

INTRODUCTION

1 EURIPIDES: LIFE AND WORKS

Few details of Euripides' life are certain. As celebrities, tragic poets attracted gossip and comic caricature – Euripides more than most. Ancient sources present such material, along with untrustworthy inferences from the poet's work, as biographical fact. Sources like the *Life* prefaced to the plays in many manuscripts, the papyrus fragments of a dialogue on the poet's life by the Peripatetic Satyrus (probably third-century BCE), and the entry for Euripides in the Byzantine encyclopedia known as the *Suda* (ε 3695), must therefore be treated with great caution.¹ A few data, however, derive from study by Aristotle and his pupils of the records of tragic competitions kept by the Athenian *polis*,² and these can be combined with careful use of the other available evidence to give an outline of the poet's life and career.

Euripides was probably born in the 480s. His father's name is given as Mnesarchides or Mnesarchus; his deme was Phyla, which belonged to the tribe Cecropis. We know nothing of his childhood and young adulthood, but we can infer from his activity as poet that he came from a prosperous family and received a good education. He must have participated in the standard military training and service required of Athenian males and, to an unknowable extent, in the institutions of Athenian democracy. He probably acquired theatrical experience by associating with other poets, actors, and chorus-trainers (roles often combined in the same individual). The ancient *Life* calls him a pupil of Anaxagoras, Prodicus, and Protagoras, and an associate (ἑταῖρος) of Socrates (T 1.7–8). This dubious claim, echoed and varied in other sources, reflects awareness that his characters and choruses participate more overtly than their Aeschylean and Sophoclean counterparts in the intellectual trends of fifth-century Greece.

The date of Euripides' first entry in the dramatic competition, again according to the *Life* (T 1.26–7 ~ 51–2), is 455, when he is said to have won third (that is, last) prize with a tetralogy including *Daughters of Pelias*. The

¹ For a complete collection of sources, see *TrGF* v.1.39–145 (reference to which is made by the letter T followed by item number). See also the collection and interpretation by Kovacs 1994: 1–141, and Scodel 2017.

² The Greek word for “director” (normally the poet) is διδάσκαλος, lit. “teacher”; a dramatic production is διδασκαλία, a word also used for the written record of a production. The evidence for tragic productions is collected in *TrGF* 1.3–52.

next important date is 441, when he won his first victory, with unknown plays (T 56–7). Of the nineteen surviving plays attributed to Euripides (seventeen genuine tragedies; the satyr play *Cyclops*; and the tragedy *Rhesus*, almost certainly the work of a fourth-century poet), the earliest is *Alcestis* (438, second prize); next comes *Medea* (431, third prize). The other extant plays produced on known occasions are *Hippolytus* (428, first prize), *Trojan Women* (415, second prize), *Helen* (412), and *Orestes* (408). *Phoenician Women* was produced after 412. The surviving *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Bacchae*, along with the lost *Alcmeon in Corinth*, won first prize in a posthumous production within a few years of Euripides' death, which the evidence of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405) allows us to fix in 407/406. Altogether, ancient scholars knew the titles of ninety-two plays, but they had texts of only seventy-eight (seventy tragedies and eight satyr plays), and they doubted the authenticity of a few of these.

No dates are transmitted for the other surviving plays, including *Ion*. The approximate dates assigned by scholars are based mainly on two criteria: quotations and allusions in datable comedies, and the frequency and types of metrical resolution in the iambic trimeter. Suspected allusions to datable historical events are sometimes adduced as well, but these are mostly vague or general, in accordance with tragic norms, and thus open to varying interpretation. An even less reliable criterion is the development of Euripides' dramatic technique. The following are commonly accepted dates and date-ranges: *Children of Heracles* (c. 430), *Andromache* (c. 425), *Hecuba* (c. 425–424), *Suppliant Women* (c. 423), *Electra* (c. 420), *Heracles* (c. 416), *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (c. 414).³

There are no certain allusions to *Ion* in datable comedies.⁴ The metrical criterion points to the 410s, one of the most thickly documented decades in Greek history. Given the play's relevance to Athenian imperial propaganda during a turbulent phase of the Peloponnesian War, we would very much like to narrow the range further. Unfortunately, the method of dating Euripides' plays by metrical evidence, while generally convincing, depends on various assumptions that can be questioned, and in any case can indicate only approximate dates; special circumstances, such as the low incidence of proper name resolutions in *Ion* in comparison with other plays, introduce further uncertainty.⁵

³ Mastronarde 2010: 28–43.

