THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# VISUALIZING THE DIVINE IN EURIPIDEAN TRAGEDY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2020

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# Abstract

The biographical tradition asserts that Euripides had been a painter before he was a tragedian and that his artworks were on view in Megara. While this story is likely fanciful, it does testify to the long-standing recognition of Euripides' interest in the visual arts. In this dissertation, I interrogate the relationship between the works of this tragedian and his visual milieu. Athens in the late fifth century was a place of great innovation and expansion in the world of visual arts: the continued production of red-figure vases, the growth of new iconographies and artforms, and drastic innovations in architecture and sculpture. Euripides and his audience lived in a city of images where their experience of divinity was shaped by and understood through material culture.

I examine the way that Euripides responds to the city's visual environment and explores the boundaries of tragedy as a visual medium itself in three plays. These tragedies alternately draw on the authority of images, contest their interpretation, or question the possibilities and limitations of visuality. In the *Ion*, images of Athens' autochthonous kings and its patron deity are woven through the tragedy to authorize an unusual variation in the plot and to place the action under Athena's purview. The *Ion* draws on the persuasive power of images to create a visual argument for the intrinsic connection between Athena, Athens' autochthonous history, and the Ionians. In the *Helen*, the relationship between Helen and her earlier representations is pivotal to the plot. Euripides first presents a Helen who aligns herself with the visual tradition, but when that threatens to leave her vulnerable to the same repetitive cycle of abduction that characterizes her counterpart in the iconographic tradition, she changes her costume in a drastic break from previous representations. The *Bacchae*, similarly, challenges the iconographic tradition, even while using it as a source of authority. First, by invoking material representations

of Dionysus through reference to the new imagery of the god contemporaneous with the production. Then, by using the ambiguity of the representation of Dionysus as the foundation for exploring the question of the appearance of divinity and the possibilities of the theater as both a visual and a temporal medium to produce an experience analogous to epiphany. Through this analysis of Euripides' use of the visual tradition, I hope to show that understanding the visual and material context of the production of tragedies not only adds further nuance, but is vital for understanding this genre.

# Acknowledgments

I am grateful first of all to my committee for their guidance and support: Sarah Nooter, Chris Faraone, and Richard Neer. I deeply appreciate the hours that you have spent reading and critiquing my work. It was a great privilege to work with you, thank you for sharing your time and expertise with me.

I am thankful as well to all of the members of the University of Chicago community who have helped me in this long journey. I appreciate the guidance of all of the professors who have been my teachers and who have supported me in each step of developing my scholarship: in coursework, in teaching, and in articulating and presenting my own work, especially Helma Dik, Jonathan Hall, and Patch Crowley. I am grateful as well to my fellow graduate students in the Classics, art history, history, and NELC departments for their support and companionship. Nor can I omit my gratitude to the many students who I have had the opportunity to teach.

I would like to thank my family for their support. My mother for her unwavering belief in my abilities. My siblings for keeping me grounded and providing refuge. And especially, I am grateful for my amazing sister Esther, who is the only one of them who will read this. The final stretch of this project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Rhyne King.

Finally, I am indebted to two people whose encouragement was vital to my success, but who are not here to see the fruition of their efforts. My mentor, Dr. Andy Little, who first introduced me to fifth-century Athens and whose enthusiasm and generosity continues to inspire me. And Sarah Miller, my study buddy, traveling companion, occasional therapist, and cherished friend. You are both profoundly missed

# Introduction

Tragedy, in its original context, is both a literary and a visual medium. The poetry of the plays has come down to us as a literary form, but the tragedies themselves were performances in which visual aspects informed the audience's interpretation.[1] The original audience of these plays lived in a world saturated with visuality, one in which visual allusions to familiar images from the Athenian environment would carry a complex web of associations. It is this relationship between tragedy and the visual environment of Athens that remains understudied and that I begin to address here, specifically with the works of Euripides and the representation of divinities. Euripides' sustained engagement with the visual arts in these plays demonstrates the role of the Athenian visual milieu in shaping the production of tragedy. Scholars have increasingly acknowledged the role of politics, legal discourse, music, performance, and other factors in the role of and production of tragedy, recognizing that the libretto that has come down to us through the manuscript tradition is only a fragment of what made tragedy such an important cultural institution. Largely due to the modern academic divide between Classics and art history, the vital role played by the visual environment of the city in the production of tragedy has received little scrutiny. Tragedy, however, was a performance, a visual medium that shaped and responded to other visual media.

My dissertation begins the process of addressing this gap in understanding. I examine three plays that have long been recognized for their interest in visuality: the *Ion*, the *Helen*, and the *Bacchae*. In all three plays, Euripides engages with images from the contemporary visual milieu. The visual tradition stands as one source of authority for the plot and the representation

[1] Mueller, *Objects as Actors*, 2. As Melissa Mueller points out, tragedies were performed before an audience that did not "privilege words over all its other means of communication."

of characters that forms the grounds for the audience's expectations. Euripides responds to these expectations in different ways, alternately drawing on the authority of the image, contesting its interpretation, or questioning the possibilities and limitations of visuality.

In the *Ion*, images of Athens' autochthonous kings and its patron deity are woven through the tragedy to authorize an unusual variation in the plot and to place the action under Athena's purview. The *Ion* draws on the persuasive power of images to create a visual argument for the intrinsic connection between Athena, Athens' autochthonous history, and the Ionians. In the *Helen*, the relationship between Helen and her earlier representations is pivotal to the plot. Euripides first presents a Helen who aligns herself with the visual tradition, but when that threatens to leave her vulnerable to the same repetitive cycle of abduction that characterizes her counterpart in the iconographic tradition, she changes her costume in a drastic break from the iconographic tradition. The *Bacchae*, similarly, challenges the iconographic tradition, even while using it as a source of authority. First, by invoking it through reference to the new imagery of Dionysus contemporaneous with the production. Then, by using the ambiguity of the representation of Dionysus as the foundation for exploring the question of the appearance of divinity and the possibilities of the theater as both a visual and a temporal medium to produce an experience analogous to epiphany.

## The Scope of the Dissertation

While I believe that there is a lot still to be explored in the relationship between tragedy and visual culture, I have limited my research in a few ways: a selection of three plays by Euripides, selected material objects, and representations of divinities. While all of the extant

tragedians show a degree of engagement with the images that surrounded them,[2] Euripides' interest in the visual arts is the most explicit. His works are full of references to statues, paintings, and architectural decoration as well as terms for production of objects, color and texture, light and shadow. For example, in the *Hecuba*, the queen begs Agamemnon: "have pity on me, and, like an artist (γραφεύς) standing back from his picture, look on me and closely scan my piteous state." (*Hec*. 808-09).[3] Moments like this one reveal that Euripides creates characters who engage with visual experience and who actively use that experience to affect other characters and the audience. Such references show that not only is Euripides aware of and responsive to a world of visual representations of his characters, but he is actively interrogating the meaning and implications of such imagery.

Euripides' tragedies also show an attention to the visual aspect of the characters he stages, particularly through the visual significance of props and his distinctive use of costuming. This aspect was a noted and remarked-upon characteristic of Euripidean tragedy in his own time, as Aristophanes' parody of Euripides' distinctively ragged protagonists makes clear.[4] Moreover, his tragedies emphatically thematize the act of seeing and the role of autopsy. This theme is not unique to Euripidean tragedy, but Euripides has his characters question the role of visual experience in a way that makes his interests much more intrinsic to his plays than those of other tragedians. The biographical tradition even records that he was an artist himself whose work was

[2] E.g. Lissarrague, "Looking at Shield Devices: Tragedy and Vase Painting." Lissarague points out how Aeschylus' famous use of shield devices in *Seven Against Thebes* to explain the relationships between the combatants is paralleled by a similar interplay in shield devices on pottery.

[3] (trans: Coleridge) οἴκτιρον ἡμᾶς, ὡς γραφεύς τ᾽ ἀποσταθεὶς / ἰδοῦ με κἀνάθρησον οἷ᾽ ἔχω κακά.

[4] E.g. we see this in the extensive parody of the *Telephus* in the *Acharnians* (*Ach*. 383-489) and the comments on Euripidean costuming in the *Frogs* (*Ran*. 842, 1063-64).

on view in Megara. Although this is unlikely to be true, the events recorded in the biographical tradition often respond to themes that the ancient themselves saw as prominent features of a tragedian's works, which certainly seems to be the case here.[5]

The three plays selected here for examination have each been noted for their emphasis on visuality. All three dwell significantly on the characters' visual experience within the play as well as interrogating the audience's own understanding of contemporaneous visual material. In the *Ion*, this emphasis on the characters' visual experience is most explicit in two extended passages of ekphrasis: the chorus' description of the temple of Apollo and the messenger's description of the tent. The culmination of the drama comes down to the recognition scene in which the visual experience of both characters and the audience becomes the crux to the interpretation of the play. In the *Helen*, visuality is thematized first and foremost through the idea of the *eidolon*, an exact duplicate of Helen herself – at least superficially. The final resolution of the play relies on the implicit connection between autopsy and truth, exemplified through the double costume change of Helen and Menelaus. Finally, in the *Bacchae*, costume change and disguise also play a crucial role, as does the question of the implicit connection between truth and autopsy, which is undermined by the impossibility of constraining divinity in the bounds of sight and representation.

In the selection of material objects, I have chosen to focus mostly on two media: architectural sculpture and pottery. My choices here are, as with tragedy, limited by the circumstances of survival.[6] The fifth century saw drastic changes in artistic production. This is

[5] Lefkowitz, "The Poet as Hero"; Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*.
[6] Aside from wall-paintings, textiles are also an important media in Classical Athens, central to the city's Panathenaea festival, which involved the weaving of a new peplos for the statue of Athena on the acropolis. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the medium, little trace of textile imagery survives.

the age of great wall-painters, whose works are lost to us, though some idea of their compositions might be found in later wall-painting and other media.[7] One of the great wall-painters of the late fifth century is the artist Zeuxis, who may have also joined Euripides in the Macedonian court – both created pieces for their patron Archelaus I.[8] The lifetime of Euripides also sees a continuance in pottery production as well as shifts in the iconography being produced in this medium. There is a decline in the amount of pottery produced in the last quarter of the century, likely due to the impact of the Peloponnesian War, but production does not stop entirely and detailed pieces continue to be produced through this period. The last half of the fifth century also sees an expansion in the architectural program of Athens, including the rebuilding of the acropolis, which had been left in ruins as a testament of the Persian sack of the city. The Parthenon was completed around 438 BCE, though decoration of the building continued until around 432 BCE. Several other massive building projects were undertaken after this, including other buildings on the acropolis (such as the temple to Athena Nike and the Erechtheion)[9] as well as other temples in the city (such as the Hephaisteion in the agora) and in other parts of Attica (such as the temple of Nemesis in Rhamnous).

I have chosen to focus on architectural sculpture, particularly the buildings of the acropolis and other sanctuaries in Attica, as both accessible to Euripides and his audience and also, as with tragedy, charged with political and religious significance. The acropolis, in particular, is a place of relevance both because of its familiarity and because the theater of

[7] E. g. Weaver, "Euripides' 'Bacchae' and Classical Typologies of Pentheus' 'Sparagmos', 510-406 BC." LIMC VII "Pentheus" no. 28. Weaver discusses the Pentheus wall-painting from the Casa dei Vetii in Pompeii, the composition of which seems to be based on a late fifth-century prototype.
[8] Aelian *Various Histories* 14.17; Pliny *Natural History* 35.62.
[9] The Erechtheion remained unfinished due to the Peloponnesian War, but was under construction between 421 and 406 BCE.

Dionysus, where the tragedies of the Dionysia were performed, is located on its south slope. Pottery speaks to a slightly different complex of associations that are more domestic, but no less charged with political and religious association. The pottery examined in this dissertation covers a variety of types and usages, but the majority of it is used in the symposium or other contexts shared by elite men, including politicians and tragedians like Euripides.[10] These pieces were also produced in Attica and their iconography reflects similarities with sculptural traditions.[11] Due to the impossibility of connecting any specific vessel securely to Euripides or his audience, I have focused on broader questions of iconography that can be seen in multiple examples.

Finally, I have limited my research to representations of divinities, a term I use to refer to gods as well as heroes. Even though these heroes are often represented onstage in the mortal phase of their lives (as is the case for Ion and Helen), the audience knows them as gods worshipped in cult. While other genres of poetry frequently feature divine actors, tragedy uniquely brings them to life on stage. This embodiment of the divine frequently depends on visual representations in other media – vase and wall painting, statuary, etc. – in order to construct the identity and authority of these divine figures. While I believe that there is more to say about the relationship between tragic performance and visual media beyond representations of divinities, particularly in terms of questions of composition, aesthetics, and relationship to the viewer, I limit my argument here to more concrete parallels between characters onstage and their visual counterparts.

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[10] This is indicated, for example, by Plato's *Symposium* which presents a symposium in 416 BCE celebrating the victory of the tragedian Agathon alongside several of the city's elites.

[11] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:1. A number of these pieces were found in south Italy. In using these pieces, I follow Isler-Kerényi's suggestion that "although the wealthy and knowledgeable Italic clientele must have influenced the luxury ceramics produced at the Athenian Kerameikos, we may presume that the creators of the imagery were, first and foremost, guided by the values and interests of their own cultural milieu."

## METHOD AND APPROACH

This examination of Euripides' engagement with visual culture will balance two different approaches, close reading of the text and reconstruction of the visual aspects of the stage. Euripides interest in visuality is not simply empty elaboration, but a reflection of the playwright's serious questioning of the role of sight and the interpretation of visual material in creating meaning. In particular, Euripides takes visual representation as a source of authority for myth that he builds on, undermines, or reinterprets to create new meaning. Euripides' tendency to reach outside his tragedies to create meaning for his audience through references to previous tragedies, epics, even comedy and contemporary legal issues has long been recognized as a feature of his work.[12] This engagement with the developments in the city around him extends also to the sphere of the visual arts.

In order to see how Euripides responds to his visual environment, I examine several elements from the tragedies. At the most basic level, I look at textual references to visual material that establish Euripides' conscientious interest in visual production. Next, I explore the visuality of the performance itself in terms of costume, props, staging, et cetera. Third, I examine the way that the process of interpretation is presented in these tragedies.

The first of these elements, the references in the text to visual material, includes Euripides' explicit language of craft, statuary, painting, and other types of production of images. These show Euripides' reliance on material objects for his understanding of myth and the assumption that the audience would be familiar with this material in their knowledge of the characters presented onstage. For example, Ion says that he knows the story of Erichthonios and

[12] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 31; Torrance, "In the Footprints of Aeschylus: Recognition, Allusion, and Metapoetics in Euripides"; Torrance, *Metapoetry in Euripides*.

the Cecropids from painting (*Ion* 271 ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται) and Helen wishes that she could be wiped away like a painting (Helen 262 εἴθ' ἐξαλειφθεῖσ' ὡς ἄγαλμ'). Visually focused descriptions and ekphrases also belong in this category. These descriptions rely on the audience's ability to draw on existing visual references. For example, in the *Ion* the chorus' parodos is an extended description of the temple of Apollo (184-218). The temple itself was not shown on stage, but instead relied on the audience's familiarity with the description of the iconography to understand the scene.

In the category of the visual material of the performance itself, I rely on performance theory and other studies on materiality (see below) to reconstruct the visual aspects of the tragedy. In approaching this material aspect of tragedy, I look for evidence of props, including, for example, the three tokens in the recognition scene at the end of the *Ion* which form visual connections between the characters onstage. Costume is also a visual medium intrinsic to tragedy and of particular interest to Euripides that reflects and responds to other visual media. This is particularly relevant to both the *Helen* and the *Bacchae*. Helen, in the eponymous tragedy, begins with an initial appearance that parallels her appearance in the material tradition (particularly pottery and relief sculpture). Dionysus, similarly, begins the *Bacchae* in a "disguise" that nevertheless parallels contemporaneous iconography. Both of these plays have costume changes for two characters that form part of the climax of the action. I also examine the way that stage actions described in the text create visual allusions. For example, in the *Bacchae*, both Pentheus and Agave throw back their heads in a pose that is familiar from the iconographic representations of Dionysus' female companions.

Finally, I analyze the process of interpretation, which shows how Euripides represents the experience of understanding visual material. In this category, I include the way that the tragedies

provide grounds for an argument about the role of sight and seeing, as well as questions of authority and interpretation. Some of this questioning is directly contained in the text, for example, Pentheus' delusion of Thebes and the bull-shaped Dionysus, which directly questions the role of autopsy. At other points, these arguments are not straightforwardly presented in the text, but in the use of visual references or in visual aspects of the performance itself. This is the case, for example, in the reunion scene of Helen and Menelaus. The action of the scene, with Helen running to an altar and Menelaus pursuing, evokes a tradition in material representations of the couple showing the reunion of Helen and Menelaus at Troy. In the tragedy, however, the meaning of the scene has changed. The pursuit is not motivated by recognition, but by the lack of it. Such moments in the tragedies indicate the way that Euripides is responding to the visual tradition, using the authority of visual allusion, but also questioning the act of interpretation.

In examining visual material for this project, I have drawn on various approaches and different media, particularly pottery and sculpture. While it is impossible to say what images Euripides and his audience would specifically know, I have relied upon examination of iconographic schemata, that is, relatively consistent patterns, allowing for the easy identification of figures. Jane Henle's *Greek Myths: A Vase Painter's Notebook* (1973) establishes a useful vocabulary for discussing how schemata are used and change over time.[13] In the Classical period, there is a shift away from the detailed and specific depictions of archaic narrative (which Henle refers to as "simultaneous") towards the rise of simplified "generic" scenes.[14] What in the

[13] Henle, *Greek Myths*; Cf. Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art*, 1–17. Stansbury-O'Donnell provides a description of the history and uses of these terms.
[14] Henle, *Greek Myths*, 17–20; Giuliani, *Image and Myth*. For example, scenes of Peleus and Thetis from the archaic period contain many specific, narratively illogical elements that indicate the nature of the scene. Generally, they show a man holding a woman as the central figures while other elements of Thetis' transformation appear on or around the couple, such as lions, snakes, or flames. Each element indicates one of the shape-shifter Thetis' transformations in her attempt to

archaic period was a scene with an overabundance of specific elements that gave a "simultaneous" sense of the whole narrative context, becomes focused on a single dramatic moment in the Classical period.[15] Identification of figures on sympotic ware becomes a kind of game or competition amongst the viewers.[16] The iconography known from sympotic ware played a role in the perception of myth. An examination of such schemata on pottery reveals how certain types of scenes rose and fell in popularity, how mythological figures were portrayed in different contexts, and creates analogous links between different myths that might not otherwise be obvious.

## HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

Numerous scholars throughout the ages have noticed the link between tragedy and the visual arts. This early work on the relationship between visual material and tragedy is foundational to my work An early example of this phenomenon is John Huddilston's *The Attitude of the Tragedians toward Art* (1898), which focuses on the use of terms such as βρέτας

free herself from her suitor. Rather than representing a single moment in time, these "simultaneous" depictions attempt to reference different moments of the narrative within one image. After the shift to "generic" scenes that happens at the start of the Classical period, however, Peleus and Thetis scenes lose most of these specific narrative identifiers and are frequently assimilated into a type of scenes referred to as "the bather surprised." These new representations of the myth present schemata common to various other scenes, such as illustrations of the story of Artemis and Actaeon. See Giuliani for more on the problems of the construction of narrative in art.

[15] Small, *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text*. Small builds off of Henle's distinction and further refines the Classical period narrative scenes with a distinction between hierarchical and spatial time.

[16] Stansbury-O'Donnell and Yatromanolakis, "The Structural Differentiation of Pursuit Scenes." Take the extremely common "generic" type of a pursuit scene. If the pursuer is a young man with wings chasing a woman holding a water pot, the scene shows Boreas and Oreithyia. If a warrior drops his sword as he pursues a woman to an altar, then the scene shows Helen and Menelaos. The poses and gestures, even the relationship between male and female figures in both of these scenes may be generic – with the same pinwheeling limbs, and hand gestures signifying desire and fear – but there are specific elements of the schemata that belie the ambiguity.

and catalogues references to architecture, sculpture, painting, and weaving.[17] This study tracks the language used to refer to art in extant tragedies and concludes that Euripides was more interested in visual experience than the other tragedians. Although a useful starting point for the discussion of the relationship between theatrical and visual arts, the book provides little in the way of analysis of the importance of this dynamic. Later scholarship begins to look at the relationship between the visual arts and tragedy, using the visual arts directly rather than focusing on the language of craft in tragedy. Louis Séchan's *Études sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique* (1926), for example, discusses the relationship between tragedies and material images.[18] Although he acknowledges the influence of art on tragedy, most of his work focuses on images as illustrations of the plots of tragedies and the use of images to reconstruct the plots of lost tragedies. Arthur Trendall and Thomas Webster's *Illustration of Greek Drama* (1971) established a particular methodology for treating vase painting as illustration for theater.[19] This work focuses on south Italian vases and argues that their iconography is drawn from theatrical production. This approach has been followed by a number of other scholars who have further expanded the idea of the influence of tragedy on vase-painting. Anneliese Kossatz-Deissmann and J.-M. Moret continued examining the representation of myths drawn from literature on south Italian vases.[20] Harvey Shapiro's *Myth into Art: Poet and Painter in Classical Greece* (1994) presents a synchronic representation of the relationship between artistic and literary representations of myth.[21] Trendall and Webster's work also formed

[17] Huddilston, *The Attitude of the Greek Tragedians toward Art.*
[18] Séchan, *Études sur la tragédie grecque dans ses rapports avec la céramique*.
[19] Trendall and Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama*.
[20] Kossatz-Deissmann, *Dramen des Aischylos auf westgriechischen Vasen*; Moret, *L'Ilioupersis dans la céramique italiote*.
[21] Shapiro, *Myth into Art*.

the basis for Oliver Taplin's influential *Pots and Plays* (2007).[22] Taplin's argues that south Italian pottery represents not just the myth told by the play, but the actual performance of the tragedy. While this work mostly approaches the material in the opposite direction to what I examine (i.e. it emphasizes the role of tragedy in the production of visual material), it demonstrates the importance of the visual aspects of tragedy and the exchange of ideas between tragic performance and material culture.

Some scholars have contested this conventional understanding of the relationship between art and poetry, challenging the idea of vase-painting as simple illustration of text. The scholarship acknowledging the development of independent artistic traditions is fundamental to my approach to material culture. Thomas Carpenter's *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (1991) uses both literature and vase-painting as sources for reconstructing the mythology of Ancient Greece.[23] Carpenter generally relies on material culture as a source for reconstructing myth in the absence of literary sources, as in the case of the myth of Achilles and Troilus, but he says little about cases where the literary and artistic tradition diverge. Richard Buxton's *Imaginary Greece: The Contents of Mythology* (1994) challenges, sometimes aggressively, the traditional philological approach.[24] Buxton focuses instead on the role of oral tradition and the plurality of myth. He argues for a relationship between text and image that relies on common oral origins rather than a literary source. Jocelyn Small's *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text* (2003) also claims that vase-painting is based on a lost oral tradition, but takes a step beyond the arguments of her predecessors by arguing for completely independent traditions of pottery and

[22] Taplin, *Pots & Plays*; See also Taplin, "The Pictorial Record."
[23] Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece: A Handbook*.
[24] Buxton, *Imaginary Greece*.

literature with practically no interchange between the two.[25] Particularly useful for the specific religious aspect of my project is Verity Platt's *Facing the Gods : Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (2011), which treats the relationship between verbal and visual epiphany.[26] Luca Giuliani's *Image and Myth: A History of Pictorial Narration in Greek Art* (2013) argues for an evolving representation of narrative in visual culture that is rooted in its relation to poetic narrative.[27]

A similar motivation to rehabilitate the independence of the visual and oral traditions inspires Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell's work.[28] For example, his article "Helen and Menelaus in Greek Vase Painting" (2014)[29] provides a chronological reconstruction of developments in the iconography of the pair and argues for shifts motivated by developments in an unrecorded oral tradition and within the pottery-making community. This argument responds to Lilly Kahil's typologies in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* where she argues that the differences in iconographic representations of Helen and Menelaus are due to the fact that the pieces are based on different, now no longer extant, parts of the epic cycle. As Stansbury-O'Donnell points out, this desire to see the primacy of the literary model ignores the fact that the shifts in iconography rise and fall sharply in popularity in certain decades[30] and that these changes correspond to changes in iconography in other vase paintings. While Kahil's work in organizing and identifying the iconography of Helen and Menelaus was a vital step in

[25] Small, *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text*.
[26] Platt, *Facing the Gods*.
[27] Giuliani, *Image and Myth*.
[28] Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Greek Art*; Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Vase Painting, Gender, and Social Identity in Archaic Athens*; Stansbury-O'Donnell, *Looking at Greek Art*.
[29] Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting."
[30] Also, these periods of popularity are all a few centuries after the supposed composition of these epics.

understanding the iconography, the argument that these iconographic types must be illustrative of particular texts is indicative of the assumptions in the field and the instinct to look for answers to discrepancies in art through the poetic tradition. Although work like Stansbury-O'Donnell's has done much to defend the independence of artistic and literary tradition, I believe that this approach can be pushed further to show that the material visual tradition actually influenced the literary tradition. The tragedians were not working in a purely poetic space, disconnected from the kind of developments that happened in their visual environment.

On the side of tragedy, I draw from the work of several scholars who have recognized and worked on Euripides' interest in visuality and the relationship between tragedy and the city of Athens. Twentieth-century scholarship on the themes of vision, ekphrasis, and spectacle informs this part of my approach. The work of Jean-Paul Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet in their attention to tragedy as the product of the tension between mythology and the concerns of Athenian citizens forms a foundation for looking at tragedy as a reflection of the moment of its production.[31] Other scholars have brought these concerns into conversation with the visual aspects of tragedy. In this, the work of Froma Zeitlin is especially helpful, as it shows how Euripides' use of technical language from the artistic sphere demonstrates an increasing exchange between the theatrical and visual arts, as well as the tragedian's awareness of the role of visual representation in creating meaning for his audience.[32] These studies, insightful and influential as they are in recognizing Euripides' interest in the visual, tend to focus more on visuality as a literary trope rather than something drawing from the lived experience of the playwright and audience.

[31] Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.
[32] Zeitlin, "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama"; Zeitlin, "Art, Memory, and Kleos in Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis."

Performance studies and work on staging shed light on the question of how the plays were enacted before the original audience and are particularly vital for understanding the connection between the text as we have it and the original production. Oliver Taplin's *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Uses of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy* (1977) provides the basis for an approach for reconstructing some of the action of the ancient stage. While tragedy has come down to us as literature, to the ancient Athenians it was a medium of performance, consisting of music, movement, and visuality. As Taplin writes, "the fifth-century tragedian composed [plays] to be performed at the dramatic festivals; for him his play was not the written libretto but the work in performance."[33] While Taplin acknowledges that many visual aspects of tragic performances are beyond recovery (e.g. numbers of mute attendants and colors used in costume and stage space), he argues that significant action "must be given concentrated attention" in both time and speech.[34] Taplin followed up his seminal work on Aeschylus with *Greek Tragedy in Action* (1978) which reiterates his approach and expands his study to include discussion of the stagecraft of Sophocles and Euripides.[35] Rush Rehm's *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy* (2002) builds on performance theory and the work of Oliver Taplin. He challenges literary analysis of tragedy, focusing instead on reinterpreting tragedies as events that are products of a specific culture and moment in time.[36] Rehm's work emphasizes the action of the stage, noting the ways that tragedians could create characterization through the use of space, such as Clytemnestra's control of the threshold in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* or the isolation of the protagonist in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Staging also creates

[33] Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, 12.
[34] Taplin, 31.
[35] Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action*.
[36] Rehm, *The Play of Space: Spatial Transformation in Greek Tragedy*.

precedents that later authors may react to by recreating or parodying, creating a relationship between tragedies that is much more visual and performative than textual.[37] C.W. Marshall's work has further expanded on previous studies of performance and stagecraft. [38] Marshall's experience with modern theater contributes to his nuanced analysis of the practicalities and physicality of ancient performance, with particular attention to the effect of role doubling and masks, as well as other possibilities and limitation imposed by the stage.

A related strand of scholarship has focused on situating the performance of tragedy in the moment of its production. These arguments about the importance of the specific cultural moment are essential to my approach, although the foundational work on this aspect focuses on elements other than the relationship to material culture. Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* (1988) responds to the anthropological readings of tragedy by Vernant and Vidal-Naquet and to the Cambridge group's thesis of the "primal ritual" origin of tragedy.[39] Schechner argues that anthropological approaches force a reading of tragedy that separates it from its actual context. He focuses instead on the idea that ritual is one of many components (such as music, sport, and dance) that should be understood as having a horizontal rather than vertical relationship with tragedy.[40] While Schechner's work provides some insight into issues such as use of theatrical space, his comments on ancient tragedy are mostly reactionary. He concentrates on convincing his readers to examine theater as a product of its own time, rejecting the Aristotelian explanation

[37] Cf. Powers, *Athenian Tragedy in Performance*. Powers examines many of the historiographical and methodological issues of attempting to reconstruct the action of the ancient theater and the possible problems of such an approach.
[38] Marshall, "Literary Awareness in Euripides and His Audience"; Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions"; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*.
[39] Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.
[40] Schechner, *Performance Theory*.

of its development. Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne's *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (1999) expands on the history and value of performance theory and particularly develops the idea of Athens as a politically performative city.[41] This work follows from Goldhill's earlier scholarship examining the relationship between tragedy and Athenian democracy in the light of performance theory.[42]

This scholarship on the visual and performative aspects of tragedy has also benefitted greatly from recent attention to the physical materials of the ancient stage. Recent work on the role of masks, costuming and props in drama will inform my analysis. This includes work such as Stephen Halliwell's "The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask" (1993), C. W. Marshall's "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions" (1999), David Wiles' *Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy* (2007) and Peter Meineck's "The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask" (2011).[43] This work has examined the tragic convention of masking by looking outside of the text of tragedies, to archaeology, visual evidence, anthropology, psychology, and the physical limitations of materials and performance for a better understanding of the tragic mask that contradicts many earlier assumptions about the nature of the mask. The advances made by these scholars is fundamental to my arguments, not only for their work in determining what the tragic mask actually was, but what it meant to the audience.

Similar advancements in understanding the visual impact of the physical accoutrements of the ancient stage have been made by Colleen Chaston's *Tragic Props and Cognitive Function*

[41] Goldhill and Osborne, *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*.
[42] Goldhill and Osborne, *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture*.
[43] Halliwell, "The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask"; Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions"; Wiles, *Mask and Performance in Greek Tragedy*; Meineck, "The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask."

(2010) and Rosie Wyles' *Costume in Greek Tragedy* (2011).[44] Although different in their approach and emphasis, both of these books bring attention to the use of physical materials on the stage. These costumes and props had visual impact and physical materiality that influenced the audience's interpretation of the tragedy, beyond what can be recovered through reading of the text alone. New Historicism and New Materialism have also contributed to my understanding of the role of material context on the production of tragedy. Particularly useful for this approach is Melissa Mueller's *Objects as Actors: Props and the Poetics of Performance in Greek Tragedy* (2016) which focuses on the importance of objects in the staging and reception of tragedy and Mueller and Telò's *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy* (2018).[45]

Finally, as my project draws heavily on material culture, some analysis of the state of scholarship in this field is required. The evidence for reconstructing the place of tragedy within the Athenian visual milieu is limited. This obstacle is further complicated by difficulties in differentiating between artistic conceits and lived experience. For example, the gesture of supplication is common in both tragedy and art, but it is unclear to what extant this is a dramatic gesture and not one seen in daily life. While we know that the ancients lived surrounded by decoration in the domestic, public, and religious spheres, we have lost much of the rich visual culture of the ancient world, such as wall painting and bronze statuary. My project will focus on the question of what materials were available to the late fifth-century audience and what sorts of developments were happening in the visual field at the time. Olga Palagia's *Art in Athens during the Peloponnesian War* (2009) provides a starting point for looking at how art developed in this period and how the context of the Peloponnesian War shaped the artistic experience.[46]

[44] Chaston, *Tragic Props and Cognitive Function*; Wyles, *Costume in Greek Tragedy*.
[45] Mueller, *Objects as Actors*; Telò and Mueller, *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy*.
[46] Palagia, *Art in Athens during the Peloponnesian War*.

There are a number of scholars whose work on pottery is essential to my project. François Lissarrague has produced several seminal discussions of the topic including *Un Flot d'Images: une esthétique du banquet grec* (1987) and *Vases Grecs : les athéniens et leurs images* (1999).[47] Richard Neer's *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting* (2002)[48] and Guy Hedreen's work on sympotic ceramics, such as *Capturing Troy: the Narrative Functions of Landscape in Archaic and Early Classical Greek Art*, also provide context and analysis for understanding sympotic visual culture.[49] Tragedy shows a particularly interesting engagement with iconographic traditions on pottery, reflecting the relationship between tragedy and the symposium.[50] For example, in the second chapter, the reunion of Helen and Menelaus purposefully echoes representations of the couple in pursuit scenes.[51]

My project also draws on sculpture of the fifth century, particularly on the representation of divinities on fifth-century building projects. Several books and articles inform my use of the

[47] Lissarrague, *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet*; Lissarrague, *Vases grecs*.
[48] Neer, *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting*.
[49] Hedreen, *Capturing Troy*; Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen"; Hedreen, "'I Let Go My Force Just Touching Her Hair.'"
[50] Plato's *Symposium*, for example, is set at a symposium celebrating the tragic poet Agathon's victory at the Dionysia of 416 BCE.
[51] Stewart, "Rape?"; Sourvinou-Inwood, *"Reading" Greek Culture*; Connelly, "Narrative and Image in the Attic Vase Painting: Ajax and Kassandra at the Trojan Palladion"; Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting"; Stansbury-O'Donnell and Yatromanolakis, "The Structural Differentiation of Pursuit Scenes." In the fifth-century, there is a sharp rise in the popularity of pursuit scenes. Andrew Stewart's analysis divides this trend into three phases: 500-475 heroes pursue women, 475-450 gods pursue mortals, and 450-425 ephebes pursue women. n this final phase, many popular figures from existing artistic tradition were adapted to fit new interests. Several scholars have worked on the iconography and interpretation of these types of scenes. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has used a semiotic approach to interpretation, differentiating between aggressive and erotic pursuits. Joan Connelly has revealed the specific dynamics and history of the motif of the Ajax/Kassandra pursuit. Stansbury-O'Donnell has examined both the specifics of the Menelaus/Helen pursuit motif and the general trend in pursuit scenes on sympotic ware with a particular focus on the structure of the iconography and a diachronic analysis of how this motif develops.

Parthenon, including *The Parthenon and Its Sculptures* (2004), edited by Michael Cosmopoulos.[52] I also consider several other late fifth-century building projects that were recently completed or ongoing at the time of Euripides' tragedies, such as the Hephaisteion and the Erechtheion.[53] In this dissertation, I examine both popular iconographies and specific works of public sculpture that made a lasting impact on Athenians and could be referenced on the stage to bring up certain associations and meanings.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

I examine three plays of Euripides which are most widely-recognized for their interest in the visual tradition. I start in Chapter 1 with Euripides' *Ion* which, I argue, draws on the visual environment of Athens to create a connection between Ion, autochthony, Athena, and Athens. This visual connection legitimizes the unusual variation of the story presented in the tragedy by drawing on the authority of images of Athens' mythic history (particularly as monumentalized in the city's fifth-century building program). It also explains the role of Apollo as a key component in Athena's vision for her city's future and an answer to the inherent tensions in autochthony.

I begin my argument by addressing the question of Apollo's absence from the play, an issue that has long been an interpretive crux. Apollo's role is intrinsic to the plot, and yet he is not the one who appears in the play's final deus ex machina. Instead, it is Athena who arrives at the end of the play. While some modern readers find her entrance unexpected, I believe that the

[52] Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon.*; Cosmopoulos, *The Parthenon and Its Sculptures*; Schwab, "Celebrations of Victory: The Metopes of the Parthenon."
[53] Dinsmoor, "Observations on the Hephaisteion"; Harrison, "Alkamenes' Sculptures for the Hephaisteion"; Reber, "Das Hephaisteion in Athen. Ein Monument Für Die Demokratie."; Barringer, "A New Approach to the Hephaisteion: Heroic Models in the Athenian Agora"; Paton et al., *The Erechtheum*; Elderkin, "The Cults of the Erechtheion"; Boulter, "The Frieze of the Erechtheion"; Clairmont, "Euripides' Erechtheus and the Erechtheion."

visual aspects of the play are key to answering this apparent confusion. At the opening of the tragedy, the parodos recasts the action from Delphi to Athens by drawing on the visual environment of the city, particularly the ongoing building projects of the acropolis and agora with their focus upon the city's autochthonous ancestors. An examination of the visual tradition of these ancestors reveals the way that the autochthony is a fraught concept in the Athenian mind: one that both testifies to Athenians' power over Attica, but also incorporates negative aspects of earthborn violence and rebellion. The use of images of autochthony, particularly snakes and the Gorgon, build through the play into the culminating moment of the final scene. This enacts a transition from the negative, dangerous aspects of autochthony (e.g. Creusa's impulsive anger that leads to her attempt to poison her son) to its advantageous aspects (e.g. divine favor for Athens' future). Athena's appearance at the end of the tragedy provides resolution, which has been prepared for through these visual allusions, as well as through visual aspects of the performance itself. Apollo's role is revealed to be one that serves Athena's vision of the future of her city, bringing the moderating aspects of this anti-autochthonous god into the service of Athenian political identity. The return of Ion to Athens, and the incorporation of his Apollonian balance into the royal family, promises to end the disruptive aspects of autochthony. The audience themselves are incorporated into the final prophecy of the play as witness to the sweeping effect of Athena's vision.

In the second chapter, I examine the *Helen*, which plays off of the title character's prominent place in the visual tradition through an exploration of the relationship between her appearance and its meaning, focusing on the way that Helen's beauty instigates repeating cycles of abduction and revenge. This is demonstrated in the visual tradition, in which Helen was a popular character throughout the fifth century. She appears in a wide variety of scenes, but these

generally fall into two types. The larger and more enduring category consists of images of her abductions by Theseus, Paris, and Menelaus. Another category of scenes, which appears late in the fifth century, is constituted by images that emphasize her divinity or heroization and her connection to Attic cults, particularly that of Nemesis at Rhamnous.[54]

The anchor of her identity at the beginning of the tragedy is not her connection to a specific geography, relationship, or behavior, but to her appearance and the reaction that it invites. At the same time, the *eidolon* is introduced. To the audience, the *eidolon* is clearly a fiction. They are never confronted by its reality and asked to question Helen's authority about her identity. The characters of Teucer and Menelaus, however, take the *eidolon* to be the real Helen. Their misrecognition establishes the failure of Helen's exemplary beauty to produce a stable future. Instead her status as perpetual *parthenos* leaves her in a cycle of ongoing pursuit and violent confrontation. The reunion of Helen and Menelaus emphasizes this ironic contrast in the audience's understanding versus that of the characters. It also brings into question the audience's ability to interpret images. Without any of Helen's other attributes of parentage, geography, or character to root the character on stage in the familiar mythological traditions, images of Helen become the final authority. Her beauty, and the response it elicits, is essential to identifying Helen, but the audience is shown that their reading of the image is wrong in several ways.[55] At the end of the play, Helen changes her appearance, abandoning her signature beauty

[54] This includes images of her birth from an egg and scenes with her brothers, the Dioscuri. The distinction between the two types is not necessarily cut and dried. Scenes with her brothers for example, often feature similar iconography to scenes of abduction, even though the narrative context is different. Similarly, images of Helen nude are both tied to the scenes of abduction by their erotic elements, but are also connected to Helen's divinity. As I argue in the second chapter, Helen's relationship to Nemesis in Attic cult connects her desirability with cyclical revenge.

[55] First, Menelaus does pursue Helen, but the motivations and context of the pursuit have been misunderstood. Second, Aphrodite is not enacting their reconciliation, but opposing it, while

for the marred appearance of a widow. By enacting the visual transformation that divorces her from the iconographic tradition, Helen's seemingly perpetual *parthenos* status does, in fact, come to an end, if perhaps only temporarily. While modern critics have found the resolution of Euripides' *Helen* confusingly lacking in catastrophe, the play itself presents a world where not only the assumptions of truth and history and language are undermined,[56] but even the simple practice of autopsy. The familiar images of the Greek world's most famous and most tragic war suddenly no longer mean what they were thought to.

The third chapter covers the *Bacchae* and explores themes of truth and deception in appearance. One of the most notable features of this tragedy is the role of Dionysus onstage as the gentle stranger – an appearance that aligns this tragedy with a recent shift in the god's iconography. Euripides draws from these images to blur the boundary between the characters and the audience in a vivid illustration of the manipulative powers of the god of perception. The iconography of Dionysus underwent a drastic shift in the last quarter of the fifth century as images of a younger, beardless Dionysus appear. In the period before Euripides' production, these two iconographies of the younger and older Dionysus coexist. The type becomes increasingly prevalent in pottery, but does not seem to completely overtake the iconography of the mature Dionysus until the beginning of the fourth century, around the time that images of the younger Dionysus begins to appear in free standing sculpture.

Euripides' *Bacchae* responds to and participates in this shift in Dionysus' iconography, staging a disguised Dionysus, who is nevertheless familiar to the audience as this new younger

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Hera, the goddess of marriage who is not in the visual tradition an ally of Helen's, is the one who supports the reconciliation.

[56] Pippin, "Euripides' 'Helen'"; Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen." While Pippin (Burnett) and Segal see questions of the validity of truth and reality at the core of the tragedy, they mostly focus on these aspects as rhetorical tropes in the language of the play.

type. Even while this appearance is explicitly described within the play as a disguise, it is to the audience a true appearance of the god in accordance with contemporary iconography. Dionysus' own ambiguous language in the play emphasizes this duality. The complexity of the relationship between representation and truth is enacted in the cross-dressing scene, when Dionysus, disguised as his own priest, disguises Pentheus as a maenad. The audience is invited to understand the personages at three levels simultaneously: through the disguises of the Dionysian priest and the maenad, the characters of Dionysus and Pentheus, and two recognizable actors from their own community. The metatheatrical gestures of the scene draw attention to this slippage between levels of understanding. This slippage is particularly emphasized through Pentheus' delusion, which grants him a glance into the true nature of the god. Finally, in the arrival of the character of Agave, Euripides' thematizes the act of interpreting the images onstage by constructing the character of Agave as a visual parallel to the last appearance of Pentheus. The continuity between the two characters, moreover, is emphasized by the fact that they are embodied by the same actor, in nearly the same costume, and posing in similar ways. However, what appears true in the most superficial visual way is contradicted by the narrative. The same appearance is reinterpreted to represent two different characters.

In the development of this theme of false autopsy and true disguise, Euripides enacts onstage a representation of the shifting nature of divinity that both draws on the iconographic tradition and gestures at how the transformative nature of performance can capture the shifting contradiction of divine nature in a way that a material image cannot.

# Athena's Acropolis and the *Ion*

Euripides' *Ion* reflects the tragedian's interest in thinking about what visual arts do to create meaning. The plot focuses on a variant in the genealogy of early Athenian kingship, reimagining Ion, the ancestor of the Ionian people, as the son of the god Apollo rather than the human king Xuthus. The tragedy is saturated with references to the visual arts. This unusually emphatic focus on imagery has long drawn disparagement and confusion from critics of the play. While the thematic importance of the imagery has been recognized, there has been little made of the fact that the descriptive passages are familiar from the visual milieu. These descriptions particularly draw on the images of the city's autochthonous ancestors and on the contemporaneous buildings projects that monumentalize the city's early history.

The origins of the Athenian people are intimately tied to the physical geography of the city. Euripides uses the imagery familiar from the visual milieu of the city in two ways. First, he draws on these images to introduce the conflict in autochthony. The autochthon has an inviolable tie to the land, making him an ideal and undefeatable defender. This aspect is preserved in the myths of Athens withstanding early invasions, such as that of the Amazons. On the other hand, the autochthon belongs to a time before civilization. Autochthons have a habit of running up against the gods and succession is often unstable.[1] Again, this is a characteristic that is shared by Athens' ancestors, like Erechtheus, whose conflict with Poseidon leads to his death and the deaths of the Erechtheids, which leaves Creusa as the *epikleros* of her father's kingdom. Early in the play, Euripides introduces the imagery of autochthony, overlaying Delphi and Athens to vividly present the conflicts inherent in this claim.

[1] Cf. Loraux, *The Children of Athena*, 184ff.

The innovation in myth that he proposes – the change in Ion's father – presents a solution to the conflict of autochthony. Apollo is the consummate anti-autochthon, a second-generation god who cannot be born on the earth, who displaces Gaia from Delphi, and defeats Python. Apollo's influence moderates the dangers of autochthony and stabilizes royal succession. Yet despite the importance of Apollo's role in stabilizing the Athenian royal family, it is Athena who appears at the end of the play. Her appearance in the final scene builds off of the images associated with autochthony that saturate the play. In the end, the future of Athens and the reconciliation of autochthony falls under her aegis. While the language of the play occasionally draws attention to the audience's potential resistance to the unfamiliar innovation of Ion' new lineage, the imagery and references to imagery encourage the audience to build up a set of associations that serve to link together Ion, Creusa, Athena, and Athens, so that, even though the *ex machina* appearance of Athena at the end of the play is unexpected, the audience finds the resolution to be nonetheless a satisfying and natural solution to the conflicts that have been raised.

## BACKGROUND

The *Ion*, thought to be written between 414 and 412 BCE,[2] comes to us as one of the so-called "alphabetic plays," preserved more through accident than the careful selection and replication that characterizes tragedies such as the *Bacchae*. The resulting lack of scholia or a

[2] Cropp and Fick, *Resolutions and Chronology in Euripides*, 43:61; Zacharia, *Converging Truths*, 242:3–7; Martin, "On the Date of Euripides' Ion." For metrical reasons (particularly the frequency of resolved iambic feet) the *Ion* is dated closest to the *Troades* (415 BCE), usually between 415 and 412. Zacharia argues for a date in 412 based on verbal parallels to the *Helen* and references to the political situation, especially the treatment of the topic of Ionian heritage. Martin, taking line 30 in Hermes' prologue as a reference to the mutilation of the herms, argues for a date of 412 or later.

robust manuscript tradition has led to difficulty in interpreting and understanding the tragedy in its original context. For example, the *Ion*, along with two of its fellow alphabetic plays, the *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and the *Helen*, has often been categorized as a romantic or tragi-comic play, following the misleading guide of Aristotle's descriptive definition of the best plots in tragedy.[3]

The tragedy tells the story of the reunion of Ion, a temple slave in Delphi, and his mother, Creusa. The play opens with Hermes who explains that Apollo raped Creusa, the daughter of king Erechtheus of Athens, and that Hermes himself brought the child to Delphi where the boy was raised as a temple slave and foster son to the priestess. Hermes announces that now Apollo plans to have Creusa's new husband, Xuthus, adopt Ion as his son, restoring the boy to his maternal home where he and Creusa will learn the truth about their relationship. At first, the plot seems to follow the divine plan. Ion is introduced as a pious, if a bit naïve, servant to the god. He meets his mother who refers cryptically to her history with Apollo. Xuthus arrives to receive the god's oracle where he is told that his heir will be the first person that he encounters upon leaving the oracle. When he exits the temple, he embraces Ion as his son, who after some confusion, accepts the oracle as truth, though he wishes to know about his mother's identity and is reluctant to come to Athens.

