ γὰρ ὅστις ἂν βροτῶν
κακὸς πεφύκη, ζημιούσιν οἱ θεοί.
πῶς οὖν δίκαιον τοὺς νόμους ὑμᾶς βροτοῖς
γράφαντας, αὐτοὺς ἀνομίαν ὀφλισκάνειν; (436-43)

440

(...But Phoebus must be admonished by me,
what has happened to him? Having taken maidens by force,
he betrays them? Having gotten children in secret,
he abandons them to die? Don't you dare, but, since you rule,
seek virtue! For whoever of mortals

66. *Ion*, ll. 429-30.

is by nature evil, the gods punish him.
How then is it right for you, having made laws
For mortals, to incur the charge of lawlessness?)

Creusa, of course, is offstage and does not hear Ion admonishing the god, but the audience and the chorus both see the impact that Creusa's story has had on Ion. After Ion too exits, the chorus sings about the joys of children and the unhappiness of the childless life.⁶⁷ The ode concludes with a summary of Creusa's story, and yet a third criticism of Apollo:

ἵνα τεκοῦσά τις Φοίβῳ
παρθένος, ὦ μελέα, βρέφος,
πτανοῖς ἐξόρισεν θοῖναν
θηρσί τε φοινίαν δαῖτα, πικρῶν γάμων
ὑβριν: οὔτ' ἐπὶ κερκίσιν οὔτε λόγοις
φάτιν ἄιον εὐτυχίας μετέχειν
θεόθεν τέκνα θνατοῖς. (502-509) 505

(Here some wretched
maiden bore an infant
to Phoebus and exposed it:
a meal for birds and a bloody feast
for animals, the transgression of a bitter bedding.
Neither at loom nor telling stories have I heard
that the offspring of mortals and gods partakes in good fortune.)

This retelling, though succinct, shows that the chorus has listened to Creusa's story and her criticism of Apollo. It mentions the important elements of the tale as related by Creusa, and suggests that, it being an established fact for the chorus that the children of humans and gods are uniformly unlucky, Apollo is to blame for the supposed demise of his child.

67. *Ion*, ll. 474-91.

After the choral ode, Ion and Xuthus enter and begin a lengthy dialogue⁶⁸ in which Xuthus reveals that the oracle has declared that Ion is his son. After the exit of Xuthus and Ion at line 675, Xuthus having expressed his intention of taking Ion to Athens as his heir, the chorus predicts, “ὄρῳ δάκρυα καὶ πενθίμους <ἀλαλαγᾶς> στεναγμάτων τ’ ἐσβολάς,” (I see tears and sorrowful cries and the beginning of groans).⁶⁹ The chorus goes on to sing about the revelations that Xuthus made, and finishes the ode by expressing worry and its intention to inform Creusa of everything that has gone on. At line 725, Creusa and the aged servant enter with mutual protestations of devotion.⁷⁰ After they reach the area in front of the oracular building, Creusa asks the chorus what the outcome of her husband’s question was, and after a few hesitations, the chorus responds:

εἰρήσεταιί τοι, κεί θανεῖν μέλλω διπλῆ.
οὐκ ἔστι σοι, δέσποιν’, ἐπ’ ἀγκάλαις λαβεῖν
τέκν’, οὐδὲ μαστῶ σῶ προσαρμόσαι ποτέ. (760-62)

(I will speak, then, even if I must die twice over.
It is not to be, my lady, that you should hold a child
In your arms, nor press it to your breast.)
Creusa replies “ὦμοι, θάνοιμι.” (O god, I wish I were dead.)⁷¹ The old

man interjects a word (“Θύγατερ—”), and Creusa continues:

ὦ τάλαιν’
ἐγὼ συμφορᾶς, ἔλαβον ἔπαθον ἄχος
ἀβίοτον, φίλαι.
διοιχόμεσθα. (764-67)

(O wretched me,

68. *Ion*, ll. 517-645.

69. *Ion*, ll. 676-77.

70. Creusa to the old man, ll. 733-34; the old man to Creusa, ll. 735-37.

71. *Ion*, l. 763.

O misfortune, I have taken—I have suffered pain
Beyond life, my friends,
I am completely destroyed.)