⁴ Delebecque 1951: 226 unconvincingly identifies two passages of Aristophanes' *Birds* (securely dated to 414) as allusions to *Ion* (*Birds* 769–84 ~ *Ion* 161–9, *Birds* 999–1009 ~ *Ion* 1132–40), which would then predate 415 (that year being already occupied by the Trojan trilogy). No sound inference regarding chronological priority can be based on mention of Pan's cave in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (produced in 411) at 1, 720, and 911 and in *Ion* at 492–509 and 936–8.

⁵ Cropp and Fick 1985: 5–25 and *passim*.

Ion's resolution rate falls between that of the securely datable *Tro.* (415) and *Hel.* (412); other extant plays whose rates fall between those of *Tro.* and *Hel.* are *IT*, for which external evidence is lacking, and *Ph.*, for which Σ Ar. *Frogs* 53 indicates a date between 411 and Euripides' death. Cropp and Fick's calculation from *Ion*'s resolution rate makes a date within the range 417–414 “very plausible,” and a date outside the range 418–413 “implausible.”⁶ When the evidence of *types* of resolution is taken into account, *Ion* again fits comfortably among the plays named so far, along with *El.* and *Her.*, and is somewhat less free than the latest group, consisting of *Or.*, *Ba.*, and *IA*.⁷

Efforts to date *Ion* on the basis of political tendency and supposed historical allusions have not produced consensus. At 1592, Athena calls Achaea “the coastal land around Rhium.” The small town of Rhium opposite Naupactus near the entrance to the Corinthian Gulf was important to Athenian naval strategy in the Peloponnesian War and is mentioned by Thucydides in connection with events of 429 (2.86, 92) and 419 (5.52). Because it is otherwise rarely heard of, Henri Grégoire argues that Euripides must have written *Ion* while the events of 419 were recent.⁸ Others, favoring the lower end of the range suggested by meter (in part for good, but inconclusive reasons relating to dramatic form and technique), examine the relationship of *Ion* to the disastrous (for Athens) end of the Sicilian expedition in 413. They disagree, however, as to whether the play more naturally belongs to a time before Chios, Erythrae, and other Ionian allies revolted from Athens, or after.⁹ They also disagree about the relevance

⁶ Cropp and Fick 1985: 23, dates rounded to the nearest whole number. The authors calculate two “relative likelihood intervals” (RLIs), 50% and 10%. The former means that a date within the calculated range has at least half as good a chance of being correct as the date corresponding, on the line derived from the metrical data, to the actual resolution rate; such a date is “very plausible.” A date outside the 10% RLI has less than 10% as good a chance of being correct as the date corresponding to the rate and is “implausible.”

⁷ Cropp and Fick 1985: 60–5.

⁸ Grégoire opts for 418 (1923: 167–8), and is followed by Delebecque 1951: 225 and, tentatively, Goossens 1962: 478 n. 1. Owen 1939: xl–xli agrees about Rhium, but thinks a supposed allusion to ostracism at *Ion* 603 “would well suit the period immediately preceding the ostracism of Hyperbolus,” which he puts in 417. The attack on such methods by Zuntz 1955: 55–69 (64 on *Ion*) has been influential.