The second half of the play takes a turn away from the plot expounded in Hermes' prologue. Creusa is devastated to learn that her husband intends to announce his paternity of Ion and legitimize the foundling who is believed to be his son. She sings to the Old Man, her childhood servant who has accompanied her to Delphi, and to the chorus, confessing her history with the god. She gains the encouragement and complicity of the Old Man and the chorus who

[3] Also complicated by the modern genre of tragedy meaning a play with an unhappy ending.

share in her anger and who also wish to protect their homeland, Athens, which Xuthus rules through marriage to the brotherless Creusa. She plots to poison Ion, but the plan goes wrong and Ion discovers the truth. He comes to kill Creusa, but Apollo sends the oracle's priestess to intervene, producing the basket in which she found the infant and the tokens that will help him identify his mother. Creusa, recognizing the tokens, manages to convince Ion that she is his mother, but Ion remains doubtful of her claims about his paternity. Athena appears at the end of the tragedy to assure the characters of its truth and to foretell the future of Ion and Creusa's lineages.

The issue of innovation in the plot of the *Ion* has compounded the question of understanding how the tragedy would have been received by its original audience. The variation of the genealogy presented in this tragedy – that Apollo and not Xuthus is father to Ion – is unattested by any earlier sources.[4] The more prevalent tradition is even explained within Euripides' new version, when Athena in the final scene tells Creusa and Ion not to tell Xuthus the truth about Ion's parentage and to let him continue in the belief that Ion is his son (1601-1603). This incorporation of the alternative also points to the innovative nature of this version of the story as it seeks to explain why this "truth" is unfamiliar to the audience. Whether this version had any previous attestations or not, it serves a particularly clear purpose in light of the political situation in late fifth-century Athens. This alternate genealogy gives the Athenians preeminence as the earliest autochthonous group. The Ionians are direct descendants of an Athenian princess and the god Apollo while the Dorians stem from a lesser branch on the same

[4]Cf. Lefkowitz, *Euripides and the Gods*, 105, 228 n. 9. Lefkowitz provides bibliography and discussion of earlier sources of Ion's lineage.

family tree, children of the princess and her bumbling, foreign husband.[5] Not only does the alternative genealogy emphasize the Athenians' prominence, but also gives the Athenians a closer genealogical tie with Apollo than the Dorians, despite the god's assumed preference for the people of the Peloponnese.[6]

Euripides' choice to manipulate the conventional genealogy of the Hellenes' ethnic ancestors thus emphasizes Athenian autochthony, replacing the outsider king Xuthus' paternity with divine paternity and giving the Athenians a genealogical tie to Apollo, traditionally a god with stronger Doric associations.[7] It also gives the Athenians a kind of parental relationship to the Peloponnesians, since in Athena's prophecy that closes the tragedy, Creusa will now be mother to Dorus and the ancestress of the Dorian people (1589-1591):

> Ξούθῳ δὲ καὶ σοὶ γίγνεται κοινὸν γένος,
> Δῶρος μέν, ἔνθεν Δωρὶς ὑμνηθήσεται
> πόλις κατ᾽ αἶαν Πελοπίαν…
>
> And there will be children born to you and Xuthus: one is Dorus, from whom the Dorian city will be praised through the land of Pelops…

The language of the prophecy is redundant in its emphasis, hammering on the point that Creusa will be mother to Dorus, who in turn is ancestor to the Dorian people and from whom comes the

[5] Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 56. As Jonathan Hall points out, "Both in the substitution of Doros for Ion as Xouthos' son, as well as in the attribution of a divine father to Ion but a mortal one to Doros, it is hard not to see a conscious act of propaganda which reflects the antagonistic relationship between Athens and Sparta in the closing stages of the Peloponnesian War."

[6] Cf. Thucydides 1.118 At the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the Spartans seek council from the oracle of Delphi which tells them that they will win and that they have the god's support.

[7] Burkert, *Apellai und Apollon*; Camp, *The Archaeology of Athens*; Graf, *Apollo*. The cult of Apollo Patroos in the agora seems to be associated with the introduction of boys in at least one phratry in the fourth century. There is no evidence of the cult of Apollo Hypoakrios on the long cliffs of the acropolis until the Roman period.

praise due to the region and its cities. The mention of the alternative ancestor of the people of the Peloponnese, Pelops himself, stands in contrast to their more noble ancestor, Dorus.

The way that Euripides presents an alternative genealogy of Ion strengthens and emphasizes the power of Athens in diverse ways.[8] Not only does this new parentage weaken the role of Apollo in the ethnic identity of the Dorians and give the god a closer tie to the Athenians, but it also promotes the importance of Athena above Apollo, by giving the role of the solver of conflicts and arbiter of justice to Athena instead. This elevation of Athena above Apollo plays out in the body of the tragedy in a way that entwines the poetic and the visual aspects. Apollo's absence becomes conspicuous while the presence of Athena and the symbols of her power fill the gaps.

## VISUALIZING THE DIVINE: PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

As discussed above, one of the great interpretive cruxes of the play is the place of Apollo and the question of what role the absent god plays. [9] Several scholars have found the absent Apollo to be of central importance in the tragedy.[10] Anne Burnett, for example, writes that Apollo's divinity is the central point of the play. She deals with his conspicuous absence by

[8] Vickers, "Politics and Challenge." Ion's anachronistic comments on Athens, which seem more in line with comments about the fifth-century democracy than the kingship of the distant past, has drawn many scholars to make arguments about the *Ion* as a commentary on contemporaneous politics. Vickers, for example, dates the play to 409 BCE and argues that it was performed to strengthen the case for Alcibiades' return from exile.
[9] Burnett, "Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' 'Ion'"; Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy*; Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived*.
[10] Thornburn, "Apollo's Comedy and the Ending of Euripides' 'Ion'"; Zacharia, *Converging Truths*, 242:103–49; Lefkowitz, *Euripides and the Gods*, 99–127. Zacharia argues for the centrality of Apollo, cf 106 n.4 for further bibliography on the centrality of Apollo in this tragedy. Lefkowitz also sees Apollo's role as central in this tragedy and reads the role of Ion in the Apollo alongside his role in other tragedies as part of a greater Euripidean approach to the role of the gods.

arguing that it only emphasizes his mercy, since his absence prevents Creusa (and Ion) from blaspheming him.[11] Others have argued for the opposite extreme, believing that Apollo's absence and the failure of the plot presented in Hermes' prologue reveals a cynical critique of Athenian theology.[12] However, both of these readings fail to see the way that Euripides creates a visual argument for the central role of Athena over the course of the play, relegating Apollo's role to supporting Athena's vision for the future of Athens. While Hermes' prologue introduces the expectation that Apollo is the driving force in the plot and that he will be the one to set right the conflicts of the tragedy, the references to imagery and the visuals presented on the stage constantly build up the underlying presence of Athena. The mapping of the acropolis of Athens onto the Delphic setting strengthens and encourages this reading, as Apollo's presence in the imagery of the acropolis emphasizes his subordinate role as supporter of Zeus and Athena rather than as deity of central importance. By the end of the play, Athena's role as adoptive mother and patroness of the Athenian people is established as the basis for the intercession of the goddess in the final scene.

From the beginning of the tragedy, Apollo's absence is clearly meant to be felt and not easily dismissed.[13] Ion's first interaction with Creusa establishes the connection between the young man and his father. When the queen first comes onstage, her first response is to cry,

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[11] Burnett, "Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' 'Ion'"; Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived*, 127–28. Burnett (1962) writes that "the confines of a mortal situation cannot contain such a god, nor could a *machina* propel him; Apollo rules the *Ion*, but he remains unseen." Her argument (also repeated less strongly in *Catastrophe Survived*) places Apollo's benefaction and mercy at the center of the play and relies on reading Creusa as lying, manipulating, and over-emotional. Although she acknowledges the relevance of Athena in connecting Ion to his new life in Athens, she reads the goddess' primary function as analogous to Hermes in serving as message-bearer for Apollo.

[12] Norwood, *Greek Tragedy*, 238–39.

[13] Zacharia, *Converging Truths,* 242:103–49. Zacharia sees Apollo as "the absent centre of the *Ion*."

prompting the concerned Ion to question her extreme reaction. She tries to obfuscate her motivations, telling the concerned Ion that it is simply the sight of Apollo's temple that has stirred an old memory (249-250):

> ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἰδοῦσα τούσδ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος δόμους
> μνήμην παλαιὰν ἀνεμετρησάμην τινά:
>
> Seeing this house of Apollo, I remembered an ancient memory.

The audience has already heard from Hermes' prologue Creusa's history with the god. Creusa's drastic reaction though, may not just be to the temple, which is not familiar, after all, to the newcomer Creusa. Instead the audience sees Creusa reacting to the memory of Apollo and to Ion, who first appears onstage bearing his father's attributes, the laurel branch and the bow (though for him, they serve the much more pedestrian purpose of cleaning and maintaining the temple) and wears a wreath, presumably also of laurel, that marks his role in the temple and his sacrosanctity while performing these duties (522). [14] When Ion prompts Creusa to say more, she responds with the idiomatic phrase, μεθῆκα τόξα ("I have said my piece" literally, "I have shot my bow" 256).[15] Inasmuch as Creusa is standing before the archer god's temple and looking at a man carrying the god's attributes, it is not just the dead idiom that it might be in another situation.[16] It is not hard for the audience to see that it is not simply the temple – which Creusa

[14] Hoffer, "Violence, Culture, and the Workings of Ideology in Euripides' 'Ion,'" 296.
[15] The language of archery is a pervasive metaphor in tragedy for speech, cf. A. Ag. 628, but in the context of this tragedy the metaphor seems to be more potent than simple idiom. Later in the play, Creusa again uses the metaphor when she recognizes Ion and seeks to reconcile with him (1411).
[16] Hoffer, "Violence, Culture, and the Workings of Ideology in Euripides' 'Ion,'" 305–6. Hoffer points out another potential meaning in the way that Creusa is deliberately represented as a parallel to Apollo, using the same riddling obfuscations as Apollo, i.e. telling the story of Ion's mother as that of her "friend" in the same way that Apollo identifies Xuthus as Ion's "father."

has never actually seen before – that stirs the memory, but her own son, who is the image of his father.[17]

Euripides further builds up the expectation of Apollo's presence in several ways – in the imagery, the narrative, and the structure of the tragedy. The conspicuousness of his absence is reiterated by the way that his presence is missing from the descriptions of the visual references in the tragedy. First, in the chorus' parodos they describe the frieze of the Gigantomachy that they see on the temple's walls (205-218), naming in turn, Athena battling Enceladus, Zeus burning Mimas with his thunderbolt, and Dionysus killing another Giant with his thyrsus. Neither the description of the temple frieze, nor the previous portion of the chorus' parodos in which they react to images of Heracles and Bellerophon, shows any indication of the figure of Apollo. Whether or not the audience was familiar with the reality of the sculptural program at the temple of Delphi, the sanctuary's patron god would surely have been expected in a description of the imagery there.[18]

This conspicuous absence is reiterated in the description of the tent which Ion sets up to celebrate his adoption by Xuthus. Again, Apollo is absent. It is not an overlooked absence either, for there are elements in the description that bring up possible connections to the god which are then not delivered. For example, the overhead tapestry of the heavens is a gift from Heracles (1144-1145), who came to Delphi for an oracle and, when denied, contested Apollo for the

[17] Estrin, "Memory Incarnate: Material Objects and Private Visions in Classical Athens, from Euripides' Ion to the Gravesite." Estrin convincingly argues that what is it at stake in this moment of the tragedy is the connection between material objects and memory. While I agree with this reading, I think that the objects of Ion's costume are playing as much of a role as the imagined temple, particularly for the audience's experience of the scene.

[18] Gigantomachy images in Athens, which will be discussed later, also usually show this god prominently, making his absence even more unusual.

tripod. [19] This is the scene depicted on the east pediment of the Siphnian treasury at Delphi (constructed ca. 525 BCE), which shows Apollo and Heracles pulling on opposite ends of the Delphic tripod while Zeus stands between them. This theme and its prominent connection to the imagery at Delphi may also be the basis for the chorus' reference to Heracles in the parodos. This oblique reference to Apollo only serves to make the fact that he is not described in the imagery of the tapestries more obvious.

Moreover, throughout the play, Euripides dwells with great irony on the presence and absence of Ion's parents. Ion first introduces himself as an orphan, ἀμήτωρ ἀπάτωρ (109), who serves devotedly and enthusiastically at the shrine of the god who nourished him in his parents' place. With an irony that is painfully obvious to the audience, Ion sings (136-140):

> Φοῖβός μοι γενέτωρ πατήρ:
> τὸν βόσκοντα γὰρ εὐλογῶ,
> τὸ δ᾽ ὠφέλιμον ἐμοὶ πατέρος
> ὄνομα λέγω
> Φοίβου τοῦ κατὰ ναόν.
>
> Phoebus is my father and begetter, for I praise the one who fed me and I call by the name 'father' the one who helped me, Phoebus ruler of this temple.

Ion is cheerfully ignorant that the master who he praises for taking him in when he was abandoned is the same father who abandoned him in the first place.

This confusion of parental presence and absence comes to a head in Ion and Creusa's confrontation outside the temple after Creusa attempts to poison her son. Ion gloats that he has been fortunate to catch Creusa before coming to Athens (1261-1281), since she would certainly have had the upper hand if he were alone in a foreign city rather than amongst friends and allies

[19] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 145; Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis*, 242. In the *Ion*, the tapestry is specifically said to be spoils from the Amazons (1145). The Amazons themselves, of course, also feature on the Parthenon's west metopes and the shield of Athena Parthenos. As Castriota points out, they stand in opposition to autochthony in their battle against the Athenians.

in the city he has lived for his whole life. The speech changes direction when Ion's thoughts turn to his mother (1275-1278):

> ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε βωμὸς οὔτ᾽ Ἀπόλλωνος δόμος
> σώσει σ᾽: ὁ δ᾽ οἶκτος ὁ σὸς ἐμοὶ κρείσσων πάρα
> καὶ μητρὶ τὴμῇ: καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὸ σῶμά μοι
> ἄπεστιν αὐτῆς, τοὔνομ᾽ οὐκ ἄπεστί πω.
>
> But neither the altar nor Apollo's house will save you: the pity (which I might have felt for you) is greater for myself and my mother: for while her body is absent, the name is not yet absent.

This passage is described by the commentator Owen as "a rather clumsy attempt to make play with the tragic irony."[20] Euripides is not subtle in drawing attention to his theme. Thinking of the danger that he escaped in discovering the hostility of his stepmother (μητρυιὰ) early on leads Ion naturally back to thoughts of the mother who he has never met, leading him to the heavy-handed irony as he refuses to pity his stepmother Creusa in favor of the pity owed to his natural mother, who also happens to be Creusa.

But the heavy-handedness of this statement draws attention to the other half of the equation – Ion's father. Ion believes that he has found his father's identity, but he and Xuthus have misunderstood the oracle. They do not realize which parent is absent. While Ion is eventually convinced of Creusa's maternity, he remains doubtful about Apollo's role. He tries to convince his mother to confess to an affair that she ascribed to the god (1516-1527). While the first point of irreconcilable disagreement is solved by the appearance of the priestess and the tokens that Creusa left with her infant, there are no tokens to prove Apollo's role.[21] The expectation of Apollo's presence is also built into the structure of the play. The presence of

[20] Owen, *Ion,* 155–56 n. 1276.
[21] Except perhaps if Ion is himself a token, both in his upbringing in his father's house and in his appearance, with laurel wreath and bow, that makes him a doublet for the god. A similar suggestion of the body as token appears also in the *Helen.*

divine characters in the prologue sets up an expectation that there will also be a divine character in the epilogue.[22] Twice in the finale of the play, Euripides has the conflict between Creusa and Ion reach a point where the characters are unable to find a resolution without outside intervention. The first comes at the moment after Creusa has taken refuge at the altar and Ion attempts to kill her (1282-1319). The confrontation is a crowning moment of tragic irony. The audience knows that Creusa would never have tried to kill Ion if she knew he were her son and that Ion, who is desperate to find his mother, would never hurt her if he knew who she was. Ion, whose earlier appearances have emphasized his naïve piety,[23] is now driven to commit two of the most sacrilegious crimes possible in one blow – the violation of a suppliant's claim to sanctuary and the murder of his mother. The irreconcilable actions of the two characters, coupled with their inability to comprehend the truth, requires an outsider's intervention. The narrative demands align perfectly with the structural possibilities of the ancient theater and the audience is prepared for the arrival of the third actor.[24]

The divine intervention is first delayed by the intercession of the priestess, sent by Apollo with the tokens that she found with the infant Ion.[25] This is enough to convince Creusa of Ion's identity and, eventually, to convince Ion to realize that Creusa is his mother. However, Ion's doubt over his paternity remains. No mortal character has the necessary knowledge or authority to intervene and the audience is prepared for the divine intercession.[26]

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[22] Dunn, *Tragedy's End*, 105; Mastronarde, *The Art of Euripides*, 153.
[23] Hoffer, "Violence, Culture, and the Workings of Ideology in Euripides' 'Ion,'" 289.
[24] Pickard-Cambridge, Gould, and Lewis, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 146. Pickard-Cambridge argues that the third actor would have played the roles of Xuthus, the priestess, and Athena, and may have also played Hermes (who may have instead been played by the second actor who also plays Creusa).
[25] Halleran, *Stagecraft in Euripides*, 36–37.
[26] Halleran, 40; Lefkowitz, *Euripides and the Gods*, 104–5.

Apollo is the obvious choice. He is the one who has led Creusa to Delphi to reunite her with their son and it is his power of prophecy that guarantees the correct outcome (57-81). It is his acknowledgement of paternity that Ion seeks and Ion, in fact, intends to get an answer from him directly by consulting the oracle. Ion has, after all, spent his whole life in service at his father's temple, the place where the god is present, where he "chants to mortals always prophesying the things that are and will be" (6-7 Φοῖβος ὑμνῳδεῖ βροτοῖς / τά τ᾽ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα θεσπίζων ἀεί.).

When Ion's approach to the temple is stopped by the arrival of a god, his response builds upon the expectation that Apollo will be the one to intercede. Ion's lines announcing the appearance of the god purposefully play upon this prospect (1549-1552):

> ἔα: τίς οἴκων θυοδόκων ὑπερτελὴς
> ἀντήλιον πρόσωπον ἐκφαίνει θεῶν;
> φεύγωμεν, ὦ τεκοῦσα, μὴ τὰ δαιμόνων
> ὁρῶμεν — εἰ μὴ καιρός ἐσθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ὁρᾶν.
>
> Oh! What god, appearing above the house full of incense, reveals a face reflecting the light of the sun? Let us flee, mother, lest we see the gods – if it is not the right opportunity for us to see them.

The reference to the light of the sun (ἀντήλιον) brings Apollo to mind, but it is Athena who appears, sent by Apollo who, she reports, does not want to be blamed (1553-1559).[27]

To modern readers of the text, the conspicuous absence of Apollo and the unexpected presence of Athena is unsettling. This final resolution, however, is prepared for in the tragedy by the constant evocation of the visual environment of Athens and by incorporating the acropolis and images of Athens' autochthonous history into the play. While Apollo is certainly an important god throughout Greece and particularly in the Peloponnese, he was secondary to Athena in the city of Athens. Euripides has clearly built up the expectation that Apollo is the

[27] Lefkowitz, *Euripides and the Gods*, 104–5.

obvious choice for the final intercession, but the visual elements and references have prepared the audience for an alternative. While Apollo slowly fades away in the visual associations built up over the course of the tragedy, references to Athena increase, particularly emphasizing her role as patron, protector, and foster mother which assures that although her appearance in the final scene is not expected, it presents a satisfying solution for the audience. In this sense, the revelation of Athena not only replaces the non-Athenian god with the Athenian one, but also replaces narrative logic with visual argument: understanding is shown not to come through stories – Ion's story will continue to be false for generations to come, after all – but through the revelation of objects (the recognition tokens) and epiphany, as well as through art.

## The Athenian Acropolis in Delphi

The extended ekphrasis of the parodos (184-218) of the *Ion* introduces the role that images from the contemporaneous Athenian visual environment play in shaping the tragedy. The parodos evokes the visual environs of Athens despite the ostensible setting in Delphi. [28] The description of Delphi reminds the audience of the images in the city around them, relying on the meaning and authority of these images as well as the web of associations that they invoke. Several key themes in the *Ion* are presented here that draw from themes already implicit in these images, including the role of Athena as patron of heroes and the tensions contained in Athens' earthborn ancestry. [29] Through references to familiar imagery of Athenian sacred spaces, the parodos also prepares for the role that Athena will perform in the end of the play.

[28] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 278–84. Stieber also discusses the relationship between Delphi and the acropolis, though she focuses more on parallels to the pre-Periclean acropolis. While her argument astutely draws out the various ways that Euripides engages with technical crafts, it does not address why Euripides uses this language.

[29] For discussion on the use of ekphrasis in the Ion to build on themes of autochthony and violence cf. Mastronarde, "Iconography and Imagery in Euripides' 'Ion'"; Rosivach, "Earthborns

The ekphrasis in the parodos is one of the most frequently cited and discussed descriptions of a work of art in Greek literature.[30] When the chorus first arrives onstage, they are amazed to see familiar images in Delphi (184-189):

> οὐκ ἐν ταῖς ζαθέαις Ἀθά-
> ναις εὐκίονες ἦσαν αὐ-
> λαὶ θεῶν μόνον, οὐδ᾽ ἀγυι-
> άτιδες θεραπεῖαι:
> ἀλλὰ καὶ παρὰ Λοξίᾳ
> τῷ Λατοῦς διδύμων προσώ-
> πων καλλιβλέφαρον φῶς.
>
> Not only in sacred Athens are there beautiful-pillared courts of the gods and worship of Apollo Agyieus, but also in the house of Loxias, son of Leto, a beautifully-shaded light of twinned faces.[31]

Does the audience see what the chorus does? The question of scene-painting in ancient Athenian drama has been the topic of long debate. Aristotle alleges that Sophocles was the first to introduce scene-painting, but the date of this innovation, the truth of the statement, and the extent of the practice is all up for debate. Nicolaos Hourmouziades' *Production and Imagination in Euripides* provides an analysis of the evidence for the possibilities of staging Euripidean tragedies and scene-painting. Commenting specifically on the possibility of the ekphrasis of this parodos as scene-painting, he concludes convincingly that "nothing of what was referred to in their description was seen by the audience."[32]

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and Olympians"; Goff, "Euripides' Ion 1132–1165: The Tent"; Zeitlin, "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama."

[30] Miller, *Daedalus and Thespis*, 53–58; Owen, *Ion*, 82–83; Zeitlin, "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama"; Collard, *Ion*, 177–85; Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 284–302.

[31] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 292. I follow Stieber's translation of 188-189; she reads the somewhat obscure language of διδύμων προσώ-/πων καλλιβλέφαρον φῶς as a reference to the double pediments of a Greek temple, shaded from the sun with overhanging cornices.

[32] Hourmouziades, *Production and Imagination in Euripides*, 56.

The question of what the chorus is meant to be looking at in the setting at Delphi is likewise controversial. The Gigantomachy was, in fact, carved on the western pediment of the archaic temple and the scenes of Heracles and Bellerophon are perhaps images from the western metopes (fig. 1 and 2).[33] However, the chorus must be approaching the entrance at the eastern side where the archaic temple displayed Apollo coming to Delphi mounted on a chariot on the

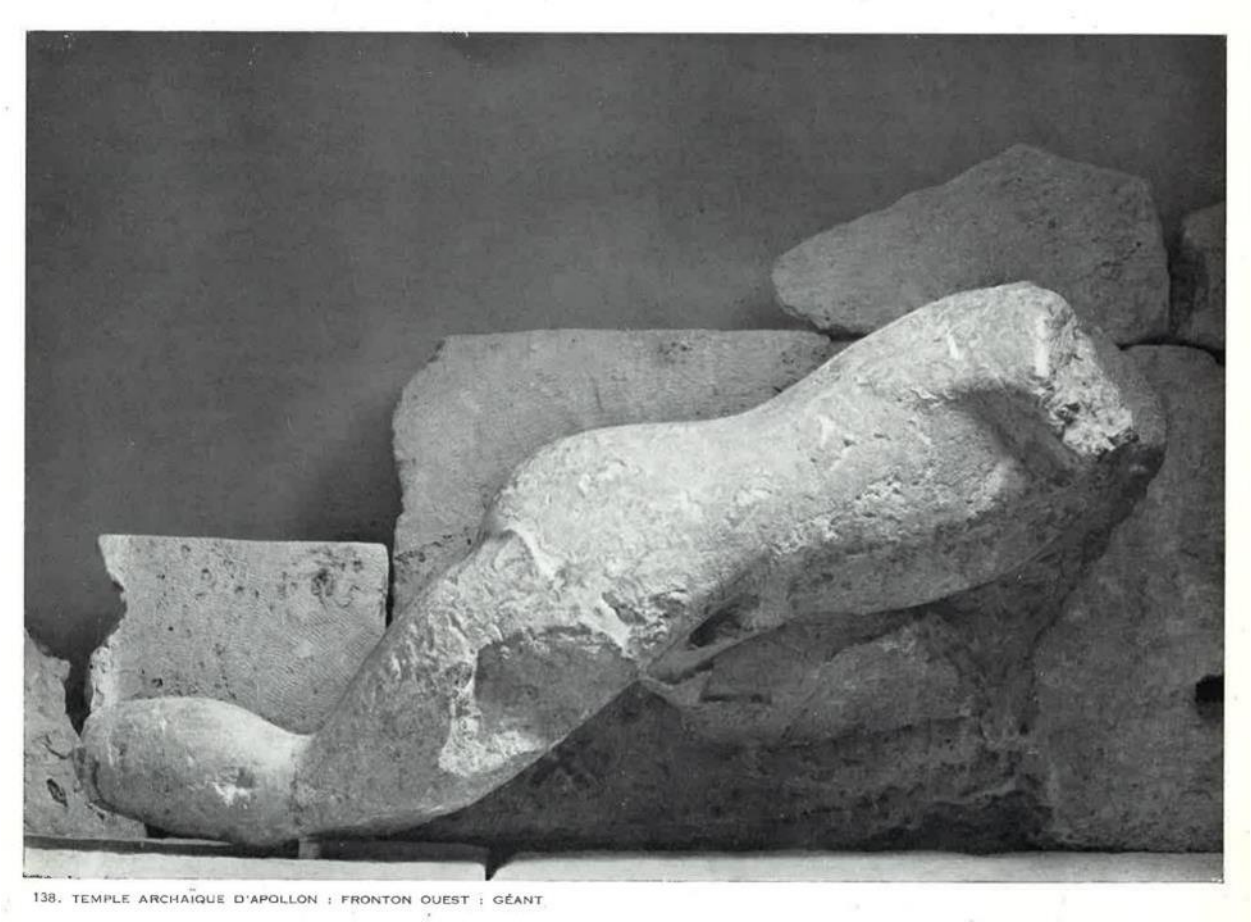


Figure 1 Relief from the West pediment of the Archaic ("Alcmaeonid") temple at Delphi. Limestone, 513-500 BCE. Perhaps depicting a Giant. Image from La Coste-Messelière and Miré, Delphes.

[33] Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture*, 51; Zeitlin, "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama," 148–49 n.28. Zeitlin finds no evidence to suggest that these images of Bellerophon and Heracles were on the metopes in Delphi.

Figure 2 Relief from the West pediment of the Archaic ("Alcmaeonid") temple at Delphi. Limestone, 513-500 BCE. Identified as Athena due to the protruding mass of stone above the himation, believed to be the aegis and attachment holes likely for metal snakes. Image from La Coste-Messelière and Miré, Delphes.

Figure 3 Relief from the East pediment of the Archaic ("Alcmaeonid") temple at Delphi. Marble, 513-500 BCE. Identified as the arrival of Apollo in Delphi.

pediment (fig. 3).[34] More recently, the argument that Euripides is transposing the western pediment and metopes depicting the heroes Heracles and Bellerophon has gained prominence. As Rosivach has argued, there is no reason to think that the audience would have found the transposition of decoration from the back to the front of the temple any more disconcerting than numerous other anachronisms and inaccuracies that pepper the play.[35] There is some question too of whether Euripides or his audience would have been familiar enough with Delphi to know what the images on the temple looked like or to know what side they were on. If the audience was familiar with the temple, would they also know that the contemporary temple was less than a hundred years old and thereby anachronistic for the setting of the *Ion*?[36] The likeliest solution seems to be that the choice of subjects was not meant to perfectly align with the iconography of

[34] Hermann, *Euripidis Ion*; Bayfield, *The Ion of Euripides, with an Introduction, Notes, and Appendices*; Owen, *Ion*, 82–83 n. 180. Other solutions have been suggested. Hermann supposed that the reference was to a stoa commemorating Phormio's victory at sea in 429. Bayfield suggests that this is a reference to the metopes on the frieze of the temple. Owen contests both of these readings arguing that the stoa is too far from the temple and the metopes would be too difficult to see.

[35] Rosivach, "Earthborns and Olympians," 284.

[36] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 288–90. Stieber points out that the play includes references to Trophonius, the semi-legendary architect of the earlier temple, which may indicate that the audience knows the contemporary temple was not original.

the contemporary temple, but to build up the themes and imagery of the play while being plausible enough choices as subject matter that they would not strain the audience's credulity.[37]

Rather than describing the real sanctuary of Delphi, the passage asks the audience to imagine the familiar iconography of these images from examples closer to home, a comparison that the chorus' first words actively invites (οὐκ ἐν ταῖς ζαθέαις Ἀθά-/ναις εὐκίονες ἦσαν… 184-185).[38] The chorus of attendants are clearly not meant to have any familiarity with Delphi, but they recognize the myths and iconography. Katerina Zacharia has pointed out that although similar "tourist" scenes are familiar in Euripidean poetry, the version presented in the *Ion* is unique in terms of how the chorus focuses not on emphasizing the difference between the their own view and the audience's, but in focusing on the similarities by singling out imagery familiar in Athenian iconography.[39] Froma Zeitlin and Nicole Loraux have both argued that the initial point of reference in the chorus' description is not Delphi, but the Athenian acropolis.[40]

The images that the chorus sees and describes are likely to remind the audience of Athena and her associations. In their first two descriptions, they respond to images of the heroes Heracles and Bellerophon, two heroes whose success is intimately tied to Athena's patronage and who were familiar from the Athenian visual milieu. The first image that a member of the

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[37] Stieber, 290.

[38] Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides*, 23; Estrin, "Memory Incarnate: Material Objects and Private Visions in Classical Athens, from Euripides' Ion to the Gravesite." Barlow argues that the parodos of the *Ion* is more about the act of seeing than the description of the temple itself, though she sees the relevance of this scene as focused on emphasizing the difference between the chorus' shallow understanding and Ion's experienced familiarity. Estrin demonstrates how the *Ion* uses material objects as carriers of memory, beginning with the contrast between the chorus' and Creusa's reactions to the temple and building up to the recognition tokens at the end of the play.

[39] Zacharia, *Converging Truths*, 242:11–18.

[40] Zeitlin, "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ekphrasis, and Spectacle in Euripidean Drama," 149–50; Loraux, *The Children of Athena*, 184.

chorus recognizes and points out is the battle of Heracles and the Hydra. She says, ἰδοὺ τάνδ᾽, ἄθρησον, / Λερναῖον ὕδραν ἐναίρει / χρυσέαις ἅρπαις ὁ Διὸς παῖς: / φίλα, πρόσιδ᾽ ὄσσοις. ("Look at this! Look at the son of Zeus slaying the Lernaean Hydra with a golden sickle! Dear, look with both eyes!" 190-194) Images of Heracles are extremely pervasive throughout the Greek world and the distinctive multi-headed Hydra is easily identifiable. Although pottery of Athens in the fifth century more often shows the hero wielding his iconic club against the serpentine monster, architectural elements often use the iconography (otherwise generally more prevalent on archaic pottery than contemporary vases) of Heracles using a sickle to cut off the serpent's heads (cf fig. 4).[41] From this, the next member of the chorus is able to identify the man

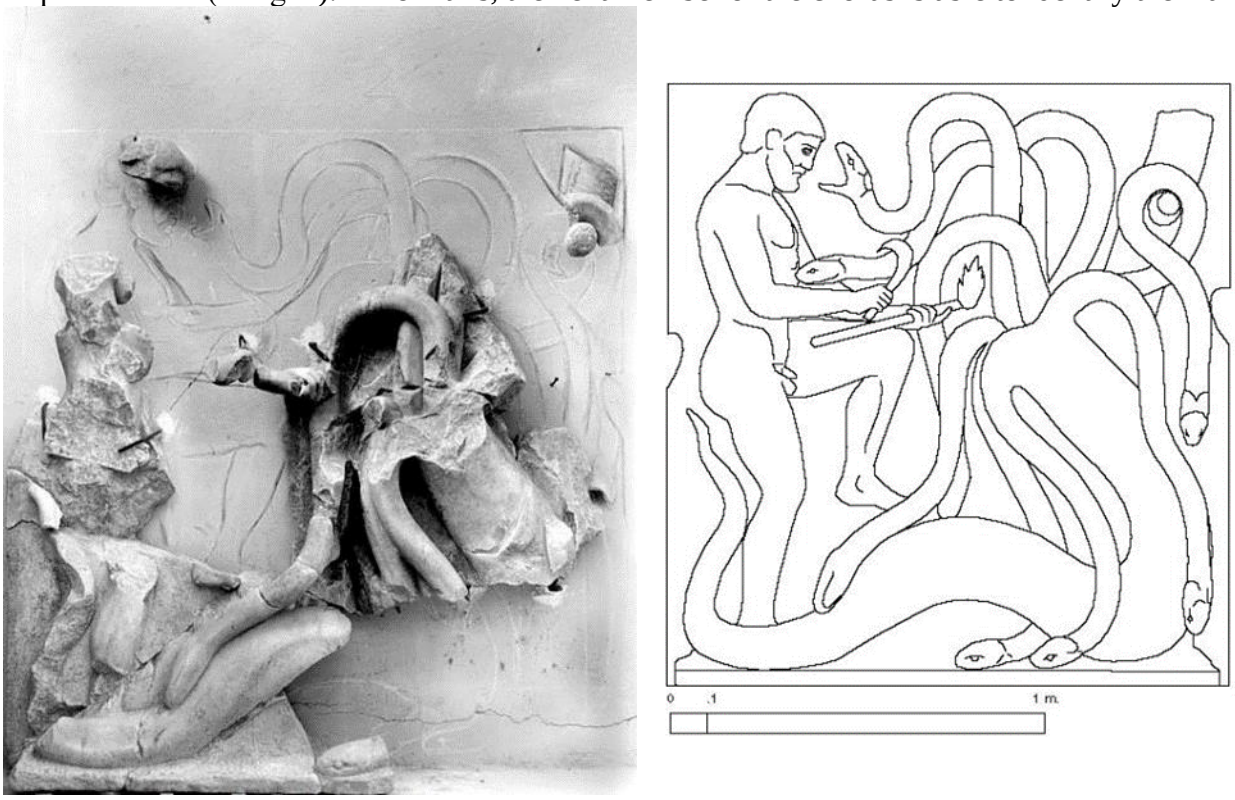


Figure 4 Metope from temple of Zeus at Olympia. Marble, 470-457 BCE. Remnants of the hands indicate that Heracles is using a sickle to behead the Hydra. Sketch copyright C. H. Smith 1990. From Ashmole, Gialourēs, and Frantz, Olympia: The Sculptures of the Temple of Zeus, 14, pl. 152.

[41] Ashmole, Gialourēs, and Frantz, *Olympia: The Sculptures of the Temple of Zeus*. Cf. metopes at the temple of Zeus in Olympia, showing the labors of Heracles, including an image of the hero fighting the Hydra with what appears to be a sickle.

beside him carrying a torch as Heracles' companion Iolaos who performs an important service in the myth by cauterizing the necks which Heracles has sliced to prevent the Hydra's heads from regrowing (194-200).

> ὁρῶ. καὶ πέλας ἄλλος αὐ-
> τοῦ πανὸν πυρίφλεκτον αἴ-
> ρει τις — ἆρ᾽ ὃς ἐμαῖσι μυ-
> θεύεται παρὰ πήναις,
> ἀσπιστὰς Ἰόλαος, ὃς
> κοινοὺς αἰρόμενος πόνους
> Δίῳ παιδὶ συναντλεῖ;
>
> I see it. And beside him, another man who raises a torch burnt with fire – Is it he who is spoken of by my loom? Warrior Iolaos who joins the son of Zeus in bearing common labors?

While this image of the two warriors working together is a familiar one from Attic pottery, the chorus' framing of the piece as a part of temple architecture brings a closer reference to mind. Iolaos is joined with Heracles in killing the Lernaean Hydra on East Metope 2 of the Hephaisteion in Athens (fig. 5).[42] This temple in the agora had only been officially inaugurated a year or two before the production of the *Ion*.[43] It featured metopes of both the Panhellenic hero Heracles and the local hero Theseus in a sculptural program that joined the two under the patronage of Athena. On this temple, Athena is, in fact, more frequently depicted with the non-Athenian Heracles than with Theseus.[44] The reference in the parodos to the iconography of

[42] von den Hoff, "Herakles, Theseus and the Athenian Treasury at Delphi," 101. Hoff points out the interesting parallelism between the figures of Heracles and Iolaos on the Hephaisteion and the Tyrannicides, emphasizing the way that Heracles had been "democratized" by the iconography of the city.
[43] Its construction had been delayed nearly three decades by the contemporaneous work on the Parthenon and the beginnings of the Peloponnesian War.
[44] von den Hoff, "Herakles, Theseus and the Athenian Treasury at Delphi," 101. As von den Hoff points out, Heracles is also more frequent on the metopes of the Hephaisteion that the local hero Theseus (ten times rather than eight).

Heracles' exploits in an Athenian context invokes the goddess' presence. The reference is then strengthened by the addition of a second hero with special ties to Athena.

The chorus moves on to the next image, a man mounted on a winged horse, killing a fire-breathing three-bodied monster (201-204):

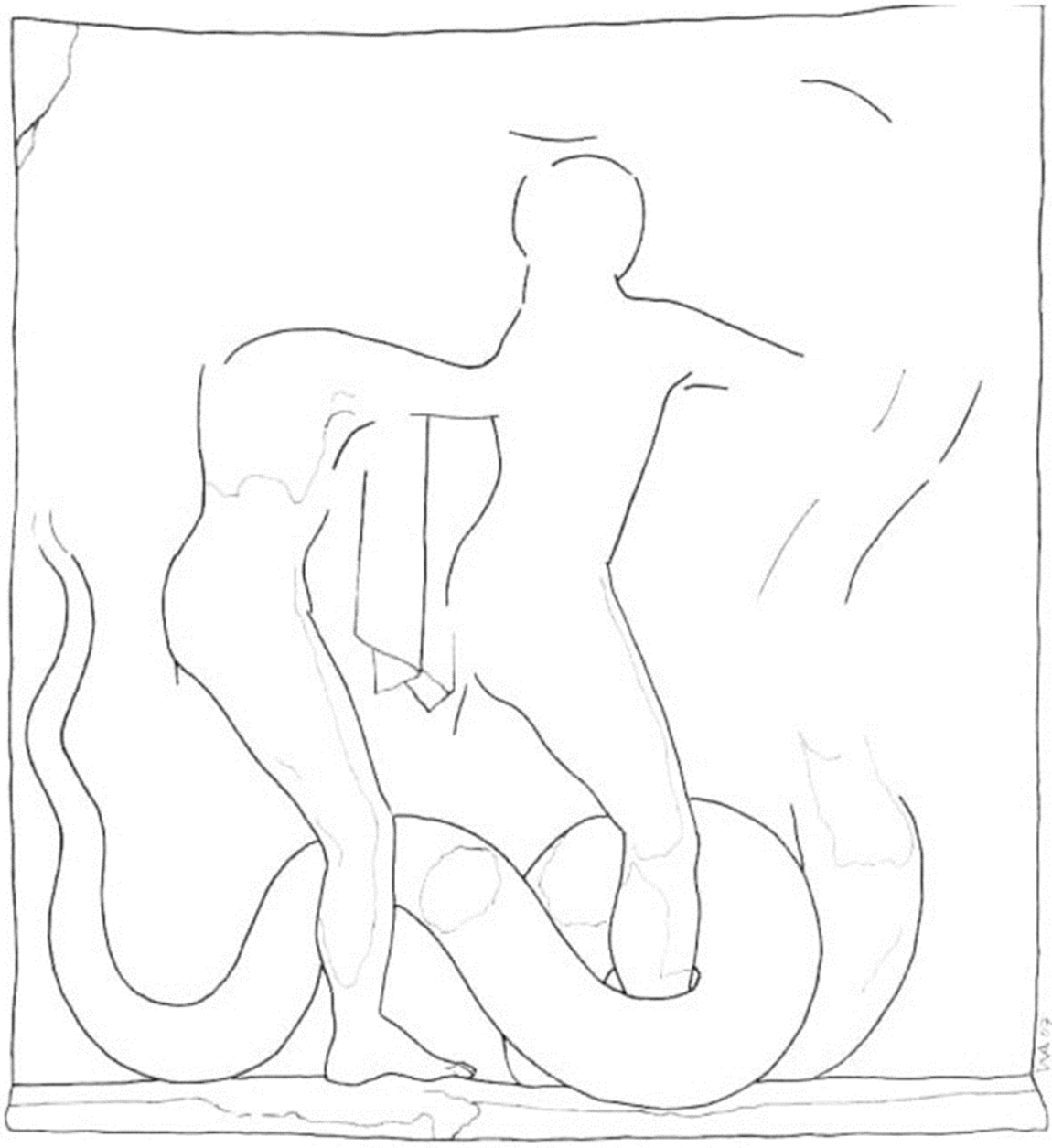

Figure 5 Heracles and Iolaos fighting the Lernean Hydra. East Metope 2 of the Hephaisteion in Athens (drawing). Marble. Athens, Hephaisteion. Drawing: Wulfhild Aulmann. From Hoff, "Herakles, Theseus and the Athenian Treasury at Delphi," 101.

καὶ μὰν τόνδ᾽ ἄθρησον
πτεροῦντος ἔφεδρον ἵππου:
τὰν πῦρ πνέουσαν ἐναίρει
τρισώματον ἀλκάν.

And look also at this man sitting on a winged horse; he kills the three-bodied force that is breathing fire.

They feel no need to supply a name as the distinctive elements of the image – the winged horse, the unusual three-bodied creature the hero is fighting – immediately suggest the identity of Bellerophon. Bellerophon, as Corinth's favored son, has relatively little prominence in Classical Athenian art and drops in popularity at the beginning of the fifth century.[45] However, he remains a recognizable figure and returns in images in the last few decades.[46] For example, on an *askos* in Paris (fig. 6), dated ca. 420-400 BCE, Bellerophon rides Pegasus on one side, while the Chimera poses menacingly on the other side of the spout. [47] According to epigraphic evidence, a bronze group featuring Bellerophon, Pegasus, and the Chimera seems to have stood on the acropolis (*IG* $I^3$ 482).[48] Despite Bellerophon's lack of local connection to Athens, he is one of the heroes most closely associated with Athena, particularly through her aid in taming Pegasus. Peter Schultz has argued that the inscription is more likely to be associated with the Erechtheion than the temple of

[45] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 298; Jones, "The Sculptural Poetics of Euripides' Ion," 749. Stieber suggests that the description of the Chimera as a "three-bodied power" may be a reference to the so-called Bluebeard pediment. However, the destruction of this pediment several decades earlier, as well as the lack of connection to Bellerophon makes this suggestion rather unconvincing. Jones suggests that the chorus does not identify Bellerophon because of the anachronistic unpopularity of the hero in fifth-century Athens. This, however, ignores the larger "guessing game" structure of the parodos in referring to figures obliquely and allowing the audience to supply their own answer, drawing them into the process of identification through iconography modeled by the chorus.
[46] Hoffman, "Bellerophon and the Chimaira in Malibu: A Greek Myth and an Archaeological Context"; Iozzo, "The Chimaera, Pegasus, and Bellerophon in Greek Art and Literature."
[47] Hoffman, "Bellerophon and the Chimaira in Malibu: A Greek Myth and an Archaeological Context," 67. As Hoffman points out, this imagery is actually gaining in popularity in South Italy, particularly as a subject for funerary art. The interest in such images for export likely played a role in the increasing production at the very end of the fifth century.
[48] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 298.

Athena Nike, as previously thought.[49] If Schultz's suggestion is correct, then this reference brings the audience's attention to a building that will remain continually in the background of this play.

Figure 6 Attic ref-figure askos, perhaps by the Cleophon Painter, with Bellerophon and the Chimera. 420-400 BCE. Musée du Louvre G446.

[49] Boulter, "The Akroteria of the Nike Temple"; Schultz, "The Akroteria of the Temple of Athena Nike," 18–24.

The references to Heracles and Bellerophon in the parodos bring a larger theme into view. These two heroes are familiar to the Athenians and are closely associated with Athens' patron goddess, although their loyalties lie outside the city.[50] Bellerophon's close association with Corinth and other cities hostile to Athenian power may have also played a role in the prominent hero's relative lack of appearance in fifth-century Athens.[51] Despite this image's relative inappropriateness to late fifth-century imperial ambitions,[52] the myth remained present in public consciousness. Euripides himself staged a *Bellerophon* of which some ninety lines remain.[53] Sophocles and Euripides seem to have both staged the story of the attempted murder of Bellerophon with an *Iobates* and a *Stheneboia* respectively and there are also frequent allusions to the myth in comedy (e.g. in the *Frogs* and the *Wasps*).[54] The chorus' allusive description emphasizes this point. They do not need to name the figures in this panel to recognize them.

The two heroes described call up the audience's knowledge of imagery, presenting visual material as a source of authority for myth and also serving to introduce Athena's patronage of heroes. The iconography that the audience turns to for models of what they are seeing makes this

[50] Grossman, *Greek Funerary Sculpture,* 101. Imagery of Bellerophon may be more familiar to the audience from archaic or even anti-Athenian sources. Janet Grossman argues that the suppression of images of Bellerophon in Athens in the last quarter of the fifth century may be tied to the prominence of the hero in Boeotian myth and his popularity on Boeotian gravestones after the battle of Delion in 424 BCE

[51] Hoffman, "Bellerophon and the Chimaira in Malibu: A Greek Myth and an Archaeological Context," 68; Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins,* 84–85. Hoffman points out that the lines in the *Iliad* (3.200-203) which refer to the gods' sudden hatred of Bellerophon and his unfortunately disgraceful fate may be a fifth-century interpolation intended to bring the epic into line with changing polis ideology. Colin Kraay has suggested that an issue of coins from Poteidaia with Pegasus and Bellerophon on them were minted specifically to pay Corinthian soldiers in the rebellion against Athens in 432 BCE, which reinforces the idea that this imagery and references to it might immediately suggest an anti-Athenian sentiment

[52] Schultz, "The Akroteria of the Temple of Athena Nike," 18–24.

[53] Dixon, "Reconsidering Euripides' 'Bellerophon.'"

[54] Iozzo, "The Chimaera, Pegasus, and Bellerophon in Greek Art and Literature," 118–21.

connection to Athena clear. Here we have the beginnings of allusive references to Athena which help to prepare the audience for her arrival at the end of the play. Second, these two heroes bring in the motif of snakes or serpentine monsters, which will be discussed at length later. These creatures come from the earth and are empowered by it, a trait that they share with autochthons who are similarly depicted as serpentine or connected with snakes.[55] The chorus' descriptions highlight this connection. Scenes of Heracles on temples are numerous and his varied labors give Euripides many options on what opponent to bring in. The choice of the serpentine Hydra is echoed by the Chimera with its snake for a tail. The choice of these two references is suggestive not only because they are plausible decorations for the temple of Delphi, but also to introduce the connection between autochthony and serpentine monsters that are threats to civilization. This theme and the issue of the dangerous nature of serpents and autochthons continues to develop through the course of the tragedy.