Lee points out that the style of these lines, full of interjections, “staccato sentences, broken syntax and asyndeton” is typical of a character’s reaction to horrible revelations like the one related by the chorus; he compares it to Medea in *Medea* at lines 144 and following.⁷² The sounds in these lines as well are very suggestive of weeping and lament. The sounds of the phrase “ἔλαβον ἔπαθον ἄχος ἄβιοτον,” with the repeated “ah” and “oh” sounds mimic the inarticulate cries and groaning that the chorus foresaw at line 676.

Creusa continues to cry out and groan her sorrow until she learns that she is alone in her childlessness—that Apollo has made known to Xuthus a son, Ion, whose existence had not previously been known.⁷³ At line 769, she explicitly categorizes her cries as γόοι, “wailing,” and at line 777, she describes the news as ἄχος ἐμοὶ στένειν, “a pain for me to groan over.” At line 781, the chorus affirms that it is true, saying “παρῆ δ’ ἐγώ.” (I was there.) Throughout this passage, Creusa cries out as each new piece of the puzzle is revealed, using repeated words and phrases such as the repetition of ἄφατον at line 782, ἄτεκνον at line 789, and οἶον at line 799. Beginning at line 808, the aged servant makes a long speech assuring his mistress of his support, and offering a possible origin for her husband’s son, one which involves trickery and ill-will on his part toward his wife. He then suggests that Creusa should murder her husband’s son, and promises to assist her, even if it means

72. Lee 1997, 248.

73. *Ion*, ll. 774-75.

his own death.⁷⁴ The chorus, who has previously exclaimed, in support of their mistress's woes,

οἴμοι, κακούργους ἄνδρας ὡς αἰεὶ στυγῶ,
οἷ συντιθέντες τᾶδικ' εἶτα μηχαναῖς
κοσμοῦσι. φαῦλον χρηστὸν ἂν λαβεῖν φίλον
θέλοιμι μᾶλλον ἢ κακὸν σοφώτερον. (832-35)

(Oh, how I despise evildoing men,
who arrange unjust deeds and then conceal them
with plots! I would rather count as friend
one who is slight but worthy than one wiser but full of evil!)

agrees with the aged servant:

κἀγώ, φίλη δέσποινα, συμφορὰν θέλω
κοινομένη τήνδ' ἢ θανεῖν ἢ ζῆν καλῶς. (857-58)

(And I, dear lady, I too wish, sharing in your troubles
to die or to live nobly.)

The support and affection expressed by these servants toward Creusa in the face of her current troubles helps to break down the fear and shame that surround her old secret. Where previously she had told Ion, in front of the chorus, that it was her friend's story, she now cannot be silent.⁷⁵ She has been given the worst possible news, and has been completely overset by it, but rather than shaming her, the chorus and the old manservant have sympathized with her, reiterated her grief, and expressed their unfailing support, even if supporting her means that they should die. Creusa responds in the form of a monody in which she first outlines her plight in a series of questions, then swears that she will no longer hide the rape, and finally castigates Apollo, pronouncing on him what is almost a curse.

74. *Ion*, ll. 850-53.

75. *Ion*, l. 859.

She begins:

ὦ ψυχά, πῶς σιγάσω;
πῶς δὲ σκοτίας ἀναφήνω
εὐνάς, αἰδοῦς δ' ἀπολειφθῶ;
τί γὰρ ἐμπόδιον κώλυμ' ἔτι μοι;
πρὸς τίν' ἀγῶνας τιθέμεσθ' ἀρετῆς; (859-63)

860

(O my soul, how will I be silent?
How will I make known my dark
Marriage bed, and how will I leave behind my shame?
What impediment yet hinders me?
Who is my opponent in this contest of virtue?)

The first three lines outline her dilemma: how can she continue to be silent? Her rape and the subsequent abandonment of her child has caused her a great deal of grief and regret. She has already ventured to speak of it, when she told Ion the story of her “friend,” but in a guarded and evasive way. Equally troubling, however: how can she speak of it? She has already seen, when she related the story to Ion, that she might not be believed, or might be thought to be hiding a personal shame by slandering a god.

She resolves, however, to speak:

οὐκέτι κρύψω λέχος, ὡς στέρνων
ἀπονησαμένη ῥάων ἔσομαι. (874-75)

(No longer will I hide the rape, so that,
casting it from my breast, I will be easy.)