⁹ Wilamowitz first held that *Ion* could not have been produced after the “collapse” of the empire in winter 413/412 (1935–72: vi.188 n. 1 [1888]), then that it very well could have been (1926: 24). Matthiessen 1964 accepts his first thoughts, Zacharia 2003: 3–7 his second. Zacharia's reason for preferring 412 to any later date is unconvincing, since it depends on an association between the number 400 and the four old Ionian tribes around the time of the oligarchic revolution (411 BCE). While no ancient source makes this association, the oligarchs demonstrably made use of the ten Cleisthenic tribes in their reorganization of the government.

of the Spartan fortification of Decelea in spring 413 which, starting in the autumn of that year, prevented initiates into the Eleusinian Mysteries from following the usual route of the Iacchus-procession from Athens to Eleusis along the Sacred Way.¹⁰ While some think that Euripides would not have evoked the procession as he does at *Ion* 1074–89(n.) after these events, others take the opposite view.¹¹ *Ion* celebrates the shared ancestry of Athenians and Ionians, affirms the Athenian claim to hegemony, and disparages the Dorian Spartans' inferior ancestry and claim. The Sicilian defeat created an atmosphere conducive to this tendency, but it would be equally fitting at any point during the Peloponnesian War, and certainly throughout the decade of the 410s. The trimeter evidence fits the middle of the decade best, but we will probably never know the exact chronological relationship of *Ion* to events of the war and Athenian domestic politics.

2 MYTH

2.1 Genealogy

In terms of genealogical myth, *Ion*'s defining purpose is to serve as eponym of the Ionians.¹² The stories told about him were not among the oldest or best attested Greek myths, and they remained subject to variation and manipulation into the fifth century and beyond. The most influential early version, preserved in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, makes *Ion* the son of Xuthus and Creusa, a daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus; in addition to *Ion*, Creusa bears Xuthus a son Achaeus and a daughter Diomedes.¹³ In this account, Xuthus is one of three sons of Hellen (son of Deucalion,

¹⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.20; cf. Plut. *Alc.* 34, Diod. Sic. 13.68–9.

¹¹ For the first view, see Owen on 1076; for the second, Wilamowitz 1926: 24 and ad loc. Note that although *Ion*'s resolution rate as interpreted by Cropp and Fick renders 412 “implausible,” many recent scholars are prepared to consider it. Martin 2018: 24–32 supports a date as late as 410 (advocated by Klimek-Winter 1996 and some earlier scholars on less convincing grounds); regarding meter, he emphasizes the many similarities of *Ion* and *Ph.* (datable by external evidence to 409 ± 2).

¹² The ethnic Ἴωνες, from which the personal name *Ion* derives (cf. 80–11n.), has no agreed etymology. It appears to be attested already in Linear B in the form *I-ja-wo-ne* (Bremmer 1997: 10–11), and several west Asian languages borrow and adapt it as a name for “Greeks” generally (Beekes s.v. Ἴωνες).

¹³ [Hes.] fr. 10a.20–4 = P.Turner 1.20–4 + P.Oxy. 2822 fr. 2, first published in 1981 and 1971, respectively. The only name entirely preserved in the papyri is Diomedes, also called Xuthus' daughter in Apollod. 1.9.4, but the combination of preserved letters and Apollod. 1.7.3 puts the restoration of the others beyond doubt (Parsons, Sijpesteijn, and Worp 1981: 14). *Ion*'s name, which falls entirely in a gap, must have appeared here in the form *Iaon* (West 1983 and 1987). In *Mel. Soph.* fr. 481.9–11, Euripides follows Hesiodic tradition in making *Ion* the son of Xuthus and an Erechtheid (unnamed). For a possibly older, west Locrian genealogy that makes him the son of Physkos, see Hall 2003: 29–30.