The initial two images described by the chorus thematize the act of seeing and the role of Athena, using the imagery of the visual environment of Athens to guide the audience. The use of the Athenian acropolis as the background for this representation of Delphi becomes even more emphatic in the final section of the parodos as the chorus turns to a depiction of the Gigantomachy (205-208):

> — πάντᾳ τοι βλέφαρον διώ-
> κω. σκέψαι κλόνον ἐν τείχεσ-
> σι λαΐνοισι Γιγάντων.
> — ὦ φίλαι, ὦδε δερκόμεσθα.
>
> — I am darting my eyes in all directions. Look at the battle of the Giants on the stone walls!

[55] When the origins of the Chimera and the Hydra are mentioned, both are generally considered to be children of Echidna and Typhon, two similarly serpentine monsters. Although the two have varying lineages *Bibliotheke* 2.1.2 cites Echidna, Typhon, and Python as the children of Gaia and Tartarus.

— Friends, we see it.

The chorus' excitement and their focus on sight emphasizes again their recognition of a scene familiar from the Athenian visual milieu.[56] The audience is confronted with imagery that, once more, is as familiar in Athens as it would be in Delphi.[57] The Gigantomachy was featured on the eastern metopes of the Parthenon (fig. 7),[58] as well as on the east pediment of the temple of Athena Nike,[59] and on the peplos of Athena woven for the Panathaea (Plat. *Euthyph*. 6b-6c).[60] The details of the imagery on the Panathenaic peplos are impossible to recover given the nature of the medium,[61] but it is often thought that the choice of imagery on the peplos predates, and even determines, the imagery on the Parthenon and the temple of Athena Nike.[62] Gigantomachy scenes had also appeared on the buildings of the acropolis before the Persian sack of the city (cf. fig. 8). Repeating the imagery of long-standing significance across various buildings on the

[56] Athanassaki, "Art and Politics in Euripides' Ion: the Gigantomachy as Spectacle and Model of Action." Athanassaki argues that the resonances between the Athenian images and the chorus' description appropriates the myth of the Gigantomachy as an Athenian local myth rather than pan-Hellenizing.

[57] The Gigantomachy certainly has a place in Delphi. For example, on the frieze of the Siphnian treasury.

[58] Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon.*; Schwab, "Parthenon East Metope XI" Brommer identifies east metope IV as Athena and Nike, though the damage to the east metopes makes secure identification difficult. Schwab argues that east metope 11 shows Heracles. If Schwab's identification is correct, this may be a further element in connecting the scenes described in this parodos.

[59] Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture*, 143.

[60] Davison, "Notes on the Panathenaea," 24–25; Shapiro, "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens," 128. The connection to the Panathenaea seems even more probable in that Erichthonios is traditionally considered one of the founders of the festival.

[61] Wace, "Weaving or Embroidery?"; Barber, "The Peplos of Athena." Wace's article settles the question of the technique for production. Barber's provides thoughtful solutions to questions of the practical aspects of production, display, and use.

[62] Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*. Mary Stieber's analysis of the *Ion* focuses on the way that Euripides' deploys the imagery of the craft of weaving and its strong connection to civic identity in Athens through the Panathenaea.

Figure 7 Parthenon eastern metope 1. 447-438 BCE. Marble. Acropolis Museum, Athens. Acr. 20.000. Scene from the Gigantomachy showing Hermes defeating a Giant.

Figure 8 Athena in a Gigantomachy scene from the west pediment of the Old Temple of Athena. Marble, 520-500 BCE. Acropolis Museum, Athens.

Acropolis emphasized the ancient tradition of the goddess' patronage and her enduring connection with the geography despite the novelty of the fifth-century architectural program.

Some sense of the Gigantomachy in Athenian imagery can be reconstructed from the fragments that remain on the eastern metopes of the Parthenon, but these were badly damaged and some of the identifications remain contested.[63] However, there are some other late fifth-century Athenian depictions of the Gigantomachy which might shed some light on how the scenes on the Acropolis were depicted. For example, a kylix in Berlin by the painter

Figure 9 Interior tondo of red-figure kylix showing the Gigantomachy, 410-405 BCE. Antikensammlung, Berlin F2531.

[63] See Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon.*; Schwab, "Parthenon East Metope XI." for arguments for identifications and further bibliography.

Figure 10 Side A of red-figure kylix showing the Gigantomachy, 410-405 BCE. Antikensammlung, Berlin F2531.

Figure 11 Side B of red-figure kylix showing the Gigantomachy, 410-405 BCE. Antikensammlung, Berlin F2531.

Aristophanes dated to the late fifth century shows an elaborate Gigantomachy scene (fig. 9-11).[64] The cup shows seven one-on-one battles between the gods and the Giants. All figures are labeled allowing for secure identification. On the interior tondo, Poseidon skewers the Giant Polybotes with his trident as Ge watches, gesturing in alarm (fig. 9). On one side Zeus, wielding thunderbolt and staff, is the central figure, fighting the fleeing Giant Porphyrion (fig. 10). The scene is flanked by Artemis at left, attacking the fallen Giant Gaion with two torches. At right, Athena battles Enceladus, striking the fallen Giant with her spear while her aegis lies over her extended left arm. On the other side, Apollo is the central figure, striking the fleeing Giant Ephialtes with his sword, while his left hand holds his bow (fig. 11). On the left, Ares, helmeted, strikes the fallen Giant, Mimon with a spear. On the right, Hera, elaborately dressed, prepares to strike the fallen Giant, Phoitos, with a spear. The Giants carry shields with snakes on them and wield rocks in place of weapons, a change from the hoplite weaponry that the Parthenon Gigantomachy seemed to play a pivotal role in influencing.[65] The use of landscape as weapons and the snakes, alongside the representation of Ge on the interior tondo, refers to the earthborn autochthony of the Giants and the derivation of their power from the earth which bore them. The emphasis in the parodos on the autochthonous Giants gestures at an anxiety that is innate to the acropolis building program, that the Athenian claim to autochthony both strengthens the Athenians control over their land while also connecting them to other autochthons who are violent resistors of civilization and the gods.[66]

[64] Cf. Attic red-figure cup attributed to the Brygos Painter, ca. 490 BCE (Berlin, Antikenmuseum F2293).
[65] Schwab, "Celebrations of Victory: The Metopes of the Parthenon," 168–69.
[66] Shapiro, "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens."

The chorus continues by picking out three specific portions of the Gigantomachy for further identification and commentary. Apollo, the god whose temple is ostensibly described here, remains absent, but the chorus singles out three gods (Athena, Zeus, and Dionysus) who are significant to the tragedy and whose participation in the Gigantomachy is significant in the Athenian visual milieu. First, Athena is identified by her Gorgon shield fighting the Giant Enceladus (209-211):

> — λεύσσεις οὖν ἐπ᾽ Ἐγκελάδῳ
> γοργωπὸν πάλλουσαν ἴτυν —
> — λεύσσω Παλλάδ᾽, ἐμὰν θεόν.
>
> — Then, do you see her, opposite Enceladus, brandishing the Gorgon-headed shield?
> — I see Pallas, my goddess.

Athena's connection to the Gigantomachy in Athens is profound. It is perhaps the obvious choice for an Athenian chorus to look for her first after identifying the scene as a Gigantomachy.[67] Next, Zeus, is identified by his thunderbolt fighting Mimas (212-216):[68]

> — τί γάρ; κεραυνὸν ἀμφίπυρον
> ὄβριμον ἐν Διὸς
> ἐκηβόλοισι χερσίν;
> — ὁρῶ· τὸν δάϊον
> Μίμαντα πυρὶ καταιθαλοῖ.

[67] The structure of the passage, like that of Bellerophon and the Chimera invites the audience's participation in the chorus' guessing game. The first chorus member names Enceladus, the Giant, and the Gorgon-headed shield, leaving the next chorus member – and the audience – to identify Athena.

[68] Neils, Reinbold, and Sternberg, "More Than the Time of Day: Helios to the Rescue"; Schwab, "The Parthenon East Metopes, the Gigantomachy, and Digital Technology," 162–63. Apollodorus (1.6.2) says that Mimas was the opponent of Hephaestus who slew him with hot metal, so perhaps Hephaestus' presence is being evoked here. Either way, Hephaestus was a part of the Gigantomachy on the east metopes of the Parthenon. Schwab has reconstructed the confrontation between god and giant on east metope 13 as Hephaestus threatening the giant with tongs holding hot metal (cf. Brygos Painter cup, Berlin, Antikenmuseum F2293). Neils et al. argue that Hephaestus participation as a combatant rather than just armorer in the Gigantomachy reflects the increased prominence of the god in the city of Athens and that he is closely associated with Helios on the Parthenon, in line with the Parthenon's novel focus on figures who render assistance in battle.

— What now? The strong thunderbolt with fire at each end in the far-shooting hands of Zeus?
— I see it. He burns to ashes with fire the hostile Mimas.

Zeus is generally thought to be the figure on east metope 8 of the Parthenon, placing him in the center of the entablature above the entrance and below the east pediment showing the birth of Athena where he was also likely a central figure.[69] Due to his centrality in the Athenian conception of the Gigantomachy, it again makes sense for the chorus to seek him out. This second identification also opens the question of Apollo's role. The use of the adjective, ἑκηβόλος, prominently applied to Apollo in the opening of the *Iliad* (1.14, 96), reminds the audience that this is his temple, but he still has not been pointed out.

Finally, the chorus describes one more scene of the Gigantomachy - Dionysus killing an unnamed Giant with his ivy staff (217-219):

— καὶ Βρόμιος ἄλλον ἀπολέμοι-
σι κισσίνοισι βάκτροις
ἐναίρει Γᾶς τέκνων ὁ Βακχεύς

— And the roarer, Bacchus, kills another of the sons of Ge with his ivy staff, unfit for war.

The identification of Dionysus as the third figure of note to the chorus is, perhaps, an unexpected shift of focus for the original audience. The god has little place in the traditional story of Ion and he is not mentioned in Hermes' prologue. However, this god will play a role later in the play, as Xuthus believes that Ion was conceived at his festival and goes to make offerings to him giving Creusa an opportunity for the attempted poisoning of Ion. Dionysus' role in the tragedy serves to further bridge the divide between setting and audience experience, since Delphi is also sacred to Dionysus and his cult has a prominent role there, while the audience is sitting in the theater of Dionysus in Athens, right beside his temple and sacred precinct. The god also plays a role in the

[69] Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon.*; Schwab, "Parthenon East Metope XI."

Gigantomachy of the Parthenon on East Metope 2 where the remaining fragments indicate a similarly unwarlike choice of weapons as the god is accompanied by a snake and a leaping panther.[70] Again, the description of the temple builds off of familiar Athenian imagery and also works to prepare the audience for the events and themes of the tragedy.[71] In this way, the description of the Gigantomachy does double duty, not only demonstrating for the audience the way that temple imagery serves as a way of knowing the history of the gods, but also introducing a number of elements that will be fleshed out in the course of the tragedy: the pointed absence of Apollo from a story that so intimately concerns him, the role of Athena as protector and her killing of the Gorgon, contested authority and the role of autochthony, and even, with the somewhat unusual and unexpected inclusion of Dionysus, the role that wine will play in the plot.[72]

The conclusion that arises from this analysis of the parodos and its iconographic references is that this is not a purely imaginative ekphrasis, even if none of the images described are actually visible onstage, nor a description of Delphi, but instead a response to the

[70] Michaelis, *Der Parthenon*. It is, in fact, the unwarlike presence of the animals that accompany Dionysus that first allowed Michaelis to begin breaking down and identifying the metopes on the east side of the Parthenon. The identification of Dionysus on East Metope 2 is the most securely identifiable of all the east metopes, which are all heavily damaged.

[71] Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon.*; Schwab, "Celebrations of Victory: The Metopes of the Parthenon." Brommer identifies Apollo in East Metope 11, while Schwab follows the more common identification of Apollo in East Metope 9, closer to the center of the scene. The presence of Dionysus as the unexpected third god in the description is one of the elements that draws further attention to the omission of Apollo. Dionysus had cult on Delphi and certainly has a prominent place in the Athenian's perceptions of that city, but Apollo, the god to whom the temple actually belongs, remains absent, despite the fact that he might be expected to have a prominent role in the Gigantomachy both because it is his temple and because he seems to have a prominent role in the east metopes of the Parthenon in Athens.

[72] Zacharia, *Converging Truths*, 242:20.

iconographic program that spreads across the Acropolis and out into the city of Athens.[73] The imagery on the buildings of the Acropolis raises two contradictory points – that serpent-affiliated monstrous earthborn autochthons are the enemies of civilization, creatures that need to be killed for human civilization to survive and flourish (the Hydra, the Chimera, Giants), and that the Athenians themselves descend from similarly serpentine autochthons (Cecrops, Erichthonios). The imagery of the parodos puts the familiar iconography of the Acropolis' building program into the background of the tragedy. The initial focus on images of earthborn monster (the Hydra, the Chimera, and the Giants) gestures towards a tension inherent in the Athenian building program which presents both the power and the danger of Athenian claims to earthborn ancestry. The *Ion* itself serves as an answer to the tensions between the power and control over the land exerted by autochthons and their inherent opposition to civilization.

## THE AUTOCHTHONS OF ATHENS: CECROPS, ERICHTHONIOS, CREUSA

The imagery of the parodos draws attention to the visual environment of Athens where representations of the city's autochthonous ancestors had surged in popularity.[74] Autochthony was a major concern in Athens in the fifth century: it saturates the rhetoric and imagery of the city, with a particular increase in the representation of Erichthonios and Cecrops as well as the other early autochthonous kings of Athens. These myths serve to displace an earlier tradition of

[73] McInerney, "The Location of the Hephaisteion." The Hephaisteion is linked with the autochthonous myths of the city's history and serves a vital function in the city's construction of its foundation. As McInerney argues, the pollution of semen prevents the myth of the conception of Ericthonios from being located within Athena's sanctuary, which kept the temple that reifies this piece of Athens' mythical history from the acropolis.

[74] Cf. Swift, "Conflicting Identities in the Euripidean Chorus," 147. Swift points out how the chorus makes little effort to distinguish between Athens, Athena, and the house of Creusa.

Ionic lineage.[75] This imagery and the discourse surrounding Athenian earthborn autochthony is a vital context for understanding the play. These myths were foundational to the public and religious imagery in the city and were tied to the physical geography through various fifth-century building projects. The parodos introduces the theme of autochthony, the idea that Athenians come from the land of Attica itself and that they have continuously occupied that land (and will continue to do so).[76] The concept of autochthony is tied to the idea that the Athenians are earthborn (γηγενής), an origin that is embodied by the mythological ancestors Cecrops and Erichthonios, both of whom were believed to have been born literally out of the earth (Gaia/Ge).[77] Over the course of the fifth century, Athenian ideology shifts to focus on and redefine autochthony as the Athenians increasingly turn to their earthborn ancestors in their conception of themselves, their legitimacy, and their heroes.[78] The claim that Athenians are descended from heroes born directly from the land of Attica rhetorically emphasizes their inalienable connection to the land and legitimized their control.[79] The overwhelming strength of autochthons can be illustrated through parallels to other children of the earth, such as the Titans,

[75] Rosivach, "Autochthony and the Athenians." Rosivach discusses the evidence for the idea that the focus on autochthony comes to Athens relatively late.
[76] Rosivach; Ogden and Ogden, *Greek Bastardy in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods*, 166–88; Loraux, *The Children of Athena*; Shapiro, "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens"; Loraux, *Born of the Earth*; Ghidini, "Identità e Miti Dell'autoctonia Nella Grecia Antica. La Terra, i Figli Della Terra"; Kasimis, *The Perpetual Immigrant and the Limits of Athenian Democracy*.
[77] Hadzisteliou-Price, *Kourotrophos*, v. 8.:104–9. There was a sanctuary of Ge Kourotrophos on the south slopes of the acropolis near the west entrance (Pausanias 1.22.3).
[78] Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*; Shapiro, "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens." Morris suggests that the focus on Athenian autochthony was a response to anxiety about the abandonment of the acropolis in the Persian War. Shapiro argues that the proliferation of images of Erichthonios are meant to replace the images of Theseus, an Athenian hero whose foreign parentage makes him ill fit for the Periclean citizenship laws and the newly developed rhetorical focus on superiority due to autochthony.
[79] Plato's *Statesman* illustrates the idea that ancient people who lived in the golden age under Cronus were earthborn (269b-271c).

the Giants, and various monster like Echidna, Typhon, Python, and other primeval serpents.[80] These parallels, however, also point to a tension in the claim of earthborn ancestry, which is that these earthborn creatures are opponents of civilization and the Olympian gods.[81] As the Athenians mobilize their claim to autochthony, they focus not only on the question of continual occupation of the land, but on incorporating the power of the earthborn as well. [82] Demetra Kasimis describes Athenian interest in autochthony as "a mythical claim that made them exceptional not only for residing in their land without interruption (the earlier meaning of autochthon) but also for being 'born *en masse* from the earth,' a condition that politically, at least, could only be inherited."[83] This incorporation of Athenian earthborn origins into the claim of autochthony creates a residual tension about the implicit threat of incorporating these dangerous relations into the city's ancestry.

The Athenian's claims to autochthony manifest in the stories of their earliest kings and these myths of autochthony are tied to the physical geography of the landscape of Athens. They

[80] The earthborn Antaeus, who was killed by Heracles on his way through Libya to fetch the apples of the Hesperides, best illustrates the conceptual link between the strength of the earthborn and the earth itself since he is stronger when in contact with his mother, Gaia, and is only defeated when Heracles raises him up, breaking his contact with the ground. Although Antaeus is referenced in earlier sources on the labors of Heracles (including about thirty pots), the element of his strength drawn from the earth is not clearly attested until later, the earliest known attestation being a Tarentine coin of the third century showing Heracles lifting Antaeus, cf. also Apollodorus (2.5.11) and Hyginus (31).

[81] This conflict in earthborn ancestry is also deployed in other tragedies, particularly in tragedies set in Thebes which had similar myths of ancestry through the origins of the Theban people from the spartoi. These are the "sown men" grown by Cadmus from the teeth of a serpent that he found guarding the land when he settled there. The *Bacchae*, for example, deploys this conflict in the opposition between Dionysus, son of an Olympian god, and Pentheus, son of the sown man Echion.

[82] Herodotus' description of the origin of the Carians illustrate some of the tensions in the claims of autochthony as well as the tie to claims of ethnicity (1.171). Herodotus presents both the Cretan account that Carians were natives of the islands, driven to the mainland by the Ionians and Dorians, as well as the Carian account of their own autochthony.

[83] Kasimis, *The Perpetual Immigrant and the Limits of Athenian Democracy*, 17.

are represented in the architectural program of fifth-century buildings and in pottery. Cecrops, the first king of Athens,[84] was parentless, born from the earth of Attica, his earthborn, autochthonous nature marked by the serpentine lower half of his body. Cecrops seems to have no surviving sons, demonstrating the problem of succession that is recurrent in myths of autochthony.[85] During Cecrops' reign, Athena and Poseidon compete for control of Athens. Cecrops is witness to this competition and sometimes judges or organizes the judging of the decision (Apollodorus 3.14.1).[86] The contest, or its aftermath, was represented on the west pediment of the Parthenon. Poseidon's saltwater spring and Athena's olive tree were also located on the acropolis as testaments to the myth. Although the tree itself had been burned down in the Persian sack of the acropolis, Herodotus reports the story that a shoot a cubit long had emerged from the stump the very next day (8.55). The immortality of this olive was a sign of Athens' survival and Athena's continuing favor. When building resumed on the acropolis in the mid-fifth century, the immortal olive and the saltwater spring were incorporated into the sacred precinct of the Erechtheion, a building that marked a number of Athens' most ancient cults and tombs of its early heroes, including that of Cecrops.

[84] Pausanias (1.2.5) and the *Bibliotheca* (3.14.1) both mention a previous king Actaeus who rules over a city called Acte which is a precursor to Athens and who is succeeded by Cecrops (through marriage to Actaeus' daughter). Similar to Cecrops and Erichthonios, he is also autochthonous, lending another layer of redundancy to the claims of Athenian autochthony.
[85] Loraux, *The Children of Athena*, 215. Loraux points to the single gendered race of the Giants and the difficulties of succession following Cadmus and the sown men in the foundation of Thebes as further examples of this trope and its association with autochthony.
[86] Other late sources tell this story in different ways, but the competing contributions of Poseidon and Athena and the presence of Cecrops are usually all represented.

Cecrops was succeeded by Erichthonios, a second earthborn ancestor. [87] Erichthonios was born from the earth (Gaia/Ge), following Hephaestus' unsuccessful attempt to rape Athena.[88] The Hephaisteion was built on the supposed site of Erichthonios' birth from the earth (Eratosthenes *Cat*. 13).[89] Erichthonios was represented in this temple, which presented the "parents" of Erichthonios as pseudo-consorts.[90] Either his birth was the subject of the cult statue-base or he was shown (either as an infant or a snake) as part of the cult statues. [91] In the visual

[87]The names Erichthonios and Erechtheus are frequently confused in sources, sometimes referring to one person, sometimes to two or even three different early kings. There is a lot of inconsistency in descriptions of early Athenian kingship, though there seems to be some attempt in the fifth century to straighten them out. In the *Ion*, the earlier earth-born king is Erichthonios while his descendant, who is killed by Poseidon, is Erechtheus. He is described in some sources as half-serpent just like Cecrops (e.g. in schol. Plato *Timaeus* p.23d) or as a snake completely (e.g. in Hyginus Astronom. ii.13; cf. fig. 3), though there is nothing to indicate that he is not meant to appear human in the *Ion*.

[88] The *Bibliotheca* provides a summary of the circumstances of his conception (3.187 trans. Aldrich): "Athene went to Hephaistos because she wanted to make some weapons. But he, deserted by Aphrodite, let himself become aroused by Athene, and started chasing her as she ran from him. When he caught up with her with much effort (for he was lame), he tried to enter her, but she, being the model of virginal self-control, would not let him; so as he ejaculated, his semen fell on her leg. In revulsion Athene wiped it off with some wool, which she threw on the ground. And as she was fleeing and the semen fell to the earth, Erikhthonios came into being."

[89] Dinsmoor, "Observations on the Hephaisteion"; Thompson, "Activities in the Athenian Agora"; Mattusch, "Bronze- and Ironworking in the Area of the Athenian Agora." Pausanias says that the Erechtheion contained altars to Poseidon-Erechtheus, Butes, and Hephaestus (1.26.5). The altar to Hephaestus emphasizes this god's paternity of the Athenian hero and reciprocates Erichthonios' presence in the Hephaisteion. It also reiterates the connection between Athena and Hephaestus, who are closely associated through Hephaestus' role in the birth of Athena (depicted on both the east pediment of the Parthenon and the east pediment of the Hephaisteion). They are also joined as pseudo-consorts in their parentage of Erichthonios as well as in their corresponding roles as gods of craft (an aspect which is physically mapped into the location of the temple between the agora and spaces for metalworking cf. Dinsmoor, Thompson, Mattusch). Butes was an Athenian hero, the son of King Pandion I, grandson of Erichthonios, and priest of Poseidon.

[90] Pausanias says there are statues of the two gods in the temple (1.14.6). They are also both featured in the temple's sculptural decoration.

[91] Dinsmoor, "Observations on the Hephaisteion"; Harrison, "Alkamenes' Sculptures for the Hephaisteion"; Delivorrias, "A New Aphrodite for John"; Reber, "Das Hephaisteion in Athen. Ein Monument Für Die Demokratie."; Palagia, "Meaning and Narrative Techniques in Statue-Bases of the Pheidian Circle"; Barringer, "A New Approach to the Hephaisteion: Heroic Models

record from Athens, the exact circumstances of Erichthonios' conception receive little interest, just as in Ion's questioning.[92] Instead, it is Erichthonios' miraculous birth from the earth and Athena's reception of the infant that dominates the iconographic tradition. Gaia gives the infant to Athena who in turn gives him to the daughters of Cecrops to raise. The girls are instructed not to look into the basket where the baby is kept, and in the usual mythic way, they disobey the goddess and find the infant either accompanied by snakes or part snake himself. The sight drives them to insanity and they throw themselves from the acropolis.[93]

Erichthonios' cult stood on the northern part of the acropolis and was part of the new complex of the Erechtheion,[94] begun in 421, which was still under construction at the time when the *Ion* was performed.[95] The building was elaborately decorated, and though most scholars agree that the frieze on the building showed scenes related to the ancestor heroes, the remnants of the frieze are too fragmentary for an exact identification.[96] Other references to Erichthonios

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in the Athenian Agora"; Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture*, 166–68. Emerson suggests that the lost frieze on the statue base of these conjoined cult statues may have shown the birth of Erichthonios. A suggestion endorsed by the architecture of the Hephaisteion as the view from the colonnade links this temple by sightline to the north side of the acropolis, the location of the city's oldest ancestor cults.

[92] However, Pausanias describes the scene of Hephaestus' pursuit of Athena on the throne of the Amyclaean in Laconia, considered to be constructed ca. 550 BCE (3.18.13). So perhaps there was an iconographic tradition illustrating this pursuit, but it was not popular in Athens.

[93] Alternatively, one of the daughters does not look and survives, but Euripides' representation of the myth seems to imply that all are killed.

[94] This appears also to be where or near where Creusa and Xuthus live, depending on how literally one reads the chorus' assertion: "Παλλάδι σύνοικα τρόφιμα μέλα-/θρα τῶν ἐμῶν τυράννων:" (235-236)

[95] Emerson, *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture*, 152. The frieze of the Erechtheion is completely destroyed, and the subject cannot be securely identified, but Emerson suggests it may have shown stories of the ancient kings.

[96] Pallat, "The Frieze of the Erechtheum"; Paton et al., *The Erechtheum*; Elderkin, "The Cults of the Erechtheion"; Boulter, "The Frieze of the Erechtheion"; Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis*. Pausanias mentions paintings of the Butadae inside the Erechtheion, but does not describe the external frieze (1.26.5).

were scattered across the city. The snake curled behind the shield of the cult statue of Athena Parthenos represented the king.[97]

These buildings, their images, and the imagery created in response to these same stories remains in the background throughout the play. After Creusa's arrival onstage and her first sympathetic interaction with her son, she reveals to Ion that she is from Athens. He responds in excitement and the two begin an exchange in stichomythia as Ion asks excitedly about the city and Creusa's family. The conversation begins with a discussion of a scene that is familiar from Athenian pottery (265-274):

> Ἴων: πρὸς θεῶν ἀληθῶς, ὡς μεμύθευται βροτοῖς ... ;
> Κρέουσα: τί χρῆμ᾽ ἐρωτᾷς, ὦ ξέν᾽, ἐκμαθεῖν θέλων;
> Ἴων: ἐκ γῆς πατρός σου πρόγονος ἔβλαστεν πατήρ;
> Κρέουσα: Ἐριχθόνιός γε: τὸ δὲ γένος μ᾽ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ.
> Ἴων: ἦ καί σφ᾽ Ἀθάνα γῆθεν ἐξανείλετο;
> Κρέουσα: ἐς παρθένους γε χεῖρας, οὐ τεκοῦσά νιν.
> Ἴων: δίδωσι δ᾽, ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται ... ;
> Κρέουσα: Κέκροπός γε σῴζειν παισὶν οὐχ ὁρώμενον.
> Ἴων: ἤκουσα λῦσαι παρθένους τεῦχος θεᾶς.
> Κρέουσα: τοιγὰρ θανοῦσαι σκόπελον ᾕμαξαν πέτρας.
>
> Ion: Truly, by the gods, as the story goes…
> Creusa: Stranger, what do you want to know?
> Ion: Your father's ancestor was born from the earth?
> Creusa: Erichthonios, yes, but family does not benefit me.
> Ion: And Athena took him up from the earth?
> Creusa: Yes, into virgin hands, not having born him.
> Ion: And gave him, as is usually shown in painting, …
> Creusa: …to the daughters of Cecrops to keep safe, unseen.
> Ion: I heard the maidens opened the vessel of the goddess.
> Creusa: And for that they died, making the promontory of the rock bloody.

The abbreviated form of the stichomythia, in which Creusa is able to predict what Ion is about to ask indicates the shared familiarity of these stories. In this section, Ion shows a particular interest in one of the first Athenian kings, Erichthonios, who is Creusa's grandfather or great-grandfather

[97] Perhaps the frieze also was meant to represent or otherwise invoke Erichthnios or other early Athenian kings, though the specifics of interpretation of the frieze remain disputed.

(cf. Pausanias 1.5.3).[98] Ion's specification in line 271, ὥσπερ ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται, makes the visual origins of Ion's knowledge of this myth particularly clear, particularly since this myth is well known from material sources. Images of the myth of Erichthonios became popular subjects in the fifth and fourth centuries.[99] The increased popularity of these images seems to be rooted in a conscientious attempt by the Athenians to deemphasize their Ionian origins and replace it with a tale of autochthony.

A terracotta "Melian relief" in Berlin, dated to c. 460 BCE, gives an example of some of the elements included in depictions of this myth (fig.12). The head, shoulders, and arms of an oversized Gaia pass Erichthonios up to Athena who stands at left. The goddess is identifiable by her peplos and helmet. While the head and part of the body of the figure of Erichthonios are broken off in this example, it is clear from what remains that the goddess is reaching out to receive the boy. On the right side stands the first Athenian king, Cecrops, holding an olive branch. He is easily identified by the serpentine lower half of his body. The relief emphasizes the autochthonous origins and divine patronage given to this founder of the Athenian people.

[98] Owen, *Ion*, 91 n.267. The language of the play is ambiguous, leaving it unclear if Erichthonios is her grandfather or great-grandfather. Euripides may have left the phrasing purposefully ambiguous due to the lack of clarity in the myths of succession of the early Athenian kingship. The names Cecrops, Erechtheus/Erichthonios, Pandion, and Aglauros all refer to at least two different figures in the Athenian myths of kingship and our sources (and likely the Athenians themselves) frequently confuse the generations and chronology.

[99] Kron, *Die zehn attischen Phylenheroen*, 5.:55–64; Shapiro, "Autochthony and the Visual Arts in Fifth-Century Athens," 133; Avramidou, *The Codrus Painter*, 34.

A kylix by the Codrus painter, also in Berlin, dated between 440 and 430 BCE shows the same moment with more context (fig. 13).[100] At the center of one side is Athena, carrying a spear with her aegis on her back. She reaches towards the left to take the child Erichthonios who is reaching eagerly upwards. Athena's role as foster mother in this myth is emphasized by the

Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz
sog. Melisches Relief: Athena, Kekrops, Gaia (Erichthoniosgeburt), Ident. Nr.: TC 6281
© Foto: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Fotograf/in: Johannes Laurentius
(cc) BY-NC-SA

Figure 12 So-called Melian Relief: Athena, Erichthonios, Kekrops, Gaia. Terracotta, ca. 460 BCE, from Athens? Staatsmuseum, Berlin. TC 6281.

[100] Avramidou, *The Codrus Painter*, 33–36.

Figure 13 Kodros Painter. Red figure Attic cup showing the birth of Erichthonius. 440-430 BCE. Staatsmuseum, Berlin. F 2537

Figure 14 Detail showing Gaia, Athena, and Erichthonios. Kodros Painter. Red figure Attic cup showing the birth of Erichthonius. 440-430 BCE. Staatsmuseum, Berlin. F 2537

absence of her helmet, the way the spear is set aside, and the detail that her aegis is turned around, all alterations in her usual costume that seem to emphasize the care that she is taking to not scare the child (fig. 14).[101] Erichthonios is held out by his mother Gaia, regal with her crown and scepter, whose chthonic nature is indicated by depicting her rising from the earth with her lower legs hidden below the ground line. On the right, behind Athena, stands Hephaestus. The unusual family is flanked by Cecrops at left, once more easily identifiable by his curling snake tail, and Herse, one of the daughters of Cecrops, who gestures in surprise at the sight.[102] The opposite side of the kylix further expands on the scene (fig. 15). Behind Herse, on the other side

Figure 15 Kodros Painter. Red figure Attic cup showing the birth of Erichthonius. 440-430 BCE. Staatsmuseum, Berlin. F 2537

[101] Cf. *Il*. vi. 461-600, where Hector removes his helmet after his armor frightens his son, Astyanax.

[102] There seems to be little evidence of independent cult to Herse in Attica, so she was perhaps a later addition, a reduplication of Pandrosus constructed to fit the Cecropids into the common pattern of a triad of girls.

of the handle, is her sister Aglauros, who rushes forward, followed sedately by Erechtheus.[103] Next to him stands the final daughter of Cecrops, Pandrosos, and then two more Athenian kings, Aegeus and Pallas. The extensive labeling of the figures secures their identities, and the royal rank of the kings (Cecrops, Erechtheus, Aegeus, and Pallas) is marked by their wreaths and scepter.

The Attic mythic history portrayed here resonates well with the version of the story told in the *Ion* (267-274). It also similarly focuses on the issue of succession by showing the next three generations of Athenian kings all as men in their prime. This cup shows that these images were already connected in the Athenian mind – the autochthony of the Attic peoples, their snake-bodied ancestor, and their snake-wearing goddess. Athena is even wearing a pair of open-ended bracelets in a shape reminiscent of snakes, perhaps an allusion to the same story or the same practice as referenced in the *Ion*. On the other side of the cup, Aglauros also wears a pair of open-ended bracelets, while her sister Pandrosos wears at least one (the spot on her left forearm where the matching bracelet should be is broken).

A red-figure lekythos in Basel, ca. 470-450 BCE, gives an example of the iconography used to portray the next phase of the story (fig. 16). One of the Cecropids, gesturing in alarm, attempts to flee from a snake emerging from the overturned basket. Athena holds her wrist to restrain her. Alternatively, a red-figure pelike in the British Museum dated ca. 450 BCE shows Athena discovering the exposed Erichthonios alone on the acropolis, the snakes set to guard him

[103] The labelling is careful to distinguish the kings Erechtheus and Erichthonios, just as in the *Ion*, though sources earlier than the fifth century show confusion over the distinction between the similarly named kings.

Figure 16 Attic red-figure lekythos showing Athena restraining a Cecropid who is pursued by a snake guarding Erichthonios. Ca. 470-450 BCE. Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig. Inv. BS 404.

Figure 17 Attic red-figure pelike attributed to the Erichthonios painter showing Athena discovering the exposure of Erichthonios. Ca. 450 BCE. British Museum. 1864,1007.125.

rising from the basket (fig. 17).[104] Instead of showing the violent deaths of the girls, the imagery instead focuses on connecting the girls to the snakes and leaves the audience to fill in the rest.

In Euripides' play, Creusa and Ion's exchange turns next to three other myths of early Athenian history which serve to further emphasize the power and danger of the autochthonous line of kings. First, Ion asks about Erechtheus' sacrifice of his daughters,[105] a myth that Euripides had put on stage some years before.[106] The element of human sacrifice emphasizes the primeval setting of these stories, as this component of myth almost exclusively belongs to the heroic age or earlier. Divine demands for human sacrifice, particularly in the tragedies, are often responses to presumptuous challenges to the will of the gods. It seems that this sacrifice was understood as part of continuing conflict between Poseidon and Athena over control of Athens. Poseidon's son Eumolpus attacks the city of Athens during the Eleusinian War and the Athenians are only able to win by the sacrifice of Erechtheus' daughters. Ion's next question, about the death of Erechtheus, also refers to this story.[107] After the sacrifice of the girls, Erechtheus is able to defeat and kill Eumolpus. In retaliation, Poseidon kills Erechtheus, on the spot where the Erechtheion was to be built. This myth of conflict between the Athenian royal family and Poseidon was perhaps further preserved in the architecture of the Erechtheion, where a cutout rectangular hole

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[104] The curator's note on this pelike suggests that it may be based on another image of a more complete scene. The running ephebes on the reverse side seem to be a misunderstanding of an original image showing the Cecropids running from the snakes and Athena's anger.

[105] Ἴων: πατὴρ Ἐρεχθεὺς σὰς ἔθυσε συγγόνους; / Κρέουσα: ἔτλη πρὸ γαίας σφάγια παρθένους κτανεῖν.

Ion: Did your father Erechtheus sacrifice your sisters? / Creusa: He dared to kill the girls as sacrifices for the country.

[106] Calder, "The Date of Euripides' Erechtheus"; Clairmont, "Euripides' Erechtheus and the Erechtheion." Calder and Clairmont both date the play to 422 BCE.

[107] Ἴων: πατέρα δ᾽ ἀληθῶς χάσμα σὸν κρύπτει χθονός; / Κρέουσα: πληγαὶ τριαίνης ποντίου σφ᾽ ἀπώλεσαν.

Ion: And did a chasm of earth truly cover your father? / Creusa: The blows of the trident of the sea killed him.

in the floor and ceiling of the north porch marked the spot where Poseidon's trident had struck the acropolis and created a saltwater spring (fig.18).[108] Ion's questions here are working on numerous levels – establishing the character and history of the Athenian royal family, Ion's interest in and knowledge of them, and explaining the desperation of Creusa's situation. After the death of her father and all her sisters, she is the only survivor of the royal line; therefore, her inability to conceive a child with Xuthus is a threat to the continuation of the autochthonous line of Athenian kingship.

Ion's questions in his initial meeting with Creusa reinforce the role of the city's geography, architecture, and images as backdrop to the conflicts of the play. Ion's ὥσπερ ἐν

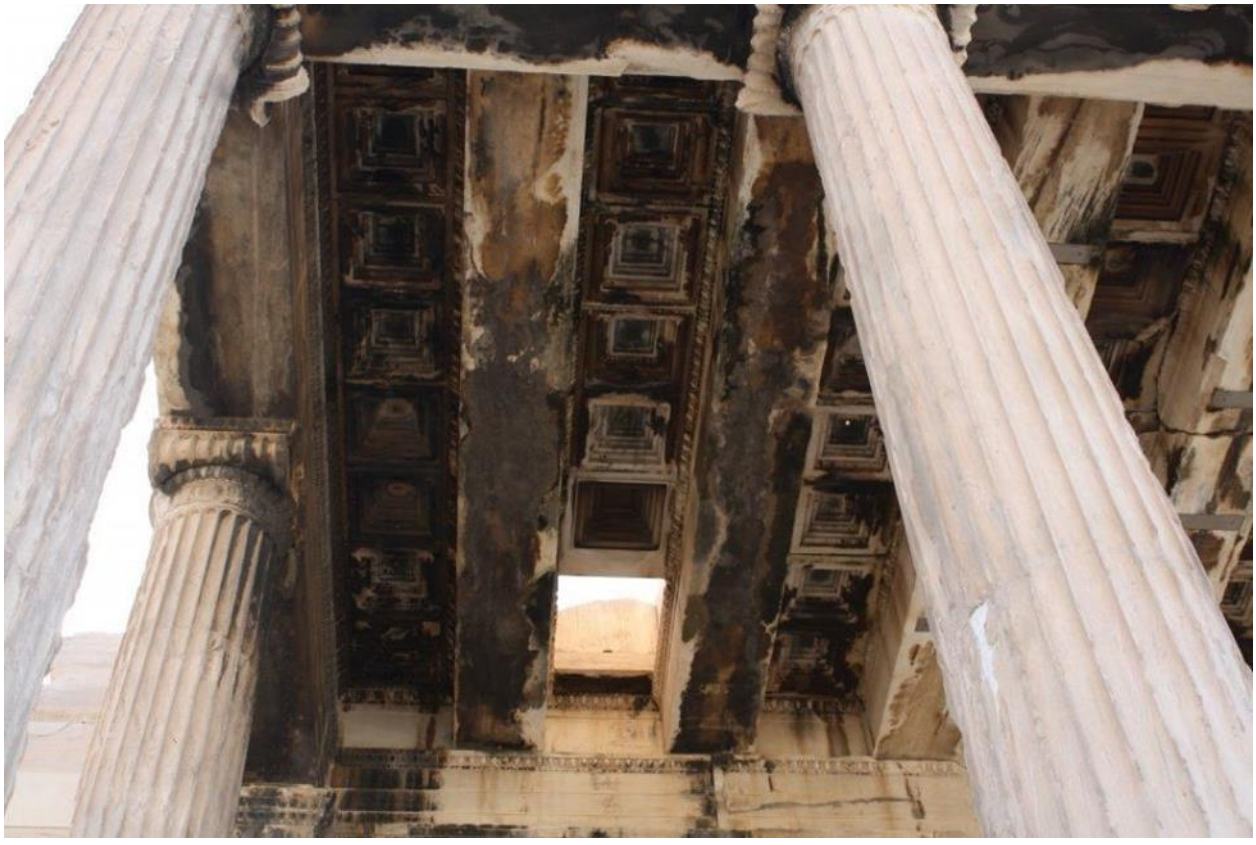

Figure 18 Aperture in the ceiling of the north porch of the Erechtheion.

[108] Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis*, 203–4. Perhaps this hole is what Pausanias is referring to in his description of the Erechtheion at 1.26.5, καὶ τριαίνης ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ πέτρᾳ σχῆμα ("on the rock is the shape of a trident). Hurwit contends that it instead marks a different moment in the struggle between Athena and Poseidon, the thunderbolt hurled by Zeus to put an end to their feud.

γραφῇ νομίζεται (line 271) encourages the audience to think of images of the myth and how Athens' autochthonous origins are represented. The myths are also situated in the physical geography of the acropolis – the place where the Cecropids died, the site of Erechtheus' death, and the cave at Makrai where Ion was conceived.[109]

## Snakes and Athenian Autochthony

Over the course of the tragedy, Euripides builds on the imagery introduced in the parodos, extending the tension inherent in Athenian autochthony as constructed on the acropolis into the plot of the tragedy. The potential danger of Athenian autochthony is reenacted in Creusa's plot to kill Ion. Hermes' prologue tells the audience of Apollo's plan for Creusa to recognize her son once he has come to Athens (…μητρὸς ὡς ἐλθὼν δόμους / γνωσθῇ Κρεούσῃ 71-72). However, Creusa's pride in her family and civic heritage makes her protective of her home city, determined to prevent a foreigner from taking the throne and destroying the chance of continuous autochthonous possession of Attica. She acts against Ion before Apollo can provide them with the possibility of recognition. The gifts Athena gave to Creusa's autochthonous ancestor Erichthonios provide the means, unforeseen by Apollo, for Creusa's plan to poison Ion with the blood from the earthborn Gorgon. The conflict between violent, impulsive autochthons is resolved by the final scene in which Athena intercedes, incorporating the moderating influence of Apollo into the Athenian royal family while preserving the advantages of autochthony.

One of the ways in which Athena's presence is prepared for is through the steady incorporation of both images of and imagery of snakes. The connection between snakes and

[109] The archaeological evidence of a cult to Apollo on the slopes of the acropolis only dates to the Roman period, though perhaps magistrates took their oath to Apollo in the cave to Pan at this site and this gave the place a strong enough Apolline coloring.

autochthony is well-documented and the thematic importance in the play has frequently been noted.[110] Snakes have no legs, so they remain in direct contact with the earth at all times. They live in holes in the ground and thereby appear to generate spontaneously from the earth, which makes them a fitting parallel for the self-generation claimed by earthborn autochthony. Snakes feature prominently in the stories of the foundation of civilization as the earliest inhabitants of the land, such as in the myth of the serpent Python in Delphi or the men sown from the serpent's teeth in Thebes. In Athens, snakes reify the city's claims of autochthony. Euripides relies upon the audience supplementing this theme through references to Athens' visual environment. The imagery is built up throughout the play into the final visual spectacle which uses this imagery to persuade the audience to accept the truth of Euripides' variant tradition.

First and foremost in this connection to snake imagery in the tragedy is the image of Athena herself. The goddess wears the aegis, a cloak trimmed in snakes, and occasionally carries a shield with the snake-headed Gorgon. For an audience that originally viewed the play seated on the lower slopes of the Athenian acropolis, the imagery of the goddess would certainly be familiar. While images of this important Olympian were numerous throughout the Greek world, they were especially numerous and grand in her favored city. The completion of the Parthenon was a relatively recent event and parts of the acropolis building program were still underway, keeping the question of the goddess' aspects, attributes, and appearance very much alive to the original audience. Besides the ubiquity of the aegis in creating a connection between the goddess and snakes, there was also famously the snake kept in the goddess' sacred precinct on the acropolis, the disappearance of which was taken as a sign of the goddess' abandonment of the city in the Persian War (Herodotus viii.41).

[110] E.g. Loraux, *The Children of Athena*, 184–236; Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology*, 87.

The *Ion* presents an innovation in the usual story of the goddess' connection to the Gorgon. It is the Gorgon's head that identifies her to the chorus when they are first marveling at the sights of Delphi (209-210). Gorgons also appear, rather unexpectedly, in Ion's description of the omphalos (224).[111] While Owen dismisses this as a misunderstanding of an ancient statue and Irvine presents a rather convoluted idea that it is a transposition of sirens on the temple's acroteria, [112] a more convincing reading might be to just take the text as it is. The unexpected appearance of an image so closely tied to Athena inside Apollo's innermost sanctum begins to prepare the audience for the role Athena will play by the end of the tragedy.

When the Gorgon comes up later in the play, instead of the customary story where the goddess is patron to the hero Perseus who kills the Gorgon and presents its head to her, Athena instead is presented as having killed the Gorgon in the battle against the Giants. This alternative story first appears when Creusa and the Old Man are scheming to find a way to dispose of Xuthus' newly acquired son (988-997):

> Κρέουσα: ἄκουε τοίνυν: οἶσθα γηγενῆ μάχην;
> Πρεσβύτης: οἶδ', ἣν Φλέγρᾳ Γίγαντες ἔστησαν θεοῖς.
> Κρέουσα: ἐνταῦθα Γοργόν' ἔτεκε Γῆ, δεινὸν τέρας.
> Πρεσβύτης: ἦ παισὶν αὐτῆς σύμμαχον, θεῶν πόνον;
> Κρέουσα: ναί: καί νιν ἔκτειν' ἡ Διὸς Παλλὰς θεά.
> [Πρεσβύτης: ποῖόν τι μορφῆς σχῆμ' ἔχουσαν ἀγρίας;
> Κρέουσα: θώρακ' ἐχίδνης περιβόλοις ὡπλισμένον.][113]
> Πρεσβύτης: ἆρ' οὗτός ἐσθ' ὁ μῦθος ὃν κλύω πάλαι;
> Κρέουσα: ταύτης Ἀθάναν δέρος ἐπὶ στέρνοις ἔχειν.
> Πρεσβύτης: ἣν αἰγίδ' ὀνομάζουσι, Παλλάδος στολήν;
> Κρέουσα: τόδ' ἔσχεν ὄνομα θεῶν ὅτ' ᾖξεν ἐς δόρυ.
>
> Creusa: listen then, you know the battle of the earthborn?
> Old Man: I know it, when the Giants fought against the gods at Phlegra

[111] στέμμασί γ' ἐνδυτόν, ἀμφὶ δὲ Γοργόνες.
…adorned with garlands and Gorgons around it.
[112] Owen, *Ion*, 87–88 n.224; Irvine, "Gorgons at Delphi? Euripides, Ion 224."
[113] Following Kirchhoff, many editors transpose these lines to follow 997 so that they describe the form of the aegis rather than of the Gorgon.

Creusa: There Gaia bore the Gorgon, a terrible monster.
Old Man: An ally for her children and toil for the gods?
Creusa: Yes, and the goddess Pallas, daughter of Zeus, killed it.
[Old Man: What sort of fierce form did it have?
Creusa: A breastplate made with the coils of a viper.]
Old Man: Is this the story that I heard long ago?
Creusa: That Athena bears its hide on her chest.
Old Man: They call it the 'aegis,' Pallas' armor?
Creusa: It has this name because she darted into the battle of the gods.