She tells the story of the rape more personally and in greater detail: she was gathering flowers, like Persephone,⁷⁶ she cried out for her mother.⁷⁷ She bore a son and

76. *Ion*, l. 888.

77. *Ion*, l. 893.

abandoned him, φρίκα ματρὸς –in fear of her mother.⁷⁸ Now, however, rather than keeping it secret, she says “εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀπαγγέλω” (I will say it in the light.)⁷⁹

Both the chorus and the old servant are shocked and sympathetic. The chorus responds first:

οἴμοι, μέγας θησαυρὸς ὡς ἀνοίγνυται
κακῶν, ἐφ’ οἷσι πᾶς ἄν ἐκβάλῃ δάκρυ. (923-24)

(Ah! What a huge treasury of evils
is opened, over which anyone would shed a tear.)

Then the old man:

ὦ θυγάτηρ, οὔτοι σὸν βλέπων ἐπιπλαμαίωμαι
πρόσωπον, ἔξω δ’ ἐγενόμην γνώμης ἐμῆς. (925-26)

(O daughter, looking upon your face, I am not relieved,
but out of my mind.)

He asks for more information, and Creusa says, “αἰσχύνομαι μὲν σ’ ὦ γέρον, λέξω δ’ ὅμως.” (I am shamed before you, old man, but nevertheless I will tell you.)⁸⁰ The old man answers, “ὡς συσπενάζειν γ’ οἶδα γενναίως φίλοις.” (Oh, I know how to join suitably in the lament of my friends.)⁸¹ Again, we see in these lines an expression of the core of lamentation. The mourner is hesitant to speak, and the respondent explicitly states that he knows the proper way to respond to lament: he will join her. Creusa is reassured that her story will be received well; the appropriate response to the mourning of another is to join in her lament.

78. *Ion*, l. 898.

79. *Ion*, l. 911.

80. *Ion*, l. 934.

81. *Ion*, l. 935.

Creusa and the old manservant engage in a dialogue in which she gives the story of her abandonment of the child in greater detail. Though he sympathizes, he does not hesitate to ask searching questions. At line 958 he asks, “καὶ πῶς ἐν ἄντρῳ παῖδα σὸν λιπεῖν ἔτλης;” (And how did you undertake to leave your child in the cave?) and then at her answer, he exclaims “φεῦ: τλήμων σὺ τόλμης, ὁ δὲ θεὸς μᾶλλον σέθεν.” (Alas! Wretched you, doing this, and the god even more than you!)⁸² Although this seems critical at first glance, Creusa plays along, saying “εἰ παῖδά γ’ εἶδες χεῖρας ἐκτείνοντά μοι.” (If you had seen the child, stretching out his hands to me!)⁸³ After another exchange that makes the picture of the abandoned infant even more vivid and pathetic, the old man asks “σοὶ δ’ ἐς τί δόξ’ ἐσῆλθεν ἐκβαλεῖν τέκνον;” (In what kind of spirit did it come to you to expose the child?)⁸⁴ Creusa answers simply, “ὡς τὸν θεὸν σώζοντα τὸν γ’ αὐτοῦ γόνον.” (That the god would save his son.)⁸⁵ At this answer, the aged retainer covers his head and weeps,⁸⁶ saying “οἴμοι, δόμων σῶν ὄλβος ὡς χειμάζεται.” (Oh, how the happiness of your house is beset by storms!)⁸⁷

The recognition scene promised in the prologue begins at line 1418; when Creusa and Ion have established to one another’s satisfaction that they are mother and son, she tells him:

τέκνον, οὐκ ἀδάκρυτος ἐκλοχεύη,

82. *Ion*, l. 960.

83. *Ion*, l. 961.

84. *Ion*, l. 964.

85. *Ion*, l. 965.

86. *Ion*, l. 967.

87. *Ion*, l. 966.

γούις δὲ ματρὸς ἐκ χερῶν ὀρίζη:
νῦν δὲ γενειάσιν παρὰ σέθεν πνέω
μακαριωτάτας τυχοῦς' ἡδονᾶς. (1458-61)

(Child, you were brought forth not unwept,
and you were ripped from your mother's hands with wailing.
Now I breathe next to your cheeks,
Having chanced upon the sweetest blessing.)