son of Prometheus); the others are Aeolus and Dorus ([Hes.] fr. 9). This so-called “Hellenic genealogy” explains the main ethnic subdivisions of the people who called themselves “Ἕλληνες at the time when it was constructed or became widely accepted, namely Aeolians, Dorians, Ionians, and Achaeans.¹⁴ Xuthus is the only “Hellene” in this stemma who is not an eponym; his purpose is rather to facilitate expression of the perceived or asserted degrees of kinship among the others: Achaeans and Ionians are presented as more closely related to each other than to Aeolians and Dorians, while the insertion of an extra generation between them and Hellen perhaps implies that they are somehow less “Hellenic.” That Ion’s mother is a daughter of the Athenian king Erechtheus, meanwhile, suggests that Athenians at this time wanted to be seen both as “Hellenic” and as ancestors of the Ionians.¹⁵ But Athens’ claim to be the Ionian metropolis was contested: a strong tradition located Ionian origins in Achaea in the northwest Peloponnese. The fact that Achaeus and Ion are brothers in the Hellenic genealogy may be an attempt to explain or reconcile these competing claims.¹⁶

The genealogy put forward in *Ion* differs from the Hesiodic Hellenic genealogy in three ways. First, and most important, it makes Apollo Ion’s father. Apollo’s paternity is not attested before Euripides, and the relatively few sources that attest it later are not demonstrably independent of him.¹⁷ The relative obscurity of Xuthus was a standing invitation for someone to gratify the Athenians by giving Ion a superior father and eliminating the foreign element from his background. Fortunately, it hardly matters for interpretation of *Ion* whether it was Euripides or someone else who

¹⁴ On genealogical thinking generally, see J. Hall 1997 and 2002; on the Hellenic genealogy, J. Hall 1997: 34–66 and 2003, Fowler 1998 and 2000–13: II.122–30. Fowler dates “the birth of Greek ethnic identity, if not its widest diffusion, at a time slightly before Homer, in the late eighth century B.C.” (127); West 1985: 136 dates the Hesiodic *Catalogue* to the period 580–520 BCE.

¹⁵ Cf. the equation of Ionians and Athenians at Hom. *Il.* 13.685–9 and Solon’s description of Athens as πρεσβυτάτην . . . γαῖαν Ἰαονίης (fr. 4a.2 West).

¹⁶ Parker 1986: 206. For the historical colonization of Ionia, see Hornblower on Thuc. 1.12.4, Deger-Jalkotzy 2006.

¹⁷ At Pl. *Euthd.* 302c–d, Socrates says that there is no “ancestral” (πατρῷος) Zeus for Athenians and Ionians, but rather Ἀπόλλων πατρῷος διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἴωνος γένεσιν. For the view that Plato may depend on Euripides here, and that later sources naming Apollo as Ion’s father (e.g. [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* fr. 1, Arr. *Anab.* 7.29.3, Diod. Sic. 16.57.4, Σ Ar. *Birds* 1527) in turn depend on either Euripides or Plato, see e.g. Parker 1986: 207 n. 80; for speculation that Euripides draws on an older tradition, e.g. Conacher 1967: 271, Smarczyk 1990: 362. Socrates’ suggestion that Apollo’s cult epithet πατρῷος derives from a myth of paternity is misleading, as it can be explained in other ways (Parker 2005: 22–3). Although the word is very common in Euripides (around ninety occurrences), it is not found even once in *Ion*. Athenians and Ionians shared the festival Apatouria, concerned with kinship, but Apollo was not its honorand (Parker 2005: 458–61), and Ion apparently played no part in it (Kearns 1989: 109).

answered the call.¹⁸ Having two fathers, a mortal one in name (as will continue to be the case, within the fiction, in the future Athena ordains at the end of *Ion*) and an immortal one in fact (as Athenians would be pleased to believe), places *Ion* in the distinguished company of Heracles (Zeus and Amphitryon), Theseus (Poseidon and Aegeus), and the Dioscuri Castor and Pollux (Zeus and Tyndareus), among others.¹⁹ But the treatment of *Ion*'s mortal "father" differs greatly from that of, for example, Amphitryon, who opens *Heracles* by proudly identifying himself as "the one who shared [Alcmene's] bed with Zeus."²⁰ The premise in *Ion* is that Xuthus and the world at large are never to know that *Ion*'s true father is Apollo.²¹ *Ion*, meanwhile, differs from other divine children in that he already has a close relationship with Apollo through personal religious devotion before he learns that the god is his father, and his social status and political identity are problematized in ways not seen with other semi-divine tragic heroes.²²

