

H.D. wrote two complete tragedies based on Euripidean originals, Hippolytus Temporizes (1927) and Ion (1937). The first is a complete retelling of the Hippolytos; the second is a free translation of the Ion with a writerly, not scholarly, commentary. Both plays are deeply concerned with a family triangle of mother, son, and divine parent-figure, but in one, presented in the mode of lyric apostrophe, the dynamic dissolves in loss and confusion, while the other, in a mode of distanced witnessing, resolves itself in finding and revelation.

In Hippolytus Temporizes, the dominant mode is apostrophe, both in the sense of addressing an absent being and of turning away. The characters use naming in attempts to capture and unite with other characters who resist and finally elude them (e. g., Hippolytus and Artemis, Phaedra and Hippolytus). Apostrophe as a rhetorical mode is at first effective (Artemis does appear, Hippolytus is seduced), but finally the namings fail through misidentification and Artemis and Hippolytus turn away. The desired (by Hippolytus) family triangle of Hippolytus/Hippolyta/Artemis collapses, and the play ends precisely as it began, with Artemis alone and desiring solitude.

Ion's dominant mode is visual; the reader is explicitly asked, especially through the commentary which alternates with the dramatic text, to see each scene and come to understand it by witnessing the action (although often H.D. offers more than one way to imagine the scene). For example, the reader is invited to imagine the ancient theater, chorus gestures similar to those found in a "pentellic frieze," various props, Mount Parnassus, colors of set and costumes, and Kreousa as a woman "step[ping] out of stone." The constant reference to the visual register creates a very different effect from the insistently verbal, naming mode of Hippolytus Temporizes. Although both plays emphasize similar themes (the youth's identity; the queen's driving despair; the union with divinity), Hippolytus Temporizes encourages identification and intimacy with the characters from the reader, while Ion provides a distance from which it invites the reader to witness (to see and to know) the action. Furthermore, in Ion, in contrast with Hippolytus Temporizes, the union with divinity is fruitful, and Kreousa and Ion are restored and fulfilled.

H.D. wrote and rewrote stories exploring the difficulties of the child understanding his or her own identity and the struggles of the woman seeking union with divinity. She took up these two major concerns in her Euripidean dramas, which illustrate two different modes of tragic knowledge. Hippolytus and Phaedra fail because of the inadequacy of song to capture and transform reality, especially as understood in the otherness of the person of Artemis (e.g., Hippolytus wonders, "[W]hat word, what word / can tell the sudden rhythm / of her white feet / that even as a bird wing / fled?"). Kreousa and Ion, through their connection with Apollo and under the guidance of Athena, pass through obscurity to a new understanding of self, where "all, all may be examined...in the light of the mind's vision." Hippolytus and Phaedra cannot find their way out of obscurity because their mystical union is fraudulent: words do not make things. Kreousa's true union with the god is the ground of later explanation and insight: her suffering and vindication are seen and known. H.D.'s understanding of the *heiros gamos* she presents in both plays relies heavily on Jane Ellen Harrison's work. H.D.'s reshaping of Euripides' tragedies to explore her lifelong concerns with identity and mystical union offer thoughtful retellings and intimate, yet universal, readings.