Creusa's mourning is at an end, but she reminds Ion and the audience that she has suffered; she did not abandon her infant son because she did not love him, but out of fear. Her joy is not only on her own behalf, though:

ἄπαιδες οὐκέτ' ἐσμὲν οὐδ' ἄτεκνοι:
δῶμ' ἐστιοῦται, γὰρ δ' ἔχει τυράννους:
ἄνηβᾶ δ' Ἐρεχθεύς,
ὅ τε γηγενέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτα δέρκεται,
ἄελίου δ' ἀναβλέπει λαμπάσιν. (1463-67)

(I am no longer childless and without an heir:
the house is well-hearthed, and the land has its king;
Erechtheus is restored,
And the house of the earthsprung ones no longer sees night,
but sees again in the rays of the sun.)

There is a last impediment to her joy, however. Ion asks that his father share in the pleasure of their reunion, and Creusa responds “ὦ τέκνον, τί φήεις; οἶον οἶον ἀνελέγχομαι.” (Oh, child, what are you saying? How, oh, how I am convicted!)⁸⁸ “ἄλλοθεν γέγονας, ἄλλοθεν.” (From elsewhere you were gotten, from elsewhere.)⁸⁹ The repetition in these lines, the rhetorical questions and the use of the dramatically emphatic verb ἀνελέγχομαι (I am convicted utterly) give an impression of renewed lamentation. Ion's response to his mother's revelation also

88. *Ion*, l. 1470-71.

89. *Ion*, l. 1472.

gives this impression: “ὦμοι: νόθον με παρθένευμ’ ἔτικτε σόν;” (Ah, no! Did you bear me as a bastard in your maidenhood?)⁹⁰ “αἶαἰ: πέφυκα δυσγενῆς. μήτηρ, πόθεν;” (Alas! Was I misbegotten, mother? From whom?)⁹¹ In a passage of broken stichomythia, Creusa confesses for the final time that she had a child with Apollo.⁹²

In this final retelling, however, she emphasizes, not the rape, but the birth and abandonment of her child. She details both the horrible act of exposure and the tokens that she left with the infant,⁹³ and while Ion responds “ὦ δεινὰ τλᾶσα μήτηρ.” (O mother, what terrible things you undertook!), he seems less to condemn than to sympathize. He goes on to caution her not to blame Apollo for her own shame, and when she assures him that she is telling the truth, he decides to ask Apollo himself.⁹⁴ Here Athena appears:

...δρόμῳ σπεύσας’ Ἀπόλλωνος πάρα,
 ὃς ἐς μὲν ὄψιν σφῶν μολεῖν οὐκ ἤξιου,
 μὴ τῶν πάροιθε μέμψις ἐς μέσον μόλη,
 ἡμᾶς δὲ πέμπει τοὺς λόγους ὑμῖν φράσαι:
 ὡς ἦδε τίκτει ς’ ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος πατρός, 1560
 δίδωσι δ’ οἷς ἔδωκεν, οὐ φύσασί σε,
 ἀλλ’ ὡς νομίζη ς οἶκον εὐγενέστατον. (1556-63)

(...speeding in haste from Apollo’s side,
 who does not come in your sight,
 lest blame come on him on account of his previous behavior,
 and so he sent me to speak these words to you:
 that this women bore you from your father Apollo,

90. *Ion*, l. 1473.

91. *Ion*, l. 1477.

92. *Ion*, ll. 1486-87.

93. *Ion*, ll. 1488-96.

94. *Ion*, ll. 1522-48.

and he gave you to the one to whom he gave you, not because he sired you, but so that you might be brought into the noblest house.)

After Athena's speech, which includes instructions and a prophecy regarding the future happiness of Creusa and the fate of Ion, Ion professes himself satisfied, and Creusa makes a brief speech, in which we see that her anger toward Apollo has softened. The speech of Athena, offering acknowledgement of her rape and suffering from Apollo, however back-handed, the promise of future happiness, and children of her present marriage, along with the restoration of the son she was forced to abandon as a young girl, seems to have wrought the change that allows her to declare:

τὰ μὰ νῦν ἄκουσον: αἰνῶ φοῖβον οὐκ αἰνοῦσα πρὶν,
1610 οὐνεχ' οὐ ποτ' ἠμέλησε παιδὸς ἀποδίδωσί μοι.
αἶδε δ' εὐωποὶ πύλαι μοι καὶ θεοῦ χρηστήρια,
δυσμενῆ πάροιθεν ὄντα. νῦν δὲ καὶ ῥόπτρων χέρας
ἠδέως ἐκκρημνάμεσθα καὶ προσενέπω πύλας. (1609-13)

Now hear me: I, who previously did not, praise Apollo,
Because the child he once abandoned he now restores to me.
These gates and the oracle of the god are a friendly sight for me,
Though previously hateful. And now I happily hang
On the knocker with my hand, and greet the doors.)