As Spencer Cole has pointed out, the language of the Old Man's response to the story at line 994 ("Is this the story that I heard long ago?") and Creusa's hedging lack of response seems to self-consciously signal the audience's reaction to Euripides' innovation.[114] Creusa presents Athena's Gorgon-headed aegis as proof of her version of the story, a somewhat evasive answer that draws attention to the multiplicity of stories that surround the origin of Athena's iconic symbol, for example in the contradictory accounts that it was created by Hephaestus for Zeus (*Il*. 15.309-10) or by Metis for Athena (Hesiod frag. 343 M-W).[115] By introducing a reference to this pre-existing uncertainty, Euripides creates a space for a previously unknown alternative. Owen comments that Euripides is blending the story of Gorgo (known from Diodorus 3.70), who was created by Gaia to aid her sons, the Giants, in their battle against the gods with that of the Gorgon, who was slain by Perseus.[116] Whether it originates as a wholescale innovation or simply a lesser-known variant, this version fits elegantly within the themes and plot of the tragedy. It recalls the chorus' description of the Gigantomachy in the parodos.

The references to the Gorgon also serve as a reminder of the potential danger of the earthborn to gods and mortals alike. The Gorgon, like the Giants, is an earthborn monster born to challenge the gods. The same danger of the earthborn snake is obliquely referenced in the

[114] Cole, "Annotated Innovation in Euripides' 'Ion,'" 315.
[115] Mueller, "Athens in a Basket," 384.
[116] Owen, *Ion*, 135 n.988.

parodos in the description of Heracles and Bellerophon who are both fighting serpentine monsters (the Hydra and the Chimera). [117] These images in particular and their associations in the Athenian visual milieu stress their connection to Athena's patronage, a goddess who is a protector and fierce defender of her chosen favorites. The story of the Gorgon woven through the *Ion* demonstrates Athena's ability to transform the dangers of autochthony into an advantage, as she has transformed the Gorgon's poison into both a powerful weapon for Erichthonios' descendants and also a panacea.

The Gorgon's ambiguity is built into the visual impact of the tragedy through the connection to Creusa. Creusa wears bracelets on her wrists.[118] At first, this detail of her costume may be seen as simple ornamentation appropriate to her status as princess, but in her conversation with the Old Man, she reveals that the bracelets she wears were once the amulet given to Erichthonios by Athena containing the drops of Gorgon's blood (999-1007): [119]

> Κρέουσα: Ἐριχθόνιον οἶσθ', ἢ — ; τί δ' οὐ μέλλεις, γέρον;
> Πρεσβύτης: ὃν πρῶτον ὑμῶν πρόγονον ἐξανῆκε γῆ;
> Κρέουσα: τούτῳ δίδωσι Παλλὰς ὄντι νεογόνῳ —
> Πρεσβύτης: τί χρῆμα; μέλλον γάρ τι προσφέρεις ἔπος.
> Κρέουσα: δισσοὺς σταλαγμοὺς αἵματος Γοργοῦς ἄπο.
> Πρεσβύτης: ἰσχὺν ἔχοντας τίνα πρὸς ἀνθρώπου φύσιν;

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[117] Bellerophon is also connected to the serpent imagery in a second way, in that his companion Pegasus was born from the neck of the decapitated Gorgon. While Euripides is actively suppressing this version of the myth of the Gorgon, this further connection might still be made by the audience, who at this point in the play have not yet been introduced to the variant myth.
[118] Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece,* 150. Perhaps these were represented in costume as snake bracelets which were popular ornaments throughout the classical period (cf. Lee).
[119] Owen, *Ion,* 136 n.999. Owen, along with other commentators, find the framing for Creusa telling the story of the amulets a bit ridiculous, considering that a trusted family retainer would probably already know the story and that the retainer's apparent dullness is purely for the benefit of the audience. While certainly the story is being recounted for the audience, I am not convinced that the audience would find the framing so implausible, considering that secrecy and the preservation of secrets is such a strong theme in the myth of Erichthonios' birth and upbringing as well as in a number of Attic festivals, such as the Hersephoria, which appear to be connected to this myth.

Κρέουσα: τὸν μὲν θανάσιμον, τὸν δ᾽ ἀκεσφόρον νόσων.
Πρεσβύτης: ἐν τῷ καθάψασ᾽ ἀμφὶ παιδὶ σώματος;
Κρέουσα: χρυσοῖσι δεσμοῖς: ὁ δὲ δίδωσ᾽ ἐμῷ πατρί.
Πρεσβύτης: κείνου δὲ κατθανόντος ἐς σὲ ἀφίκετο;
Κρέουσα: ναί: κἀπὶ καρπῷ γ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἐγὼ χερὸς φέρω.

Creusa: You know Erichthonios – but of course you must, old man?
Old Man: He whom Ge bore, your first ancestor?
Creusa: Pallas gave him while still a newborn…
Old Man: What is it? You draw out your words.
Creusa: Two drops of blood from the Gorgon.
Old Man: That have what powers over mortals?
Creusa: One killing, one healing of disease.
Old Man: In what did she fasten these around the body of the child?
Creusa: In golden chains: and he gave them to my father.
Old Man: And after he died they came to you?
Creusa: Yes; I wear them on my wrist.

Creusa's bracelets are the infant Erichthonios' amulets containing the Gorgon's poison.[120] The ornamentation of her costume is transformed in meaning to a physical tie to her autochthonous ancestor. [121] In the drops of blood that it contains it represents the powerful abilities of the earthborn. This is the source of the poison that Creusa attempts to use against Ion. In the opening of the final scene, when Creusa's poisoning has failed and Ion, in anger, has chased Creusa to the altar of Apollo (1250-1251), the dangers of Creusa's autochthonous nature are made explicit. She has nearly poisoned her own son and nearly ended the autochthonous line of Athens out of ignorance. Ion attributes her actions to her autochthonous ancestry, dwelling on the image of the dangerous serpent implicit in this connection (1261-1263):

ὦ ταυρόμορφον ὄμμα Κηφισοῦ πατρός,
οἵαν ἔχιδναν τήνδ᾽ ἔφυσας ἢ πυρὸς
δράκοντ᾽ ἀναβλέποντα φοινίαν φλόγα,

[120] Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*, 50–51.
[121] Mueller, "Athens in a Basket," 386. Mueller points out that the secrecy of the drops of the blood alongside their history, and the way that they are kept in proximity to the body, mark them as inalienable possessions of the Erechtheid line.

> Oh bull-formed eye of ancestor Cephisus, what sort of viper you produced or deadly serpent casting up a glance of fire!

As powerful as the claim to autochthony is, it is also a dangerous one. Autochthons challenge the will of the gods. Ion demonstrates that he shares his mother's potential for destructive harm against his enemies when he tries to have her pulled from the altar to be killed. Fortunately for Creusa, Apollo sends the priestess to intercede in time, bringing with her the basket in which she found the abandoned infant Ion.

The items in the basket are the objects that begin the reconciliation of Athens to autochthony in the tragedy.[122] They emphasize the protectiveness of autochthony rather than its danger and tie Ion into his Athenian heritage.[123] Each token serves not only to prove Creusa's maternity through her knowledge of the items, but to emphasize the legitimacy of Ion's place in the Athenian royal family through objects that are both personal to Creusa and potent in their meaning to the audience. They echo the imagery of the city presented in the parodos, emphasizing the favor that the autochthons of Athens receive from their patron goddess. The three tokens serve to emphasize Ion's connection to Athens and position him – who was conceived, born, and left to die in a subterranean cave – as the legitimate successor of Athenian royal autochthony. [124]

The first token that Ion produces from the basket is the cloth that Creusa wrapped the exposed infant in (1417-1423): [125]

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[122] Mueller, 394–95. I follow Mueller in assuming that the props on stage were actual objects as indicated by the imperative (ἰδού) and deictic (τόδ᾽) in 1424.
[123] Wolff, "The Design and Myth in Euripides' Ion," 174.
[124] Rosivach, "Earthborns and Olympians," 293.
[125] Mueller, "Athens in a Basket," 392. As Mueller points out, the incompleteness of the weaving serves a specific purpose. It reminds the audience once again of the sharp break that the god has created in Creusa's life, the incompleteness of the weaving guiding the audience to think of the girl's abrupt change in circumstances that led her to abandon this piece of practice work. It also gives specificity to the token. As Ion points out (1418), many girls make weavings, so the

Κρέουσα: σκέψασθ᾽: ὃ παῖς ποτ᾽ οὖσ᾽ ὕφασμ᾽ ὕφην᾽ ἐγὼ —
Ἴων: ποῖόν τι; πολλὰ παρθένων ὑφάσματα.
Κρέουσα: οὐ τέλεον, οἷον δ᾽ ἐκδίδαγμα κερκίδος.
Ἴων: μορφὴν ἔχον τίν᾽; ὥς με μὴ ταύτῃ λάβῃς.
Κρέουσα: Γοργὼ μὲν ἐν μέσοισιν ἠτρίοις πέπλων.
Ἴων: ὦ Ζεῦ, τίς ἡμᾶς ἐκκυνηγετεῖ πότμος;
Κρέουσα: κεκρασπέδωται δ᾽ ὄφεσιν αἰγίδος τρόπον.

Creusa: Look! Cloth that I wove as a child –
Ion: What sort of cloth? There are many weavings of girls.
Creusa: Not completed, a sort of practice work of the loom.
Ion: What shape does it have? You will not catch me out in this way!
Creusa: A Gorgon in the middle threads of the robe…
Ion: Oh Zeus, what destiny hunts me down!
Creusa: …and bordered in serpents like the aegis.

The Gorgon of the aegis returns, this time in Creusa's childish weaving which Ion examines.[126] A visual connection between mother and son is formed as he holds the cloth, the woven Gorgon paralleled by the bracelets that Creusa wears, which the audience knows are relics of Athena's defeat of the Gorgon, like the goddess' aegis.

This connection between Ion and Athens is continued in the second birth token which Creusa identifies (1426-1431):

Ἴων: ἔστιν τι πρὸς τῷδ᾽, ἢ μόνῳ τῷδ᾽ εὐτυχεῖς;
Κρέουσα: δράκοντες: ἀρχαῖόν τι παγχρύσῳ γένει
δώρημ᾽ Ἀθάνας, ἢ τέκν᾽ ἐντρέφειν λέγει —
Ἐριχθονίου γε τοῦ πάλαι μιμήματα.
Ἴων: τί δρᾶν, τί χρῆσθαι, φράζε μοι, χρυσώματι;

incompleteness of this one not only serves as a sure symbol that Creusa is not simply guessing at the contents, but that the tokens are indeed a corroboration of her story.

[126] Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis*, 45; Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 275–336; Jones, "The Sculptural Poetics of Euripides' Ion," 752–53. Stieber points out the use of the technical language of weaving as well as metaphors of craft that pervade the *Ion*. Jones argues that the description of this cloth as a peplos brings in parallels to the Panathenaea. However, I am not convinced by Jones' suggestion that the audience's primary reference for this image would be "the young temple boy in the central panel of the Parthenon's east frieze," especially given the difficulties of seeing the frieze in situ and the fact that many audience members would have their own actual experience of the Panathenaea festival and seeing the real Panathenaic peplos. If Hurwit's suggestion that the blank space on the wall of the Erechtheum beside the caryatid porch was used to display the Panthenaic peplos, then the presence of this actual textile on display on the acropolis seems to be an even stronger connection than the Parthenon frieze.

Κρέουσα: δέραια παιδὶ νεογόνῳ φέρειν, τέκνον.

Ion: What is there besides this? Or are you fortunate in this alone?
Creusa: Serpents: An ancient gift of Athena, the golden kind, which she said to raise children in – in imitation of Erichthonios long ago.
Ion: To do what with the gold? To use it how? Explain it to me.
Creusa: Necklaces for the newborn infant to wear, child.

The amulets, first mentioned in Hermes' prologue (21-27), further reiterate the connection between Ion and his uniquely Athenian identity.[127] They build on the connection of the weaving, emphasizing the echo between the amulets that Ion now holds and those Creusa wears. If commenters are right and Hermes' line about the custom amongst the Erechtheidai is meant to be a reference to practice in contemporary Athens, [128] then the connection created in this recognition scene is not only between son and mother, nor even just son and home city, but may have been a further level of connection that was felt by the audience as well.[129]

The final token which Creusa describes strengthens this connection. It is a wreath of olive (1433-1436):

στέφανον ἐλαίας ἀμφέθηκά σοι τότε,
ἣν πρῶτ᾽ Ἀθάνα σκόπελον εἰσηνέγκατο,
ὅς, εἴπερ ἔστιν, οὔποτ᾽ ἐκλείπει χλόην,
θάλλει δ᾽, ἐλαίας ἐξ ἀκηράτου γεγώς.

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127 …κείνῳ γὰρ ἡ Διὸς κόρη
φρουρὼ παραζεύξασα φύλακε σώματος
δισσὼ δράκοντε, παρθένοις Ἀγλαυρίσι
δίδωσι σῴζειν· ὅθεν Ἐρεχθείδαις ἐκεῖ
νόμος τις ἔστιν ὄφεσιν ἐν χρυσηλάτοις
τρέφειν τέκνα. ἀλλ᾽ ἣν εἶχε παρθένος χλιδὴν
τέκνῳ προσάψασ᾽ ἔλιπεν ὡς θανουμένῳ.

For the daughter of Zeus, having set beside him [Erichthonios] two serpents as guards of his body, gave him to the daughters of Aglaurus for safekeeping: from which in Athens there is a custom amongst the Erechtheidai to raise children in snakes of beaten gold. Fastening the ornament that the girl [i.e. Creusa] brought to her child she left him to die.

128 Grégoire et al., *Euripide*, 184 n.1.

129 See Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*, 50–51.

> I put around you a wreath of olive which Athena once brought into the promontory which, if it is there, has not yet lost its green and flourishes, born from the pure olive.

The wreath's evergreen leaves specifically connect it to the immortal olive that Athena gave the citizens of Athens, a gift sometimes tied to the city's founder, Cecrops.[130] The city's sculptural program and images of early ancestors are once again brought before the eyes of the theater's spectators. The connection between the tragedy and the mythic history of the acropolis is reified in this prop, which is linked to both the gift of olive, foundational to Athenian life, but also to the specific tree on the acropolis that was taken as evidence of Athena's favor.

The first token, the weaving, serves the purpose needed by the dramatic situation, proving that Creusa knew what had been left with the exposed infant. In many tragedies, a single object serves to complete the recognition (e.g. the scar in Euripides' *Electra*), but the *Ion* belabors the point, bringing out two more tokens before Ion is fully convinced of his mother's identity. The manipulation of a sequence of tokens for theatrical effect is not without precedent. The recognition scene in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* inaugurates the tradition of the three tokens.[131] In this scene, the tokens go from ambiguous signs of Orestes presence to the discovery of the man himself, thus playing out a process of revelation. The tokens of the recognition scene in the *Ion*, however, move rather from the most personal – the childish, handmade swaddling clothes – to the most generic – a wreath. This sequence shows that the scene serves a greater purpose than just connecting mother and son to each other, greater than even drawing a connection between their characters and their history. The connection is shown to reach beyond the stage to the

[130] Bibliotheca 3.14.1 explicitly connects the two, but they are also tied in the Periclean building program which brought together the ancient olive and the tomb of Cecrops in the complex known as the Erechtheion.
[131] Euripides mocks the significance of these three tokens n his *Electra*.

audience as their familiarity with each token grows stronger, moving from the personal to the communal.[132]

For while the childish weaving links mother and son, the snake necklaces for the newborn are said to be part of a practice for all Athenian children, drawing Ion into the history and community of the entire city of Athens. Likewise, the final token, an olive wreath, lacks the personal touch of the childish weaving, but instead serves to tie Ion to the community at large and to Athena, inasmuch as the unwilted leaves act as signs of her influence. These objects and their message of reconciliation and healing stand in contrast to the beginning of this scene where the violence, danger, and impulsiveness of autochthony are emphasized. Through these objects, the emphasis is shifted to the more positive – to the connection to the earth and the special relationship with patron gods that autochthons receive.

The references to snakes and serpentine monsters built up through the course of the tragedy reach their culmination in this final recognition scene. Creusa's bracelets and Ion's birth tokens not only create a visual link between the two of them, but an association with the imagery of Athens' most sacred places. Ion initially appeared holding a bow and laurel branch (522), wreathed with laurel,[133] an image of his father. In the final scene, he appears with the Gorgon's head, snake amulets, and a wreath of olive. Athena's sacred symbols, particularly ones

[132] Mueller, "Athens in a Basket," 393; Mueller, *Objects as Actors*, 81. Mueller points this out particularly in connection to the golden snake bracelets, the replication of the practice has transformed it from a symbol of the goddess "connection to one particular family to her patronage of the city at large."
[133] Hoffer, "Violence, Culture, and the Workings of Ideology in Euripides' 'Ion,'" 296.

associated with her ancient patronage of Athens,[134] link mother and son and prepare the audience for the concluding image of the play, the arrival of the goddess herself.

The visual link reaches its culmination in the appearance of Athena onstage at the very end of the play. She likely wears, as in almost all depictions in the Athenian visual milieu, the aegis, the appearance of which (and its connection to Erichthonios and the Athenian royal family) has been thoroughly discussed in the tragedy. In the final scene, Ion's legitimacy in the Athenian royal family is reiterated visually through the connection in serpentine motifs in the objects he holds, the bracelets Creusa wears, and the aegis of the city's patron goddess. The use of props and imagery to create a visual link that substantiates a confusing and contested genealogy is a similar gesture to the connection created visually on the Berlin kylix (fig. 14). Euripides shows an awareness of how visual parallelism can create a sense of association between figures.

The final revelation of snake imagery in this scene also responds to the unsettling aspects of autochthony. Earthborn creatures stand in opposition to civilization and order in most myths – the Giants and the similarly chthonic creatures like the Chimera and the Hydra are forces of chaos and disorder, opposing the rule of the gods and the progress of human civilization. Even the autochthonous early kings of Athens, whose dangerous power is mostly turned outward against the city's enemies, are not completely unproblematic in the stories passed down about them. The succession of kings is frequently troubled (as demonstrated by Creusa who has no brothers to succeed her father, leading to her foreign husband coming to power in the city), and the members of the royal household have troubled relationships with the gods, as when the

[134] There are other images besides the snake and the Gorgon that are strongly linked with Athena in the Athenian visual milieu (the clearest example of this being the owl), but that are not strongly associated with Athens' autochthonous history like the image of the snake.

Cecropids are driven mad by Athena or Erechtheus is killed by Poseidon. Ion's succession as heir serves to balance the power and chaos of the earthborn with Apolline order and purification, ridding the Erechtheid line of the negative aspects of autochthony.

Apollo is, after all, the consummate anti-autochthon. He is a second-generation god and his birth is rejected by the land itself until his mother finds the floating island of Delos to bear him.[135] Delphi is a particularly significant location for Apollo as an anti-autochthon as it is the place where he killed the serpent Python and took control of Delphi from Gaia herself.[136] Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris,* dated to around the same time as the *Ion,* includes a choral ode near the end of the play that recounts the infant Apollo's killing of Python and fight with Gaia over control of the sanctuary (*IT* 1234-1283). Apollo's role as Ion's father brings his civilizing influence into the Athenian royal family. Creusa's words upon recognizing that Ion is her son, gesture towards this role of Apollo in reinvigorating the Erechtheid line. She says, "the earthborn house no longer sees night, but looks up at the light of the sun" (ὅ τε γηγενέτας δόμος οὐκέτι νύκτα δέρκεται, / ἀελίου δ᾽ ἀναβλέπει λαμπάσιν 1466-1467).[137] This purification is represented through the harmless destruction of the poisonous drop of Gorgon's blood, while the healing drop remains.[138]

Apollo's role in mediating and balancing out the dangerous aspects of autochthony is crucial to the tragedy, but the final scene places the vision for Athens' future under Athena's

[135] Cf. *Homeric Hymn to Apollo,* Pindar *Prosodion to Delos,* strophe 2.
[136] Cf Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology,* 68–69. Dowden discusses the sources on Apollo's arrival to Delphi and Python as representative of autochthonous land rights. The rejection of other lands as host to Apollo's both is an important element if the *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo*.
[137] Imagery of light and its connection to Apollo is pervasive in the tragedy, appearing in Hermes' prologue, Ion's introductory song, and Creusa's monody. Cf. Halleran, *Stagecraft in Euripides*.
[138] Mueller, "Athens in a Basket," 387.

purview. She is no mere messenger sent to manage her brother's domestic embarrassments. [139] The incorporation of Apollo into the Athenian royal line falls literally under Athena's aegis. Her appearance ex machina at the end of the play is the answer to the imagery of the acropolis and Athens' autochthonous ancestors that is built through the tragedy. Ion's transformation to Athenian ancestor is complete and the Gorgon-headed aegis links goddess, mother, and son. Her closing pronouncements in the play about Ion's future in Athens act as the final culmination of this imagery, as the motifs of the tragedy seamlessly weave themselves into Athens' visual environment.

## CONCLUSION

Euripides' *Ion* creates a double of Athens in the lavish descriptions of Delphi, mapping the audience's familiar experience with the imagery of the city onto the setting of the play. The visual references draw on material depictions of autochthony and highlight the potential issues that autochthony brings with it. Euripides' play seeks to reconcile the myth of Athenian autochthony with the alternative Ionic lineage that it displaces. In doing so, Euripides also seeks to purify the contemporary Athenian legacy of earthborn autochthony from its negative aspects through the introduction of Apollo, a god of purification and the ultimate anti-autochthon, into the Athenian royal line.

In the plot, themes, and imagery of this play, Euripides demonstrates the influence that the Athenian visual milieu has on the construction of tragedy. Many of the issues that scholars have found with this play over the years – the innovation in myth, the long ekphrastic passages,

[139] Contra Lefkowitz, *Euripides and the Gods*, 123. While Lefkowitz is certainly convincing in contesting the ironic, atheistic readings of the tragedy, she overemphasizes Apollo's role in the *Ion*.

the strange tonal shifts, the appearance of Athena at the end, et cetera – seem more natural and understandable when the role of images and architecture in the city is taken into account. The *Ion* is a production in which the city and the acropolis which looms above the theater becomes a part of the play itself.

Similar issues of tone and interpretation have haunted the *Helen*, a tragedy produced at around the same time as the *Ion*, which also evokes the authority of the visual tradition. Rather than weaving images into the background of the plot as the Ion does and leaning on the implicit persuasiveness of imagery, the *Helen* directly explores the relationship between the protagonist and her place in the Athenian visual milieu. Euripides' tragedy reconciles the multiplicity of images of Helen with her role in Attic cult through an exploration of the act of interpretation and an interrogation into the assumptions about the meaning of images, as we will see in the following chapter.

# The Painted Protagonist of Euripides' *Helen*

Euripides' *Helen* is a tragedy with a sustained and deep engagement with the visual tradition. Partly, this is a reflection of the character of Helen herself and the intersection of her role in the visual, literary, and religious traditions. She is the epitome of beauty, her appearance demands desire, and that desire, in turn, instigates a cycle of violence and reprisal that characterizes her. This idea of Helen and her role in instigating conflict was particularly relevant at the time of the production of this play when Athens was embroiled in war with Sparta, Helen's homeland. Euripides' tragedy draws on the authority of the visual tradition before complicating and redefining those images to create a Helen who transforms in the course of the play from the always-abducted Spartan queen to an Athenian heroine with the power to end the cycle of violence.[1]

Helen is a character with a robust life in the literature, theater, religion, and visual tradition in Athens. This tragedy begins with a Helen who is stripped from her conventional history and behavior, whose identity is, first and foremost, rooted in her beauty. Euripides draws from the robust visual tradition that surrounds Helen in his creation of this character, particularly negotiating between the long tradition of images that present Helen's desirability and newer types of imagery that are tied to the growth of Helen's status as cult figure in Attica. Helen's

[1] I have generally classed these scenes together as "abductions" in this discussion, though I realize the deficiency of this choice of term due to the connotations of resistance in English. What I wish to emphasize is not Helen's consent or lack thereof, but the way that Helen's desirability leads the men who encounter her to take physical possession of her and bring her somewhere else as well as the way that these abductions demand violent retribution. As is described at length later in the chapter, this includes, for example, Theseus abducting her to Attica, her brothers taking her back to Sparta, Paris abducting/seducing her to Troy, and Menelaus bringing her back to Sparta.

famous beauty and the role it plays in defining her identity is exhibited in a series of scenes of misrecognition. The first two emphasize the dangers of Helen's beauty and the way that it makes her the object of cyclical abduction and revenge. Helen's own recognition of this cycle leads her to drastically change her own appearance and then use the persuasive power of this new imagery to complete her and her husband's escape.[2]

## BACKGROUND

The *Helen* is dated – with relative surety – to 412 BCE.[3] Like the *Ion*, it is an "alphabetic play," preserved more through accident than because of its purposeful canonization.[4] Perhaps even more than the *Ion*, it has suffered from criticism stemming from the over-privileging of Aristotle's fourth-century commentary on tragedy.[5] The successful reunion and escape of Helen and Menelaus at the end of the play has struck later audiences as deficient in dramatic

[2] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 87. As Marshall points out, this escape plot is the most innovative part of the play and crucial role of the double costume and mask change is a particularly unusual gesture.
[3] Kannicht, *Helena*, ll. 78–79; Burian, *Helen*, 40. The alignment of several comments in the scholia allows for secure dating. Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* is dated to 411 BCE by scholia to lines 190 and 841. Scholia to lines 1060-1061 of the *Thesmophoriazusae* places the performance of Euripides' *Andromeda* in the previous year and the performance of the Helen in a tetralogy with the *Andromeda* is secured by a scholion to *Thesmophoriazusae* 1012.
[4] Mastronarde, "Text and Transmission," 20–21.
[5] Griffith, "Some Thoughts on the 'Helena' of Euripides"; Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides.*; Pippin, "Euripides' 'Helen'"; Podlecki, "The Basic Seriousness of Euripides' Helen"; Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen." Griffith, Zuntz, and Pippin (Burnett) are important in the turn in criticism from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dismissal of the Helen as insufficiently tragic. Although they still maintain that the tragedy is comic in nature, they draw attention to the importance of ideas and politics in the play. Podlecki and Segal both discuss this history of criticism of the tragedy and argue against privileging a comic reading while not denying the play's comic elements.

seriousness and lacking in the clear presence of *hubris* and *hamartia* that post-Aristotelean discourse on tragedy has come to expect.[6]

In the *Helen*, the eponymous heroine never goes to Troy; instead she has been taken to Egypt under the care of King Proteus where she has remained for seventeen years. She has been replaced in Troy by the *eidolon*, an identical copy that Hera made from a cloud. At the start of the tragedy, Proteus is dead and his son, Theoclymenos, wants to take Helen as his wife. She has taken refuge at Proteus' tomb and delivers the play's prologue there, explaining her situation. She encounters Teucer in the next scene, who, before leaving for his own wanderings, tells her of the fate of her family and that Menelaus has gone missing, Then, Menelaus himself is shipwrecked in Egypt. After a difficult reunion and a convoluted ruse that involves costume changes for both husband and wife, the two manage to escape from Egypt. The tragedy ends with the *ex machina* appearance of Helen's brothers, the Dioscuri, who prohibit Theoclymenos' pursuit and prophesy Helen's coming apotheosis.

The unusual variation on Helen's role in the Trojan War is already known from the 'Palinode' of Stesichorus, a lyric poet from the late seventh and early sixth century.[7] Stesichorus' defense of Helen also has a phantom in Troy while the real Helen resides in Egypt under Proteus' protection.[8] While Euripides is not starting with a completely unknown variation, his

[6] Pippin, "Euripides' 'Helen'"; Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived*; Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen." Anne Pippin Burnett's work has been particularly influential in the serious reconsideration of the *Helen*, Charles Segal provides background on this reappraisal as well as his own influential reading of the play as a philosophical romance.
[7] Cf. Herodotus *Histories* 2.112-119, which gives a rationalized version of the same story. Herodotus claims to have heard the tale from priests in Egypt. Euripides *Electra*, which was likely produced some years before the *Helen*, also presents this variant (1280-1283).
[8] P. Oxy. 2506, frag. 26, col. 1 = Stesichorus frag. 193. 12-16 (*PMG*). Kannicht, *Helena*, ll. 30–31; Burian, *Helen*, 4–6; Wright, *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies*, 85–113. Kannicht and Burian discuss the evidence for Stesichorus' poem and how it aligns with Euripides' plot. Wright argues

version does contradict the Homeric epics and the general presentation of Helen in the theatrical tradition.[9] The end of the play also seems to be unprecedented in its resolution of how the couple makes their escape from Egypt. It is particularly theatrical in its focus on the role of costume and mask change. The tension between the generally accepted story and the truth is one of the themes that dominates the play.[10] The audience is frequently confronted by variations on the familiar story and challenged to make the play as presented fit into their worldview.

In a gesture relatively common to the work of Euripides, the play ends by connecting the myth and the presentation of the heroes in the play with a specific cult site.[11] In this case, the site is an island off the coast of Attica near Sounion, known in ancient times as Helen,[12] where Hermes first set Helen down after taking her from Sparta (1666-1675) and the site of a cult to the goddess. Helen's deification is not anything unusual by Athenian standards. She had particularly prominent cultic roles in two other outlying demes – Aphidna, where she was supposedly kept by Theseus after his abduction of her, and Rhamnous, where she was worshipped as the daughter of

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that Euripides is solely responsible for the innovation, an argument that Burian (pg. 6 n.12) finds unconvincing.

[9] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 89; Edmunds, *Stealing Helen*, 136–42. Marshall suggests that the variation with the *eidolon* was also presented in Aeschylus' satyr-play *Proteus* which accompanied the *Oresteia*.
Cf. Euripides' *Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*, and *Electra*. *Hecuba* and the *Trojan Women* refer to Helen's presence in Troy and give no indication that the woman is meant to be seen as a phantom. The *Electra* combines both versions. The chorus (213-214), Clytemnestra (1027-1029), and Electra (1080-1085) all follow the conventional line of criticizing Helen for her unfaithful behavior in going to Troy with Paris. The Dioscuri who appear *ex machina* (with Helen?) at the end of the tragedy give the version with the phantom (1278-1283).

[10] Pippin, "Euripides' 'Helen.'"

[11] Dunn, *Tragedy's End*.

[12] Modern Makronissos. Due to the troubled recent history of the island, little archaeological work has been published about this site. However, the island was recently (July 2, 2019) declared an archaeological area of interest.

Nemesis.[13] Herodotus gives a sense of the extent of the impact of Helen's role in Attic mythology in the fifth century. He says that in the early years of the Peloponnesian War, the deme of Decelea (about 120 stadia away from Athens) was spared the ravaging that devastated other demes because of the mythological role of the people of Decelea in helping the Dioscuri recover Helen. The legend had led to a long-standing privileged relationship between the deme and Sparta, which continued even into the Peloponnesian War (Herodotus *Histories* 9.73).[14] In spring of 413 BCE, about a year before the production of the *Helen*, Spartan forces took control of the deme (Thucydides *History* 7.18.1-19.3). Thucydides sees Spartan control of this deme as one of the principal reasons for Athens' eventual loss in the war, particularly as it disrupted Athenian control over their silver mines, allowed Boeotian raids of Attic farms, and forced the city to be constantly on guard against attacks (7.27.3-28.4).[15] While Helen was also worshipped as a goddess in her hometown of Sparta as well (notably at Therapne, where she seems to have been an important goddess at the temple known now as the "Menelaion"),[16] Euripides downplays

[13] Herodotus *Histories* 9.73; Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca historica* 4.63. Plutarch *Theseus* 32; Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.17.5, 41.3.

[14] Connor, "The Problem of Athenian Civic Ideology." Connor, arguing against the idea of Athenian cultural and political homogeneity, suggests that there was "some sympathy in the area for Sparta."

[15] Interestingly, Thucydides writes that Alcibiades proposed to the Spartans that they should occupy Decelea saying that it was, ὅπερ Ἀθηναῖοι μάλιστα αἰεὶ φοβοῦνται ("the very thing which the Athenians always fear most" 6.91.6). While he goes on to list several advantages that control of the deme would bring to Sparta (6.91.7), he says nothing about why the Athenians always feel afraid of losing that deme in particular. Herodotus' suggestion about the close relationship between Sparta and Decelea might be the source of Athens' anxiety.

[16] Catling, "Excavations at the Menelaion, Sparta, 1973-1976"; Antonaccio, "Contesting the Past," 98; Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 80–81; Antonaccio, *An Archaeology of Ancestors*, 155–66. The name Menelaion was attached to the structure upon its discovery by Ludwig Ross in the early nineteenth century, but excavations in the 1970s and 1980s by Hector and Richard Catling have revealed evidence that Helen was much more central to the cult than was first assumed.

her role in Spartan cult and instead emphasizes her connection to Attica.[17] The buffoonish character of the Spartan Menelaus in this play particularly drives home the difference between Spartan and Athenian cult, where worshippers of Helen generally dismissed Menelaus completely or treated him as a figure of secondary importance. During a time of war with the Spartans, it seems pointed that Menelaus and his kingship are relegated to secondary importance while Helen herself, in the guise of a faithful agent of divine action, finds her final home in Attica rather than the Peloponnese.[18]

## IMAGES OF HELEN

Throughout the play, Euripides evokes the image of Helen from the Attic visual milieu and uses the audience's knowledge of this tradition to shape and manipulate their interpretation of the play. Helen became a focus for discourse on the relationship between beauty – especially female beauty – and deception in the fifth century.[19] In this tragedy, Euripides emphasizes Helen's appearance and the reactions that it elicits as the core truth of her identity. In doing so, he builds off of this established and prevalent visual tradition.

For the original audience, the image of Helen was repeated throughout the city and visible in domestic, political, and religious settings. Further examination of these images can

[17] Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, 323. Foley sees the omission of reference to the cult at Therapne in the Dioscuri's speech as a pointed denial of the priority of Helen's role as wife.
[18] Dunn, *Tragedy's End*, 136–47. Dunn sees the aition and prophecy in the Helen as "a minor curiosity whose relevance to the plot is altogether doubtful." However, this perception of the insignificance of the ending is partly due to Dunn's synchronic and literary approach which ignores the political and religious context of the tragedies.
[19] Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* is perhaps the most famous example of this. It drew on ongoing interest in interpretation of Homeric epic, which Euripides also participates in. Worman, *The Cast of Character*, 108–48. Worman discusses the ways that verbal technique and visual impact are interlaced in the character of Helen who emerges in the fifth century as a visual metaphor for deceptive, sophistic style.

provide insight into what Euripides and his audience were drawing from in their understanding of Helen and exactly how Euripides deploys and manipulates this visual tradition to create this complicated tragedy.

Helen has a long history in the Athenian visual environment. As is customary in Attic pottery, she is frequently identified by a label, but in the absence of a label it is not any one particular attribute that secures her identity, but primarily the relationship to other figures in the scene that fixes Helen's identification. She is depicted as an attractive young woman with long hair, either tied up or with curls falling on her shoulders. Her clothes are not standardized, but are usually elaborate. Occasionally she wears a diadem to indicate her royal status.[20]

Despite the mythological conceit that Helen is distinct as the most beautiful woman in the world, in the visual tradition she belongs to a type shared by many other female figures. She is always presented as the idealized *parthenos* or *nymphe*, an attractive young woman ready for marriage. While there are several positive traits associated with beauty – youth, long hair, fine clothes and jewelry – it is mostly an absence of imperfections and distinguishing features that identifies a figure as beautiful.[21] Beauty is signified through the reaction that it demands from others.[22] Helen's beauty is what leads to her effect on men and, in turn, her constant marriages, abductions, seductions, and returns. The superiority of Helen's beauty above that of other women is conveyed not through any indication in her iconography of any individual scene, but through

[20] see *LIMC* 4, pt 1 s.v Hélène
[21] Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, 61–67; Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, 3. Blondell argues that beauty in the ancient Greek world was seen as an objective rather than a subjective quality. As she puts it, "the objectivity of beauty helps explain why beautiful people were typically thought of as generic in appearance rather than uniquely individuated, and personal idiosyncrasies less a source of charm than a regrettable departure from the ideal."
[22] Konstan, *Beauty*, 62–72. See Konstan for a discussion of the connection between beauty and erotic desire.

the multiplicity of her abductions. While for most women in myth, there is just one moment in which a woman's beauty is at its peak and she is singled out, for Helen this moment repeats over and over again.[23] While there is nothing truly unique about Helen's appearance in the visual tradition, it is the number of different partners she is depicted with that captures the sense of her beauty's superiority.

Helen is particularly associated with scenes of marriage and abduction, though her partner and the emphasis of the scene changes over time.[24] These abduction and marriage scenes fall into a number of different types depicting different moments in Helen's mythic history. The most common of these scenes on Attic pottery of the sixth and fifth century show Helen in four different scenarios: being abducted by Theseus, brought back to Sparta by her brothers the Dioscuri, led off by Paris, or re-captured in Troy by Menelaus. All of these types of scenes emphasize Helen's role as an archetype of the desirable woman.[25] Although many heroes are shown abducting various women, Helen is the only woman shown being abducted by so many different men. The tradition of Helen and Theseus, the first evidence of which appears in the sixth century, may grow out of this idea of Helen as a paradigm of desirability.[26] A stamnos from Athens gives an example of this type showing Theseus' abduction of Helen (fig. 19). The stamnos was found in a grave in Marathon and dates between 430 and 420 BCE. It depicts Theseus, on the left, leading Helen to a chariot driven by his companion Perithoos while Helen's

[23] Calame, "From Choral Poetry to Tragic Stasimon"; Calame, "De la poésie chorale au stasimon tragique: Pragmatique de voix féminines," 191–202; Murnaghan, "The Choral Plot of Euripides' Helen," 164; Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, 47–48. Calame connects this theme with Helen's role in Spartan myth and cult as a *choregos*, who stands out from the other girls.
[24] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*
[25] Jenkins, "Is There Life after Marriage?" As Jenkins points out, the abduction motif remains a model for the iconographic representation of the Athenian wedding ceremony throughout the sixth and fifth centuries.
[26] Mills, *Theseus, Tragedy, and the Athenian Empire*, 7–10.

sister Phoibe watches.[27] Theseus, who is distinguished from other heroes by his petasos and dual spears is represented as a young man, while Helen is a young, marriageable woman with ornate clothing and a diadem signifying her royal status. While this iconographic tradition of Theseus'

Figure 19 Attic red-figure stamnos by Polygnotos, 430-420 BCE. National Archaeological Museum in Athens, 18063. Found in a grave in Marathon. LIMC IV Helene no. 35. Theseus (far left) leading Helen to a chariot driven by Peirithoos. Helen's sister, Phoibe (on the right), looks on. Their names are inscribed overhead in white characters: Theseus, Helen, Peri(tho)os, Phoiba.

[27] This sister is also named in Agamemnon's prologue in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* (50).

abduction of Helen dates to the sixth century, it takes on particular relevance at the end of the fifth century when Theseus' abduction of Helen is reimagined as a precursor to the conflict between Athens and Sparta.

Particularly important to understanding the context of the *Helen* are images of the reunion of Helen and Menelaus at Troy. These scenes have a long history in the Athenian visual milieu. Starting with a discussion of the development of this iconography will allow some insight into which elements remain constant and uncontestable in the imagery of Helen and Menelaus and which elements are flexible and subject to change. This will also reveal which elements are unique to, or especially emphatic within, the visual tradition in contrast to the literary, as well as what features were relatively new or pervasive in the late fifth century when Euripides' works were initially produced.

Menelaus' place in the iconographic tradition is almost entirely intertwined with that of his wife.[28] A small number of vases show Menelaus with other participants in the Trojan War in scenes of combat, sacrifice, dueling, or healing.[29] However, representations of Menelaus are dominated by scenes of his reunion with Helen. Artists depict Menelaus as a mature man, bearded, dressed either as a king, in a long chiton and himation, or, more commonly, as a warrior armed with either a sword or spears.[30] Like Helen, he belongs to a broader type (one shared by other warriors and kings) and is mostly identified through labeling or through his relationship with other figures in the scene.

[28] As is also true of Paris whose iconographic tradition predominantly shows him with Helen or in scenes of the judgement of Paris, which are innately connected to Helen. In contrast, Helen's suitor Theseus has a separate, robust iconographic tradition.
[29] Even the scene of Menelaus and Patroclus is rare in this early period.
[30] see *LIMC* 8, pt 1 s.v Menelaos

Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell has traced the development of different types of scenes, showing the reunion of Helen and Menelaus through the sixth and fifth centuries.[31] He points out that in the sixth century this encounter was the most popular Trojan War scene. The couple is shown at the moment of their reunion, either facing each other or with Menelaus leading Helen away. The focus in these early scenes is on the incongruity of Helen's reaction. Menelaus is a threatening figure, fully armed, bearing a sword, but the action of the scene stands in sharp contrast with his threatening appearance.[32] Instead of the expected violence of an armed warrior, the couple emulates bridal poses with Helen either clasping her mantle (*anakalypsis*) or Menelaus holding her by the wrist. In the majority of these scenes, the couple shares a mutual gaze, a further indication that this scene has nuptial overtones.

In the fifth century, according to Stansbury-O'Donnell's analysis, the iconographic type shifts from these nuptial-toned, sedate reunion scenes to scenes of Menelaus pursuing Helen.[33] Helen and Menelaus, whose reunion at Troy had been a common subject in art for over a century, had begun to decline in popularity at the beginning of the fifth century. Yet the popularity of Helen and Menelaus as subjects of pottery was reinvigorated by a new trend, an interest in dynamic scenes of erotic pursuit. Many examples of this type appear in the early fifth century showing young men or gods chasing fleeing women. The reunion of Helen and Menelaus was reconfigured into a scene of this type. Helen's role as the archetype of beauty

[31] Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting."
[32] Sourvinou-Inwood, "Menace and Pursuit: Differentiation and the Creation of Meaning"; Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen," 166. The work of Sourvinou-Inwood shows the iconographic difference between erotic pursuit with spears (in which the weapon acts as a signifier of ephebic status, but does not connote violence against the woman pursued) and attacking with swords (where violent intention against the woman is implied). As Hedreen points out, there is only one unambiguous extant example where Menelaus is shown armed with a spear rather than a sword.
[33] Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting."

made her an obvious choice for the subject of erotic pursuit. While some scholars have suggested that this image is a visual representation of literary narrative, Guy Hedreen has argued against the assumptions of earlier scholars that Menelaus' pursuit of Helen necessarily has a literary precedent.[34] Instead, he suggests that the popularity of the pursuit motif led to its proliferation and the incorporation of this narrative into the type.

These scenes show Helen running and glancing back over her shoulder to look at Menelaus, who usually holds a sword as a sign of his violent intent. A hydria from the British Museum, dated to ca. 480 BCE, gives an example of this new mode of iconography (fig. 20). Menelaus stands at left, reaching for Helen with his left hand while he threatens her with a sword in his right hand. Helen stands in the center of the vessel, gesticulating in fear.[35] Another woman stands at right, gesturing towards the couple. This woman has been identified as Aphrodite interceding to protect Helen.[36] An amphora by the Altamura Painter, dated between 470 and 450 BCE and also in London, shows even more emphatically the motion of the figures rather than the stationery interaction pictured during the sixth century (fig. 21). This development in type replaces the sedate reunion of the sixth century and in doing so changes the tone of the reunion.

[34] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*; Clement, "The Recovery of Helen"; Kahil, "Hélène"; Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen." Hedreen argues against Kahil's and Clement's assumption that these images must be closely modeled on literary sources.
[35] Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen," 169.
[36] Woodford, *The Trojan War in Ancient Art*, 112–13; Blondell, *Helen of Troy*, 51. See Woodford for the identification of Aphrodite. Blondell points out that Helen and Aphrodite can frequently be hard to distinguish. This likeness is partly due to the generic nature of the Greek idea of beauty, but also seems to be emphasized, particularly through replication of hairstyle in several examples. The similarity between the two particularly makes sense in that Helen is something of a human analog to Aphrodite, given to Paris as a substitution for the goddess herself.

Figure 20 Attic red-figure hydria, attributed to the Syriskos Painter, BM London 1843,1103.86, ca. 480 BCE.

No longer is this an incongruously peaceful nuptial scene in the midst of the destruction of Troy, but instead a fitting moment for a wartime narrative that emphasizes the dangerous anger of the husband and the abject fear of the wife. It is not the gentle reunion of the sixth century images, but a violent confrontation. In many ways, the scene becomes a counterpart to another popular Ilioupersis scene, the rape of Cassandra, which features a similar iconographic schema of aggressive pursuit.[37] The audience, however, knows that Helen's outstanding beauty will provide her with a different fate than that of her former sister-in-law.

Figure 21. Attic red-figure amphora, attributed to Altamura Painter, British Museum, London 1837,0609.71, 470-450 BCE. ARV 594,54; LIMC IV 542 no.264 pl. 337.

[37] Sourvinou-Inwood, "Menace and Pursuit: Differentiation and the Creation of Meaning." Sourvinou-Inwood's analysis acknowledges the structural similarities between the types, while pointing out contrasting details that point to the different outcomes.

The scene of Menelaus and Helen's reunion undergoes one further development in the middle of the fifth century. A new iconographic type becomes very popular from 450 to 425 BCE, namely scenes that increasingly emphasize the role of divine intent in the moment before the reunion. Helen and Menelaus are not touching and sometimes separated by a divinity (Eros, Aphrodite, or Peitho). The motion of the pursuit is emphasized by showing the figures in more dynamic poses with pinwheeling legs and arms, a feature that becomes even more exaggerated over time. Usually, this type includes an altar or sanctuary that Helen seeks in her flight, variously that of Aphrodite, Athena, or Apollo.[38] Guy Hedreen argues that the reason why these pursuit scenes feature an altar or sanctuary, but not a specific god is because the setting does not play a critical role in the action (as it does in the story of Cassandra), but instead plays a role in the visual narrative. He adds that "it explains how Helen reacted when she saw Menelaos coming with his sword drawn. She did not stand her ground, confident in the power of her beauty or trusting in the favor of Aphrodite. She ran for her life to the nearest sanctuary, hoping that her husband, angry as he was, would not violate a god's property."[39] An example of this type, a volute krater, dated to around the 450s, shows Menelaus' pursuit of Helen (fig. 22a and 22b).[40] Menelaus and Helen are both dynamically posed, especially in contrast to the other figures in the scene, with their legs positioned far apart to capture the sense of their motion. Menelaus looks towards Helen, his sword pointing towards her, Helen glances back over her shoulder towards him, clasping her mantle in a gesture of alarm. Various divinities watch the action unfold. Athena stands between the couple, Apollo beside Helen, and Aphrodite watches the whole scene

[38] Hedreen, *Capturing Troy*, 48–63.
[39] Hedreen, 61.
[40] The far left side of the scene shows Akamas and Demophon, the sons of Theseus and Phaedra, free Aethra, their paternal grandmother and Helen's slave in Troy.

unfold from underneath the handle. The tripod, altar, and statue all place the action in a sanctuary.[41]

Figure 22a Attic red-figure volute krater Bologna 269, 460-455 BCE Niobid painter. ARV 599,8; LIMC IV no.250 pl. 336. At left, Akamas and Demophon, the sons of Theseus and Phaedra, free Aethra, their paternal grandmother and Helen's slave in Troy.

[41] Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen," 170.

Two panels of the north metopes of the Parthenon also show this iconographic type and reflect its centrality to the Athenian visual tradition.[42] As discussed in relation to the *Ion* in the preceding chapter, the Parthenon's iconographic program was a vital part of religious and civic life. The north metopes show a series of images from the fall of Troy and most of the decipherable iconography appears to be drawn from the same themes in vase-painting. North metopes 24 and 25 show the reunion of Menelaus and Helen (fig. 23). North metope 24 shows two men, the one on the right side is carrying a shield on his left arm and running towards the

Figure 22b Continuation of the previous, showing the altar that Helen flees to with a statue of Apollo. The male and female figures beside the altar have been identified as Chryses and his daughter Chryseis who play an instigating role in the conflict of the *Iliad*.