Second, whereas the *Catalogue* makes Xuthus son of Hellen (son of Deucalion,²³ son of Prometheus), in *Ion* Euripides makes him son of Aeolus, son of Zeus. On the assumption that this Aeolus is the one who is Xuthus' brother in the *Catalogue* (and in two other places in Euripides, frs. 481.7–9 and 929b), it is not clear why Euripides here makes him Xuthus' father instead, as he has no obvious motive for boosting the status of Aeolian Greeks.²⁴ If the goal is not simply to

¹⁸ *Creusa* and *Ion* (possibly the same play) are attested as titles for Sophocles, but the fragments are undatable and do not even establish that Sophocles treated the same story as Euripides, let alone what parents he may have given *Ion*. For a possible intertextual relationship between *Ion* and S. fr. 356 and 354 (*Creusa*), see 633–45n.; cf. 16, 919–22nn.; n. 99 below.

¹⁹ *LIMC* v.1.703 (E. Simon). West 1985: 106 notes that Apollo, though not named in [Hes.] fr. 10a, may have been identified as *Ion*'s true father when *Creusa*'s story was told more fully later in the *Catalogue of Women*.

²⁰ τὸν Διὸς σύμλεκτρον (*Her.* 1). Cf. *Or.* 476, where Tyndareus takes no offense at being addressed by Menelaus as Ζηνὸς ὁμόλεκτρον κάρα.

²¹ This is in keeping with the treatment of Xuthus as an outsider (§5.2); see also §9 on *Ion* and comedy. For Apollo's wish to keep his union with *Creusa* secret, see §8.1.

²² §§7.1, 6.1.

²³ West 1985: 50–6 makes a strong case that the *Catalogue* made Zeus the true father of Hellen. This would explain why Euripides does the same in *Mel. Soph.* fr. 481.1–2 and 929b.

²⁴ Smith 2012 argues that the Aeolus meant is the *Odyssey*'s king of the winds, and that Euripides thus alludes to a Dorian genealogy of Xuthus (since this Aeolus is son of Hippotes, a Heraclid). Smith succeeds in showing that Xuthus' ethnic background could be contested, but he is wrong to say that *Ion* 292 (cf. 63–4) points to a Dorian genealogy because "no matter how hard you look, Zeus is nowhere to be found in the lineage of the ps.-Hesiodic, Ionian, Hellenic Xuthus" (2012: 133). On the contrary, Euripides himself, probably following the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, makes Zeus Hellen's father (previous note). Smith does not explain why Euripides would blend Dorian and Hellenic elements in Xuthus' genealogy, nor what it means that he presents Dorus as Xuthus' son (*Ion* 1589–91).

make Hellen disappear, it may be to draw Aeolians and Ionians closer together. In any case, “Greekness” is no longer an issue in the way it was when the Hellenic genealogy was created; interest has shifted to distinctions among perceived ethnic subdivisions, above all Ionians and Dorians.²⁵

The third difference is that Dorus (along with Achaeus) is made Xuthus’ son rather than his brother (1589–94). This diminution of the status of their eponym would be most unwelcome to Dorian Greeks, including (among many others) Spartans and Corinthians, Athens’ bitter enemies at the time of the play’s first production. Worse still is that Dorus and Achaeus are to be sons of Creusa, which makes them Athenian on their mother’s side, and that their father is the mortal Xuthus, whereas their older half-brother Ion is a son of Apollo. This outrageous innovation, which almost certainly belongs to Euripides, is ignored by later authors. Some modern scholars maintain that the bitter pill is sugar-coated, in that the Euripidean genealogy offers a reminder that Athenians and Spartans are after all related, but the widely accepted Hellenic genealogy already did that on terms much more favorable to the Dorian Spartans.²⁶

