

Recent years have seen a vigorous renewal of interest in the Parthenon and its sculpted decoration (Cosmopoulos 2004; Neils 2005), fueled in no small way by a fresh controversy over the interpretation of the frieze (Connelly 1996; Neils 2001). Scholars have also begun to recognize the interactive nature of viewing and the subjectivity of reception in antiquity, making interpretation an open-ended question. Along these lines, this paper seeks to illuminate the subject of the Parthenon frieze from a unique angle: I argue that the staging of the recognition scene in Euripides' *Ion* consciously mimics the iconography of the central peplos scene on the east frieze.

In the play, Euripides' extensive use of *ekphrasis* to narrate certain myths establishes a governing paradigm that equates poetic narratives with visual representations: both media converge in tragedy and become indistinguishable in the *Ion*. Ion's own account of Erichthonios' birth derives from his experience with both verbal (μεμύθευται 265, ἤκουσα 273) and visual (ἐν γραφῇ νομίζεται 271) representations. On stage, the boundary between these media collapses when the chorus arrives at Delphi and narrates several myths by reading their depiction in architectural sculpture. Their metatheatrical command to look (ἰδοῦ, 190; σκέψαι, 206) signals the audience that they too are experiencing myth through vision—the tragic performance has become a living sculpture. Froma Zeitlin (1994) has shown how this dramatic strategy is used to “animate” the sculpted figure of Athena, who stands in for Apollo in the narrated temple Gigantomachy before making a physical appearance at the end of play, again in place of the Delphic god. In this way the audience's gaze is simultaneously directed toward Delphi and Athens, as the former becomes a dramatic mirror of the latter. Creousa's own gaze redirects the audience's perspective back to its home polis (οἴκοι δὲ τὸν νοῦν ἔσχον ἐνθάδ' οὔσα πού, 250). Thus Ion is compared to Erichthonios (542, 1429; Zeitlin 1989) and assumes a purely Athenian identity; he is even hailed as a second Erechtheus (ἀνηβᾶ δ' Ἐρεχθεύς, 1465).

The sculpture of the Parthenon is integrated into this framework in two ways: first through a kind of *ekphrasis* when the chorus prays to Athena and describes her birth as it appears on the east pediment of the Parthenon (453f.), and second, through a combination of verbal cues and staging during the banquet and recognition scenes that recall the action of the frieze. Descriptions of the sacrifice at 652-3, 1166-8, and especially 1140 (πάντα Δελφῶν λαὸν ἐς θοῖνην καλῶν) mirror the Panathenaea and set the stage for the re-creation of the peplos scene that occurs when Ion presents his peplos/swaddling cloth (σπαργανώσαντες πέπλοις, 955) to the assembled crowd in front of the temple altar. The visual effect created by the young Ion's presentation of his peplos and his call to look at it (ἰδοῦ· τόδ' ἔσθ' ὕφασμα, 1424) purposefully parallels the gesture of the youth on the frieze. As with the figure of Athena, Ion replaces his Athenian counterpart whose sculpted image is brought to life on the stage.

In light of Ion's newly established iconography (Shapiro, in press), it is easy to see how Euripides and his audience would have been reminded of the young hero every time they looked up at the frieze. Some viewers may have even thought of the young temple boy in the frieze as the archetypal Ion or Erichthonios who share the same iconography and tragic persona (Kardara 1964). In presenting the recognition scene as he does, Euripides invites his viewers to share in reverse the experience of an allied visitor to Athens, who may have looked at the Parthenon frieze and identified their common hero Ion just as the chorus of Athenian women see their patron goddess Athena instead of Apollo.