[42] It is likely that this type would also appear in wall paintings. Wall painting is generally considered to be the premier art form in late fifth-century Athens and various vase paintings are thought to be derivative of it (for example, see Matheson, *Polygnotos and Vase Painting in Classical Athens*, 237–47). Unfortunately, we have little evidence outside of descriptions, such as those of Pausanias, and these presumed copies on vases.

right. On the next metope are two women. Helen, on the right side, flees towards a statue.[43] The woman who stands relaxed beside her is best identified as Aphrodite. The presence of Eros in the top left corner of the panel with his very distinctive wings and miniature size secures the identification of the scene.

Another new element in the iconography is an image of Menelaus dropping his sword in his pursuit.[44] This first appears around 470 BCE and surges in popularity in the second half of the fifth century on kylixes and kraters, as well as other symposiatic vessels in Athens (cf. fig. 21).[45] The scene proved so iconic that the particularly recognizable gesture of Menelaus' sword

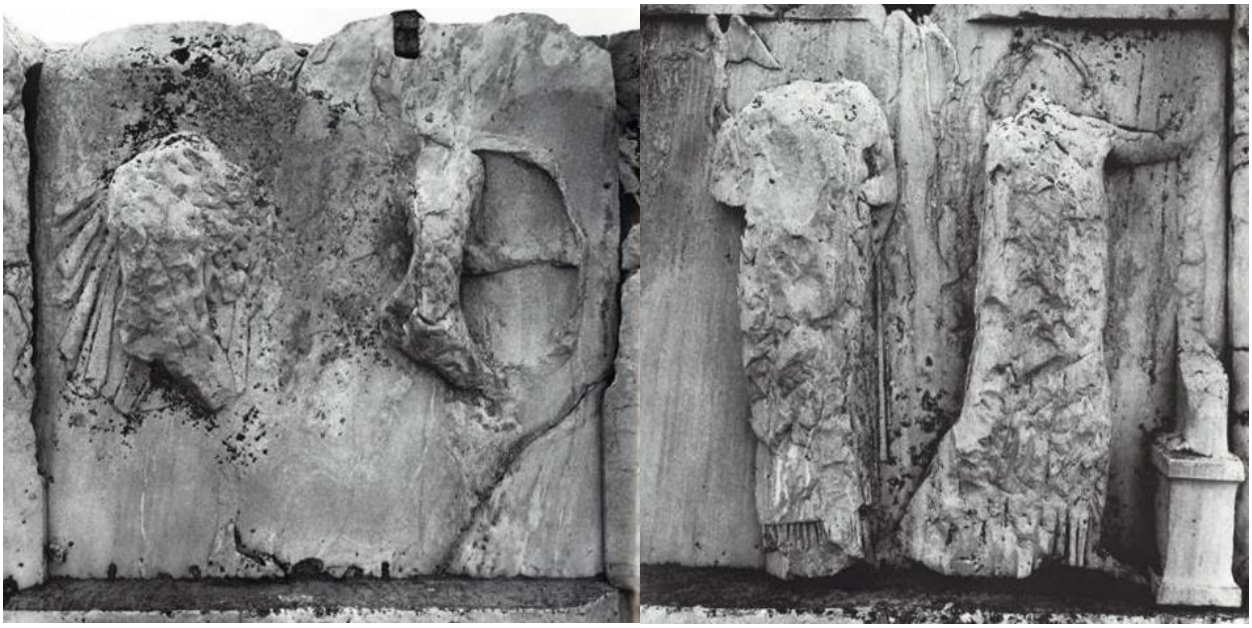

Figure 23 Parthenon north metopes 24 and 25, 447-438 BCE.
24: Two warriors advance to the right – Menelaos and a companion?
25: Aphrodite at left with Eros on her shoulder, at right Helen taking refuge at the Palladion

[43] Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen," 171–73. Hedreen follows most interpretations of the metopes by saying that the statue is that of Athena. While some scholars have objected to the identification, due to the presumed hostility of Athena towards Helen, there are examples in vase-painting that clearly show Athena intervening on Helen's behalf, such as the volute krater of the Niobid Painter (ca. 460-455 Bologna 269).
[44] Hedreen, 156.
[45] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*; Kahil, "Hélène"; Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen"; Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting."

dropping was parodied by scenes of Iris dropping her caduceus as she pursued young men. [46] Euripides' *Andromache,* staged some years before the *Helen,* cites this iconographic trope[47] as does Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (155-156). In the *Andromache,* when Peleus berates Menelaus for his cowardice, he includes in his diatribe this criticism of Menelaus' inability to follow through on his conviction (627-631).[48] The detail of the dropped sword as sign of Menelaus' changed mind refers to the visual tradition and this later phase of iconography.[49]

A krater of 440-430 BCE gives an example of this iconographic type (fig. 24). Menelaus drops his sword while he chases Helen, who takes refuge at an altar. Helen's exaggerated stride and her hands reaching for the altar make her fear visible, while Menelaus' armor shows his violent intent, though his dropped sword indicates that he has changed his mind. The Getty nestoris displays this scene, showing Menelaus in the center of the vessel, running towards Helen

[46] Mitchell, *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour*, 135–42. There is perhaps some elements of gender inversion also in the humor of the image of Menelaus dropping his sword, because earlier pursuit scene iconographies sometimes feature a surprised woman dropping a water jug or flowers.

[47] Conacher, *Euripidean Drama*, 166 n.1; Storey, "Andromache," 123–24. The exact date of the *Andromache* remains controversial, but it was likely produced between 427 and 425 BCE.

[48] ἑλὼν δὲ Τροίαν — εἶμι γὰρ κἀνταῦθά σοι
οὐκ ἔκτανες γυναῖκα χειρίαν λαβών,
ἀλλ᾽, ὡς ἐσεῖδες μαστόν, ἐκβαλὼν ξίφος
φίλημ᾽ ἐδέξω, προδότιν αἰκάλλων κύνα,
ἥσσων πεφυκὼς Κύπριδος, ὦ κάκιστε σύ.
And when you had taken Troy (for I am even going there against you), you did not kill your wife when you caught her, but as soon as you saw her breasts, you threw down your sword and showed your affection, fawning on the traitorous bitch, overcome by Aphrodite, you coward.

[49] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*; Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen." The *Andromache* and the *Lysistrata* include the exposure of Helen's breast as the instigation of this change in Menelaus' decision, which the scholiast to the Lysistrata attributes to Lesches' *Little Iliad*. The evidence, however, contradicts this attribution (cf. Kahil 31). Hedreen has convincingly argued that the late fifth-century iconographic tradition does not include this element. Euripides' *Andromache,* which is the earliest extant source for the exposure of Helen's breast in the reunion of the couple seems to partly be parodying Clytemnestra's exposed breast in the *Libation Bearers*.

with pinwheeling legs that emphasize his motion while Aphrodite holding Eros stands unmoving between them (fig. 25).[50] Around 450 BCE, Eros starts appearing in these scenes in this very distinct iconography. Although there are other examples from this period which show him as a full-size adult, in scenes showing the reunion of Helen and Menelaus he appears in a diminutive form, often reaching out to Menelaus with a cup or garland to show his intervention. A final example, an oinochoe dated between 430 and 425 BCE, shows many of the same themes of this

Figure 24 Attic red-figure bell krater, The Persephone Painter, Toledo Museum of Art 1967.154, 440-430 BCE.

[50] On the other side of the handle is a continuation of the Ilioupersis theme, showing Priam sitting on an altar. So this Helen is also running to an altar, though it is less obvious than in the previous example.

type (fig. 26). Menelaus drops his sword as he pursues Helen as gods look on (Peitho at left while Aphrodite and Eros standing between the couple) and Helen taking refuge at the Palladion.

Figure 25 Attic red-figure nestoris, attributed to Polygnotos, Getty Villa, Malibu 81.AE.183.2, ca. 440. LIMC IV 543-544 no. 276 pl. 341. In the center is Menelaus running, his falling sword visible between his legs. To the right is Aphrodite, standing unperterbed with a small Eros in her hand. At the far right, Helen runs from her husband, glancing back over her shoulder.

Figure 26 Attic red-figure Oinochoe, Vatican, mus. Greg. Etr. 16535, 430-425 BCE. ARV 1173; LIMC IV no.272 bis.

The new emphasis on the dropped sword and the intervention of Eros in this type serves two purposes. First, it shows in clear visual language Menelaus' changed intentions. Such interiority of a character can be explained easily by a line of poetry or prose, but the intentions and thoughts of a character are less intelligible in a visual medium. Menelaus' fallen sword is a clear visual sign of the character's changed intentions.[51] It also emphasizes Helen's desirability and Menelaus' inability to resist his wife. The loss of his threatening sword and the triumph of lust over violence makes Menelaus a somewhat comical figure. The popularity of the image of an emasculated Spartan king in Athens during the Peloponnesian War is surely no coincidence.[52]

New types of imagery of Helen that arise in the last few decades of the fifth century further demonstrate the development of the role of Helen's appearance in her divinity. In some images from the end of the fifth century, she is depicted bathing nude, perhaps influenced by Zeuxis' lost wall painting.[53] For example, on a lekythos from the end of the fifth century, Helen is shown bathing (fig. 27).[54] She crouches and brushes out her hair, attended by Eros and Pothos while Aphrodite and two other female divinities look on. One of the women is labeled Eukleia

[51] Hedreen, "Image, Text, and Story in the Recovery of Helen," 161; Stansbury-O'Donnell, "Menelaos and Helen in Attic Vase Painting." Hedreen and Sansbury-O'Donnell have made convincing arguments that trace this innovation through the iconographic tradition rather than the literary.
[52] Friedman, "Old Stories in Euripides' New 'Helen'"; Mitchell, *Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour*, 142.
[53] Sutton, "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather."
[54] Shapiro, "The Judgement of Helen in Athenian Art"; Sutton, "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather." Shapiro says that Zeuxis' nude Aphrodite dates to ca. 410 BCE. Sutton, however, points out that there is a significant increase in scenes of nude, crouching bathers, attended by Eros and marked out as honorable brides after 430 BCE. He ties this trend in images to Zeuxis' nude Helen. Although this example, which probably dates to around 410 BCE is the clearest example that identifies Helen as the bather, Sutton includes a number of other examples from 430-410 BCE that while unlabeled, he believes should be identified as Helen.

Figure 27 Attic red-figure lekythos attributed to the Shuvalov Painter, end of the fifth century. Private Collection. Photo: © Christie's Images Limited 1993.

(good repute) which contextualizes the scene as one that is not simply erotic, but reflective of Helen's status as idealized *parthenos*.

This iconography of Helen as the nude bather places her in a specifically nuptial context as the idealized bride, a trait that is also shared by the representation of Helen in scenes of her initial encounter with Paris.[55] These scenes became particularly popular in the last third of the fifth century.[56] Despite the narrative context of the scene, which should mean that Helen is already a wife and mother when she meets Paris, she is still depicted as an ideal *parthenos*, while Aphrodite often plays the role of mother-of-the-bride.[57] As Shapiro points out, the visual formula of the pensive Helen "is later adapted for scenes of the shy, hesitant bride receiving encouragement on her wedding day."[58] For example, an amphoriskos dated ca. 430 BCE shows the meeting of Helen and Paris heavily mediated by divinities (fig. 28).[59] Helen sits on Aphrodite's lap, veiled with eyes cast down in a pose of contemplation while Peitho stands to her

[55] Sutton, "The Invention of the Female Nude: Zeuxis, Vase-Painting, and the Kneeling Bather." Sutton's argument that the scenes of nude bathers especially emphasize a positive representation of female nudity through their context on vessels especially associated with women's use and marriage rites is also true of many of these representations of Helen and Paris' meeting.
[56] Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art*, 189–98; Shapiro, "The Judgement of Helen in Athenian Art," 50; Edmunds, *Stealing Helen*, 135.
[57] Less numerous than representations of Helen, but a tantalizing parallel to this is the goddess/heroine Ariadne. She undergoes the *parthenos'* moment of exemplarity and selection twice, first as wife to the Attic hero Theseus and then, the next day, to the god Dionysus. Images of the sleeping Ariadne emphasize how the bride's prior sexual experience does not contradict her desirability or appropriateness as wife of a god. For example, a kylix ca. 490 in the National Archaeological Museum of Tarquinia shows Ariadne asleep and Theseus hastening to leave at the command of Hermes, while a fruiting vine signifies the imminent arrival of Dionysus (Tarquinia RC5291, Beazley archive number 204395). The opposite side of the cup shows Menelaus pursuing Helen at Troy. The interior tondo shows a man with spears leading away a woman. If identification of this scene as Agamemnon and Briseis is correct then all three scenes on this cup show women who are twice chosen.
[58] Shapiro, "The Judgement of Helen in Athenian Art," 51.
[59] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*, fasc. 10:59–60.

right holding a pyxis. To their right stands Paris with Himeros pulling on his arm. Four other goddesses observe the scene. Heimarmene (Fate, uniquely depicted here) stands nearby holding a bird with a companion (the name is lost, Shapiro suggests Themis).[60] Beside them, Nemesis points accusatorily at Helen, supported by another goddess, whose name is damaged, but is most likely Tyche.[61] Like the images of the reunion of Helen and Menelaus, these images of Helen

Figure 28 Attic red-figure amphoriskos, name vase of the Heimarmene Painter ca. 430 BCE. Berlin 30036. Scene showing the meeting of Helen and Paris in Sparta. Figures are labeled, though two labels are damaged. Helen sits on Aphrodite's lap, to their left stand Peitho with a pyxis. On the right is Paris and Himeros. Further right are four goddesses. The first pair contemplate a bird, one is labeled Heimarmene, the other's identity is lost. Behind Peitho are two other goddesses, one, labeled Nemesis, points accusatorily while she is supported by the other, likely Tyche. Two erotes fly on the upper register of the vase.

[60] Nemesis is closely associated with Themis in the Attic tradition and the two goddesses had temples close together in the sanctuary at Rhamnous.
[61] Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art*, 192–95.

and Paris from the late fifth century situate the action in the midst of gods and divine personifications.

There are also a number of scenes showing her birth from an egg, produced in the late fifth century, which reflect Helen's divinity in a different way. This subject seems to have been a particularly local take on Helen's myth that made Nemesis the mother of Helen and Spartan Leda the foster parent.[62] For example, a kylix in Boston dated to 430-420 BCE (fig. 29), shows the egg containing Helen on an altar with a bird, while members of Helen's adopted family look on (from left, Clytemnestra, Tyndareus, and Leda, all labeled). The comic potential of this image

Figure 29 Attic red-figure kylix, the Xenotimos Painter, 430-420 BCE. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 99.539. Exterior side A showing the birth of Helen.

[62] Cf. Shapiro, "Cult Warfare: The Dioskouroi between Sparta and Athens." Shapiro discusses the spread of the cult of the Dioscuri in Attica and its growth in the fifth century as part of competing claims for divine patronage during the Peloponnesian War. He connects the images of Helen's birth from an egg to the cult of Nemesis at Rhamnous as part of this Athenian counter-claim.

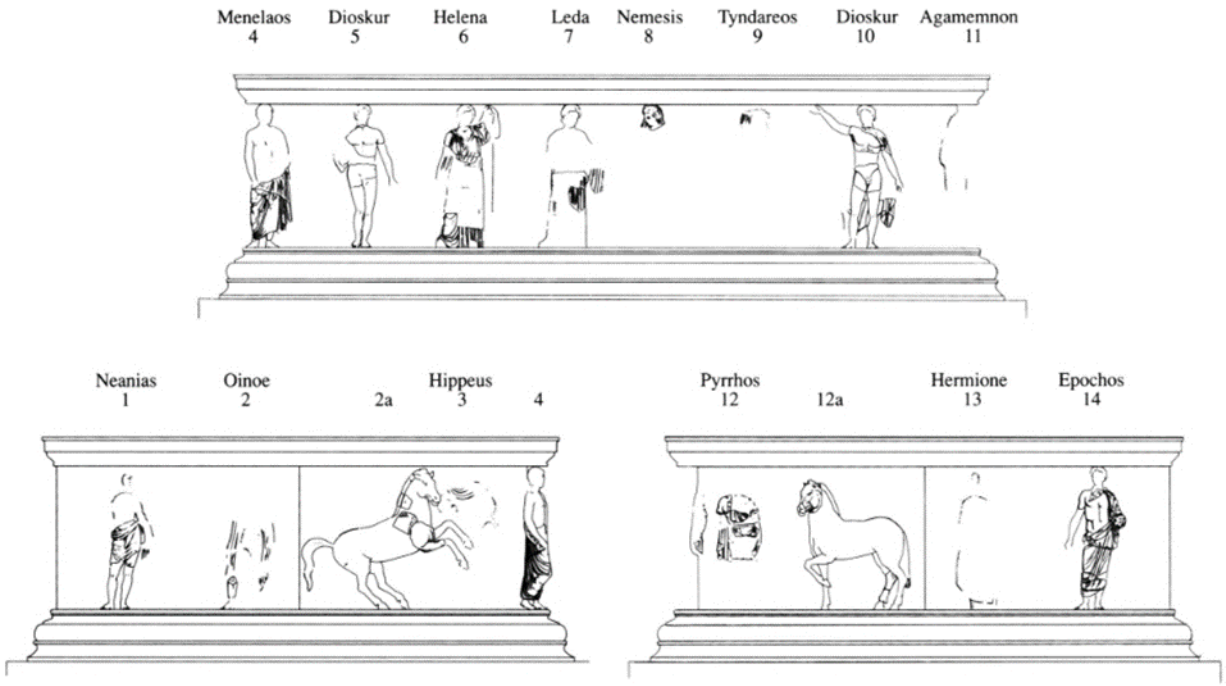


Figure 30 Line drawings of the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous and the statue bases, from Ehrhardt 1997.

seems to have been exploited in Cratinus' comedies *Nemesis*, produced in 431 BCE,[63] and his *Dionysalexandros*, which was produced around 430/429 BCE.[64] Helen also appears in connection with Nemesis at her temple in Rhamnous, built in the 430s or 420s. The cult statue base depicted the presentation of Helen to her mother Nemesis, the goddess of divine retribution (fig. 30).[65] These images associating Helen with Nemesis demonstrate the connection between

[63] Shapiro, "The Judgement of Helen in Athenian Art," 54.
[64] These comedies seem to have especially encouraged the artists of south Italian vases in the fourth century. Though even in images explicitly inspired by the comedy, such as the Apulian red-figure bell krater in Bari ca. 375-350 BCE (Museo Archeologico, Bari 3899), Helen is depicted as emerging from the egg as a fully-formed nubile *parthenos*. Cf. Bakola, "Old Comedy Disguised as Satyr Play" for a reading of the fragments of the hypothesis of Cratinus' play.
[65] Petrakos, "La base de la Némésis d'Agoracrite"; Petrakos, "Provlimata tes Vases tou agalmatos tes Nemeseos"; Miles, "A Reconstruction of the Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous"; Lapatin, "A Family Gathering at Rhamnous?"; Ehrhardt, "Versuch einer Deutung des Kultbildes der Nemesis von Rhamnus"; Kosmopoulou, *The Iconography of Sculptured Statue Bases in the Archaic and Classical Periods*, 129–34. for the debate over the identities of the figures in the cult

Helen and cyclical revenge. Helen's status as the most beautiful woman in the world, a perpetual *parthenos* who always demands desirous reaction from her male viewers is key to the relationship between Helen and Nemesis. The frequent presence of divinities in these late fifth century images of Helen serve as a gloss on the scenes, providing tools for the interpretation of the action.[66] Persuasion, lust, destiny, et cetera, all work together, for example, to convince Helen to leave with Paris or to change Menelaus' murderous plot against his wife.[67] But the scene, as shown, has a long history in visual art before the addition of these divine figures and personifications, as well as a living and vigorous literary and oral counterpart, which surely aided in any issues of interpretation. What these additions add, then, is not simply context and explanation for the motivations of the characters, but a sense that what happened between Helen and Menelaus was divinely orchestrated.[68]

In Euripides' *Helen*, the eponymous protagonist shows an awareness of how her appearance is tied to her suffering through the repeated cycle of abductions that characterize her imagery. She laments, εἴθ' ἐξαλειφθεῖσ' ὡς ἄγαλμ' αὖθις πάλιν / αἴσχιον εἶδος ἔλαβον ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ("if only I were wiped away like a picture and could take anew an uglier form in place of

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of Nemesis at Rhamnous. Helen's connection to Rhamnous is clear, but the extent to which her family and Spartan connections were emphasized in this cult is debated.
There is also evidence for worship of Helen in other parts of Attica, such as at Thorikos where she seems to be named on the deme's sacrificial calendar (Lupu, NGSL 1 = IG I3 256bis).

[66] Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art*. See Shapiro for more on the chronology and types of personifications that appear in Greek art.

[67] Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés.*, fasc. 10:86. As Kahil points out, there is a clear difference in tone between the representation of Helen and Menelaus' reunion in Troy and Helen and Paris' meeting in the late fifth century in that there is an element of (averted) violence in scenes with Menelaus that is not present in scenes with Paris.

[68] Similarly, scenes of Helen and Paris which remain popular through the end of the fifth century and beginning of the fourth increasingly show a number of these gods and personifications participating in the abduction/marriage.

beauty" 262-263).[69] The phrase indicates that Helen is thinking of herself as an object, one subject to the same duplication and revision that is possible for the generation of images.[70] The *eidolon* is also referred to by the term ἄγαλμα to emphasize its constructed nature (705, 1219).[71] While the character Helen speaks of herself as an ἄγαλμα, the audience recognizes the images and iconography that made up the actual objects and adornments that depicted her. In the visual culture of Athens, she is the ever-pursued woman, prize and victim of Athenian and Spartan kings alike. This is the effect of the beauty that Helen relies upon as the source of her identity. The question of appearance and the reaction that it demands are a core part of Helen's identity. This is precisely the part that is problematized from the opening lines of the tragedy: Helen is portrayed as a product of her appearance whose beauty demands the immediate overreaction of those who see her. This multiplicity of abductions that defines her provides a background to her character in the play and the emphasis remains on her appearance as the cause of these abductions. Euripides' tragedy strips away other identifiers and leaves Helen's appearance at the core of her identity.

[69] Kannicht, *Helena*, l. 262; Burian, *Helen*, 205 n.262; Allan, *Helen*, 180 nn. 262–63. The terms that she uses here are explicit references to material craftsmanship and the visual tradition. There is some ambiguity in the interpretation of the phrase, as the term ἄγαλμα usually refers to sculpture instead of painting. Some commentators, like Kannicht, have argued that the phrase refers to a polychrome statue stripped of its paint. Burian, however, points to similar passages about the obliteration of paintings (γραφή) in *Peleus* fragment 618 and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 1327-1329. Allan also argues that "picture" is a more logical translation in this context.
[70] Austin, *Helen of Troy and Her Shameless Phantom*, 203; Stieber, *Euripides and the Language of Craft*, 176.
[71] The term occurs in two other places in the play – towards the end at line 1433 where it refers to marriage offerings that Theoclymenus wants brought to his house to celebrate his expected nuptials and earlier in the play at line 206 where it describes the Dioscuri.

## HELEN'S CONTESTED IDENTITY

The play begins with the question of what element is at the core of a character's identity and how far a tragedy can push that identity away from the audience's expectations without losing credibility. Euripides calls into question a number of attributes that define the mythic hero – connection to a specific place, relationships with others, personality, and behavior. Helen's opening speech presents this catalogue of associations and traits to the audience only to emphasize how these attributes fail to identify this Helen. By the end of the prologue, the audience is introduced to a character of Helen who emphatically has the mythological figure's famous beauty, but little connection otherwise to the qualities that have defined previous iterations of the character on the stage and in Athenian culture more broadly. The thematization of the issue of identity and the reduction, from the beginning of the play, to an issue of appearance places the role of visuality at the forefront of the tragedy. Indeed, visuality will become the key component to Euripides' innovation and the resolution of the plot.

The play opens with Helen at the altar of Proteus as a suppliant. In the very first lines, which detail the setting in Egypt and set up the situation, Euripides introduces the theme of contested identity. It begins, rather obliquely, with Helen's description of Proteus' wife and children, who seem to have little or no precedent in the tradition of the story of Proteus. Proteus' marriage to Psamathe, in fact, goes against the story in Hesiod (*Theogony* 1004-1005) that Psamathe was married to Aeacus. This previous marriage is explicitly referenced, only to be explained away: [Πρωτεὺς] ὃς τῶν κατ᾽ οἶδμα παρθένων μίαν γαμεῖ, / Ψαμάθην, ἐπειδὴ λέκτρ᾽ ἀφῆκεν Αἰακοῦ. ("[Proteus] who married one of the daughters of the sea, Psamathe, after she broke off her marriage to Aeacus." 6-7) The gesture of explaining away the first, better-known marriage prepares the audience for the variations in the expected stories that the *Helen* will

present.[72] The role of contested identity is further emphasized by the introduction to Theonoe, who is described as having been called Eido as a child (11-15):[73]

> Εἰδώ, τὸ μητρὸς ἀγλάισμ᾽, ὅτ᾽ ἦν βρέφος:
> ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἐς ἥβην ἦλθεν ὡραίαν γάμων,
> καλοῦσιν αὐτὴν Θεονόην: τὰ θεῖα γὰρ
> τά τ᾽ ὄντα καὶ μέλλοντα πάντ᾽ ἠπίστατο,
> προγόνου λαβοῦσα Νηρέως τιμὰς πάρα.
>
> [A daughter called] Eido, as she was the adornment of her mother, when she was a baby; but when she came to her youthful prime, ripe for marriage, they called her Theonoe, because she knew all divine matters, both the things that are and will be, receiving this honor from her grandfather, Nereus.

Theonoe is a character who will play a crucial role in the final resolution of the play. This description introduces the idea of the insecurity of identity, particularly for the children of the gods, whose change in appearance and understanding reflects a fundamental difference in identity. As David Sansone points out, the childhood name Eido, which refers to her beauty, is replaced in adulthood with Theonoe, a name which indicates her knowledge of the gods.[74] The change in name reflects a change in function, the girl who had been an ἀγλάισμα (adornment)

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[72] Burian, *Helen*, 191 n.7; Boedeker, "Significant Inconsistencies in Euripides' Helen," 248. As Burian points out, the verb ἀφίημι is used of men breaking off a marriage to a woman. Psamathe, perhaps by virtue of her status as a minor divinity, can take the active, masculine role in initiating a divorce and this "gives her situation a suggestive similarity to what is believed about Helen." Boedeker argues that the obscure variation on Psamathe's story is designed to create a false parallel to Helen and to sow doubts in the audience about the possibility of resolution.

[73] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 79–95. The character Eidothea, the daughter of Proteus also appears in the Odyssey (4.366) as well as in fragments of Aeschylus' satyr-play *Proteus*, which accompanied the *Oresteia* in 458 BCE. Marshall argues that for the *Helen*, as for a number of Euripidean tragedies from the 420s and later, the *Oresteia* is an important intertext.

[74] Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen," 590; Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus," 20. Segal points out that Theonoe and Helen share a parallel ability to understand the gods. Sansone notes that the name Eido also suggests knowledge, though the gloss explaining the name as parallel to ἀγλάισμα emphasizes the meaning of "beauty." This choice of name also serves to prefigure the *eidolon* which will play such a prominent role in the contest for Helen's identity.

becomes a powerful prophet and rejects the potential benefits of her beauty when she chooses to remain unmarried (12-13).

When Helen begins to introduce herself (16ff), the insecurity of her mythic identity comes to the fore most emphatically. Her home, Sparta, and her father, Tyndareus, are "not nameless" (οὐκ ἀνώνυμος 16), but she is separated from them and their connection to her identity. In the same line as she introduces her father (16), she begins the story of her alternate parentage: that Zeus fathered her in the guise of a swan (16-21). She ends the account of her dual paternity without any sure statement, but rather the ambiguous εἰ σαφὴς οὗτος λόγος ("if this story is accurate" 21).[75] Helen has not, up to this point, given her name.[76] Her identity is in the contradictions – she is from Sparta, but has spent half a lifetime in a foreign land; she has a mortal father or perhaps an immortal one.

After she gives her name, she moves on to the one trait that is not contestable: her beauty (22ff).[77] Beauty is the source of her fame, the cycle of abductions that characterize her, her place as the prize in the judgement of Paris, and the wife of Menelaus. In this play, it is what led to her presence in Egypt, seventeen years separated from her homeland of Sparta. When Aphrodite offered her to Paris as a prize in the contest of beauty between the goddesses, Hera's jealousy

[75] Kannicht, *Helena*, 16–22; Burian, *Helen*, 192 n.21. Kannicht argues that the ambiguity in this statement comes from the contrast between the life expected for a child of Zeus and Helen's suffering. Burian points to parallel skepticism about myth in other Euripidean plays, but also that the chorus repeats this story twice more in the course of the Helen with no hint of skepticism about its reality (214-216, 1145-1146).

[76] Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre*, 23. It is unclear what would have been known about a play prior to its initial production. At the very least, it seems the eponymous archon who made the selection of the competitors in that year's Dionysia would know something about the contents of the production.

[77] Hawley, "The Dynamics of Beauty in Ancient Greece." Hawley discusses the ambiguity of feminine beauty in the discourse of fifth-century Greece, particularly in how tragedy connects feminine beauty to vanity and destructiveness (using the *Medea* and the *Electra* as examples).

over the loss led her to fashion the *eidolon* out of cloud so that Paris' prize would be empty.[78] This *eidolon* takes Helen's place in Troy but, while it preserves Helen's fidelity, it does not stop the cycle of pursuits and abductions that characterize Helen's beauty. She laments that her beauty is misfortune (δυστυχές 27).[79] Sheila Murnaghan writes about the protagonist of Euripides' *Helen* as a "dislocated" chorus leader caught in an unsuccessful transition from maidenhood to marriage. She describes Helen's beauty as "so powerful that, for her, to be the one who stands out and is chosen is not a transient stage of life leading to the obscurity of a successful marriage, but a recurrent syndrome."[80] This element of Helen's identity, which is so prominent in the repetition of abductions in the visual record, is explicitly brought forward as the key to Helen's identity in the early part of this play.

The visual tradition illustrates the difficulty of depicting the most beautiful woman in the world. [81] Beauty is the idealized *parthenos,* represented by a lack of identifiable traits. It is the absence of imperfections and the addition of external adornments. Thus, visually there is nothing that regularly sets Helen apart. It is likely that Helen's costume in this play would have reflected this and that she would have appeared in the generic costume indicating an attractive young

[78] The reference to the judgement of Paris here seems to in some ways prepare the audience for the ending. Helen demonstrates a connection to each of the three goddesses of the contest. She is the image of Aphrodite, the most beautiful, sexually desirable mortal counterpart of the goddess (cf. Hughes), she has a cloud replacement to preserve her fidelity to her husband while tempting the ill-intentioned into acting against the gods. A trait she shares with Hera, who constructed a cloud duplicate of herself to tempt Ixion. In the final act of the play will receive cult in Athena's land of Attica while proving herself a masterful strategist.
[79] Cf. lines 236-237, 260-266, and 375-385 for other self-conscious laments about Helen's fatal beauty.
[80] Murnaghan, "The Choral Plot of Euripides' Helen," 164.
[81] The difficulty of capturing Helen's beauty is exemplified by the legend about Zeuxis, a contemporary of Euripides, attempting to create a portrait of Helen by combining features of five different beauties. The story, known from Roman sources (Cicero *de Inventione* 2.1-5 and Pliny *Natural History* 35.64-66), was popular amongst artist of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

woman.[82] Although the audience knows that she has been in Egypt for seventeen years (112) and Helen herself complains about her daughter "going gray" (283-284),[83] it is unlikely that she would have appeared onstage as a woman of the age described.[84] The chorus, made up of young

[82] While the evidence for masking (and costuming) conventions in the fifth-century theater is sparse, it is most likely that masks and costumes were somewhat generic with few if any unique characteristics. It is probably that they indicated perhaps only age, gender, and status (though that idea is clearly complicated in this play by Menelaus' rags and likely in some other plays of Euripides, e.g. *Ino*). There are some indications of masks or mask changes to indicate grief or injury (including Helen's costume and mask change towards the end of this play or the mask of the blinded *Oedipus* in Sophocles' tragedy). Helen likely initially appeared in this play as a generic young woman, similar to her depiction in other visual media, where there is really nothing to distinguish Helen from other young elite women. For more on the conventions and possibilities of masks, see Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions"; Meineck, "The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask"; Ley, *A Short Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theater*, 25–29; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 294–95. Marshall 2014 argues that the mature female mask might have been used because the character must be in her thirties. However, I believe that the logical choice to a modern reader need not be the logical choice to the ancient audience, as there are frequent inconsistencies in the timelines of drama and myth that simply are not seen as incongruent in the relatively unchanging and timeless world of the heroes. Marshall's second suggestion of a young mask with a more mature hairstyle seems more convincing in light of the way that other characters in the play react to and address Helen, which is more in line with response to a younger woman than a mature one. Ley suggests that Euripides may have reused or recreated the mask for the character Helen from his *Trojan Women* produced a few years before.

[83] Ln. 283-284 ὃ δ' ἀγλάισμα δωμάτων ἐμοῦ τ' ἔφυ, / θυγάτηρ ἄνανδρος πολιὰ παρθενεύεται· "while the one who was born the glory of the house, my daughter, is growing gray as a virgin, without a husband"

[84] Swift, *The Hidden Chorus*, 219–21. Swift states that it wouldn't be unexpected for the audience to hear Helen speak in parthenic terms despite the contrast to her actual age, citing the similar use in wedding imagery to describe Penelope's reunion with Odysseus in the *Odyssey* as a parallel. However, I think the visual nature of tragedy deserves more consideration here. While it is possible in literature to have an older character take on younger traits (especially for Penelope whose reinvigoration matches the divinely-granted reinvigoration of her husband), in staging a play, an older appearance runs the risk of becoming mockery. It is unlikely that a more youthful appearance than is logical for the story would have been remarkable to the audience at first. As discussed in the section on images, Helen remains constantly and illogically young. There are also frequent inconsistencies in the timelines of tragedy and other representations of heroes, as well as rationalizations about the differences between the humans of the heroic age and contemporary humans that allowed such inconsistencies to be ignored. There were also likely limitations on the possibilities of masks as well as the visibility of performers to a large audience that favored the use of generic types over appearances specifically matched to the character's circumstances.

Greek women (Ἑλλανίδες κόραι 193), calls her "child" (παῖ 1356), indicating that she has a similar *parthenos*-like status to that of the chorus members.[85] Similarly, in the scene in which Menelaus and Helen trick Theoclymenus into believing that Helen has been widowed, Menelaus addresses her as "young woman" (νεᾶνι 1288).[86] As he is playing the role of a polite and deferential stranger of lower status than Helen, it makes sense for him to address her by the term that most obviously seems to describe her status.[87] Helen's laments about the difficulties her beauty has caused, her immediate recognizability to Teucer and Menelaus, Theoclymenus' ardent pursuit, and the impact of the change to widow's costume at the end, all indicate that Helen's initial costume likely belonged to the type used by other young, royal women on the stage.[88]

The illogicality of Helen's status as *parthenos* evident also in the mythological tradition. From the end of the sixth century, Athenians had propagated stories of Theseus, their local hero, to connect him to the other great heroes of the previous ages. One of the stories that begins to appear is about Theseus and his friend Perithoos when they decide to take daughters of Zeus as

[85] Allan, *Helen*, 307 n. 1356–57.
[86] Wolff, "On Euripides' Helen," 67. Wolff takes this and other references to youth in the play as part of the message about Menelaus and Helen stating anew after escaping Egypt.
[87] Euripides elsewhere uses the term νεᾶνι to address young woman of marriageable age. In the *Helen*, it is also used of Theonoe (995) and elsewhere it is used of Iphigenia (*Iphigenia in Aulis* 1402, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 617), a *parthenos* par excellence, and of the recently married Hermione in the *Andromache* (190), where it is used by Andromache to draw attention to the difference between the maturity and experience of the two women. For both young and mature women, the less age specific γύναι ("woman") can be used instead (for example, Teucer calls Helen this at line 80).
[88] Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions." Marshall argues that there were six generic mask types indicating gender and age. He also points out that in the *Trojan Women*, it appears that Helen is distinguished from the other Trojan captives by her unshorn hair, which acts as a visual indication of the difference between her fate and that of the other women. Even though the scene of her *agon* with Menelaus ostensibly ends with him leading her off to kill her, the audience knows that he will change his mind.

wives. Theseus chooses the most beautiful woman in the Greek world. As ancient mythographers point out, the timeline does not quite work out for this story when aligned with other elements of the mythological tradition.[89] Theseus must be in his seventies while Helen is a child, but artistic representations show Theseus as a young hero and Helen as a young woman ready for marriage (cf. fig. 1). Like their divine parents, heroes remain at the peak of youth, strength, and desirability.[90] This trait is particularly emphatic for Helen, inasmuch as her life is filled with the repetition of abduction and marriage, which are meant to take place at just one moment in a woman's life. At the other extreme in the illogicality of Helen's desirability is her relationship with Achilles.[91] Literary sources from the Second Sophistic period imagine Helen as the consort of Achilles even though most earlier sources make him much younger than Helen and possibly even born after Helen's marriage to Menelaus.[92] Euripides' *Helen* may in fact have been influential in the creation of such a tradition, as Helen remembers Achilles as one of her suitors (99). It is the earliest source that we have which refers to the possibility of marriage between these two.[93]

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[89] Hellanicus *FGH* 4 F 134; Diodorus 4.63.1-3. Hellanicus puts Helen at seven, Diodorus at ten.
[90] Burn, *The Meidias Painter*, 68–70. Euripides' *Helen* references the illogicality of Helen's perennial desirability when she laments that her daughter Hermione is getting too old to marry (283-284). In artistic representations of the queen, no attempt is made to reconcile the seemingly impossible timeline. As Burn points out, on one fragmentary hydria (Athens, Kerameikos 2712) of the Meidias painter (active in the late fifth/early fourth century), Helen sits with her sisters and daughter who are all depicted as young women in their prime despite the generational difference.
[91] Ashmole, "A New Interpretation of the Portland Vase"; Zeitlin, "Life Trajectories: Iphigenia, Helen, and Achilles on the Black Sea." The relationship between Achilles and Helen seems to originate in cult from the Black Sea region which makes them consorts on White Island. Bernard Ashmole and other scholars have seen this myth as the subject of the cryptic Roman glass Portland Vase in the British Museum. For more on the Black Sea and its connection to Helen and Achilles in tragedy see Zeitlin.
[92] Pausanias 3.19.11-13; Philostratus 10.32-40.
[93] Burian, *Helen*, 197 n.99; Allan, *Helen*, 160 n.99. Burian points out that Hesiod fragment 204.87-93 M-W says that if Achilles had been old enough to compete, he would have won Helen.

As in the visual tradition, in the *Helen*, beauty is not determined simply by appearance, but by its ability to demand an immediate reaction with serious consequences for those around her.[94] Her history as Aphrodite's prize in the judgement of Paris illustrates this, as does Teucer's and Menelaus' immediate (and violent) reactions to her appearance. Even though in the *Helen*, Paris never successful abducts Helen, her removal to Egypt for the preservation of her marriage and fidelity is figured in terms and imagery that characterize it as abduction all the same (44-48):[95]

> λαβὼν δέ μ᾽ Ἑρμῆς ἐν πτυχαῖσιν αἰθέρος
> νεφέλῃ καλύψας — οὐ γὰρ ἠμέλησέ μου
> Ζεύς — τόνδ᾽ ἐς οἶκον Πρωτέως ἱδρύσατο,
> πάντων προκρίνας σωφρονέστατον βροτῶν,
> ἀκέραιον ὡς σῴσαιμι Μενέλεῳ λέχος.
>
> Hermes, taking me in the folds of the upper air and covering me in cloud – for Zeus was not neglectful of me – he set me in this home of Proteus, choosing the most self-controlled of all mortals, so that I could preserve an unviolated marriage with Menelaus.

Helen's desirability and its effect on others is paramount to Zeus' decision to place her with σωφρονέστατος Proteus. The reaction she elicits requires a guardian whose self-control outstrips

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[94] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 55–79. Marshall suggests that Helen may have had little or no precedent on the tragic stage (except perhaps in satyr-plays) before Euripides' *Trojan Women* of 415 BCE. As Marshall and others point out, Helen stands out remarkably from the other women in this play as the only one who is presented as a noblewoman, not in rags and mourning like the other characters and the chorus. Helen's striking and inappropriate beauty acts as the climax in a series of confrontations between Hecuba and the women who are the victims of the war. While the ragged suffering of Cassandra and Andromache moves Hecuba to pity, Helen's appearance fills her with anger. Similarly, Marshall points out that in Euripides' *Orestes* of 408 BCE, Helen is presented as a typical noble lady, but the strong reactions that other characters have to her is what singles her out (75-76).

[95] Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, 306–7. Foley has pointed out how Helen's removal to Egypt is modeled on the motif of abduction, see 306 n.9 for further bibliography. The story told here closely parallels the story told by Aphrodite in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 117-125. It is an intriguing reflection on the entanglement of truth and lies in this play that in this case, the precedent for Helen's story is explicitly a lie, falsely told by Aphrodite to hide her true divine nature from Anchises. When it comes to Helen, Hermes abduction is the true story and Paris' the false one.

all others. Theoclymenus demonstrates the necessity of this concession. The king, who is otherwise a paragon of filial piety, is willing to go against his father to take Helen as wife.[96] Even though her age, her existing marriage, her lack of a home and a dowry should all make her a less than desirable partner, her beauty is enough to offset all of these deficiencies.[97] Euripides takes pains to emphasize to his audience that there are no other possible motivations.

Helen is a wife with no husband, a queen with no country, a daughter with no parents, a mother whose child is too old to be married, while she herself remains desirably youthful. She is treated as the exemplar of infidelity, but she has never been unfaithful. She has ceased to exist in her own life, her place taken by a woman shaped from cloud, and no one has noticed the difference. Helen relies on her beauty as the source of her identity and her source of hope for the prophesied reunion with her husband (56-59). It has not occurred to her yet that her husband will be just as incapable of telling her apart from her image as anyone else.

## MISRECOGNIZING HELEN

While the prologue encourages the audience to see Helen's appearance as the core element of her identity, the existence of the *eidolon* introduces the potential conflict. Over the course of the tragedy, three scenes of misrecognition of Helen destabilize the connection between Helen's beauty and her identity. The first is Helen's run-in with Teucer. As the scene

[96] Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen," 583ff; Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus"; Boedeker, "Significant Inconsistencies in Euripides' Helen," 250. A number of features indicate Theoclymenus' piety (which perhaps is pushed to a comical extreme): the presence of his father's tomb outside the house, greeting the tomb in his first appearance, and his desire for a religiously pure marriage demonstrated by his generosity in allowing for the proper burial of Menelaus.

[97] This stands in contrast to the Helen of the wider mythological tradition whose desirability as wife is overdetermined: she is the most beautiful woman in the world, her father is a god (as are her mother and brothers in some versions), and she is the *epikleros* (or rather *patrouchoi*) of the entire kingdom of Sparta – Menelaus is only king of Sparta through his marriage to Helen.

plays out, it points to the crux of Helen's issue by introducing vividly how the *eidolon* complicates Helen's claims. In this first misrecognition, however, the *eidolon* acts (as it did with Paris' abduction) as a protection for the real Helen. The potential threat of the doubling of Helen is kept at a remove. The second scene is the reunion of Helen and Menelaus, in which Helen relies upon her appearance as the secure site of her identity. The identification of Helen is once again foiled by the existence of the *eidolon*, but this time to Helen's detriment. She even acts as her image in this scene, reenacting the pursuit that defines her beauty's effect on others. Helen gives Menelaus the choice between two identical wives, only differentiated by their faithfulness or infidelity towards him, and he chooses the unfaithful *eidolon*. Appearance, affection, and shared history all fail to convince Menelaus. It is only the arrival of the messenger, announcing the disappearance of any alternative, that secures Helen and Menelaus' reunion. Helen's confidence in her appearance as a source of identity is shattered. In the final scene of misrecognition, Helen demonstrates an ability to manipulate her appearance and identity, along with the assumptions of interpretation that accompany such visual manipulations, and use them to enact her escape.

The first piece in this triad of misrecognitions is the arrival of Teucer (68ff). He is identified at first only as a Greek warrior, dressed in heroic costume. He marvels at the Egyptian palace, then catches sight of Helen. Immediately, he draws his bow and prepares to kill her before remembering that he is in Egypt and she cannot possibly be the woman he hates (72-77).

> ὦ θεοί, τίν᾽ εἶδον ὄψιν; ἐχθίστην ὁρῶ
> γυναικὸς εἰκὼ φόνιον, ἥ μ᾽ ἀπώλεσεν
> πάντας τ᾽ Ἀχαιούς. θεοί σ᾽, ὅσον μίμημ᾽ ἔχεις
> Ἑλένης, ἀποπτύσειαν. εἰ δὲ μὴ 'ν ξένῃ
> γαίᾳ πόδ᾽ εἶχον, τῷδ᾽ ἂν εὐστόχῳ πτερῷ
> ἀπόλαυσιν εἰκοῦς ἔθανες ἂν Διὸς κόρης.

> Oh gods, what do I see? I see the most hated, blood-stained image of a woman who destroyed me and all of the Achaeans. May the gods spurn you for having so great a resemblance to Helen. And if my feet did not touch foreign earth, you would have died by this well-aimed feathered arrow as a reward for your likeness to the daughter of Zeus.

Although Teucer has often been explained away as an expositional character, he plays an important role in establishing the stakes of the tragedy.[98] He is ready to attack Helen the moment he lays eyes on her precisely because she is immediately recognizable to him *as* Helen. The only reason he spares her is because, despite his immediate recognition, he reasons that logically she must be someone else. To him, the real Helen is an εἰκών (image, likeness) or a μίμημα (copy, representation), while the cloud-formed copy from Troy is the true one. Helen is only spared by this willful misrecognition.

[98] Prescott, "Inorganic Rôles in Roman Comedy," 249–50; Griffith, "Some Thoughts on the 'Helena' of Euripides," 37; Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen," 563; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 26. Prescott, who is arguing against a Euripidean prototype for "inorganic" expositional roles in Roman comedy, follows Leo and others in assuming that Teucer's role in the tragedy is mechanically protactic (though he disagrees that only one extant role that is solely expositional is grounds for seeing it as the root of the expositional character of Roman comedy). Griffith, Segal, and Marshall say that Teucer is an expositional character whose role is primarily limited to presenting Helen with information about the Trojan War and her family. While Segal characterizes Teucer as a protactic character "with only peripheral relevance to the plot," he recognizes the importance of Teucer's role in introducing the themes of the antithesis between appearance and reality. While Segal's argument does not explain why Teucer is chosen for this role over any other Greek hero who fought in Troy, there are two elements in the finale of the tragedy that play off of Teucer's appearance in this early scene. One is the role of Athens at the end of the play and the deification of Helen on an island off the coast of Attica. Teucer's brother Ajax (and perhaps Teucer himself) was worshipped in Athens as a hero and particularly in his home island of Salamis, off the coast of Attica, which was under Athenian control by the time of the production. The second element is the appearance of the Dioscuri at the end. Not only does Teucer tell Helen about the divergent rumors of her brothers' fate (which presumably any hero would be able to do), he also dwells on his own connection to his brother's death (87-104), providing a vivid illustration of the consequences of one sibling's actions on the lives of another, a possibility that deeply unsettles Helen when Teucer suggests that the *eidolon*'s tarnishing of her reputation has led to her brothers' violent suicide (137-142).

