

When Doves Drink: The Allied Duality of Dionysus and Apollo in Euripides' *Ion*

The element of duality in Euripides' *Ion* has been addressed by scholars in a variety of contexts, and has been framed in the following ways: the dual aspects of divine and mortal characters (Kindt 2007), the play's dueling genres of tragedy and comedy (Hunter 2011), and the duo of cultural identities displayed (Zeitlin 1989). While a fluctuation of divinity is recognizable in the appearances of gods on stage, such as Hermes and Athena, or off stage, such as Apollo, this presentation will investigate the role of another god, Dionysus, whose individual significance Zeitlin and Hunter have discussed at length. However, I propose to look at the role of Dionysus not as an individual figure, but as one forming a pair with Apollo in the *Ion*.

I contend that Apollo and Dionysus cooperatively shape the underlying duality of the *Ion*, and I explore the manifestations of this duality with an examination of the play's physical and spatial settings as representing symbolic ideas expressed by Euripides. Because the *Ion* is set in the temple of Apollo at Delphi but performed at the Theater of Dionysus in Athens, the audience experienced both locales simultaneously alongside their religious and mythological connotations. This paper illuminates how the cooperative relationship between Apollo and Dionysus in the *Ion* is physically suggested by the intimate closeness of Apollo's oracle at Delphi and the torchlight rituals of Dionysus on Mount Parnassus (*Ion* 714). The ritual rotation between Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi, where Dionysus took over while Apollo was absent among the Hyperboreans in the winter, highlights the link between them (Burkert 1985). The audience also experienced a spatial sense of duality between the play's represented locations associated with Apollo and Dionysus since, in the play's account, Creusa was raped by Apollo in Athens, explicitly on the north side of the Acropolis. The audience, facing north, would have been viewing the play while seated at the Theater of Dionysus on the south side of the Acropolis. This

is significant, as the physical locations associated with Apollo and Dionysus create a linked duality that is reinforced by Dionysian references throughout the *Ion*.

In addition to the play's spatial settings, I examine the dual symbolism suggested by dove imagery in the *Ion*. In one instance we find a dove who, upon swallowing poisoned wine intended for Ion, "went into a Bacchic frenzy... and died while gasping for air" (*Ion* 1204-8). This is noteworthy as the verb used to describe the dying bird, βακχεύω, "to rave like a bacchant," demonstrates the relationship Dionysus has with Apollo in the scene: doves have already been linked to Apollo when they were said "[to dwell] fearless in the house of Loxias" (*Ion* 1197-8). I argue that Apollo himself, not wanting his son to die, may have sanctioned the interference of the dove at his son's party: the bird that presumably performed the will of Apollo through Dionysus as a medium further reinforces the associative duality of these two gods.

In looking at specific passages from the *Ion*, I aim to contribute to recent interpretations of the play's representation of duality, and by adding a consideration of divine duality to the discussion, I hope to develop our understanding of the two divinities whose presences are strongly felt but never seen onstage.

Bibliography

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