A genealogical explanation was also sought for the fact that Athens shared the names of its four pre-Cleisthenic “tribes” with divisions of the population in various Ionian cities.²⁷ Ion never achieved a place on the usual list of Attic kings.²⁸ Rather, he was usually seen as a military man summoned from elsewhere to help Athens in a time of crisis.²⁹ When specified, the crisis is the defensive war fought by the Athenians against the Eleusinians and their Thracian allies led by Poseidon’s son

²⁵ Already in antiquity Euripides was notorious for taking genealogical liberties (*Σ Hec.* 3); for examples of genealogies he gives in longer and shorter forms, cf. Harder on *Arch.* 2 Austin (= 228a Kannicht).17.

²⁶ For Athens as Ionian metropolis in *Ion*, see further §6.3.

²⁷ Jones 1987: 11–12, 295, 303–15, 320–2 (citing evidence from Erythrae, Teos, Colophon, Ephesus, and Miletus); cf. Parker 1996: 16–17, Zacharia 2003: 51.

²⁸ The list, some version of which was apparently known to Thucydides (2.15.1), is stable in the Attidographers (chroniclers of Athens) and later sources; for its early history, see Fowler 2000–13: II.447–53. In *Ion*, Athena does instruct Creusa to install Ion on the Athenian throne, and the text emphasizes that he deserves to rule (1572–4, 1618).

²⁹ He is often called στρατάρχης or the like. According to [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 3.2 and fr. 1 (and some others: see Rhodes ad locc.), he was made πολέμαρχος; this title suggests the existence of a story explaining why the Athenian king did not lead his own army and giving an aetiology for the office of polemarch still held annually by one of the nine archons in classical Athens. On the transfer of Ion’s military skill to Xuthus, see 59–60n.

Eumolpus.³⁰ This war provides the context for Euripides' *Erechtheus*, in which *Ion* has no part.³¹ In *Ion*, it is said to have taken place while *Ion's* mother *Creusa* was still an infant, and the Athenians are led by the autochthon *Erechtheus*.³² It has been argued that in earlier versions, roughly from the mid-sixth to the mid-fifth century, *Ion* led the successful Athenian defense. In the late archaic period, such dependence on an ally with a foreign father was acceptable; later, under the influence of democratic and Periclean ideals of citizenship, *Ion* was seen as insufficiently Athenian to have led Athens in this defining struggle – a problem neatly solved by Apolline paternity.³³ After coming to Athens' aid, *Ion* fathered sons who gave their names to its tribes.³⁴ In *Ion*, *Athena* predicts the colonization of *Ion*ia by descendants of these sons, and we are to understand that they take the tribal names with them.³⁵ Early sources do not say where *Ion* was when he was summoned as an ally. *Achaea* in the northwest Peloponnese is one obvious possibility, Phthiotic *Achaea* in Thessaly another. Later sources variously associate *Xuthus* and *Ion* with both of these, while cult records attest their connections with places in Attica other than Athens.³⁶

2.2 *The Hero Exposed and Rescued*

As his story is developed by Euripides, *Ion* is one of countless children (mostly sons) born to mortal princesses impregnated by Olympian gods. In myth, such sons exist to be exposed, rescued, and raised in exile or obscurity. Eventually, they return to their native land and enter their rightful status as kings, or they go somewhere else and found new cities or cults. This story pattern, which is old and found in many cultures, is

³⁰ See Hdt. 8.44.2, Thuc. 1.3.2 and 2.15.1 (which glance at this tradition but do not name *Ion*), Philoch. 328 *FGrHist* F 13, Strabo 8.7.1, Paus. 1.31.3 and 7.1.2–5, *EM* 649.49 (= [Pherecyd.] 3 *FGrHist* F 176), Σ Ar. *Birds* 1527; Fowler 2000–13: 11.464–8.