Perhaps this scene would have played out to the original audience in a very different way than it does to a modern reader who opens the play to a list of characters.[99] In Helen's prologue, she establishes her predicament. She is trapped in Egypt with no way to escape, cut off from her husband and the Greek world (1-67).[100] Her situation demands a savior and the audience knows that Menelaus must come to Egypt.[101] It is a logical assumption that the couple will be reunited. When a Greek hero appears onstage, fresh from the Trojan War, and enraged at the sight of Helen, he seems at first to be Menelaus.[102] Teucer's name is purposefully delayed,[103] teased out by Helen through a series of questions that seem to keep the possibility open that the newcomer

[99] Pickard-Cambridge, Gould, and Lewis, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 67–68; Csapo and Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama*, 105, 109–10. There was a *proagon* before the competitions, attended by the poet and actors, in which something was said about the upcoming performances. The sources on this occasion are late, sparse, and unclear, so there may have been some information presented on the characters. How well that information was circulated from the attendees of the *proagon* (which had a smaller audience due to being held in the smaller structure of the Odeon adjacent to the theater) to the attendees of the larger performances at the Dionysia is similarly obscure.

[100] Juffras, "Helen and Other Victims in Euripides' 'Helen.'" Juffras points out that this play begins with an opening that parallels other suppliant dramas like Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. She argues that through the references to the myth of Persephone and other women who are the victims of sexual violence Euripides creates a contrast between Helen and these other women in that Helen is able to reverse the consequences of abduction and violence.

[101] Euripides frequently draws on and manipulates the audience's expectations from both established myth (particularly as known from cult, Homer, or other tragedies), as well as the expectations established by the conventions of tragedy, such as the presence of savior figures when a character presents themselves as a suppliant with no way to resolve the conflict on their own.

[102] Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen," 562. Segal points out how the two Greek warriors, Teucer and Menelaus, contribute to the theme of doubling that pervades the play, but he does not speculate as to whether the audience would at any point confuse Teucer for Menelaus.

[103] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 210. Marshall points out that "any entry along an *eisodos* necessarily takes some time: while conceivably characters could begin to speak as soon as they are visible, there is a sense of mounting expectation whenever a character enters."

is Menelaus, until he finally reveals who he is (87).[104] The anonymity of the Greek war hero stands in stark contrast to Helen's immediate recognizability to the characters in the play.

Initially, Teucer's recognition seems to reinforce Helen's recognizability, inasmuch as her beauty triggers an immediate reaction. However, the course of their exchange reveals how much this trust in appearance can be undermined. Teucer himself is not immediately identifiable by his appearance. His costume and reaction plays upon the ambiguity of the appearance of the Greek hero. Although his initial reaction shows that he recognizes Helen, he convinces himself that he does not. The *eidolon* in this tragedy has a dual purpose, to protect Helen's chastity and to make Aphrodite's victory over Hera hollow in the contest of beauty (31-48). While in this case, the *eidolon*'s identical appearance serves to save Helen from Teucer's anger, the danger of this physical double and the way that it positions the couple in opposition to Aphrodite's conciliatory power is revealed in Helen's reunion with Menelaus.[105]

After Teucer's arrival, Helen knows that the expedition to Troy is over and she fears that her husband is dead, so she goes to consult Theonoe about Menelaus' fate (317-333). In an unusual gesture in tragedy, the chorus joins Helen in her departure from the stage, leaving the

[104] Diggle (OCT 1992) deletes 86-89 as spuriously repetitive, but this leaves Teucer never explicitly named, though his identity is ensured by the identification of his father (92) and brother (94).

[105] Zeitlin, "The Lady Vanishes: Helen and Her Phantom in Euripidean Drama," 265. Zeitlin demonstrates how the *eidolon* motif has a long association with Zeus and Hera in which Zeus' power as cloud-shaper protects his wife from sexual assault by a mortal (most famously of Ixion, see Pindar *Pythian* 2.21-48, but also Endymion in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 260 M-W = fr. 148 Rzach). The protective aspect of the creation of the *eidolon* certainly seems to be intrinsic to its role as presented by Helen in the prologue and in this first interaction with Teucer. As with Hera's *eidolon* (sometimes referred to as Nephele) the purpose of this creation is to secure the wife's fidelity, not to seduce the legitimate husband. Aphrodite also has an association with an *eidolon*. Apollo creates an *eidolon* of her son Aeneas when Aphrodite takes him from the battlefield in the *Iliad* (5.449).

*skene* empty.[106] This allows for a kind of "second prologue" that Menelaus delivers on his arrival.[107] The unusual staging is a particularly clever set up for the conflict of appearance and recognition. It allows for the audience to learn that this is Menelaus. Even though he is a king, he appears shipwrecked and bedraggled, lacking in both the costume and the dignity expected of his character as he engages in a humorous exchange with the old woman at the gate.[108] In Menelaus' case, the conflict of identity from Helen's prologue is inverted. While Menelaus has the history expected by the audience and in turn expects to be recognized for his successes in the Trojan War, he lacks the stage presence. Visually, he looks more like a beggar than a king.

In a parallel to the initial prologue, the old woman tells Menelaus that Helen is in Egypt, but just as Helen's prologue pointed to the instability of the conventional identifiers of a heroic figure – name, parentage, connection to a specific place – the instability of these categories as a marker for identity is reiterated in Menelaus' "prologue" as he wonders how there can be another woman with the same name as his wife, another Zeus, another Eurotas, et cetera (487-496). While the scene certainly has comic overtones in Menelaus' frustrated confusion over the riddle of this reduplication, it also serves to remind the audience, before the couple's reunion, of how the opening of the play had indicated that these traditional attributes are not enough to identify this tragedy's Helen. The separate introductions of husband and wife invite the audience to come

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[106] Dunn, *Tragedy's End*, 13; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 29. Marshall points out that in other extant plays, the exit of the chorus is used to mark a change in location.

[107] Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen"; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 30–31. Segal discusses the theme of doubling in the play and the ways in which Menelaus' martial values are set up against Helen's *charis* and are shown to be inappropriate. Marshall illustrates the extent of the structural twinning of the two "prologues."

[108] Allan, *Helen*, 33; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 234–35, 253–55. Allan suggests that the same actor plays Teucer and Menelaus. Marshall prefers to assign the part of Teucer to the actor playing Theonoe/Theoclymenus, but says that the similarities between the characters will associate them regardless.

to terms with the unconventional representations of these figures in this tragedy. The two prologues allow for the full dramatic irony of the misrecognition to hit home with the absence and re-introduction of the chorus particularly emphasizing the depth of the misunderstanding onstage as none of the characters know enough about the situation to mediate between husband and wife.

The costume of Menelaus seems to be unprecedented in the literary and visual sources, an innovation by Euripides that breaks from the expectations set up by prior tragedies and by other representations of Menelaus available to the audience.[109] When Helen and Menelaus first see each other, the question of representation comes to the fore. Menelaus does not look how he should, causing Helen to initially reject him. Helen, in contrast, is immediately recognizable, though her presence is inexplicable to Menelaus.

Helen's immediate reaction on catching sight of Menelaus is to run from her husband to the altar while he tries to stop her (541-549):[110]

> ἔα, τίς οὗτος; οὔ τί που κρυπτεύομαι
> Πρωτέως ἀσέπτου παιδὸς ἐκ βουλευμάτων;
> οὐχ ὡς δρομαία πῶλος ἢ Βάκχη θεοῦ
> τάφῳ ξυνάψω κῶλον; ἄγριος δέ τις
> μορφὴν ὅδ᾽ ἐστίν, ὅς με θηρᾶται λαβεῖν.

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[109] Zuckerberg, "The Clothes Make the Man"; Collard, "Fragments and Fragmentary Plays," 356–57. The unusual innovation in costuming here plays a part in Aristophanes' parody of the *Helen* in the *Thesmophoriazusae* (855-923). Zuckerberg argues that the ragged costume of Menelaus in the *Helen* is a response to Aristophanes' mockery of Euripidean costuming in the *Acharnians*. Collard points out that Euripides *Ino*, which dates to before 425 BCE, likely involved the character Ino returning to her husband's house as a servant in rags. By the time of the *Helen*, Euripides unconventional costuming already had some precedent.

[110] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 266. Marshall argues that the action in the scene was quite dynamic, with the actor playing Helen running and dodging around the actor playing Menelaus. While this may be correct, I think that the head-covering masks, elaborate costumes, and the danger of ruining a performance through a fall during a headlong dash means that the speed of the action was necessarily slower than the description implies. In fact, the purpose of this explicit description of Helen's speed may be to help the audience imaginatively supply a speed and dexterity to the action that was not possible on the actual stage.

> Oh, who is this? I am not ensnared by the plots of the impious son of Proteus, am I? Will I not reach the altar, running like a filly or a Bacchant? He has a wild appearance, this man who hunts to take me.

Once Helen has reached the safety of the altar, she finally looks back and examines the man.[111] He exclaims that he has never seen a body more similar to his wife's and she answers by crying out to the gods, struck by sudden recognition of her husband (559-560).[112] It is clear that both the protagonists know who they are seeing and, though Helen is overjoyed, Menelaus is in denial. She moves to embrace him and he rebuffs her (566-567). Despite the fact that she is identical to his wife, he still remains adamant that the phantom he left in the cave is the real one. Just as with Teucer, the identical appearance of the *eidolon* leaves Menelaus with no way to make the distinction between the two. However, unlike in the scene with Teucer, where Helen goes along with Teucer's confusion and did not identify herself, in her reunion with Menelaus, she does. The structure of the tragedy allows the audience to experience the full irony of Menelaus' denial. The initial prologue prepares them to recognize the Helen on stage as the true one, and even during Menelaus' second prologue, his interaction with the old woman at the door of the palace informs Menelaus that his real wife is in Egypt (470-475). The tragic irony of his misrecognition is further enhanced for the audience by the fact that the *eidolon* is never a real character on the stage and remains in the realm of fantastical report. By never placing the *eidolon* onstage, Euripides never encourages the audience to question the validity of Helen's identity. Despite Helen's insistence on her identity, Menelaus refuses to believe his own recognition. The dramatic structure places the audience firmly on Helen's side, making Menelaus' stubborn denial

[111] Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived,* 82–83. Burnett points out that this scene is staged as a pursuit scene common to the subgenre of suppliant tragedies. In this case, there is a comic irony to the scene as Menelaus, meant to be Helen's savior, is playing the wrong role.
[112] M: οὐπώποτ᾽ εἶδον προσφερέστερον δέμας / Ἑ: ὦ θεοί· θεὸς γὰρ καὶ τὸ γιγνώσκειν φίλους.

seem both foolish and tragic, as he rejects his loyal wife in order to make the pointless suffering of the Trojan War meaningful.

The stage action reflects the popular iconographic type of Helen running to an altar and Menelaus trying to catch her.[113] Euripides' tragedy, however, creates an ironic inversion of the customary scene. While on the painted vessels Helen runs because she recognizes Menelaus, Euripides' Helen runs because she does not.[114] By creating an echo onstage of this common iconographic type, Euripides further bolsters Helen's claim to her identity against the claims of her double, the *eidolon*. Not the *eidolon,* but Helen herself and Menelaus physically reenact the scene of reunion that is so familiar from the Athenian visual environment.[115] The action stands in contrast to the description of the reunion between Menelaus and the *eidolon* that Teucer narrates in which Menelaus drags his supposed wife away by the hair (116).[116] The description of the

[113] Pippin, "Euripides' 'Helen,'" 154. The analogy of the Bacchante in the description of Helen's flight, also seems to direct the audience to think of vase painting where the fleeing Bacchante was another popular pursuit motif.
[114] Hedreen, *Capturing Troy*, 61. Hedreen argues that the purpose of the elements of setting in this iconography is to show Helen's fear of her husband's response, which is also indicated in scenes that show Helen looking back over her shoulder as she runs from Menelaus.
[115] There is some question of how exact the correspondence here is between the stage actions and the iconographic motifs. The elements of Menelaus, Helen, the altar, and the pursuit are likely sufficient for the audience to make the connection, but it is possible that the match between the two was even more exact. The text is clear that Menelaus is armed with a sword. It is mentioned explicitly at line 982, δίστομον ξίφος τόδε ("this two-edged sword") and alluded to at various points throughout the play (e.g. 837, 840-842, 971, 1072). It is possible, and, by Helen's reaction, even likely, that Menelaus threatens Helen with his sword, creating a further connection to the iconography of the couple's reunion. It is even possible that he dropped the sword. It is impossible for the modern reader to tell, though there would have been no ambiguity in the choice in the original performance. However, I would suggest that it is not dropped, and that the contrast in this element could emphasize the shift in focus and the initial failure of recognition. Euripides is well-recognized for playing upon his audience's expectations, by creating a tableau that is familiar from the visual milieu, he sets up the expectation that Helen's extraordinary beauty will overwhelm Menelaus and lead to reunion, but with the existence of the *eidolon*, the expectation fails. Marshall 2014 (268-269) suggests the sword is dropped or at least lowered at lines 578-579 when Helen asks Menelaus to look at her and accept the proof before his eyes.
[116] Μενέλαος αὐτὴν ἦγ᾽ ἐπισπάσας κόμης.

reunion between Menelaus and *eidolon* is more akin to the iconography of scenes of Cassandra and Ajax, which frequently feature Ajax holding Cassandra by her hair in a display of masculine aggression.[117] This is a sharp contrast to the iconographic tradition of Menelaus and Helen, which is, as discussed earlier, less focused on sexualized violence and more on the effect of Helen's beauty on Menelaus and their forthcoming reconciliation.

While the stage action of this reunion echoes the iconographic tradition, thoroughly familiar to the audience and featured on the Parthenon, these cues are not enough for Menelaus. He denies the truth in front of his eyes, choosing instead the fantasy presented by the *eidolon* and the glory of war. The *eidolon*'s existence gestures towards the lack of specificity in exemplary beauty. Helen's flawlessness is identical to that of her physical copy. At the same time, the audience, who are fully aware of the irony of the scene, are confronted by a familiar image from the iconographic tradition, but are forced to reassess its meaning. While the image of the pursuit of Helen by Menelaus retains its truth, its implications and context have changed. The idea presented in this tableau – that images have the power to lead the viewer to the wrong conclusions – reaches its final culmination in the conclusion of the tragedy.[118]

The failure of visual recognition emphasizes Helen's dependence on her appearance as secure site of her identity. Earlier in the play, after her unsettling run-in with Teucer, Helen tells the chorus that she and her husband will recognize each other if he comes, assuring them that the

[117] For example, see the Kleophrades Painter's early fifth-century hydria in Naples which shows various vignettes from the sack of Troy, including Cassandra and Ajax. See Sourvinou-Inwood, "Menace and Pursuit: Differentiation and the Creation of Meaning" for more on the iconography of violent pursuit.

[118] Euripides' lost *Ino* may have contained similar themes (Hyginus *Fabulae* 4). Reconstructions of the play suggest that it also involved a misrecognition, in this case, a mother's fatal confusion of her own sons for her stepsons. See Collard, "Fragments and Fragmentary Plays," 356–57.

couple have tokens that only they would recognize (φανέρα ξύμβολα 290-291).[119] Recognition in tragedy is almost always tied to a physical object which acts as a catalyst for memory. Yet Euripides' corpus demonstrates his interest in not just using tokens effectively, but in thinking about and challenging the very nature and function of tokens. For example, in the *Electra,* Electra mocks the idea that the siblings would know each other through the traditional Aeschylean tokens (the lock of hair and footprint would be different, no one would keep a piece of weaving from infancy), and recognition is instead secured by a scar that Orestes got as a child chasing a deer in the house. Tokens of recognition also feature prominently in the near contemporary plays, the *Iphigenia in Tauris* and the *Ion*. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris,* Iphigenia reads aloud the letter that she wants Pylades to bring to Orestes, and the letter triggers Orestes' recognition, but Iphigenia is unconvinced. Orestes then recounts the weaving Iphigenia made as a child, depicting Atreus and Thyestes and speaks of the spear of Pelops in Iphigenia's childhood bedroom. Iphigenia's belief in her brother's identity is finally secured only through references to objects that serve both as reminders of their childhood in the same house and as references to the family's bloody history of internecine conflict that has led to their current predicament. In the *Ion,* as discussed in the previous chapter, Creusa recognizes her son's cradle and he accepts her identity only when she describes the objects inside – a piece of weaving, golden snake ornaments, and an olive wreath. Again, Euripides provides an excess of tokens that both serve as personal connections between the characters and also place their conflicts into a greater mythological and genealogical context. In the Ion's case, this recognition occurs by reference to Athenian autochthony (see chapter 1).

[119] εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἔζη πόσις, ἀνεγνώσθημεν ἂν / ἐλθόντες, ἃ φανέρ᾽ ἦν μόνοις, ἐς ξύμβολα.
"For if my husband were alive, we would recognize each other from tokens which are known clearly to us alone."

In contrast to these overdetermined recognitions, in which multiple objects and memories play a role in securing an identity that cannot be achieved by appearance alone, Helen and her husband recognize each other as soon as she stops running and the couple can finally get a good look at each other. Typically, there is no need for a recognition scene, as such, between adults who can identify each other by appearance alone (e. g. in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*). However, although he admits that the woman looks exactly like his wife, Menelaus refuses to believe that this is the real Helen. In this way, the recognition scene echoes the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus.[120] There are certainly other parallels as well: in the length of the couple's separation, the wife's fidelity, and the costume of Menelaus, as well as Helen's consequent failure to recognize him due to his ragged appearance (*Odyssey* 23.93-95). This parallel, however, only makes clearer the failure of the token to secure the identity. Despite what she said to the chorus earlier, Helen never produces an object to act as a token to convince Menelaus of her identity. As she tries to get him to recognize her, she instead treats her own body as the token that Menelaus should recognize. She says to him, σκέψαι: τί σοὐνδεῖ; τίς δὲ σοῦ σοφώτερος; ("Look! What is missing? Who is more knowledgeable than you?" 578) Helen, whose defining characteristics throughout the tradition are her beauty and desirability, offers her body as proof of her identity. As we have seen, generally in tragedy recognition either occurs immediately, in which case presumably the appearance of the other character is enough to trigger recognition, or recognition requires a token. Helen conflates these two possibilities, using her own body as token, sure that

[120] Several scholars have recognized the connection to the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, see also Steiger, "Wie Entstand die Helena des Euripides?"; Eisner, "Echoes of the Odyssey in Euripides' Helen"; Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen"; Friedman, "Old Stories in Euripides' New 'Helen'"; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 32–33, 63; Boedeker, "Significant Inconsistencies in Euripides' Helen," 247.

even if her husband somehow does not recognize her for herself, her reaction-demanding appearance should be enough.

Yet Menelaus does not accept the proof in front of his eyes. Even when Helen explains to him what the *eidolon* is, he still refuses to believe her. Menelaus is faced by two wives, both of whom have Helen's defining beauty. One has been loyal, the other betrayed him, yet he chooses the one that leaves his heroism intact rather than rendering his efforts at Troy a vain fight for a phantom. From his first entrance on the stage, he has characterized himself first and foremost as leader of the Greek armies in Troy (393-396). Even though his shipwreck has deprived him of many of his men and all of the treasures he won from the sack of Troy, he still clings to its fame despite the cost. When Helen offers him an alternative, a loyal wife who nullifies the cause of the war, he refuses her. At the end of the exchange, he concludes, τοὐκεῖ με μέγεθος τῶν πόνων πείθει, σὺ δ᾽ οὔ ("the greatness of my suffering there convinces me; you do not" 593). Menelaus' denial is hedging, inasmuch as he has no explanation for the presence of this second Helen and does not even argue for the *eidolon*'s truth. Rather, he simply refuses to accept that the Trojan War was unnecessary.

When Helen recognizes Menelaus she speaks of their marriage, of their relationship and history together, but Menelaus sees Helen as only a surface; to him she is indistinguishable from the cloud-made copy. It is only the disappearance of the *eidolon*, the removal of any alternative and the apparition's divine endorsement of Helen's words which compels Menelaus to accept his true wife. As in the contemporaneous visual tradition, the reunion is not completed by the couple alone, but through the intervention of divine actors. No amount of mortal strength and ingenuity can guarantee an escape for Helen and Menelaus, not with the gods so present in Egypt through Theonoe. Only winning divine favor to their side can allow the couple's escape (876-891). In

this instance though, the divine agents are different from the iconographic tradition, particularly the role of Aphrodite in effecting the reunion. Aphrodite's patronage is undermined and is replaced by Hera's. She is presented as the cause of the couple's separation, as Aphrodite offered Helen to Paris as a reward for his judgement. In an inversion of the judgement of Paris, it is instead Hera, goddess of marriage, who is the one to effect the final reconciliation. While Hera is also partially responsible for the couple's separation since she substituted the *eidolon* for Helen to make Aphrodite's victory hollow (673-684), when the *eidolon* threatens to disrupt the reunion of husband and wife, it disappears. Theonoe's judgement makes this clear. She announces that she will help the couple because Hera wishes to help them, despite Aphrodite's opposition (1005-1007).[121] In comparison to the visual tradition, where Helen's affiliation with Aphrodite emphasizes her mythological role as a living manifestation of Aphrodite's power, in this play Helen's primary affiliation is with Hera, emphasizing her fidelity and this new conception of her as a paragon of the faithful wife.

This persuasive power of images comes to the fore in the latter half of the play as Helen herself takes on the role of manipulator of appearances. Throughout the play, Helen has shown an awareness of the role that beauty plays in shaping her fate. She laments the difficulties that the effect of her appearance has brought her and her family (e.g. 261-266). She has also shown an awareness of the mutability of beauty. This is particularly clear in Helen's lament immediately before the arrival of Menelaus, in which Helen describes how the "gift" of her beauty has

[121] Sansone, "Theonoe and Theoclymenus," 19. As Sansone points out, Theonoe acts as a parallel to Athena, the third participant in the judgement of Paris. The language of Theonoe's judgement, that she has decided in favor of Hera because she is a sworn virgin and has nothing to do with Aphrodite echoes Athena's famous judgement at the end of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* where Athena decides in Apollo's favor over the Erinyes, but also ameliorates the goddesses' ill will in her decision.

reduced Hellas itself to mourning (363-374) and links this to the transformations of Callisto and the daughter of Merops (375-385).[122] In the scratched cheeks of the mourning Hellas, the possibility to mar Helen's unaltered beauty is first hinted at. Yet at this early point in the play, with Menelaus still missing and the possibility of recognition still dangling, Helen chooses not to obscure her beauty in any way, even though it is what has placed her in a position of danger due to Theoclymenus' pursuit. When her beauty fails to play the expected role in the recognition, and it is instead up to divine intervention to reconcile the couple, the role of Helen's appearance shifts in value and meaning.

The final scene of misrecognition demonstrates this transformation in the value and meaning of Helen's appearance. The plan that Helen formulates to enact the couple's escape from Egypt is an attempt to inhabit a new identity, one in which she is no longer the ever-pursued *parthenos*.[123] She changes her costume, switches from the young and beautiful woman who is so immediately recognizable to Teucer (71-73) and Menelaus (549) to a mourning widow who is no longer recognizably Helen.[124] Helen finds that she can achieve the transformation of

[122] Robinson, "Stars and Heroines in Euripides' Helen (Helen 375-85)"; Murnaghan, "The Choral Plot of Euripides' Helen," 165. Robinson identifies the Titan's anonymous daughter as Taygeta, mother of the eponymous hero Lacedaemon. He argues that the happiness of Callisto and Taygeta comes from their imminent catasterism, not the transformation into animals.
[123] Wyles, *Costume in Greek Tragedy*, 61–94. Wyles discusses the ways in which costume is innately tied to identity in the Athenian mind. While she does not discuss this tragedy in particular, a number of the principles she discusses about the connection between costume and identity are relevant to this tragedy.
[124] Burian, *Helen*, 256 n.1056. When Helen presents this plan of false death and her own transformed appearance to Menelaus, he points out, παλαιότης γὰρ τῷ λόγῳ γ᾽ ἔνεστί τις ("This is an old story." 1056). The reference, as Burian argues, is most likely an allusion to Sophocles' *Electra*, although in that play Electra's mourning is not a ruse (while Orestes' falsely reported death is). The reference to Electra, the mourning young woman par excellence, whose dogged loyalty is often placed in juxtaposition with the infidelity of her mother and aunt, makes Helen's transformation even more emphatic and points out the contradiction between this role and her expected character on stage.

beauty that she thought impossible, wiping it away to create new meaning (cf. 262-263) through the physical marring that is characteristic of women's mourning practices. Helen's change of costume is unusual on the tragic stage.[125] For the tragic audience, the costume and mask together act as the identity of the character, as actors played multiple parts and the same character could be played by different actors.[126] This costume change is thus a potentially confusing moment for the audience, challenging one of the fundamental rules of the tragic performance. In order to prevent the audience from becoming confused and misunderstanding the continuity of the

[125] Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions"; Halliwell, "The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask"; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 284; see also Wyles, *Costume in Greek Tragedy*, 69–76; Sourvinou-Inwood, "Medea at a Shifting Distance: Images and Euripidean Tragedy," 289. Marshall 1999 argues that the blinding of Oedipus, Polymestor, and the Cyclops would require a changed mask, but in Marshall 2014 he revised his confidence in this argument, influenced by the skepticism of Halliwell on whether such a change is actually necessary or would simply be mimed for the audience. Either way, there is no reason to think that there was any change in the clothing of the costume in these plays. As far as changing costumes goes, Euripides' *Heracles* involves a costume change early on in the play for the character of Megara and the silent extras playing her sons (327-335;442-450; 525-528; 548-549; 562-564). The exact change here is unclear, since the dead simply wear fine clothes, which may not be a marked change in the case of Megara, though it must involve garlands for the children, at least (Euripides plays upon the ambiguity of bridal and funerary clothing in the *Alcestis* and in the character of Evadne in the *Suppliants*). Heracles does not comment on any change in Megara's appearance, though perhaps this is only to emphasize the misfortune for his sons who, despite their youth and noble family, have been dressed for death on the expectation that no one will be left who cares enough to complete the burial rites properly for them. By the end of the play, even though Heracles returns to save his wife and children from Lycus, the costumes prove prophetic in determining the characters' fate (see Wyles 2011). Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that Medea appeared in a different, markedly barbarian costume in the final scene of the *Medea*. While this would fit well with the themes of the play, I think the tie between costume/mask and character would make it highly unusual for such a change to go without remark. Still, it is possible that Medea's foreignness was emphasized in costume in some way, such as by the addition of a tiara.

[126] Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, for example, requires two actors to play Theseus. While it is unusual for actors to share a speaking part in this way, it is not unusual for a character played by one of the three actors to show up onstage played by one of the nonspeaking extras at another point in the play. See Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy" for more about the possibilities and limitations of the three actor rule and the way that tragedians could play upon the audience's awareness of the actor to create connections between characters.

character, the costume change is described beforehand (1085-1089) and then again when Helen's actor returns to the stage in a new costume (1186-1192).[127] This redundancy emphasizes the innovation of the costume change and the potential for misrecognition both for the characters within the play and for the audience.

The transformation of Helen through this costume change is vividly illustrated by her return onstage. Her mask and costume are altered. She is no longer dressed as a young queen, but as a mourning widow, her white dress exchanged for black, her hair shorn, her face scratched. Theoclymenus at first does not seem to notice her presence, calling on his men to hunt Helen down before noticing that she is still present (1184-1185).[128] He questions her about her changed appearance and twice he specifically mentions her shorn hair (1187-1188; 1224).[129] This is particularly notable because Helen's hair is one of the attributes that defines her beauty.[130] In Euripides' *Trojan Women,* for example, Helen stands in contrast to the other captive Trojans in that her hair is not shorn (881; 1026; 1107-1110).[131] The iconographic tradition also emphasizes the relationship between Helen's beauty and her hair (cf. fig. 7, the Getty nestoris, which shows Helen and Aphrodite with their hair styled the same way, creating a visual echo between the two). Despite being widowed numerous times, Helen is never shown mourning. In the scenes

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[127] Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 284–88. The same redundancy accompanies the costume (and probably also mask) change of Menelaus later in the play.
[128] Segal, "The Two Worlds of Euripides' Helen," 583. Theoclymenus is described earlier in the play as an astute hunter of Greeks (155). There is a particular irony in the juxtaposition of Theoclymenus' reliance on his hunting skill and his inability to notice his quarry when she is right in front of him. Segal argues that Theoclymenus, like Menelaus, represents a masculine obsession with glory and violence that proves to be ineffectual in the world of this play.
[129] Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, 312; Wolff, "On Euripides' Helen," 67 n.17. Foley, following a brief suggestion by Wolff, speculates that the shorn hair, as well as other elements in this scene (such as the motifs of abduction and disguise), evoke the Spartan marriage rite.
[130] Marshall (2014), 291.
[131] Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions," 195; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 291.

that portray her reunion with Menelaus, she is always shown with long hair despite the fact that she was recently made a widow by the death of Paris (and perhaps also by the death of Deiphobus, the Trojan prince who she marries after Paris' death).[132] Helen's costume and mask-change in Euripides' *Helen* are made more emphatic by this alteration of one of the character's most recognizable features.[133]

The change in Helen's appearance at the end of the tragedy marks her as a character separate from many of her literary predecessors and as completely differentiated from the visual tradition. While the literary tradition does show Helen as a character in mourning, most notably in her speech at Hector's funeral at the end of the *Iliad*, there are no examples of a mourning Helen in the visual record. And while Menelaus' costume change in the end of the tragedy is a restoration of his familiar mien, for Helen the costume change is an innovation to the visual tradition. The final image of Helen in this tragedy – that of her as a mourning widow – stands in stark contrast to the iconography of Helen as the perpetual *parthenos* and object of constant abduction. Euripides' tragedy responds to and references the visual tradition, only to change Helen's place in it. Helen is split in two: the desirable *eidolon*, eternally young and beautiful but false, and the wife, no longer an unchanging *parthenos*, who has remained devoted to her husband and family and will continue to godhood.

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[132] Cf. ln 283-284, which likewise references the illogical beauty of Helen since she remains desirable while her daughter grows too old for marriage:
ὃ δ᾽ ἀγλάισμα δωμάτων ἐμοῦ τ᾽ ἔφυ, / θυγάτηρ ἄνανδρος πολιὰ παρθενεύεται·
"while the one who was born the glory of the house, my daughter, is growing gray as a virgin, without a husband."

[133] Cf. *Orestes* 128-129, Electra complains that although Helen is ostensibly mourning the death of her sister Clytemnestra, she has only cut off the tips of her hair to leave as an offering at the tomb. As this play also ends with the deification of Helen and does not portray Electra in a positive light, it is unclear exactly how this would have been staged.

## CONCLUSION

The happy resolution of the play is enacted through Helen's ability to understand and manipulate images. Helen, for whom the first half of the play has been a brutal lesson in divine manipulation and the misleading power of appearance, is the one who can come up with a successful plan for escape.[134] The power of images to persuade is key to Helen's plan. It relies on Theoclymenus' misinterpretation of Helen's mourning and of Menelaus' bedraggled appearance.

Over the course of the play, each piece of Helen's identity is undermined. The progression away from the traditional tropes that define the character forces the audience to reassess their own understanding. Their initial understanding of Helen is transformed until she leaves the play as a completely unrecognizable figure, in a completely different mask and costume than was used to identify Helen before. The appearance of the Dioscuri at the end of the tragedy reifies this transformation.[135] Theoclymenus makes the mistake of attempting to pursue Helen, but the sudden appearance of her brothers to curtail his aggression demonstrates that he has missed the significance of the change. She is no longer the ever-pursued woman. The transformation in the visual appearance of the character marks a substantial change to the reaction that Helen's appearance demands.

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[134] Holmberg, "Euripides' Helen," 35; Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, 313, 317, 325; Marshall, *The Structure and Performance of Euripides' Helen*, 42. Holmberg argues that Menelaus' inability to devise any sort of success places the emphasis on Helen's subjectivity and marks the difference between Helen and Penelope, whose independent plans either fail or are co-opted by Odysseus. As Marshall points out, not only is Helen the one to come up with a successful plan to escape, but the play's staging visually emphasizes her success by having her leave her place of supplication at the tomb and leave Menelaus in her place, hiding at the tomb just as she was at the beginning of the play.

[135] Edmunds, *Stealing Helen*, 85–87. Cf. Edmunds for the connection between Helen and the *theoxenia* of the Dioscuri's cult.

In this way, the transformation of Helen builds off of and then reinterprets the visual tradition. It is first presented as the unassailable truth of Helen's identity, only for the audience to be confronted with a new understanding of the images that are so familiar to them, then finally a complete change in mask and costume that undermines the truth of Helen's beauty. While Menelaus needs to dress again as a hero to reach the resolution of the tragedy, Helen's part in the story ends in the guise of a widow. This is, for the audience, another truth inverted. While the traditional literary story of Helen and Menelaus' reunion makes her a recent widow of Paris, she never appears as a widow in the visual tradition. Instead, her role as wife and mother never alter her appearance, and she remains the idealized young woman always. Here, in the ruse of widowhood, she marks this final abduction visually as an end to the cycle, a movement beyond the phase of life that has illogically defined her. Helen's role in the plot for escape shows her transformation from a pawn moved about by the gods to a goddess who is herself able to control the meaning of images.

The ending of the tragedy leaves the audience with a drastic reconsideration of the character of Helen. She has transformed from the frequently abducted Spartan queen to an Athenian goddess who will pass beyond the reach of mortals.[136] In Attica, at Rhamnous in particular, Helen is the child of the goddess Nemesis. In this role, Helen is tied to the cyclicity of revenge. She is not merely a human queen who happens to be beautiful, but an embodiment of Nemesis as a goddess of retribution. She is meant to instigate and replicate conflict, and her beauty is a function of her divinity which allows her to perform this role. This beauty demands

[136] Dunn, *Tragedy's End*, 156. Dunn sees the end of the tragedy as "firmly rooted in the Athenians' new experience of profound uncertainty" following the failure of the Sicilian Expedition and, like other scholars, sees the optimism and role of chance in the resolution of the play as an argument for sudden reversal and eventual success in light of the bleak atmosphere of the city at war.

forceful response and incites a cycle of repeated violence. The images of Helen play a role in shaping this conception of her as an instigator of conflict, not only in the context of the Trojan War, but in the specifically Attic context. Helen's abduction by Theseus places her as an inciting factor in the conflict between the Athenians and the Spartans.

By the end of the *Helen,* Euripides has presented a challenge to the casual reading of these images, placing Helen in a much more active role as a goddess who is able to understand and manipulate interpretation. After the conflict and failure of beauty to achieve for her the re-abduction by her husband that she desires, she abandons the trappings of beauty – elegant clothing, long hair, and a lack of imperfections – by adopting a wholly new appearance and using it to complete her escape. The use of costume in the *Helen* as a point of contact between the visual environment of Athens and tragedy is also interrogated in the *Bacchae*, as we will see in the next chapter. Here, the iconographic shift in images of Dionysus instigates a challenging reinterpretation of an old plot. Like the *Helen,* the *Bacchae* uses a double costume change as a way to question the relationship between character and appearance. In the *Bacchae*, this transformation acts as a testament to the power of the theatrical illusion to reflect the power of the god.

# Shifting Images in the *Bacchae*

The prologue of the *Bacchae* introduces the god Dionysus in disguise, but the disguise itself is a familiar one. In the late fifth century, the iconography of Dionysus shifted from the traditional appearance of the god as a mature, bearded man to a new iconography which shows the god as young and beardless. The disguise that Dionysus uses in this tragedy is one that evokes this new iconography, inviting ambiguities of imagery and divinity. In this tragedy, Euripides explicitly brings to the fore the question of the relationship between images and truth, between vision and interpretation.

Dionysus' role as god of perception makes him a particularly appropriate bridge between the world of images and the world of theater. The story of Dionysus' conception, as well, is one that is naturally open to the question of how to visualize the divine, since the epiphany of Zeus in his true form is what cause Semele's death.[1] Semele's lesson that it is impossible for mortals to look on true divinity and survive is reenacted through Pentheus, whose momentary delusion gives him insight into the god's true nature while simultaneously marking that he will then die.[2] False images in this play, like disguise and delusion, contain truth, while autopsy deceives. The *Bacchae* is, at its core, a tragedy of visuality, one which recognizes the power of images, while

[1] Larson, *Greek Heroine Cults*, 93–96; Sommerstein, "Bacchae and Earlier Tragedy," 31. Cf. Larson for the cults to Semele in Greece and the significance of her death. Sommerstein suggests that Aeschylus' lost *Semele* included a disguised Hera tempting Semele to her death.
[2] Hamilton, "Bacchae 47-52," 144–49. Hamilton argues that the palace miracles are an epiphany of Dionysus's birth, reenacting the thunder, lightning, and fire that accompanied the appearance of Zeus and the resulting destruction.

also acknowledging the dangers of misinterpretation and the impossibility of capturing the protean form of a god in a single, static image.[3]

The *Bacchae* draws on the visual milieu of Athens, particularly thematizing the recent iconographic shift in the representation of Dionysus, to investigate the relationship between gods and images. In the course of this play, Dionysus demonstrates his ability to control perception, challenging and reshaping not only the experiences of the characters, but also drawing in the audience.[4] Euripides draws on the audience's consciousness of the theatrical illusion by building off of and working against the material iconographic tradition, as is especially illustrated by the visual stagecraft of costuming. The relationship between costume and character, already explored in the *Helen*, comes to a head in the *Bacchae*, which experiments with the theme of disguise in a way that stretches the limits of the tragic genre. In the metatheatrical gesture of the cross-dressing scene, the audience participates in Pentheus' double-vision, experiencing the fractured perception of the theatrical illusion laid bare. Euripides' *Bacchae* layers disguises, deception, and truth in a way that draws on the authority of images and their associations, but also argues for a constantly shifting truth about the nature of divinity.

## BACKGROUND

The *Bacchae* is one of Euripides' best-known plays, both in the ancient and modern worlds. It tells the story of the arrival of the god Dionysus at Thebes, which is the city of his

[3] Other visual media, of course, have their own claims to representing the nature of divinity in ways that tragedy cannot replicate.
[4] Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," 111. As Foley points out, the palace miracles scene could not have been performed onstage in a way that imitates the full extent of the earthquake and destruction described. The audience does not share in the chorus' experience, but watches the chorus describing the experience of seeing the miracle, a gesture that presents the theatrical illusion to the audience.

maternal ancestors. In his prologue, he announces that he has come in disguise to punish his mother's sisters who have denied his divinity and to impose his rites on this city first of all those in Greece. He has driven his aunts and the women of the city mad and they have encamped on Mount Cithaeron as maenads. Dionysus is captured by his cousin Pentheus, the king of Thebes, who does not believe in the new god. Eventually, Dionysus overcomes the mind of his cousin, tricking him into dressing as a maenad to spy on the women, leading to the king's death at the hands of his mother and the other women of the city. After Pentheus' mother, Agave, comes onstage with the head of her dismembered son, her father, Cadmus, talks her back to sanity and the terrifying realization of what she has done. Dionysus reveals himself and outlines the future of his family and his worship.

The *Bacchae* is the only extant tragedy which features a god in disguise as one of the characters.[5] There were, however, several others that have not survived. In the *Republic*, Socrates objects to this practice, μηδ᾽ ἐν τραγῳδίαις μηδ᾽ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ποιήμασιν εἰσαγέτω Ἥραν ἠλλοιωμένην, ὡς ἱέρειαν ἀγείρουσαν ("neither in tragedy, nor in other poetry bring in Hera disguised as a begging priest" 381d).[6] The characters of the *Bacchae* and the tale of the conflict in Thebes over Pentheus' resistance to the god were also already familiar, as this story had been staged at least once before by Aeschylus.[7]

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[5] Burnett, "Pentheus and Dionysus." Burnett argues that the *Bacchae* follows the model of "test by a god in disguise," but that the expected course of events dictated by the type changes when Dionysus chooses to use Pentheus a scapegoat rather than take out his anger on the whole city of Thebes.

[6] Sommerstein, "Bacchae and Earlier Tragedy," 31. Although the scholiast on Aristophanes *Frogs* 1344 attributes this story to Aeschylus' *Xantriai*, Sommerstein contends that the disguise is more appropriate to Aeschylus' *Semele* and that some of the extant fragments of the play (lines 23 and 27) are delivered by the disguised Hera to Semele.

[7] Kirk, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, 3; March, "Euripides' Bakchai"; Sommerstein, "Bacchae and Earlier Tragedy"; Lamari, "Visual Intertextuality in Ancient Greek Drama: Euripides' Bacchae and the Use of Art Media. 187-204."

Unlike the *Ion* and the *Helen*, which survived as "alphabetic plays," the *Bacchae* was preserved as one of the "select plays" of Euripides, used as school texts in the Byzantine and Roman periods. While there were seven select plays each for Aeschylus and Sophocles, there were ten for Euripides, and the *Bacchae* comes to us as the last of these. Due to the circumstances of transmission, a section towards the end of the *Bacchae* is missing.[8] Probably about fifty lines have been lost, from the end of the exchange between Cadmus and Agave, including the arrangement of the fragments of Pentheus' body, to the arrival of Dionysus as deus ex machina. The play also lacks scholia and is incomplete in one of the manuscripts.[9] This issue of transmission means that there are several places where the text is questionable and any argument about the final scene of the play is, necessarily, speculative.

The *Bacchae* was produced posthumously by Euripides' son or nephew, probably in 405 BCE,[10] alongside the *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the lost *Alcmaeon in Corinth*.[11] It was one of Euripides' few first-prize-winning entries in the Dionysia. Euripides himself died shortly before the play's first performance (in 406 BCE). His passing was supposedly marked by Sophocles who showed up at the proagon that year dressed in mourning with his actors ungarlanded.[12] The

[8] Alexopoulou, "'Christus Patiens' and the Reception of Euripides' 'Bacchae' in Byzantium." One of our sources for the reconstruction of this missing section is the *Christus Patiens*, a Byzantine passion play which draws heavily from the *Bacchae*, particularly for the character of Mary, whose mourning for her son is the central focus of the play.
[9] Dodds, *Bacchae*, li–lix.
[10] Possibly 406 BCE.
[11] Hall, "Perspectives on the Impact of Bacchae at Its Original Performance"; Karamanou, "Family Reunion or Household Disaster? Exploring Plot Diversity in Euripides' Last Production."
[12] Scullion, "Euripides and Macedon, or the Silence of the 'Frogs,'" 396. Scullion suggests that this famous episode has more to do with the construction of the character of Sophocles in the biographical tradition than the truth or as a reflection on the attitude of the city. The biographical tradition often casts Sophocles as the most pious and patriotic of the tragedians.

biographical tradition also states that Euripides left Athens in 408 BCE for Macedon at the invitation of Archelaus I, spending the last two years of his life there.[13]

The final years of the Peloponnesian War had doubtless been hard on the city's tragedians and artists. Pottery production declines sharply and building projects lapse.[14] Tragedies, typically funded by liturgies paid by the wealthiest citizens, were almost certainly affected by the cost of the war. While plays continued to be produced, the wealthy citizens who funded these productions were also being heavily levied for the costs of the war, especially in the last decade, by which point the Athenians had lost control of much of the revenue from their empire and the silver mines at Laurium.[15] Although the civic festivals remain important enough to the city to continue to be funded until the end of the war, they are surely not the lavish productions of Aeschylus' time,[16] impacted by both the loss of wealth and manpower.[17] While the Dionysia had once been the centerpiece in the display of Athens' wealth and imperial reach,

[13] Kovacs, *Euripidea*, 62–67; Stuttard, "Introduction - Bacchae in Context," 5–6. Stuttard (influenced by arguments about the *Bacchae* made by Carrière and Delebecque) suggests that animosity between Euripides and the recently-returned Alcibiades influenced his decision to leave the city.

[14] Randall, "The Erechtheum Workmen." The Erechtheum accounts of the Athenian building commission are an inventory from 409 BCE when work resumed on the Erechtheum, presumably after the construction was halted by the Sicilian Expedition. Some of the elements of the building's decoration, such as the rosettes in the frieze over the porch of the caryatids on the south side of the building, were never finished.

[15] Böckh, *Die staatshaushaltung der Athener*; Davies, "Demosthenes on Liturgies"; Pritchard, "Costing Festivals and War"; Pritchard, *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens*. Böckh began the discussion over the relative costs of festivals and military spending during the Peloponnesian War, criticizing the Athenians for their excessive festival spending. Since then, other scholars have tried to quantify Athenians spending of liturgies, such as Davies, who attempts to tabulate the fifth- and fourth-century regular liturgies. Pritchard has recently written several times about the issue, concluding that, although festival spending remained high, military spending was significantly higher.

[16] Perhaps this is what is at stake in Aristophanes' *Frogs*: not just the recent deaths of Sophocles and Euripides, but the decline of the theatrical festival and the loss of the genre.

[17] Hanink, "The Great Dionysia and the End of the Peloponnesian War."

as the war continued and the city's fortunes fell, it must have served as a vivid illustration of changing circumstances.

The biographical tradition is a questionable source and the context of the composition of the *Bacchae* remains uncertain.[18] Euripides certainly has some connection to Macedon at this time, as is best illustrated by the lost *Archelaus*, which was written for the king of Macedon.[19] Archelaus' recruitment of the poets and artists of Athens includes the tragic poet Agathon and the painter Zeuxis, as well as several other artists and musicians, such as Timotheus.[20] However, Scott Scullion and others have cautioned against taking the biographical tradition too seriously, especially in light of the late date of these traditions and the lack of corroborating fifth-century sources.[21]

## IMAGES OF DIONYSUS

The iconography of Dionysus underwent a drastic shift in the last quarter of the fifth century as the image of the god as a beardless young man surged in popularity. The disguise of Dionysus in the *Bacchae* echoes this new iconography. Euripides' use of this recent iconographic shift creates a sort of double-vision for the audience, who are simultaneously aware that Dionysus' appearance is a disguise and a different image than his traditional mien, while at the

[18] Lefkowitz, "The Euripides Vita"; Hanink, "Literary Politics and the Euripidean Vita." Hanink argues that "the widespread stories about Euripides' time at the Macedonian court reflected the desire of Macedonian dynasts to assert not only control over, but also a legitimate inherited claim to, a poet whose foremost importance in the history of Greek literature was already well established." (131-132)
[19] Ridgeway, "Euripides in Macedon."
[20] Hardiman, "Classical Art to 221 BC," 507.
[21] Scullion, "Euripides and Macedon, or the Silence of the 'Frogs.'" Scullion particularly questions the lack of corroboration from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the premise of which is that Euripides is vying with Aeschylus on the question of who is the better representative and teacher of tragedy. He argues that if the biographical tradition of Euripides' defection and death abroad were true, we would expect to see it referenced in this context.

same time they are cognizant that this appearance has recently become recognizable as a way for the god to be portrayed. The use of this iconographic parallel thus highlights the ambiguity of truth in images and the role of interpretation, emphasizing that there are multiple layers of truth and deception at stake in the play.

Since the god first appeared in art around 580 BCE, Dionysus had mainly been shown as a mature, bearded god, usually in a long chiton with a himation.[22] The type is generally shared by all of the senior male gods, such as Zeus and Poseidon. Dionysus is distinguished by a larger beard, the ivy wreath he wears, and certain attributes that he carries – a kantharos or rhyton and an ivy branch or vine.[23] Over the course of the sixth and fifth centuries, a number of gods and figures from mythology take on younger, beardless forms (e.g. Apollo, Hermes, and several heroes), but Dionysus remains distinctively archaizing in appearance, identifiable by the markedly old-fashioned look of his long chiton and unruly beard.[24] Dionysus is frequently

[22] Veneri, "Dionysos," 414–15; Jameson, "The Asexuality of Dionysus," 48–50; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:74–75. As Jameson points out, while the mature iconography of Dionysus almost never shows him naked, there are exceptions, particularly when depicted drunk in the komos. For example, the mid-fifth-century red-figure bell krater in the Met shows him naked except for Thracian boots and a cloak over his left shoulder, leaving his flaccid penis visible (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 07.286.85). Isler-Kerényi points out that the naked, mature Dionysus first appears around the mid-fifth century.