Conclusion: Lament and the Narrative Arc

The speech of Athena appears to be the decisive moment in which Creusa's anger toward Apollo is appeased. The message from Apollo conveys acknowledgement of the pain he has caused Creusa even as it assures her that she has been under Apollo's protection at every point since the rape. At first glance perhaps it seems that Creusa pointlessly weeps her way through the action of the play, her grief and anger ending abruptly upon Athena's facile assurance that everything has happened according to the plan of Apollo. However, when the speeches of Creusa

from her entrance at line 247 to her final statement at line 1617 are examined through the lens of lament tradition, a very different pattern emerges.

Creusa repeats the story of her rape and the abandonment of her child three times throughout the course of the play. She first relates the events to Ion and the chorus before the doors of the oracular shrine, and attributes the story to a friend. The second repetition is spoken in the first person to the aged manservant and the chorus, and the third is again to Ion, this time admitting her part in the narrative. In each retelling, she emphasizes a slightly different element of the story, moving from a distanced third person perspective to an intensely personal and sorrowful first. These retellings of the story contribute to the narrative arc of the play, not only by providing the details lacking in Hermes's succinct exposition in the prologue, but also by propelling the character of Creusa through the process of grieving for her missing son as well as for her truncated girlhood.

As she tells and retells her story, she is validated by each audience. Ion, the chorus, and the old man each reflect and respond to her pain and anger, and this acknowledgement of her suffering allows her to arrive, by the end of the play, at a kind of peace with it. Athena's statement that Apollo fears to appear before her lest she and her son find fault with him implies that he is aware that there is some fault to find. The assurance that her future will be a happy and fulfilled one, with her firstborn restored to her and children of her long marriage yet to come allows Creusa to accept her past, lay it to rest, and ready herself to move toward the promised happy ending.

Creusa's lament, though ostensibly for the loss of her son, allows her to tell the story of her rape and the abandonment of her infant, and to have this story heard and validated by others. Until she first relates the sad experience of her "friend" before the shrine of Apollo, she has not spoken of her rape, her pregnancy, or the abandonment of the child. Having once spoken, she is empowered to tell it again and again. Does Creusa lament her son, or herself? After Ion is revealed to be her son, she continues using the characteristics of lamentation in her speech, and Ion continues to respond appropriately, as the old man has defined appropriate response. Her lament ceases at the point when Apollo, through the intermediary of his sister, himself acknowledges her pain and anger, and promises that she will be compensated for her suffering. Perhaps her lament is only intended to convey her grief at the supposed death of her son—but perhaps it is intended all along to serve as a vehicle for assertion of her self and her experience in a way not usually allowed to women in tragedy.

The common denominator in the lamentation of a woman in Greek tragedy is that her lament—whether for husband, son, brother, city—becomes the lament for the woman herself, and by extension for all women everywhere who hear or experience her misfortunes. Creusa exemplifies this: her lament for a dead infant, first spoken to the young man who, unbeknownst to her, is that infant, is only the first of the contradictions that define her character and situation.

If, as Gregory Bateson said, information consists of differences that makes a difference,⁹⁵ Creusa herself is an exemplar of women's lamentation, not because she artlessly delivers a standard mourning song, but because she consciously tailors her lament to the traditional model, at once reinforcing its characteristics and demonstrating its true goals: the reception of the female voice and the acknowledgment of the speaker as an individual capable of suffering. When Creusa laments the loss of her son, she mourns in the only way she can for all the other losses she has suffered in the past and will suffer in the future. The dead infant she mourns is a signifier for the living woman; the fact that the "dead infant" is a live youth standing before her does not negate the power or purpose of her lament. Her lamentations are intended not for him, but for herself, and for the living ears that can hear and participate in her lament.

95. *Mind and Nature*, 1979.

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