³¹ Unless he is the heir *Erechtheus* addresses in fr. 362 (but the heir is too young to fight); see Cropp ad loc., Sonnino 2010: 125–31.

³² 277–82n.

³³ Sonnino 2010: 45–58; on *Ion* and Athenian citizenship, see §6.1.

³⁴ Hdt. 5.66.2 (cf. 5.69.1); *Ion* 1575–8, 1579–81 (nn.).

³⁵ 1581–8; cf. 74–5n.

³⁶ Marathon (*IG* 1³.255 A 13; cf. Lambert 2000: 71–5), where Strabo says *Xuthus* settled and founded the Marathonian Tetrapolis (8.7.1); Potamoi, where Pausanias says *Ion* was buried (1.31.3, 7.1.5); Porthmos, where *Ion* received an offering from the Attic *genos* Salaminioi (*LSS* 19.86–7); and Gargettos, near which was a deme called *Ionidae* (Kearns 1989: 109–10, 174–5, Harding 2008: 216–17). West 1985: 57–8 suggests that *Xuthus* was originally at home in Euboea; in *Ion*, he has won *Creusa's* hand by helping Athens in a war against the Euboeans (59–60n.).

only sparsely attested in Greek literary sources before Attic drama.³⁷ It was apparently Sophocles and Euripides who made it a favorite subject for tragedies.³⁸ Most center on either the birth, exposure, and rescue of the newborn, or his arrival at the threshold of maturity and encounter with his birth family. *Ion* is our best surviving example of the latter type, and because it includes vivid recollections of Ion's birth, exposure, and rescue, it develops many typical motifs of the former as well.³⁹ These mostly occur in the back story, but a few are reenacted and developed within the play.

Ion's mother Creusa was raped by Apollo (motif 1.1)⁴⁰ and exposed their child through fear (motif 2.1),⁴¹ an act she characterizes, unusually, as unjust.⁴² In a sense, Hermes exposed Ion again when carrying out Apollo's instructions to save him (28–40). When, in the prologue, he returns to Delphi to see what will happen next (76–7), the effect is both to collapse time and to suggest that Ion is once again exposed to danger. The cave where the rape occurred and Creusa exposed Ion is significant

³⁷ Oswald 2004, Huys 1995: 62–3. The best-known examples in early poetry involve Perseus (Simon. fr. 543), Jason (Pi. P. 4.108–16), and Iamos (Pi. O. 6.29–58); in prose, Cyrus (Hdt. 1.108–17). A related pattern becomes a staple of Greek New Comedy: a baby girl is exposed, rescued, and raised; becomes the object of a young citizen male's affections; and is finally discovered to be born of citizen parents and thus marriageable (Sommerstein 2013: 30–6). That New Comedy owes a debt to tragedy and to Euripides in particular was acknowledged already in antiquity (550–4, 1431nn.; §9 below), but how often and in what circumstances infants were actually exposed by ancient Greeks is debated (references in Sommerstein on *Sam.* 132), as is the question how much the historical reality should affect our understanding of either genre, especially tragedy, where the circumstances surrounding exposure (divine parentage, royalty, oracles, etc.) invite interpretation as myth, psychological fantasy, and literary elaboration. For a psychological interpretation of *Ion* that takes the historical practice of infant exposure seriously, see Pedrick 2007, especially 31–51; cf. §5.3.

³⁸ The evidence does not reveal which of them led the way. In Aeschylus, elements of the tale type are found in Oedipus' background in the Theban trilogy, and the satyric *Diktyouloko* dramatizes the rescue of Danae and Perseus by fishermen.