The long chiton is not, as it has sometimes seemed to modern eyes, an effeminate garment per se. In sixth-century depictions of male gods the long chiton is the norm, but in the fifth century, a shorter chiton predominates. Dionysus continues to wear it after it has fallen out of fashion for others. While the saffron-dyed version worn by the character Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (46) is certainly an effeminate form of this garment, in the undyed form it still retained echoes of archaic masculinity and was worn by men for specific occasions, such as musicians and charioteers.

[23] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art*; Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 11–14. See Carpenter (1985) for the appearance and development of Dionysus in archaic art.

[24] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 92; Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus," 261; Osborne, "Men without Clothes," 517.

depicted in Athens in the fifth century.[25] The iconography of the god is diverse, from aniconic representations of him as a mask attached to a pillar to narrative scenes from his life and divine exploits. Frequently, he is shown without specific narrative context, reveling with satyrs or bacchants.[26] The new iconography of Dionysus as a younger man that emerges in the last decades of the fifth century has been thoroughly catalogued by a number of scholars, particularly in the extensive studies of Thomas Carpenter and Cornelia Isler-Kerényi.[27]

This younger image of the god was, in some ways, not created entirely from scratch. Dionysus had a developed tradition of his infancy and youth that appears in both literary and

[25] Gasparri, "Dionysos."
[26] Henrichs, "Myth Visualized: Dionysos and His Circle in Sixth-Century Attic Vase-Painting"; Hedreen, *Silens in Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painting*, 174–75 n.37; Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 52–53; Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 91–96; Lindblom, "Take a Walk on the Wild Side," 145; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:4–8. Horse-human hybrid "wild men" known as silens (of Attic-Ionic origin) or satyrs (of Peloponnesian origin) were conflated in the sixth century BCE. By the fifth century, in the realm of satyr-plays (which took the final space in a tragic tetralogy) the chorus is made up of a group of "satyrs" while one actor may play an older individual, otherwise similar in appearance, named "Silenus" who is considered the father of satyrs. For ease of understanding, I will refer to all of these horse-human hybrids as satyrs, even when distinguished by age. Carpenter and Larson argue that the women in the Dionysiac thiasos, especially prior to the fourth century, are best understood as nymphs whose role in Dionysian scenes is an outgrowth from early narratives of Dionysus' nymph nurses who accompany him and share in his madness. Carpenter argues that the confusion with maenads comes from the *Bacchae* and that while earlier instances of women with Dionysus should be understood as nymphs, those after the production of the *Bacchae* would be understood by their original audience as maenads as a reflection of the influence of the play. Isler-Kerényi argues against drawing too absolute a line between mortal and nymph when the imagery (and the language itself) is ambiguous. I have chosen to refer to the women followers of Dionysus as "bacchants," especially in fifth-century images in order to emphasize their relationship to the god. I refer to them as "nymphs" only when image or narrative specifies this status and refer to them as "maenads" when they are specifically humans driven mad by the god, as is the case for the women of Thebes in the *Bacchae*.
[27] E.g. Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art*; Carpenter, "On the Beardless Dionysus"; Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Archaic Greece*; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*.

material evidence, though with a different emphasis.[28] Literary evidence describes Dionysus as a young god, even in early sources. For example, in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* (VII) he takes on the appearance of a youth (νεηνίῃ ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς 3).[29] Mythologically, Dionysus always belongs to a generation of gods younger than Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. By the fifth century, many of the other gods who are also children of Zeus, like Dionysus, have taken on a younger appearance. For example, Dionysus' half-brothers Hermes, Apollo, and several heroes have iconographic traditions showing them as young and beardless.[30]

The visual tradition also shows the motif of Dionysus' infancy and youth. From around the 480s BCE, the birth and infancy of Dionysus become popular subjects on pottery, peaking in popularity around the 450s.[31] These pots frequently show the infant Dionysus being given to caretakers. Carpenter has also described two pots from the 470s BCE that long precede the change in iconography which show Dionysus in a younger guise.[32] He has argued that the pots are related to a lost production of the story of Lycurgus in which Dionysus appeared to the

[28] Unlike, for example, Athena who is a fully armed adult at the moment of her birth. Other divine children of Zeus such as Hermes or Apollo also have literary and cultic traditions about their birth (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*). It is perhaps surprising that Dionysus did not shift to a younger iconography much earlier, as is the case with these half-brothers. Unlike in the story of Apollo, where the young god's vulnerability to the jealousy of Hera is focused on the mother, Dionysus is also the target of Hera's anger. His personal vulnerability remains a point of emphasis (e.g. *Bacchae* 88; 286-297).
[29] The story here of the god in disguise testing mortals and then punishing or rewarding their behavior belongs to a general type used in stories of several gods. Stories of the rejection of the god seem to be particularly prolific in Dionysus' case.
[30] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:173. The exception to this is Hephaestus, who remains bearded and mature in his iconography despite also belonging to a younger generation of gods. Isler-Kerényi argues that this is because of his role in Athens as ancestor to the city's mythological kings.
[31] Isler-Kerényi, Volume 181:100–113.
[32] Carpenter, "On the Beardless Dionysus."

hostile king as a young man. [33] However, these two examples are unusual and seem to illustrate a specific narrative. In most of the images of Dionysus from the earlier fifth century and in all non-narrative scenes showing Dionysus with his thiasos, he is shown as a mature, bearded man until the last couple decades of the fifth century.

This new iconography of Dionysus as a young, beardless man begins to appear at the end of the 430s BCE. Carpenter and Isler-Kerényi see the innovation in Dionysus' imagery as originating with the iconographic shift initiated by the construction of the Parthenon (completed by 432 BCE) particularly with the identification of Figure D on the east pediment as Dionysus (fig. 31).[34] However, the exact identity of this figure remains debated, so attributing the change in the appearance of Dionysus to this sculpture remains speculative.[35] It is certain, though, that images of Dionysus as a young man begin to appear on pottery after 430 BCE and come to almost entirely replace images of the mature Dionysus by the end of the fifth century.[36]

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[33] Unlike many of the later scenes of the young Dionysus, these two representations of Dionysus in a younger guise show him fully clothed. In fact, it is the peculiar overgarment that Dionysus wears in this scene and in a selection of others showing a more mature Dionysus in the same garment that encourages Carpenter to connect the images with a specific stage production.

[34] Pemberton, "The Gods of the East Frieze of the Parthenon"; Gasparri, "Dionysos," 507; Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 85–103; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:8–10, 162–210. Similarly, a figure in the assembly of the gods on the east frieze of the Parthenon has been identified as Dionysus (mostly through process of elimination, the figure holds some kind of staff, as many gods do, that may be a thyrsus). The head of this figure is badly damaged (as with the other figures of the gods on the east frieze), making it difficult to say if this figure was bearded or not. Cf. Pemberton for discussion on how the figure of Dionysus fits in this place in the frieze.

[35] Harrison, "Athena and Athens in the East Pediment of the Parthenon," 41–45. Harrison, for example, offers a compelling argument for reading the figure as Heracles, which a number of other scholars have found convincing.

[36] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 92. Carpenter argues that coins and terracotta reliefs suggest that there were not earlier representations of beardless Dionysus before the Parthenon.

Certainly, by the early fourth century Dionysus appears as a youth in sculpture, but the question of fifth century sculpture of Dionysus as a youth is still debated. Some statue types (e.g.

In the late fifth century, the traditional representation of Dionysus, in which he is depicted as a mature, bearded man, briefly coexists in pottery with the new, younger representation. For example, on a terracotta pelike dated ca. 420-410 BCE (fig. 32), Dionysus is shown as a mature, bearded man in contrast to the younger man who serves him and the older satyr at the far left of the scene.[37] While he does not wear the long chiton so familiar in archaic and archaizing images of Dionysus, he does wear a himation draped over his legs and genitals, in

Figure 31. Figure D from the east pediment of the Parthenon, Pheidias, ca. 438–432 BCE. London, British Museum. 1816,0610.93.

the Cyrene type LIMC III.1 "Dionysos" no. 119) may date to the late fifth century or the early fourth century.

[37] Veneri, "Dionysos," 456. The young man's role as servant is signified by the wine sieve he carries in his left hand, he may be Oinopion, Dionysus' son. The man's youth in contrast to Dionysus is also emphasized by the defined relief lines of his musculature in contrast to the diluted lines of the musculature on the body of Dionysus.

Figure 32. Attic red-figure pelike, attributed to the Somzée Painter, 420-410 BCE, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 75.2.7. LIMC III Dionysos no. 369. Dionysus reclines on a couch, attended by a young man, an aged satyr, and a woman bearing a basket of grapes.

contrast to the younger man who is completely nude. Elements of the composition, particularly Dionysus' languid pose and partial nudity, reflect ongoing changes in the iconography of Dionysus,[38] while still maintaining the bearded, mature image of the god.

Several works of the Dinos Painter show Dionysus in this younger guise,.[39] This painter worked between 430 and 400 BCE, peaking around 410 BCE.[40] His works appear to be the oldest extant images of this type of the youthful Dionysus.[41] In one example, a dinos dated ca. 420-410 BCE (fig. 33, the name vase of the Dinos Painter), a young Dionysus reclines on a couch.[42] In some elements of the iconography, the representation of Dionysus is very similar to the pelike just discussed. Dionysus lies on a couch, looking to the right, resting his left elbow on striped pillows, in his right hand he holds one of his traditional attributes (in this case a thyrsus, in the previous, a kantharos), he is semi-nude wearing only a chiton wrapped over his legs and genitals, and his hair is tied up in a similar looking headband with stylized ivy leaves above his face, with a loop and trailing cloth from the headband falling over his shoulders.[43] This Dionysus, however, is beardless and young. While the image shows the same three-part age

[38] Burn, *The Meidias Painter*. Some of these changes in pose and clothing are reflections of greater trends not unique to imagery of Dionysus. Cf. Burn for the late fifth-century/early fourth-century work of the Meidias Painter which exemplifies this trend.
[39] In addition to the piece discussed here, see also the volute krater in the Museo Civico Acheologico in Bologna, inventory number 283 (215253 in the Beazley Archive, LIMC Dionysos 738) or the calyx krater in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, inventory number 1024 (215261 in the Beazley Archive, LIMC Oinanthe 1).
[40] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:184–90.
[41] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 98.
[42] Carpenter, 98–99; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:186–87. Of this piece, Carpenter says "…there is no obvious connection between the physical appearance of this figure and the effeminate Dionysos in Aeschylus' *Edonians* or Euripides' *Bacchae*. The Dinos Painter has chosen an athletic form for the beardless god. Only later, with other painters, does the beardless figure degenerate into the soft effeminate form so common in fourth-century painting and sculpture."
[43] The cloth of the himation is similarly styled in both images, falling in several deep folds below the stomach and patterned with looping tendrils to indicate the excess of cloth.

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Dinos-Maler, Attischer Dinos, Ident. Nr.: F 2402
© Foto: Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
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Figure 33 Attic red-figure dinos, name vase of the Dinos Painter, ca. 420 BCE, Berlin, Antikensammlung der Staatlichen Museen F 2402. LIMC III Dionysos no. 371. Dionysus reclines on a couch attended by satyrs and maenads.

structure as the vessel previously discussed, in this case the satyrs play the roles of both the old and the mature men while Dionysus is a youth.[44]

In another example, a squat lekythos by the Eretria Painter dated ca. 425 BCE and formerly in Berlin,[45] Dionysus also appears in this younger guise (fig. 34).[46] The beardless Dionysus sits sedately on a rock, while satyrs and bacchants revel around him.[47] The composition of this piece exemplifies another shift in late fifth-century pottery towards tall, slender figures, languidly posed, with a greater emphasis on representation of groups of women. The attitude and role of these female figures in Dionysian images is particularly different from previous eras. In sixth-century, black-figure representations of Dionysus' thiasos, relationships

Figure 34 Attic red-figure squat lekythos, the Eretria Painter, ca. 425 BCE, (formerly) Berlin. Dionysus surrounded by a retinue of bacchants and satyrs.

[44] The aged satyr on this dinos is represented very similarly to the one on the pelike, though this one shows a more active pose. The age of both is indicated by the white paint on their hair, beards, and tails, both also use a gnarled branch as a cane and wear a fawnskin tied over their shoulders.
[45] This lekythos went missing after WWII.
[46] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:200–201.
[47] All figures have names inscribed. The women are named Antheia, Choro, Chrysis, Kale, Kisso, Makaria, Naia, Nymphe, Periklymene, Phanope and two satyrs are named Komos and Silenos.

between the satyrs and bacchants in his company are often sexual, or at least amicable. In the first half of the fifth century, this relationship takes on a more hostile tone, with the women increasingly unreceptive to the amorous pursuit of their male companions.[48] In the late fifth century, relations between the members of Dionysus' thiasos become less aggressive, but with a focus on music and revelry that is not as much tinged with the eroticism than in previous eras.[49] This new iconographic type is increasingly common in the work of the Meidias Painter and his circle at the end of the fifth century and beginning of the fourth.[50]

The new iconography of Dionysus as a young man emphasizes his place in the younger generation of gods, alongside the other sons of Zeus who are represented as beardless youths, particularly Apollo.[51] This connection is illustrated in the volute krater of the Kadmos Painter in Ruvo, ca. 430-420 BCE, which juxtaposes Dionysus and Apollo (fig. 35). On one side, a young beardless Dionysus reclines on a couch, wreathed and holding a thyrsus aloft. His chest is bare, but he wears an ornate himation over his left shoulder and wrapped around his lower body. Erotes, satyrs, and bacchants surround him. On the reverse is the contest between Apollo and

[48] McNally, "The Maenad in Early Greek Art"; Lissarrague, "The Sexual Life of Satyrs"; Lindblom, "Take a Walk on the Wild Side." McNally traces the development of the relationship between satyrs and maenads in sixth- and fifth-century vases, attributing the change in representation to societal tensions.

[49] Lissarrague, "The Sexual Life of Satyrs"; Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 52–69. The diminished eroticism might best be seen in changes in the behavior and appearance of the satyrs who generally lose their oversized, donkey-like penises over the course of the fifth century in favor of genitals that look more like those of human men and are occasionally even infibulated.

[50] Cf. Burn, *The Meidias Painter*.

[51] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:162–83, 202. As Isler-Kerényi points out, the two gods play a similar role in Attic myth, acting as the executors of their father's divine order. Some forms of this myth stress Dionysus' role as go-between and peacemaker, as in the case of the wedding and Peleus or the return of Hephaestus to Olympus to free Hera. Others, like the myths of Pentheus, Lycurgus, and the daughters of Minyas stress Dionysus' enforcement of worship and his role as a punitive god, a role he shares with Apollo.

Marsyas. Marsyas, who is a satyr, sits under a tree, playing the kithara. Athena watches, standing on the right side of the tripod that sits in the center of the scene. To the right, Apollo sits, leaning against Artemis as they watch Marsyas.[52] Around them are other gods, as well as satyrs and bacchants. The poses of Apollo and Dionysus echo each other with both gods leaning back on their left arm while their right arms are raised high, holding a branch (laurel for Apollo, a thyrsus for Dionysus). Both are young, wreathed, and wear a himation over their left shoulder and wrapped around their lower body. The myth depicted on the vessel acts as a further link between

Figure 35 Attic red-figure volute krater, Kadmos Painter, 430-420 BCE, Ruvo, Museo Jatta 1093. Dionysus surrounded by bacchants and satyrs. On the other side, the competition of Apollo and Marsyas.

[52] Despite the fact that, narratively, the contest will end in the death and flaying of Marsyas, the tranquil scene depicted on the vase shows no trace of the violent consequences.

the two gods, since the satyrs, including Marsyas, usually belong to Dionysus' retinue, while the music they perform in their revelry falls under Apollo's domain.

## The Disguise of Dionysus

The *Bacchae* gestures towards this change in the god's iconography by using his younger guise as the appearance of the stranger. If the suggestion that this was how Dionysus was represented on the Parthenon is true, then this image of Dionysus would certainly be familiar to the audience and would be innately tied to Athens' civic rituals that took place on the acropolis. Even if this identification is not correct and we consider only extant evidence from ceramics, then this would still be an increasingly familiar image. The types of vessels that use this new iconography illustrate the diffusion of imagery: sympotic vessels (e.g. dinos fig. 3), oil/perfume flasks (e.g. lekythos fig. 4), as well as domestic vessels associated with women (e.g. lekanis fig. 7). In a city saturated with images where iconography of the gods is naturally conservative, this new representation of Dionysus as a young man seems to have been gaining a market.

Despite being a disguise, then, the stranger's appearance is also a true depiction of the god, one that particularly works in the context of this play to reify certain truths about Dionysus, such as his relative youth compared to other gods. Pentheus is dismissive of the stranger and his power, in part because of how the image of a gentle, effeminate stranger runs counter to his own conceptualization of divinity. The moment of Dionysus' revelation of his identity at the end of the play is, unfortunately, lost. The loss of crucial lines in this scene makes any suggestion about whether Dionysus' final revelation involved a significant change in costume speculative. [53]

[53] This difficulty is further compounded by the question of whether the gods as a class were depicted onstage in any significantly different way, such as by golden masks.

Would he have appeared in a younger form, closer to the disguise seen earlier in the play?[54] Or would Dionysus have appeared at the end in his traditional archaic appearance as a mature man?[55] I suspect that the latter is the case, but without the closing lines of the play, it is impossible to be certain.[56]

The "disguise" that Dionysus chooses when he appears in the *Bacchae* is one that conscientiously echoes this new iconography, that of a young man who is long-haired and delicate in appearance, and marked as Dionysus' follower by his thrysus.[57] His beauty receives commentary from Pentheus who finds his appearance both intriguing and insulting. However, he is clearly not meant to be recognizable as Dionysus to the characters in the play, even those like the chorus of bacchants who seem to have some sense of the appearance of the god.[58] His initial

[54] Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," 131. Foley argues that the rarity of costume-change in tragedy makes this option more likely.
[55] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 105 n.8; Lapatin, *Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 99. Carpenter suggests that the mature, bearded appearance of Dionysus was used for the final epiphany.
[56] I suspect that this is correct for two reasons, first that Pentheus' treatment of Dionysus' disguised form as inappropriate for even a priest indicates an expectation of the more familiar archaic form; second, that it would further emphasize the metatheatrical theme of the god's control over appearance to see his successful transformation to a different type and, especially, to an appearance that underscores Dionysus' relation to his divine father rather than his similarity to his mortal relatives. I imagine the most fitting choice for the appearance at the end would be one that echoed the cult statue of Dionysus from the temple in the theater's precinct or other images associated with this temple, such as wall paintings. While Pausanias claims that there was a chryselephantine statue by the late-fifth century sculptor Alcamenes at the sanctuary near the theater (1.20.3), no type for the statue is securely attached to this artist and the dating for the temple itself may be fourth century, leaving the attribution to Alcamenes questionable (cf. Lapatin, *Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 99.).
[57] The thyrsus is an attribute of Dionysus that is traditional, but Dionysus is also reflecting newer iconography in more subtle ways. Dionysus' calm, for example, is emphasized throughout the tragedy, an aspect that seems to some degree to reflect the more sedate and languid representations of Dionysus in the late fifth century.
[58] Dodds, *Bacchae*, 85–89. The epode of the parodos (135-169) describes the epiphany of the god. Though the imagery in the passage is vague and sometimes unclear as to whether it is describing the god or his followers, it is enough to say that they have some conception of his

prologue immediately introduces the disguise, μορφὴν δ᾽ ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησίαν (4 "I have changed from a god to mortal form"), which he also repeats at the end of the prologue, …εἶδος θνητὸν ἀλλάξας ἔχω / μορφήν τ᾽ ἐμὴν μετέβαλον εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν (53-54 "I have changed to a mortal appearance and shifted my shape to that of a man"). The redundancy emphasizes the unusual complexity of a disguised character on the tragic stage.[59] It is clear that neither the chorus of bacchants who accompanied him from Asia nor his human family are meant to recognize him as the god. For Pentheus, the stranger's soft appearance and long hair are hardly fitting for a servant of a god, let alone a god himself. Yet, the iconographic tradition, and particularly the recent surge of popularity of the image of the god in a younger form, implies that he is recognizable to the audience.

Dionysus' disguise corresponds with many elements in the new iconography of the god, particularly in the youth and gentleness of his appearance. The similarities between Dionysus' disguise and this new iconography is, it seems, so self-evident to the modern viewer that it is not unusual for scholars to completely disregard that it is, in fact, a disguise.[60] Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, I will discuss how this disguise aligns with the late fifth-century developments in Dionysus' iconography. There are several elements of Dionysian imagery echoed in the description of the stranger in the play, including his youth, long hair, costume, thyrsus, and

physical manifestation, which includes familiar attributes like the fawnskin, the thyrsus, and long hair.

[59] Dodds, 69–70 nn.53–54; Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," 126–28. Dodds says the redundancy makes clear to the audience that the speaker who they accept as a god will be accepted as a man by the other characters. Foley points out that the repetition points to some "visual confusion," though she believes that the emphasis is on the unusual appearance of Dionysus' mask. Cf. Billings on the question of Dionysus' mask.

[60] E.g. Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:9, 213–17. Isler-Kerényi, discussing literary sources that present Dionysus as a child or young man, says that Dionysus "features as a youthful god in the Bakchai." (9)

accompaniment of women. Pentheus twice describes the stranger. The first time in his "prologue"[61] when he describes what has been reported to him (233-238):

> λέγουσι δ᾽ ὥς τις εἰσελήλυθε ξένος,
> γόης ἐπῳδὸς Λυδίας ἀπὸ χθονός,
> ξανθοῖσι βοστρύχοισιν εὐοσμῶν κόμην,
> οἰνῶπας ὄσσοις χάριτας Ἀφροδίτης ἔχων,
> ὃς ἡμέρας τε κεὐφρόνας συγγίγνεται
> τελετὰς προτείνων εὐίους νεάνισιν.
>
> They say that some stranger has come, an enchanting sorcerer from the land of Lydia, his hair sweet-smelling in fair locks, bearing the wine-colored[62] charms of Aphrodite in his eyes, who day and night, offering his Bacchic rites, is accompanied by girls.

When he finally meets the stranger, he inspects him and describes him again,[63] finding him a fitting match to his expectations (453-459):

> ἀτὰρ τὸ μὲν σῶμ᾽ οὐκ ἄμορφος εἶ, ξένε,
> ὡς ἐς γυναῖκας, ἐφ᾽ ὅπερ ἐς Θήβας πάρει·
> πλόκαμός τε γάρ σου ταναός, οὐ πάλης ὕπο,
> γένυν παρ᾽ αὐτὴν κεχυμένος, πόθου πλέως·
> λευκὴν δὲ χροιὰν ἐκ παρασκευῆς ἔχεις,
> οὐχ ἡλίου βολαῖσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὸ σκιᾶς,
> τὴν Ἀφροδίτην καλλονῇ θηρώμενος.

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[61] Pentheus' "prologue" is not a true prologue since the chorus has already entered and there are two other characters on stage already. It serves a similar purpose to a typical prologue in that it outlines Pentheus' motivations and plan, but the staging (after the divine prologue, the entrance of the chorus, and with other characters onstage) serves to place Pentheus in a secondary position and add an element of dramatic irony to the scene.

[62] Dodds, *Bacchae*, 99 n.236; Maxwell-Stuart, *Studies in Greek Colour Terminology. Volume I: Glaukos*, 65, 67:6–10. Dodds assumes the reference here is to the stranger's flushed cheeks, due to the use of the phrase οἰνωπὸν γένυν (wine-colored cheek) at line 438, though he admits there is no reason to take ὄσσοις to mean face. Maxwell-Stuart, based on an extensive word study of the term in prose and poetry, objects to the traditional "wine-dark" translation used frequently of Homer. He argues that in terms of color οἰνωπός means something more like reddish brown. Of the use of the term in poetry, he says "its connotations, however, are drunkenness, blood, and the abandon which accompanies surrender to alcohol and so, through those associations, it can be made to imply unsteadiness, violence, anger, and even death." (9)

[63] Relatively detailed physical descriptions are characteristic of late fifth-century tragedy and might have been understood as something akin to stage directions, aimed at easing production of the plays, particularly when the author was not the producer of the play (as is true of the *Bacchae*) or when the play is re-performed.

> Your body is not misshapen, stranger, to women, at least, for which reason you have come to Thebes. Your curls are long, not by wrestling, flowing by your cheek, full of desire. Your skin is fair on purpose, hunting Aphrodite with beauty not under the rays of the sun, but in shadows. [64]

Pentheus' description emphasizes the cultivated attractiveness of the stranger's appearance. He repeatedly dwells on the stranger's long hair. He first describes it as ξανθοῖσι βοστρύχοισιν εὐοσμῶν κόμην ("hair sweet-smelling in fair curls" 235). The term, ξανθός (ξανθός: yellow, fair; frequently of hair, blonde or auburn), is used of male heroes in epic, particularly of Menelaus.[65] Euripides uses the same phrase as he uses here, ξανθός βόστρυχος (βόστρυχος: lock of hair), when referring to the hair of male and female heroes. There is similar language, for example, in the Pedagogue's description of Orestes' dedicated lock of hair in Euripides' *Electra*, ξανθῆς τε χαίτης βοστρύχους κεκαρμένους ("…shorn locks of fair hair" 515) and in Theoclymenus' reaction to Helen's shorn hair in the *Helen*, τῶνδ' οὕνεκ' ἔταμες βοστρύχους ξανθῆς κόμης· ("For this reason you cut the locks of your fair hair?" 1224). Some translators have over-emphasized the implication of effeminacy in the choice of descriptor here,[66] but the term βόστρυχος is used of men and women, and Euripides predominantly uses the descriptor ξανθός for two reasons, neither of which are effeminacy.[67] In some cases in Euripides' extant tragedies,

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[64] This line implies a possibility that Dionysus was distinguished from his cousin by a lighter-colored mask. No ancient tragic masks exist to know for sure, but perhaps gender was marked by the coloring of the mask, like it was in the white-painted skin of women on black-figure pottery, and possibly in wall-painting or on painted statues. If this paleness is more than a rhetorical flourish, then perhaps this is another site of contrast between the cousins, one that might also change in the cross-dressing scene if Pentheus' new costume involves donning a lightened mask that implies the use of cosmetics to achieve a more feminine look.

[65] The phrase ξανθὸς Μενέλαος is used as a line ending formula about two dozen times in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

[66] E.g. George Theodoridis' translation, "with blond and scented plaits" or Ian Johnston's "golden ringlets."

[67] Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*, 230–32; LaRue, "Prurience Uncovered," 210. Onians points out that growth of hair was "popularly associated with sexual vigor" and that rivers associated with marriage bathing rituals received offerings of hair from boys who reached

he uses it in connection with Menelaus and, by extension, other members of the Spartan royal family. This is a purposeful Homeric echo of the phrase ξανθὸς Μενέλαος, used at least twenty times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, most commonly as a line ending formula.[68] Otherwise, Euripides uses this as a descriptor for particularly young characters, which seems to be what is at stake here.[69]

The term εὔοσμος ("sweet-smelling") emphasizes the stranger's foreign origins, particularly his connection to Lydia.[70] Dionysus had, in his prologue, mentioned that he has

puberty. LaRue argues that the description characterizes Dionysus not as effeminate, but as a seducer.

[68] The descriptor ξανθός is used of Menelaus in a deliberately Homeric echo in *Iphigenia in Aulis* (ξανθὸν Μενέλαόν 175). It is also used for the hair of Orestes (ξανθῆς…χαίτης *Electra* 515 and, in a bizarre metaphorical dream, κόμας / ξανθὰς *Iphigenia in Tauris* 51-52), of Clytemnestra (ξανθὸν…πλόκαμον *Electra* 1071), of Helen (ξανθῆς κόμης *Helen* 1224), and of Iphigenia (ὦ ξανθαὶ κόμαι *Iphigenia in Aulis* 681, ξανθῆς ἐθείρας *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1367 ξανθὰν χαίταν *Iphigenia in Tauris* 174). Several of these may also fit in the category of youth as well.

[69] It is used to describe Herakles' hair at the time of his first labor, in a distinctly visual choral ode in which the ξανθός head of Herakles is covered by the πυρρός (tawny, yellowish red) jaws of the lionskin (*Herakles* 361-363), and of Herakles' son's head (ξανθὸν κάρα 993). It is used of Phaedra's head and hair (ξανθὰν κεφαλὰν *Hippolytus* 134; χαίταν ξανθὰν *Hippolytus* 220), of Hippolytus' head (ξανθόν…κάρα 1343), of Cassandra's hair (ξανθοὺς πλοκάμους *Iphigenia in Aulis* 758), of Harmonia at the time of her birth (ξανθὰν Ἁρμονίαν *Medea* 832), of Creon's daughter's hair in *Medea* (ξανθᾷ…κόμᾳ 980), of Medea's children's heads (ξανθὸν κάρα *Medea* 1141), of Parthenopaeus' head, who was considered, since Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* at least, to be the youngest of Thebes' attackers (ξανθὸν…κρᾶτα *The Phoenician Women* 1159). The only other cases where the phrase appears pejorative rather than simply descriptive is in Amphitryon's threat to Lycus in *Herakles* that if he were younger he would "make bloody those fair curls" (…τοῦδε τοὺς ξανθοὺς πλόκους / καθημάτωσ' ἄν… 233-234). This description fits with Euripides' particular interest in creating vivid descriptive images using color terms. The other case is in the *Orestes*, when Orestes describes his uncle Menelaus as "priding himself on the fair locks on his shoulders" (ξανθοῖς ἐπ' ὤμων βοστρύχοις γαυρούμενος 1532). Aeschylus and Sophocles, generally much less inclined to use such visual descriptors, use ξανθός more rarely and not ever, as far as I could find, of people.

[70] Bowra, "Xenophanes, Fragment 3." Xenophanes' fragment 3 decries the Lydian influence amongst the elites of Colophon, drawing particular attention to the Ionians carefully arranged hair and perfume as indications of Lydian influence. Bowra describes other sources, literary and material, that corroborate this idea of Lydian influence in Ionian shaping hair and perfuming practices.

come from Lydia and the women who accompany him as the chorus are from Tmolos in Lydia (55).[71] Certainly, the reference to Dionysus' Lydian origins brings in an element of effeminacy as the two are inextricably linked in the Athenian mind.[72] When Pentheus and the stranger meet, his comments again turn to the stranger's long hair (455-456): πλόκαμός τε γάρ σου ταναός, οὐ πάλης ὕπο / γένυν παρ᾽ αὐτὴν κεχυμένος, πόθου πλέως· "Your curls are long, not by wrestling, flowing by your cheek, full of desire." Pentheus' remark here is tinged with sarcasm. [73] A fighter would keep their hair closely cropped to avoid giving his opponent a way to hold him, and the stranger's long hair marks his disinterest in such pursuits. As Pentheus is frustrated by the stranger's elusive answers to his questions about the new god and his rites, he turns once again to his hair, saying πρῶτον μὲν ἁβρὸν βόστρυχον τεμῶ σέθεν ("first I will cut your luxurious locks" 493).[74] Again, the language, particularly the term ἁβρός (luxurious) marks a particularly strong connection to Lydia.[75]

The emphasis on the long hair of Dionysus' disguise aligns with the new image of the god that emerged in the late fifth century. Longer hair than that of other gods had been a feature

[71] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 35–51, 107–8; Wyles, "Staging in Bacchae," 67–68. As Carpenter points out, most of the tales of Dionysus' youth before his arrival in Greece are set in Thrace. He suggests that mention of Thrace is purposefully excluded in this play to emphasize Dionysus' "oriental travels." (108 n.23) Wyles suggests that the chorus' costume might have further emphasized their Lydian origins through use of dye or patterns, such costuming would not only create a greater spectacle, but also create more visual contrast between the Lydian chorus of maenads and Agave.

[72] Lombardo, "Habrosyne e Habra' nel Mondo Greco Arcaico"; Kurke, "The Politics of Ἁβροσύνη in Archaic Greece"; Neer, *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting,* 19.

[73] Rijksbaron, *Grammatical Observations on Euripides' Bacchae,* 72.

[74] Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae,* 174–77. Segal takes the stress on hair to be an aspect of the play's focus on initiate and rites of passage.

[75] Bowra, "Xenophanes, Fragment 3," 123; Kurke, "The Politics of Ἁβροσύνη in Archaic Greece." Bowra points out that although the word retains strong Lydian associations into the fifth century, the connotation becomes much less negative. Kurke's arguments about the use of this term and its cognates in Pindar similarly shows how it comes to mediate between civic ideology and aristocratic luxury.

of Dionysus' iconography even earlier in the fifth century. For example a bell krater, dated 440-430 BCE, shows Dionysus with very long hair, standing between a satyr seated on a rock and a maenad playing a tympanon, his long hair falling over his shoulders and down his arms (fig. 36).[76] In another example, a volute krater from Ferrara of a similar date, Dionysus has similarly long hair (fig. 37). However, it becomes particularly emphatic in the absence of the long, unruly

Figure 36 Attic red-figure bell krater, the Curti Painter, 440-430 BCE, Cambridge, MA, Fogg Museum 1960.343. Dionysus accompanied by a satyr and a maenad.

[76] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Archaic Greece*, 95–96.

Figure 37 Attic red-figure volute krater, Kleophon Painter, 440-430 BCE, Ferrara, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Spina 44834. Return of Hephaestus.

beard in the shifting iconography of the last decades.[77] An example of this can be seen in a lid of a lekanis, by an unknown painter, from around 440-430 BCE, that shows Dionysus in this younger guise, watching the death of Pentheus (fig. 38).[78] Dionysus, naked with long hair and a himation draped over his left shoulder, stands sedately, a thyrsus in his left hand, his long hair falls past his chest.[79] The attitude of Dionysus depicted on this piece, standing sedately in a relaxed contrapposto pose, his hands at his sides, contrasts with the dynamic gestures and

Figure 38 Attic red-figure lid of a lekanis, unknown painter, 440-430 BCE, Paris, Louvre G 445 LIMC VII Pentheus 24. Pentheus torn apart by two bacchants, two others rush towards him, Dionysus stands opposite.

[77] Depending on the painter, Dionysus' hair is not always quite so long, and a number of other gods and heroes may be depicted with hair falling to or past their shoulders. The long hair is a strong indication of Dionysus' identity, but alone is not enough to signify Dionysus' identity.
[78] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 106–7; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:202. Carpenter mentions this pot as one of the scenes of the death of Pentheus in which the representation of Dionysus has "nothing to do with the Oriental stranger of the *Bacchae*."
[79] On the opposite side of the lid, Pentheus is being pulled apart by two maenads, one woman on each side holding a wrist. The maenad on the left side of the figure of Pentheus has her other hand at his shoulder, while the one to the right holds Pentheus' ankle as well, leaving his body splayed between them, limbs dramatically extended. He is naked except for a himation trailing from his left shoulder, his hair falls to his shoulders. While Dionysus is distinguished by his hairstyle and thyrsus, the himation and the naked male body creates a visual echo between the two figures.

frenetic poses of the other figures, indicating his divine calm even in the face of human suffering.[80] This divine calmness is replicated in the *Bacchae*.

It is unclear from the text if Dionysus wears a short or long chiton. Both are seen in images of the god in both his mature and young form. A short chiton is probably more likely since a long chiton is more unusual and more likely to have received direct comment.[81] Dionysus was increasingly shown naked in the last decades of the fifth century, but the generic conventions of tragedy strictly prohibit nudity.[82] It is likely that he is wearing, if not a mitra, then a wreath, likely of ivy, as such wreaths are to be expected for a priest in the celebration of rites.[83] He is also carrying a thyrsus (240, 495). The thyrsus is an element of Dionysian imagery that receives focus in the course of the play as a potent symbol of participation in Dionysus' rites (495-496).[84] It is a constructed from a giant fennel stalk with ivy leaves attached to the top. This

[80] It is conventional in Greek pottery for the facial expression of the participants to remain neutral regardless of the activity depicted. This is a trait shared between artistic conventions in ceramics and the stage, as tragic masks fully covered the head and left no room for facial expression (cf. Halliwell 203). As in images, emotion in the theater seems to primarily be conveyed through gesture.

[81] Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," 130 n.38. Foley's tentative suggestion that Pentheus' costume change is an imitation of Dionysus' and that the stranger is wearing a saffron peplos like Dionysus of the *Frogs* seems implausible.

[82] Osborne, "Men without Clothes"; Sommerstein, *Greek Drama and Dramatists*, 13.

[83] Besides the general expectation that a priest would wear a wreath, which is well-attested in both literature and material evidence, there are several moments in the *Bacchae* which stress the importance of such wreaths in Dionysiac rites. Teiresias mentions the role of a wreath in Bacchic rites (314) and Cadmus attempts to wreath Pentheus which the young king resists (341-344). The maenads of Thebes in the mountains also wreath themselves with ivy, oak, and smilax (702-703).

[84] Kalke, "The Making of a Thyrsus." Kalke examines several of the references to the thyrsus in the play and its significance for Dionysian worship as well as in the themes of the play. Particularly, she argues that the thyrsus is significant because it is a profane object (a fennel stalk) crowned with ivy and made sacred to the god in a way that parallels the transformation of Pentheus.

object as an attribute of Dionysus first appears in early red-figure pottery.[85] Originally an attribute of bacchants, it comes to replace Dionysus' attribute of the branch of ivy or vine around the last quarter of the sixth century.[86] It is a uniquely Dionysian visual signifier, a distinct form of the wand or scepter carried by other gods and one that, unlike the vine, is not incidental or naturally occurring, but purposefully manufactured.[87]

Dionysus' disguise is completed by the chorus (55-57), a group of women who he has brought with him from Tmolos in Lydia.[88] In fifth-century representations of the god, he is frequently accompanied by women (e.g. fig. 34).[89] The presence of the women of the chorus evokes these images of Dionysus as a god surrounded by wild, female companions. While the women represented in pottery may be nymphs, they are not visually distinguished from mortal women.[90] The visual effect of the young god surrounded by women, particularly in a setting

[85] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 12–13. As Carpenter points out, this object as an attribute of Dionysus first appears in early red-figure pottery. The thyrsus is part of a larger trend amongst early red-figure painters to create a more distinctive Dionysus than is represented in contemporaneous black-figure.
[86] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:176.
[87] Similar in iconographic significance is the caduceus carried by Hermes and Iris or the trident of Poseidon, which are also iconographic markers of identity.
[88] Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 158–214; Jameson, "The Asexuality of Dionysus." Dionysus, unusually for a male god, is particularly strongly associated with female worshippers, attendants, and associates. Segal discusses Dionysus' close association with the feminine, not only through association with female worshippers, but through taking on effeminate traits. Jameson argues that Dionysus is not an asexual figure, but mediates between male and female.
[89] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 52–53; Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 91–96. Carpenter and Larson have argued that the women on vases before the fourth century are better understood as nymphs rather than mortal maenads. However, as far as the visual effect is concerned, there is nothing that distinguishes the women of Dionysus' retinue from mortal women.
[90] Unlike their female counterparts, satyrs are visually distinguished from human men by their equine features and distorted faces.

where music features prominently,[91] underscores the connection between the production of the *Bacchae* and the images of late fifth-century Athens.

Pentheus' confusion on this aspect of Dionysian cult comes into play with his fixation on the sexual behavior of the women.[92] Pentheus several times mentions his conviction that the women on Mount Cithaeron and the stranger are using Dionysus' worship as a cover for sex (225, 236, 459, 957-958). Within the tragedy, this is clearly signaled as a misinterpretation: first, by Teiresias who attempts to convince Pentheus that he is misunderstanding the god's cult in fixating on the potential sexual aspects (314-318), then by the stranger's own calm and controlled demeanor and description of the god, and finally in the speech of the herdsman from the mountains, who describes the women's behavior as alternately bucolic and violent, but not sexual. Yet, Pentheus' conviction about the sexuality of the cult remains to his very last scene (957-958), fueling the desire to spy which will lead to his destruction. Again, the *Bacchae* reenacts a theme familiar from the imagery of the Dionysian thiasos, suggesting that Pentheus' understanding runs counter to the audience's own experience of representations of Dionysian worship. Despite the companionship of both female nymphs and male satyrs in Dionysus' thiasos, the contemporaneous representations of Dionysus' companions focus on the role of music, dance, and revelry over eroticism.[93] Pentheus' concerns, then, would sound misguided to

[91] Music is frequently evoked in images through the presence of musical instruments. In the case of pottery used in the symposium, music would also be a part of the association through use of these vessels.

[92] Gregory, "Some Aspects of Seeing in Euripides' 'Bacchae';"; LaRue, "Prurience Uncovered." Gregory, on the contrary, argues that Pentheus' actions would not be viewed as fixated or impious because the taboo of seeing his relatives and noblewomen engaged in sex would not apply if they were engaged in impious action and as leader of the city, it is reasonable for him to both moderate their behavior and to demand proof by seeing it for himself.

[93] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 111–16. Carpenter points out several elements in the descriptions of the maenads on Mount Cithaeron that align with images of nymphs in Dionysus' thiasos, including their handling of snakes and their nurturing of wild

the contemporary fifth-century audience who likely would have had a different understanding of Dionysus' rituals.[94]

Throughout the play, the disguise of the young stranger is, at times, revealed to the audience as a truth masquerading as a lie. Dionysus' disguise is that of a young man, a peer to Pentheus.[95] Although the stranger's appearance is explicitly a disguise, narratively it is fitting for Dionysus since he is represented as a genuinely young god, whose human relatives are still alive.[96] To the audience, it is also a true representation of Dionysus that aligns with the new iconographic type that is quickly replacing the archaic appearance of the god. The other elements of the costume described in the play corroborate the idea that the disguised god evokes this new

creatures, as well as their alternatively peaceful or maddened behavior and the absence of eroticism.

[94] Including, of course, the Dionysia itself which seems to be entirely lacking in any formal erotic elements despite probably having both female and male participants. Athenian cult to Dionysus seems to be almost entirely lacking in orgiastic elements.

[95] Pentheus' youth is an emphatic element in the play. At the beginning, Teiresias and Cadmus both chastise Pentheus for rejecting the new god, addressing him by terms that refer to his age. Teiresais calls him as νεανίας (274 "young man") while Cadmus calls him παῖς (330 "boy"). The terms of youth return with greater frequency and emphasis in the latter half of the play. Dionysus, on the brink of destroying his cousin, describes him as τὸν νεανίαν (974 "young man"). Cadmus, grieving over his lost grandson, three times calls him τέκνον (1308, 1317, 1319 "child") and once παῖς (1226 "boy"). To the audience viewing the play, Pentheus' mask would have made his youthfulness clear throughout the play. Perhaps the increased emphasis on this aspect at the end of the play is to draw attention to an attribute that would no longer have been so visible as the body of Pentheus lies dismembered and partially covered, obscured from the audience.

Dionysus' youth is also emphasized from his first appearance, not only in costuming, but in his words. In his prologue, he expresses the more human side of his motivation, that he wants to repay his aunts for their insult to his mother. This familial connection demonstrates Dionysus' youth, inasmuch as, had he been mortal, he would have been young.

[96] Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:113. As Isler-Kerényi points out, Dionysus had an association in images with young children, having the rare distinction of being represented as an infant or young child in pottery, particularly from ca.480 to ca. 420 BCE.

iconography with his long hair, ornate foreign clothes, calm and languid presence, and accompaniment of women.[97]

The duality of the disguise's function as both truth and deception is reflected in Dionysus' ambiguous speech. When Pentheus captures the stranger in their first confrontation, he asks him what the god looks like (τὸν θεὸν ὁρᾶν γὰρ φῄς σαφῶς, ποῖός τις ἦν; 477). Dionysus' answer is ambiguous: ὁποῖος ἤθελ᾽("of whatever sort he wished to be" 478). Pentheus responds with annoyance at the stranger's string of cryptic evasions. The audience, however, experiences the full dramatic irony of the scene.[98] They know that the stranger is Dionysus and, for them, the stranger's appearance is the thinnest of deceptions, a mere human counterpart to the familiar image. Pentheus, who thinks that his interrogation will lead to answers that he has already determined, dismisses the hint of epiphany in the god's words.

Another glimpse of the truth behind the lie is revealed in the third confrontation between Pentheus and Dionysus, after the king has fully fallen under the god's sway and has changed his

[97] Chaston, *Tragic Props and Cognitive Function*, v. 317.:179–237; Billings, "The 'Smiling Mask' of Bacchae." Several scholars assume that Dionysus is wearing a smiling mask in the play. Chaston, for example, dedicates a chapter in her book on props to this mask, including a reconstruction of it. Billings has recently argued that, contrary to the assumptions about this mask (which he believes are rooted in Dodds and Winnington-Ingram's readings of the play), there is nothing in the *Bacchae* to suggest that Dionysus wore a smiling mask, or a mask that was in any way distinguished from Pentheus' mask. The two lines most often cited as evidence refer to previous, offstage action (439) and the god himself, rather than the appearance of the disguise (1021). Billings argues that one of the reasons why modern scholars have remained fixated on the idea of Dionysus wearing a smiling mask (despite the lack of evidence) is that it would serve to demarcate the god's divinity, even though it is explicit in the text that Dionysus' disguise is fully human. I believe that, even in the absence of a distinctly unhuman mask, the familiarity of Dionysus' new iconography would serve to keep the stranger's divinity at the forefront of the audience's mind, while still appearing wholly appropriate as a human costume.

[98] A similar dramatic irony informs the audience's experience of other questions in Pentheus' interrogation, such as his questions about Dionysiac worship, which the audience is, naturally, participating in through the simple attendance at the Dionysia festival.

costume to a woman's. When he emerges onstage at the beginning of the scene, he says (918-922):

> καὶ μὴν ὁρᾶν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ,
> δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλισμ᾽ ἑπτάστομον·
> καὶ ταῦρος ἡμῖν πρόσθεν ἡγεῖσθαι δοκεῖς
> καὶ σῷ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι.
> ἀλλ᾽ ἦ ποτ᾽ ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν.
>
> Truly I seem to see two suns and double Thebes, the seven-mouthed city. And you seem to go before me, as a bull, and horns have grown from your head. Were you a beast before? Now, certainly, you have become a bull.

These famous lines mark how far Pentheus has fallen under the sway of the god and signal his forthcoming death. His vision of the god is a manifestation of Dionysus' bestial incarnation. For the first time, the skeptical Pentheus sees beyond the stranger's disguise to the divinity that lies inside. The delusion, while clearly contradicted by the audience's own vision of the scene, nevertheless points to an underlying truth about the duality and contradiction of the god. There is more to divinity that can be captured in one simple, straightforward glance because divinity is contradiction.[99] Gods have power over both negative and positive extremes of their sphere of power.[100] Pentheus' vision gives him a sample of this truth when he sees the god as the stranger and a bull at the same time. Dionysus is both madness and freedom from madness, both prey and hunter, both aggressor and victim. His uncanny calm is not a disguise hiding a brutal and violent nature; instead both aspects are true – the violence and the gentleness.

[99] Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 27–31. Segal discusses how elements of contradiction are intrinsic to Dionysus, but an element of contradiction is shared by all divinities in that their powers run to both extremes.

[100] Apollo, for example, is the god of healing and the instigator of disease. Artemis is both huntress and protector of the innocent lives of animals. Hera is both a kourotrophic goddess (particularly in regions outside of Attica) as well as the antagonist of many heroes' childhoods; both the story and the name of Heracles illustrate this relationship.

## THE DISGUISE OF PENTHEUS

The conflict that Euripides explores in the *Bacchae* about the complexity of visual truth is enacted for the audience in the cross-dressing scene. In the disguise of Dionysus, the image of the god is simultaneously true and false. This experience of the audience's double vision, their competing awareness of both autopsy and the failure of autopsy to convey the whole truth, is then reiterated through the transformation of Pentheus, which similarly plays upon the visuality of tragedy to demonstrate the god's power. As with the costuming of Dionysus, the costumes of the cross-dressing scene draw on the audience's awareness of the visual tradition and thematizes the act of interpreting images.

Once Pentheus proves utterly unwilling to turn away from his aggression against the god, Dionysus manipulates him into disguising himself as a maenad and attempting to spy on the women on Mount Cithaeron, leading to his death at their hands. The cross-dressing element in the *Bacchae* appears to be a Euripidean innovation.[101] It is likely that the death of Pentheus was the subject of at least one earlier tragedy, since Aeschylus wrote a *Pentheus* (probably the same

[101] Dodds, *Bacchae*, xxviii, 181 nn. 854–5; March, "Euripides' Bakchai"; Weaver, "Euripides' 'Bacchae' and Classical Typologies of Pentheus' 'Sparagmos', 510-406 BC"; Sommerstein, "Bacchae and Earlier Tragedy." Dodds contests that it is not an innovation, but a kind of transubstantiation in which the victim becomes the god, an element that he believes has earlier roots in Greek cult. Aside from the issue that there is no evidence of such a myth or rite, Dodds' theory seems to confuse the ideas of cross-dressing as part of ritual and dressing up as the god. Pentheus is dressed as a maenad, not as the god. Dodds also believes that images of the destruction of Pentheus simply ignore the cross-dressing aspect because it would be too hard to clearly represent disguise in an image. More recent scholars have argued against the idea that this is rooted in ritual, preferring to see it as uniquely Euripidean idea more closely tied to the possibilities and concerns of theater. March argues that there are three significant innovations in Euripides' tragedy: the maddening of Pentheus by Dionysus, the journey to Cithaeron dressed as a woman, and the death of Pentheus at the hands of Agave. Sommerstein, who attempts to reconstruct two of Aeschylus' trilogies about Dionysus and his family, argues that Agave's role in the death of Pentheus is as likely to be an Aeschylean innovation as a Euripidean one. He contends that Euripides' major innovation was the cross-dressing and spying of Pentheus, as well as the return of Agave with the head of Pentheus (37).

play as the one called *Xantriai* in the scholia). However, since only scattered references to the play survive, we are left mostly to guess at its contents.[102] The reference to Pentheus and Dionysus at the beginning of Aeschylus' *Eumenides* implies a tradition in which an armed Pentheus attacks the maenads (24-26):

> Βρόμιος ἔχει τὸν χῶρον, οὐδ᾽ ἀμνημονῶ,
> ἐξ οὗτε βάκχαις ἐστρατήγησεν θεός,
> λαγὼ δίκην Πενθεῖ καταρράψας μόρον·
>
> Bromios holds the place, I do not forget to mention him, since the god led the bacchants as general, devising death like a hare for Pentheus

The verb here, ἐστρατήγησεν, suggests that Dionysus led the maenads in battle. A passing reference like this is unlikely to be putting forth a new variation to the audience.[103] In the fifth-century iconographic tradition too, Pentheus is armed.[104] For example, a kylix painted by Douris,

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[102] Sommerstein, "Bacchae and Earlier Tragedy"; Lamari, "Visual Intertextuality in Ancient Greek Drama: Euripides' Bacchae and the Use of Art Media. 187-204." Sommerstein examines the references to and fragments of this play and the two others he believes formed a trilogy, the *Archeresses* and the *Semele*. He argues that all three plays dealt with disguised gods and the death of a member of the Theban royal family, Artemis and Actaeon in the *Archeresses*, Hera and Semele in the *Semele*, and Dionysus and Pentheus in the *Pentheus*. Lamari argues that visual allusions in the *Bacchae* refer to images from the city's visual milieu which are themselves references to Aeschylean tragedy. According to her argument, several of the visual allusions in the play are "visual hyperlinks," in which vase painting serves as an intermediary to earlier Aeschylean tragedies such as the *Xantriae* and the the *Archeresses*.

[103] Even if this allusion was an innovation or invention, the reperformance and canonization of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* by Euripides' time suggests that this was a version that Euripides was aware of and responding to. Euripides' awareness of the *Oresteia* and his desire to respond to and correct it is best illustrated by his *Electra*, which explicitly parodies the recognition scene of the *Libation Bearers* in such detail that it suggests not only Euripides' own familiarity with his predecessor, but the expectation that the audience would be familiar enough with the scene to understand the allusion.

[104] March, "Euripides' Bakchai," 36; Weaver, "Euripides' 'Bacchae' and Classical Typologies of Pentheus' 'Sparagmos', 510-406 BC"; Mimidou, "'In Looks You Resemble Exactly One of the Daughters of Cadmus' (Euripides, Bacchae, 917)," 7–8. Mimidou points to two later examples (a fourth-century Apulian bell-crater and a third-century bronze cista from Praeneste which appear to show Pentheus in women's dress, possibly influenced by the *Bacchae*. Weaver details the few known depictions of Pentheus from ca. 510-406 BCE and finds no evidence of the cross-dressing variation presented in the *Bacchae*.

ca. 480 BCE,[105] shows Pentheus already partially dismembered with no evidence of disguise, or of any sign of a relationship between him and the women who attack him (fig. 39).[106] There is no indication of cross-dressing in other images of Pentheus from before the end of the fifth century, such as the lid of the lekanis in the Louvre discussed previously (fig. 38). In this example, Pentheus appears in the costume of heroic nudity, with a strap across his shoulder and the end of a handle of a sword on his left side, indicating that he is armed.

Euripides exploits references to this tradition in order to subvert it with a shockingly drastic change in appearance. In the early parts of the play, Pentheus seems determined to carry out a straightforward attack on the maenads.[107] His initial costume seems to align with this more traditional representation in images. He begins the play as a young, soldierly king, perhaps carrying a sword.[108] In Dionysus' prologue, this view is supported when he says that if the Thebans try to drive the maenads from the mountain, he will lead the maenads in battle, preparing the audience for this course of action (50-52). Pentheus then repeatedly threatens to

[105] Buitron-Oliver, *Douris*, n. 121, pl. 73; Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens*, Volume 181:58–59.

[106] Mimidou, "'In Looks You Resemble Exactly One of the Daughters of Cadmus' (Euripides, Bacchae, 917)," 2. On this kylix, Dionysus sits on a chair on the opposite side of the cup from the torso of Pentheus, kantharos and vine in his hands, turning to watch a satyr who plays the aulos beside him. He is represented as a mature man, with full beard, wearing a long chiton and himation with a garland around his head. He seems placidly uninterested in the three bacchants who dance around him, holding Pentheus' thighs and one of his calves, foot still attached. Although there is little evidence for costume, the king is wearing a band around his head which may be a mitra according to Mimidou. However, an examination of other pots attributed to Douris shows a number of other male figures with headbands both in mythological narrative and in daily life scenes with no Dionysian, foreign, or effeminate connotations.

[107] March, "Euripides' Bakchai," 37–41. March reviews the references to war between Pentheus/Thebes and the maenads. She argues that the expectation of armed confrontation saturates the early part of the play until line 810 when Dionysus begins to drive Pentheus mad and the armed confrontation is replaced by cross-dressing and spying.

[108] He is certainly described as having a sword during the "palace miracles" scene when he believes he is killing the stranger, which he drops in fatigue by the end of the delusion (627-637).

Figure 39 Attic red-figure kylix, Douris, ca. 480 BCE, Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum, AP 2000.02. LIMC VII Pentheus 43. Pentheus torn apart by bacchants.

attack or capture the stranger and the women (e.g. 228, 230-231, 778-785). Teiresias also seems aware of this possibility, warning Pentheus of Dionysus' ability to rout an army in his rationalized description of the god's power (302-304):

> Ἄρεώς τε μοῖραν μεταλαβὼν ἔχει τινά·
> στρατὸν γὰρ ἐν ὅπλοις ὄντα κἀπὶ τάξεσιν
> φόβος διεπτόησε πρὶν λόγχης θιγεῖν.
>
> He has some share of Ares also, when fear strikes panic into an army under arms, drawn up for battle, before they touch their spears.

While Dionysus is not usually a war god, and the panic described here is more closely associated with Pan instead, the reference to Dionysus' martial aspect serves several purposes.[109] In a play about Dionysus' explicitly Theban heritage, Dionysus' affinity to Ares is a reminder that the war god is also his maternal great-grandfather, a link that he shares with his cousin.[110] The connection also gestures towards the possibility of direct, martial confrontation between Pentheus and Dionysus (accompanied by the maenads of Thebes). Perhaps these references play

[109] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, 15–34; Veneri, "Dionysos," 475–76. Dionysus' most common martial association in Athens is through the Gigantomachy in which he is frequently featured as a participant in fifth-century Athens. Although literary accounts of this battle are either allusive or late, it is commonly featured in pottery and on temples, including the east metopes of the Parthenon. In this imagery, Dionysus' success is often underscored by his pointedly unfitting weapons as he uses snakes, panthers, and his thyrsus to fight. See especially LIMC "Dionysos" 618-621, 639-640 for several examples from the mid-fifth century of pots where the god is unarmored and brandishes branches, his thyrsus, and snakes. Carpenter points out that there are several scenes in which satyrs and maenads carry armor, helmets, and other items which indicate an arming/departure scene, but Dionysus does not conventionally wear armor in Gigantomachy scenes, so these arming scenes appear to be parodies, which only further emphasize the god's unarmed state.

[110] In other cases, Dionysus and Ares are placed in opposition as gods. For example, in the myth of the return of Hephaestus to Olympus (a theme that was popular in vase painting in the sixth and fifth centuries though little trace of it remains in Classical era literature), Ares attempts to bring his brother back to Olympus and fails. Dionysus' gentleness and the persuasive power of wine succeed where force cannot.

The presence of Ares in this family tree returns as an important point at the very end of the play where Dionysus prophesies that Ares will eventually intervene, ending Cadmus and Harmonia's transformation into snakes and taking them to the Land of the Blessed (1330-1339).

on the expectation of a revelation of a more warlike Dionysus in the end of the play, since Dionysus' revelation of his true identity is already built into the structural expectations of the disguise plot. Instead, a version of this earlier representation of Pentheus' myth is played out through the first messenger speech in the description of the maenads' successful attack on a village (761-764):

> τοῖς μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἥμασσε λογχωτὸν βέλος,
> κεῖναι δὲ θύρσους ἐξανιεῖσαι χερῶν
> ἐτραυμάτιζον κἀπενώτιζον φυγῇ
> γυναῖκες ἄνδρας, οὐκ ἄνευ θεῶν τινος.
>
> For them [i.e. the villagers], pointed weapons drew no blood, but those women throwing forth their thyrsoi from their hands were wounding them and putting them to flight, women (!) did this to men, not without some god.

The description recalls some of the imagery of Pentheus' death, but even more so it echoes Dionysus in the Gigantomachy where he fights with the unwarlike weapon of the thyrsus. Even after Pentheus begins to fall under Dionysus' sway and starts to consider spying on the maenads rather than attacking them directly, he is still contemplating the possibility of direct confrontation in his last line before he goes offstage to change into a woman's costume (845-846).

Pentheus' aggressive nature and his preference for martial confrontation is thus emphasized throughout the play and is particularly rooted in his autochthonous ancestry. [111] Pentheus is the son of Echion, one of the sown men of Thebes, who were born fully armed and whose first act was to turn on each other, waging war until only a few were left standing. While Pentheus' father is absent from the play, his autochthonous ancestry is mentioned several times (265, 507, 537-44, 991-996, 1024-1026, 1155, 1274).[112] From his first appearance, his hair-

[111] Podlecki, "Individual and Group in Euripides' Bacchae," 156–58; Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 129–36, 171–72, 178–80.
[112] The strophe and antistrophe of the chorus' second stasimon (519-575) lay out the contrast between the birth of Olympian Dionysus and the autochthonous lineage of Pentheus.

trigger temper is manifest when he threatens his elderly grandfather and Thebes' esteemed prophet Teiresias. Moreover, his first response to news of the stranger's arrival and the new cult is to threaten to cut off the priest's head. The servants and messengers further emphasize that Pentheus rules with violence, tentatively voicing their objections to the capture of the stranger (441-442) and their fear of reprisal (668-671).[113] Pentheus' own martial nature makes him unable to see the futility of attempting to stop the god of loosening with chains and bolts. It confounds him to confront a man for whom immediate, martial violence is not the answer.[114]

Contrary to the expectations set up by literary and artistic precedent, and by Pentheus' own intentions, the plot takes off in another direction when Dionysus convinces Pentheus to change his clothes and spy on the women.[115] This is no longer an attack, though much of Pentheus' language and that of the messenger speech is still caught up in martial terms.[116] Whatever little dignity Pentheus could claim from open confrontation with unarmed women is replaced with total humiliation and disaster. This cross-dressing scene is an iconic coup de théâtre and has received plenty of dissection, interpretation, and analysis.[117] I will focus on the visual impact of the scene, the way that it draws on the visual milieu, and the way that Euripides

[113] The servant/soldier who captures Dionysus and brings him to Pentheus is ashamed to bind the willing captive and says that he does not do so willingly (441-442). His final words indicate that he is convinced of the god's power and wants no part in the capture of the priest (449-450). The messenger/shepherd who comes from the mountains with the first report on the maenads activities is reluctant to speak of the miracles he saw there until Pentheus promises not to take out his anger on him (668-671).
[114] Burnett, "Pentheus and Dionysus." Burnett takes a more sympathetic view on Pentheus' behavior, arguing that his skepticism only becomes unreasonable after the palace miracles (21).
[115] Pentheus' resistance to Dionysus is expressed through costuming in Pentheus' first scene. When Cadmus tries to wreath Pentheus with a garland of ivy, Pentheus reacts like the wreath is a source of contamination and will not even let his grandfather touch him (343-344)
[116] Hamilton, "Bacchae 47-52," 142–44; Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 189–214.
[117] Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*; Wyles, "Staging in Bacchae."

both draws on the authority of images and shows that theater can go beyond the limitations of a static image to capture the power of the god. By necessity, this will involve outlining some of the metatheatrical implications of the scene.

Pentheus had initially arrived onstage as a character in martial costume, but the aggressive young king has literally been disarmed, his sword thrown down in his mad rush to extinguish his not-burning palace as the stranger escapes (635). After Dionysus talks him into spying on the women, he returns onstage in a woman's costume. As in the *Helen*, the costume change is clearly marked by discussion both before and afterwards. Due to the conventions of Athenian theater, the same actors play multiple roles[118] and character identity is heavily tied to costumes and masks, which would have covered the actor's entire head and body.[119] In the few cases where there are costume or mask changes in tragedy, they are explicitly and laboriously explained so that the audience will not be confused by such a profound disruption of the conventions of theater.

After Dionysus suggests that he can take Pentheus to the women, he introduces the idea that Pentheus will have to go in disguise (821-846).[120] Although Pentheus leaves the stage still toying with the idea that he will return armed for war with the women (845-846), the tone of the scene, in which Dionysus has taken on the commanding role while Pentheus becomes questioning and unsure, leaves little doubt for the audience about the outcome. The dialogue

[118] The character might also be played by multiple actors (or by one of the three main actors and a mute performer), though this is much rarer.
[119] Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy," 317–19; Walcot, *Greek Drama in Its Theatrical and Social Context*, 57; Halliwell, "The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask"; Marshall, "Some Fifth-Century Masking Conventions."
[120] This point of the dialogue marks the change from Pentheus issuing commands and Dionysus asking questions to the opposite.

mentions Pentheus' new female costume explicitly three times (822, 828, 836), preparing the audience for his appearance on return.

Several elements of the upcoming costume change are clearly marked. First, Dionysus tells Pentheus to dress in a peplos of fine linen (στεῖλαί νυν ἀμφὶ χρωτὶ βυσσίνους πέπλους 821). While "peplos" can be used of a man's garment (e.g. the robe Deianira makes for Heracles in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, line 602), it is more frequently used of a woman's clothing, especially in an Athenian context, where the audience would be inclined to think of the peplos made for the statue of Athena during the Panathenaea. The material, βύσσος, likely means fine linen, or possibly a rarer material such as cotton or silk.[121] It is clear from Pentheus' reaction that this not a garment appropriate for a man, let alone a king, and his anxiety about being seen by his subjects in such attire marks his clear knowledge that, whatever his reasons may be for doing so, wearing this clothing will subject him to scrutiny and laughter (840-843). There are several other elements to the costume that will complete his disguise as a maenad. First, Dionysus says he will spread out long hair on Pentheus' head (κόμην μὲν ἐπὶ σῷ κρατὶ ταναὸν ἐκτενῶ 831). Although not necessarily effeminate in and off itself, the absence of long hair would be decidedly unfeminine. This specification also reflects back to Pentheus' own earlier comments where he sarcastically commented on how the stranger's long hair made him unfit for wrestling (455). On his head he will wear the mitra (ἐπὶ κάρᾳ δ᾽ ἔσται μίτρα 833), a headband associated with women, Eastern foreigners, and the cult of Dionysus.[122]

His disguise will be finished with two attributes distinct to participants in Dionysian cult, the thyrsus and the fawnskin that Dionysus will give him (θύρσον γε χειρὶ καὶ νεβροῦ στικτὸν

[121] Maeder, "Byssus and Muschelseide. Ein spraliches Problem und seine Folgen."
[122] Brandenburg, *Studien zur Mitra*; Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*, 158–60.

δέρας 835). These final two elements of costume are shared with the other worshippers of Dionysus in the play, including the offstage maenads of Thebes (24-25, 696, 704-711, 723-726, 733, 762-763, 1054-1055, 1099-1100,1141-1142), and Teiresias and Cadmus (176-177, 187-188, 248-254).[123] Dionysus' description of his arrival in the prologue establishes that part of the announcement of his divinity was making the maenads of the city take up these attributes (24-25):

…νεβρίδ' ἐξάψας χροὸς
θύρσον τε δοὺς ἐς χεῖρα, κίσσινον βέλος·

…fastening a fawnskin to their body and placing a thyrsus in their hand, a weapon of ivy

Both the fawnskin and the thyrsus act as direct connections between the god and the wild, even though the action of the play takes place within the city.[124]

After the third stasimon Pentheus returns onstage in his new disguise. Once more, elements of the changed costume are discussed and described (925-944). The repetition of the description of the clothing once again serves a practical purpose in guiding the audience through the transformation of the character. The dialogue emphasizes elements of feminine and Dionysian dress. While the costume change itself took place offstage, elements of the change are reenacted in this scene as Pentheus preens and Dionysus solicitously helps his cousin adjust to the unfamiliar clothing. Many of the same elements from the discussion of the costume before the change are repeated here: the peplos (935), the long hair (928-933), the mitra (929), and the thyrsus (941-942). The description of the costume change provokes some question about how this would be represented practically onstage. It appears that the character of Pentheus is now

[123] The costume of the chorus is not directly referenced in the play, though they sing about the thyrsus and fawnskin as elements of Dionysian worship.
[124] It is likely that, even if the god appeared in his epiphany at the end in a mature, bearded form, these elements would carry over as they are particularly strongly connected with Dionysus, unlike other more variable elements of his costume (like hairstyle or the length of his chiton).

wearing a wig since his hair is now long (831, 928-933). His earlier comments seem to indicate that he sees long hair as unmanly, so it is unlikely that the character was initially portrayed with long hair (455). In actual performance, this would likely mean that the character playing Pentheus is wearing a new mask entirely as hair was sewn directly onto the mask.[125]

The dialogue draws attention to the transformative elements of costume and the ways that theater responds to and creates iconography through the use of costume. Different clothes require the wearer to carry the body in different ways, an element that Pentheus draws attention to when his first question about his new costume is about posture rather than any of the specific elements (925-926):

> τί φαίνομαι δῆτ᾽; οὐχὶ τὴν Ἰνοῦς στάσιν
> ἢ τὴν Ἀγαύης ἑστάναι, μητρός γ᾽ ἐμῆς;

Well how do I look then? Don't I take the posture of Ino or of my mother, Agave? Pentheus' concern is not just to get the costume right, but to correctly embody the maenad. Dionysus acts the role of theatrical producer, dressing and arranging Pentheus, teaching him how to best look and act the role.[126] Pentheus describes practicing tossing his head inside the house and the opening of this dialogue implies that he is practicing the well-known pose of the maenad with uplifted head (cf. fig. 40). The pose Pentheus alludes to is one familiar from, and perhaps originating with, representations of bacchants in vase painting.[127]

## THE POWER OF PERFORMANCE

The metatheatrical gestures in this scene draw on the authority of visuality to create continuity and meaning, while also creating an argument about the power of tragedy to transform

[125] Halliwell, "The Function and Aesthetics of the Greek Tragic Mask."
[126] Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus," 114; Wyles, "Staging in Bacchae," 65.
[127] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens,* 82–84.

Figure 40 Detail of Attic red-figure stamnos, Dinos Painter, 430-420 BCE, Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. (Photograph: M. Tiverios, Elliniki Techni). Detail of right side of side A, women dancing around a masked column of Dionysus.

the meaning imported by the static image into an experience that the audience not only sees, but also participates in. This visual transformation is substantiated by the transformation of the actor from the character of Pentheus dressed as a maenad into the maenad Agave. The same actor plays both parts, in nearly the same costume and attitude, even though the audience understands them to be two different characters. The near absence of change in the visual experience of the audience between the two characters is contrasted with the drastic change between characters in the narrative. Continuity in appearance is belied by contradiction in the context. The theatrical illusion is able to not only have the same character take on two different appearances, but even to have the same appearance take on two characters.

Pentheus' costume change makes him a double for Agave. As Mark Damen and others have argued, the institution of awards for acting in the mid-fifth century suggests that individual performers were detectable to the ancient audience.[128] Generally, full-body costumes and masks that covered the whole head would have helped the audience to distinguish characters played by the same actor, but height and, especially, voice would have been important in distinguishing performers. In the case of the *Bacchae*, the same actor plays both parts: he leaves the stage as Pentheus dressed and posed as a maenad, driven out of his mind by the god's power; he returns to the stage as a new character, but one that is otherwise markedly similar to the transformed Pentheus of his final scene. Euripides conscientiously draws attention to the realities of performance, using visual parallels to emphasize the continuity between the characters of Pentheus and Agave. In a play about the god of theater, the audience is drawn into the illusion

[128] Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy."

and they become, like Pentheus and Agave, subject to the double vision that characterizes those under the sway of the god's power.[129]

Scholars have suggested that Pentheus becomes a double for Dionysus in the cross-dressing scene, but this interpretation ignores the differences between Pentheus' and Dionysus' costumes. [130] When Dionysus convinces Pentheus to spy on the women in the mountains (810-838, 917), the gendered aspect of the transformation is emphatic. He is not going to the women with a ruse that he has changed his mind about the rites, as a male Dionysiac worshipper like the stranger or the old men Cadmus and Teiresias, but as a woman. Dionysus, in his guise as the stranger, is Lydian in his costume and especially in the styling of his hair long (455). While Pentheus' traditional conception of masculinity finds Dionysus' delicate Lydian style to be effeminate, none of the other characters indicate a similar judgement. In fact, Pentheus' fixation on the stranger and the women's use of the new cult as a cover for sexual misbehavior is an explicit acknowledgement of the stranger's threatening masculinity. He is afraid that the effeminate elements of the stranger's appearance are a ruse to lure women into sexual behavior that will threaten the order of the city. Pentheus' change in appearance seems to take the effeminate elements of Dionysiac costume to a further extreme, while his earlier comments

[129] Gregory, "Some Aspects of Seeing in Euripides' 'Bacchae,'" 29. Gregory argues that the focus on seeing in this play is not about sexual voyeurism, but religious taboo. She concludes: "It would appear, finally, that while the motif of seeing in the *Bacchae* originates with Pentheus and his curiosity about Bacchic rites, in the course of the play it is subsumed to a general investigation of the relative nature of perception."

[130] E.g. Dyer, "Image and Symbol"; Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*; Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus"; Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus," 280. Much of the legacy of this argument owes its prominence to Dodds' use of Frazer's *Golden Bough* and the concept of the god who is sacrificed and eaten. Foley tentatively suggests that the "two suns" line might refer to both characters wearing a saffron-dyed peplos, but this is not at all indicated by the text. A theatrical allusion to the costume of the *Frogs* seems unlikely and unnecessary for understanding the scene.

suggest that he views Dionysus' disguise as alarmingly unmanly, his own disguise is fully feminine.[131]

It is clear from the text that the association that the performance of the scene is building in the audience's mind is not primarily between Pentheus and Dionysus, but between Pentheus and Agave. This is enforced by the comments about their similar appearances, made by both Dionysus and Pentheus himself (917, 925-926).[132] When the final scene between Pentheus and Dionysus ends, the discussion leads to Pentheus' return to his mother. The exchange is bitterly ironic as Pentheus imagines he will be spoiled by the luxury of his mother's attention, while Dionysus and the audience know that the reunion will be very different from how the young king envisions it (967-70).[133] While some scholars have read Pentheus' desire to be reunited with his

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[131] Carpenter, *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens,* 104–18; Csapo, "Riding the Phallus for Dionysus," 261–62; Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*; Wohl, "Beyond Sexual Difference: Becoming-Woman in Euripides' Bacchae." Csapo, contrary to Carpenter, argues that Dionysus' costume is effeminate, citing a fragment from Aeschylus' Edoni (TrGF 61) in which Lycurgus calls Dionysus γύννις ("a womanish man"). However, I think it is worth considering that in the context of the plot of this play, Lycurgus, like Pentheus, holds an outdated traditional view which makes him skeptical about Dionysus' divinity. The audience is meant to understand that insults from the mouths of these characters say more about the characters themselves than about Dionysus. Wohl, responding to the binaries constructed by Segal's structuralist approach to the *Bacchae*, argues that a "dynamic of becoming" dominates the play and that Pentheus' transformation into a maenad should be seen in this context (146-151).

[132] Pentheus' comments on the comparison between himself and his mother or her sisters also brings an echo of Semele into the scene. In this play, Euripides emphasizes Dionysus' dueling mortal and divine ancestry. He has come to Thebes at split purposes, to institute the cult of his divinity, but also to respond to the insults levied against his mother by his aunts (20-31). The reunion of mother and son that Pentheus is so looking forward to echoes Semele and Dionysus. A son fatal to a mother creates a mother fatal to her son. Dionysus is now aligning himself with the full fury of a god who has been wronged. As Hera and Zeus orchestrated the death of Semele, and as Artemis killed his mortal cousin Actaeon, so Dionysus too advertises his full divine status through the gruesome death of a mortal. As his father brutally and carelessly killed his mother in Thebes a generation before, so Dionysus plays the part of the calm (ἡσύχιος) and untouched divinity, who laughs at those who attempt to defy him, even as the human audience reels in shock from the absolute brutality of Dionysus' vengeance.

[133] Διόνυσος: ἐπίσημον ὄντα πᾶσιν. Πενθεύς: ἐπὶ τόδ' ἔρχομαι.
Διόνυσος: φερόμενος ἥξεις ... Πενθεύς: ἁβρότητ' ἐμὴν λέγεις.

mother and carried by her as a distinctively Freudian expression,[134] this moment seems better understood as a further metatheatrical gesture, preparing the audience for the dissolution of the division between mother and son in the body of the actor who plays both parts. Between the last scene where the actor plays Pentheus and the scene where he plays Agave there is continuity not only in costume, but also mental state.

Dressed and arranged by Dionysus to fully look like his mother (917, 925-926), Pentheus goes offstage to his doom.[135] The actor playing the part of Pentheus returns to stage as Agave, likely in a costume very similar to the one in which he had left,[136] although, perhaps, the mask marks her as more mature. It is likely that the trophy she carries is the mask of Pentheus from his initial appearance. The use of mask as prop emphasizes the continuity of actor. The act of putting on the costume seen in Pentheus' final appearance is now undone. Several scholars have pointed out the self-conscious metatheatrics of this play in which Euripides thematizes the experience of theater by staging a play within a play, drawing attention to the conventions of the dramatic

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Διόνυσος: ἐν χερσὶ μητρός. Πενθεύς: καὶ τρυφᾶν μ᾽ ἀναγκάσεις.
Διόνυσος: τρυφάς γε τοιάσδε. Πενθεύς: ἀξίων μὲν ἅπτομαι.

[134] March, "Euripides' Bakchai," 56. March argues that this scene is meant to evoke extreme pathos and not the Freudian anxieties that some scholars have read into it.

[135] There is a powerful change in the sympathies of the audience between the penultimate and final scenes of the tragedy. When Dionysus dresses Pentheus as a woman, there is humor to the scene. Cross-dressing characters are a trope that belongs to the comic stage, a humorous disregard for boundaries that the Greeks saw as impassable. On the comic stage, cross-dressing is always flawed by its innate transparency. This remains true for the *Bacchae*; the audience is not for a moment allowed to forget that this is Pentheus in costume. Although, the maenads on the mountain are unable to recognize him as their king, they do immediately see through his disguise. Agave calls Pentheus a beast (θήρ), but then she warns the maenads that the spy might "report the secret dances of the god" (ἀπαγγείλῃ θεοῦ / χοροὺς κρυφαίους 1108-1109). In her deluded state, unable to tell man from animal, Agave recognizes that this is no maenad.

[136] Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy." Damen argues that although the head covering mask and full-length costume "lent credibility to the separateness of characters played by the same actor," the actor's awards of the fifth century indicate that the audience must have been able to distinguish the performers.

illusion.[137] Pre-performance moments of production, costuming, and correctly embodying a character are especially highlighted.[138]

Not only the costume and props, but the performance of the two different characters creates further continuity between the two. While the character of Pentheus regains his wits in the scene described in the messenger speech, Agave has been driven out of hers. For an audience who can follow the actor as well as the character, the euphoric delusion of Pentheus' exit is echoed by the similar manic delusion of Agave's entrance. The poignant scene between Cadmus and Agave serves to return Agave's perception from the distortion imposed by Dionysus to the simple and literal truth of her destruction of her son. [139] The exchange between father and daughter is an undoing of the earlier exchange between Pentheus and Dionysus. Just as the

[137] E.g. Foley, "The Masque of Dionysus"; Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*; Wyles, "Staging in Bacchae."

[138] Hall, "Perspectives on the Impact of Bacchae at Its Original Performance," 11; Wyles, "Staging in Bacchae," 66; Zuckerberg, "The Clothes Make the Man." As Hall eloquently puts it, "the spectator is invited to contemplate the experience of any performance which entails the impersonation of one being by another." … "*Bacchae*, therefore, is a mediation on the very experience of theatre – a mimetic enactment of the journey into and out of illusion, the journey over which Dionysus presides in the mysterious fictive worlds he conjures up in his theatre." (11)

[139] Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy," 322–23. Damen explores not only the question of the relationship between the roles of Pentheus and Agave, but also the roles played by the other actors in this play. The second actor plays two characters who advocate for the worship of Dionysus and have close connections to the gods, as the characters of Dionysus and the seer Teiresias. Damen highlights the continuity between the third actors' roles of Cadmus in his first appearance, the servant, and the first messenger in that they all attempt to stop the young king from resisting Dionysus' worship. He argues that "the actor who played the lesser roles (Cadmus, the servant, and the first messenger) in the *Bacchae* struggled futilely against the greater forces represented by the actors playing the principal characters. On the level of pure theatre, this 'third' actor tried again and again to stop one of the principal actors (the one portraying the mortal Pentheus, later also his mother Agave) from resisting the other (the one portraying the divine forces, Dionysus and Teiresias), first by playing Cadmus and, when that failed, by playing the servant, and when that failed, by playing the messenger." He sees the suffering of the characters portrayed by this actor at the end of the tragedy (the second messenger and Cadmus) as well as the character of Agave as "a product of the composite failure of their previous incarnations."

delusion of Pentheus culminated in the fracture in his ability to see, from the opening lines of the cross-dressing scene where he sees two Thebes, two suns, and the bull-shaped god, so Cadmus' attempt to restore his daughter to reality begins with him helping her see reality again (1264-1270):

> Κάδμος: πρῶτον μὲν ἐς τόνδ᾽ αἰθέρ᾽ ὄμμα σὸν μέθες.
> Ἀγαύη: ἰδού· τί μοι τόνδ᾽ ἐξυπεῖπας εἰσορᾶν;
> Κάδμος: ἔθ᾽ αὐτὸς ἥ σοι μεταβολὰς ἔχειν δοκεῖ;
> Ἀγαύη: λαμπρότερος ἢ πρὶν καὶ διειπετέστερος.
> Κάδμος: τὸ δὲ πτοηθὲν τόδ᾽ ἔτι σῇ ψυχῇ πάρα;
> Ἀγαύη: οὐκ οἶδα τοὔπος τοῦτο. γίγνομαι δέ πως
> ἔννους, μετασταθεῖσα τῶν πάρος φρενῶν.
>
> Cadmus: First, set your eyes on the sky.
> Agave: Fine then. Why do you advise me to look at it?
> C: Does it appear to be the same to you or has it changed?
> A: It is brighter and more translucent than before.
> D: And is this quivering excitement still in your soul?
> A: I do not understand your words. But I have come to my senses somehow, changing from my previous state of mind.

Cadmus helps Agave return to reality by having her look at the sky and focus on what she sees, stepping away from the delusions that grip her mind. The scene of Pentheus' delusion has the actor throw back his head as the character imitates the head-tossing of the maenads. Cadmus' directions put the character of Agave into the same pose in order to begin the process of bringing her back to reality, eventually culminating in her looking down at the head she holds and recognizing it for what it is (1277-1282).[140] Agave's realization is an undoing of Pentheus' process of becoming a maenad.

[140] Some scholars (e. g. Kirk, Foley, Seidensticker, Kalke) believe that Agave is entering with Pentheus' head on the tip of the thyrsus as is described in the messenger scene (1141), but lines 1240 and 1277 both make it clear Agave is holding the head in her hands. While it is possible that Agave enters with the head on the thyrsus and then takes it off, I do not believe it is necessary or convincing to assume that the offstage actions need to be replicated onstage, especially when this would involve excessive manipulation of the cumbersome stage properties to get the head into Agave's hands when she says it is.

The change of costume in the course of these scenes moves from a scene drawn from comedy of a man dressed as a woman to the fully uncomedic cross-dressing conventional in Greek tragedy through character of Agave, who is literally a man dressed as a woman. But the humor of cross-dressing is gone, re-transformed into the fully serious convention of tragic performance.[141] Altered perception is Dionysus' realm of power, easily understood and accessed through wine, but just as potent in the theatrical illusion itself. In the contrast between two scenes the audience has seen the same actor in nearly the same costume, first presented as something intentionally humorous and then as a genuine expression of human suffering. The same image on the stage is presented to mean two different things.

## CONCLUSION

The *Bacchae* draws on recent iconography of the god to demonstrate how divinity can be represented only through the multiplicity and layering of images. In a play about the god of theater and perception, whose mother was destroyed by the sight of divinity, the question of how to represent the unrepresentable divine is a central concern.[142] The audience is drawn into this multiplicity from the very first scene, when Dionysus appears in a disguise that is rooted in a

[141] This also seems to contrast the reaction and sympathy of the audience. Pentheus' bullheadedness and refusal to accept what the audience knows to be true makes him an unsympathetic character. It seems likely that the audience would also share in Dionysus' schadenfreude in seeing the proud and traditionally masculine Pentheus changed into the dress of a woman, reduced to fussing about the fall of his curls and the way his dress lies on his ankle. However, with the gruesome description of the messenger speech and Cadmus and Agave's mourning over their memories of a doting, lovable child the addition of humiliation to the expected death of Pentheus begins a reversal of sympathy which is driven home by Dionysus' final epiphany and his pronouncement of further punishment for his mortal relatives.

[142] Barrett, *Staged Narrative*, 102–31. In Semele's story, direct epiphany of the god is death and destruction for mortals, as it is for Pentheus when, in his delusions, he grasps the god's true nature. Barrett argues that the messenger acts as go-between for the audience, able to see the hidden revelations and survive.

newly-emerging iconography that is familiar to the audience, while also contradicting the traditional representation of the god. Euripides emphasizes the way that the god is not constrained by a single representation through a reenactment of the ambiguity of images. The audience experiences this same double-vision through a combination of visual references, which present one kind of truth, and the dramatic moment, which creates a contrasting truth. This double-vision is first exemplified by Dionysus' disguise, at once a true appearance of the god and a deception within the narrative frame of the myth.

The terms of the play's dénouement remain starkly visual and depend upon the audience's awareness of a kind of theatrical iconography. Costumes and their accompanying props and gestures create a distinct visual vocabulary that provides meaning in the tragedy. In the cross-dressing scene, the metatheatrical elements lay the construction of the theatrical iconography bare. The audience experiences the dislocation between the character's appearance and identity, the character of Pentheus is dressed as a maenad and Dionysus is dressed as a mortal priest. At the same time the play within a play reminds the audience that the story itself is an illusion, performed by men of the audience's own community and familiar to them.

The unrooting of the relationship between image and singular interpretation is enacted for the audience with the arrival of Agave, who is a tragic reflection of Pentheus' comic final appearance. This gesture at the end of the play of presenting the audience with two similar images that have different meanings draws attention to the contrast between theater and other visual media. Euripides interrogates the role of theater in responding to and creating iconographies and its ability, unlike the static image, has a temporal and transformational

aspect.[143] Euripides' *Bacchae* provides the audience with an avenue for glimpsing the power of divinity, one that builds off of established visual traditions and associations with iconography, but also exploits the specificities of theater as a visual medium.

[143] Which is not to say that static images did not have their own particular claims to representing divinity in various ways, such as through their glittering materials, their scale, or their timeless endurance, but the *Bacchae* makes a claim for the unique power of a visual medium that is by nature mutable and ephemeral.

# Conclusion

The aim of my project has been to examine the way that Euripidean tragedy was in dialogue with its contemporary artistic context. The production of tragedy was not simply the production of a text, but a performance. As a visual art, tragedy responded to images and participated in the construction of a discourse about the authority and meaning of visuality. The artificial divide in modern scholarship between Classics and art history does not accurately reflect the context of the production of Athenian drama. Tragedies were produced in a world saturated with images, one in which those images were intimately tied to religion, politics, and identity. Tragedy participates in this visual world.

In this dissertation I have focused on three tragedies where visual elements play a central role. These tragedies demonstrate that understanding the visual context for the production of tragedy is not incidental to understanding them, but essential. They draw on the audience's knowledge of Athens' visual environment in order to construct meaning.

In the *Ion*, it is the authority of representations of Athens' autochthonous ancestors, and particularly their place within the ongoing building of the acropolis, that serves as the backdrop of the tragedy. A consideration of the visual references in the tragedy provides an answer to one of the elements of the text that has perplexed modern readers, the choice of Athena as the deus ex machina that ends the play. The visual argument constructed in the *Ion* weaves Ion into the mythical history of the city through references to the city's mythic ancestors and through the motif of the earthborn autochthonous snake. The message of the final scene, rooted in the visuality of the tragedy, is one of Athena's control.

While this play has long been recognized for its visual elements and, especially, for its extended ekphrases, the role of these visual references has generally been stripped of its context and specificity. For the audience in fifth-century Athens, the city's autochthonous ancestors are not nebulous ideas, but visceral presences, tied into the physical geography of the city. Acknowledging this context and recognizing the role that visual material played in the original audience's understanding of the tragedy effects the meaning of the play. This has profound implications for the question of the construction of tragedy and its relationship to other visual arts. Euripides draws on the authority of images as a source of legitimization.

This authority of images and their relationship with innovative myths is also questioned, though in a different way, in the second play examined. In the *Helen*, Euripides explores the complex relationship between the visual tradition, Helen's beauty, and her divinity. The tragedy draws on the images of Helen in Athens' visual milieu which depict her as an unchanging, ever-desirable parthenos, subject to abduction and seduction. Late in the fifth century, changing conceptualization of Helen's divinity also enters the visual tradition with the introduction of the nude Helen, the increased interest in the story of her birth from an egg, and the building of the temple of Nemesis at Rhamnous.

Helen starts the play as a character who is identified through – and who stakes her own identity in terms of – her beauty. The opening costume of the character would have reflected and reified this to the audience as she appears young and beautiful. The danger of Helen's beauty is demonstrated in her initial run-in with Teucer who wants to kill her and is only stopped by the *eidolon*, Helen's physical double. The issue of the doubling of Helen's beauty in the *eidolon* is repeated in Helen's reunion with Menelaus where the supremacy of her beauty is rendered moot by the *eidolon*'s existence. Only after divine intercession is the couple able to reunite.

The final section of the play, in which Helen and Menelaus change costume and escape, plays upon the issue of interpretation of images. Helen has learned of the power of the image to mislead through Teucer and Menelaus' misrecognition of the *eidolon*. Her plan for escape uses her marred beauty and Menelaus' bedraggled appearance to convince Theoclymenus to unwittingly help them. The appearance of Helen's brothers, the Dioscuri, at the end of the play emphasizes how the transformation of Helen's appearance is a true ontological shift. Helen's appearance of widowhood has ended the cycle of abduction and violent revenge that characterizes her.

Euripides thus interrogates the role of images as authority in myth. The play begins by emphasizing the authority of the image in Helen's case. The interactions with Teucer and Menelaus reveal that even immediately recognizable images are open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. While Teucer's misinterpretation saves Helen's life, Menelaus' misrecognition threatens the couple's future and the reconciliation that Hermes had promised to Helen (56-59). The meaning that Helen has attached to her appearance fails and divine intercession is required to resolve the disruption between the couple. Towards the end of the play, the failure of appearance to secure reconciliation and identification for Helen presents a new possibility for resolution. Helen's plan for escape relies upon the misinterpretation of images (1165f). She disguises herself as a widow, an appearance that is completely alien to her, one that makes her unrecognizable even to her ardent suitor Theoclymenus (1184-1185). The escape plot is, in a way, Helen's purposeful reperformance of her own misrecognition of Menelaus.

The play displays a sustained engagement with the question of what role visuality plays in creating meaning. Helen is shown to be rooted to her iconographic tradition which represents her as the always desirable bride. A time of life that is usually only reached once by a woman

becomes Helen's constant state. The changing emphasis on Helen's divinity and her relationship to cyclical violence in the late fifth century emerges in the visual tradition. This reconsideration is partly motivated by Helen's status as hero in both the Peloponnese and Attica and the way that her mythological tradition was mapped into the ongoing conflict between Sparta and Athens. Euripides' play seeks to reconcile new trends in imagery of Helen as divinity with an established iconographic tradition of Helen as the object of violent erotic pursuit, which is notably the subject of the north metopes of the Parthenon and tied intimately to the city's public and religious space.

In the *Bacchae*, the very act of putting the Dionysia festival's patron god onstage in a disguise demands an interrogation of the role of the visual impact of theater. Dionysus, god of theater and of altered perception, has come to announce his divinity to his mother's city of Thebes, the place where the sight of unveiled divinity led to her death. The premise of the tragedy, as Euripides presents it in the opening prologue, weaves together questions about representation of truth and images of divinity. Dionysus appears in a guise that is at once familiar and nontraditional, echoing the young and beardless version of the god who had begun to appear in Athens.

The use of an appearance that is, at the same time, framed as a disguise to the characters in the play and a revelation to the members of the audience creates a kind of double vision that saturates the entirety of the tragedy. The cross-dressing of Pentheus, understood in this visual context, serves to make the mechanics of the performance itself visible by drawing attention to the continuity of the appearance of Pentheus and Agave, played by the same actor.

Tragedy builds off of the visual tradition and its meaning to the audience, but, as the *Bacchae* demonstrates, is able to take the changing, shifting aspect of divinity and give the

audience a glimpse into this transformative experience. This tragedy, above all, makes a claim not only for the power and truth of the visual tradition, but for tragedy's place as a visual medium. While the ephemerality of tragic performance cannot capture the everlasting nature of the divine, it can replicate the experience of divine wonder and the transformative experience of encountering the gods.

The tragedies selected for this dissertation represent only a small sample of the tragedians' engagement with their visual environment. I chose the work of Euripides because his interest in the visual arts is the most widely recognized and explicitly stated, but the other tragedians also produced tragedy as a visual medium and engaged with its performative aspects. Elements of this interest are recorded in the biographical tradition which suggests that Sophocles was the first to arrange scene-painting and that Aeschylus was a performer in his tragedies. Like the stories of Euripides as a painter, these biographical traditions illustrate the way that ancient audiences saw these tragedians as engaged with the visual and performative aspects of tragedy.[1]

This engagement is also seen in other plays of Euripides. I chose to focus on the *Ion*, the *Helen*, and the *Bacchae* because of two main reasons. First, that these tragedies engaged with Athens' visual environment in a number of ways and, second, that they engaged with a different body of visual materials. Euripides' other tragedies could also be revealing. The *Alcestis*, for example, contains a passage in which Admetus tells his wife that he will have a craftsman sculpt an image (δέμας) of her that will act as her replacement (348-352).[2] This passage has often been

[1] Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*. Lefkowitz demonstrates how these biographical traditions follow specific patterns to emphasize archetypes. Other aspects of the biographical tradition point to different aspects of the ancient audience's reception of these tragedies, such as the tradition of Sophocles as receiver of the cult of Asclepius, which emphasizes his reputation as the most pious of the tragedians.

[2] Segal, "Euripides' 'Alcestis'"; Stieber, "Statuary in Euripides' 'Alcestis'"; Bassi, "Morbid Materialism: The Matter of the Corpse in Euripides' Alcestis."

examined through the lens of later antiquity, particularly the accounts of misplaced lust towards Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Cnidus or in Ovid's tale of Pygmalion. However, examination of this passage in reference to the visual context at the time of its production, may reveal more about how this strange passage would have been understood by its original audience. Similarly, the statue of Artemis is an important plot point in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which may illuminate more about the way that Euripides drew on and manipulated his audience's experience with material culture.

In expanding this project, it would be particularly fruitful to look at the ways that Euripides engaged with the same iconographic traditions in different ways. For example, one could examine *Helen* alongside the *Trojan Women* and the *Hecuba* as plays that all engage with the iconography of the destruction of Troy. The *Hecuba* engages explicitly with the power of images to have an emotional effect on the viewer, a concept that is also explored in the vignettes of suffering in the *Trojan Women*. In these tragedies, Euripides' characters alternatively echo or distance themselves from the iconographic tradition, revealing Euripides' careful manipulation of figures that are featured prominently in the Attic visual tradition and are loaded with potent visual associations.

Over the course of the argument, I have shown that Euripides is not simply engaged with the visual tradition as mere flair or cleverness, but in a way that seriously interrogates the role of tragedy as a visual art. The visual tradition is one source amongst many that Euripides draws on in crafting his tragedies, one that has gone underrecognized in large part because of divides in scholarly disciplines. The authority and persuasion of images makes them a source that is perhaps even more difficult to confront than the poetic tradition which Greek tragedians were already so well-versed in challenging. Euripides responds to the persuasive power of images in a

variety of ways in the plays examined here. In the *Ion*, references to the visual milieu are woven into the background of the play in order to lend their authority to an innovative story. In the *Helen*, images are foregrounded in order to be reinterpreted. In the *Bacchae*, the presence of two different iconographic types for Dionysus becomes the grounds for an exploration of the shifting nature of divinity.

The visual environment is a vital component in the construction and performance of tragedy. Understanding this environment not only enhances our understanding of tragedy, but the absence of the visual context leaves any reading of the tragedies incomplete.

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