³⁹ Plays dealing with the hero's birth, exposure, and rescue include Sophocles' *Danae* (with related material possibly in *Akrisios* and *Larisaioi*) and possibly *Tyros* A; and Euripides' *Danae*, *Melanippe Sophe*, *Alope*, and *Auge*. Plays dealing with his maturity and encounter with his birth family include Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Aleada* (and possibly *Telephos*), *Alexandros*, and *Tyros* B; and Euripides' *Ion*, *Antiope*, *Alexandros*, *Melanippe Desmotis*, and *Oedipus*. For Sophocles' *Creusa* and/or *Ion*, see n. 18 above, n. 99 below.

⁴⁰ For rape, see §2.3; for the identification and numbering of the motifs, Huys 1995: 40–1. Huys studies the tale type systematically in *Ion* and the eight fragmentary Euripidean plays listed in the previous note, and provides copious Greek and non-Greek parallels.

⁴¹ 1497–9n.; cf. 897–8n. It is not clear whom Creusa feared (14–15n.).

⁴² 963; cf. Huys 1995: 100 n. 46.

(motif 2.2). It is a marginal, uncivilized place, but at the same time linked with the sacred.⁴³ It represents a womb-like enclosure analogous to Ion's basket, Apollo's temple, the tent where Ion faces danger from his mother again, and Delphi itself.⁴⁴ When Hermes "exposed" Ion, it was likewise in a special, liminal place, just outside the entrance to the temple, which continues to be significant not only as the play's setting, but as a symbolic boundary marking Ion's transition to adulthood (§3).

Creusa exposed Ion in a special basket along with special objects (motif 2.3) whose Athenian ritual and symbolic associations are developed at length.⁴⁵ She exposed him as a "compromise between death and rescue" (motif 2.4); her expectation that he would die has persisted in unresolved tension with her hope that Apollo saved him.⁴⁶ Ion was rescued (motif 3.2) by Hermes, who conveyed him to the threshold of the temple (28–40), and by the Pythian priestess, who took him up and raised him (49).⁴⁷ The fact that Hermes acted on Apollo's instructions and the Priestess on an impulse caused by him shows that the divine father is looking out for the welfare of his offspring, as is typical.⁴⁸ The young Ion shows extraordinary ability (motif 3.3): the Delphians have entrusted him with important duties (54–5), and he has led a life of uninterrupted piety (55–6).⁴⁹ In the end, Ion learns that what binds him to his mother and Athens is stronger than what binds him to his father and Delphi. The princess in the tale had always represented the hero's ties to a particular clan or city, but Euripides invests the motif with extraordinary emotional force.⁵⁰

⁴³ Cult places of Pan and possibly Apollo are nearby, as is the Athenian Acropolis (11–13n.).

⁴⁴ 19, 76, 1141–65nn. Etymologically, "Delphoi" means "inhabitants of the womb (δελφύς)"; γύαλα, "hollows," was a kind of nickname of Apollo's precinct (76n.). Mastronarde 2010: 253–4 notes that the association of males with interior spaces in *Ion* is a striking inversion of the norm.

⁴⁵ 1395–1438, 1421–3, 1427–9, 1433–6nn.; see also 26–7n., §3, Mueller 2010, 2016: 70–84.

⁴⁶ 18, 26–7, 965nn., Huys 1995: 246–52.

⁴⁷ The hero in such tales is rescued by animals, gods, humans, or some combination of these. Because they are often combined in literary elaborations, rescuing and menacing are treated together by Huys as motif 3.1. Ion is never actually menaced, but Creusa imagines him being devoured by birds and beasts, and the descriptions of this grow more vivid throughout the play (348–52, 503–6nn.), even after Creusa knows it did not happen (1494–5n.).

⁴⁸ Hermes' role is one he plays elsewhere (1–81, 28–40nn.). In the play, the Priestess' helpful intervention (47–8n.) is both reenacted and reversed when she brings Ion's basket back out of the temple (1320–68n.); spectators will see this and the "chance" events that foil Creusa's murder plot (1189, 1191–2, 1204–5nn.) as further saving acts by Apollo, as Athena eventually confirms (1565n.).

⁴⁹ 54–5, 55–6nn., §7.1.

⁵⁰ §§5.3, 7.1.