

Ritual Viewing at Delphi: Euripides' *Ion* and the Temple of Apollo

An important component of *theôria* (sacred sightseeing) involves ritual viewing, that is, travel to a sanctuary in order to see the sacred space, the buildings, sculpture, and dedications (Rutherford 2013). This practice is staged in Euripides' *Ion*, when the chorus of enslaved women of the Athenian ruling house arrive, singing the *parodos* (184-236) and admiring the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Endless scholarly discussion concerns what monument or monuments the chorus gaze upon (for recent bibliography, see Gibert 2019). Yet, the impossibility of connecting the chorus' description to this or that historical pediment, frieze, series of metopes, or temple, I suggest, speaks to the complexity of ritual viewing within the context of *theôria*, a subjective, sensory, and affective practice that is mediated and hardly straightforward, and which instead involves significant interference (Platt).

The chorus' description represents the first of two *ekphraseis* in the play (the second is the messenger's description of the tent, 1132-66), and *Ion* is frequently described as Euripides' most visual play because of these two descriptions (Zeitlin 1994, Stieber 2011, Torrance 2013). The chorus sketch a Gigantomachy. The so-called Alcmaeonid temple (built during the late 6th century BCE), which Euripides himself might have seen and which would likely have been familiar to many audience members, included a Gigantomachy on the west pediment. The *east* pediment, however, is what an arriving tourist would come upon first, and the east pediment depicted not a Gigantomachy, but a central group of divinities, usually interpreted as Apollo arriving at Delphi in a chariot. A variety of solutions have been proposed for the chorus' description of the Gigantomachy: the chorus imaginatively describe both east and west façades at the same time (Torrance 2013); the pediments are switched for thematic purposes (Rosivach

1977); the chorus look upon not the Alcmaeonid temple but a mythical temple, or generic temple (Stieber 2011; Jones 2019); the chorus describe not the temple of Apollo but another structure altogether, such as the Siphnian treasury (Bowden 2005). While such attempts to connect the description with a real-world monument are valuable, this paper argues that the *parodos* provides not a transparent snapshot of any actual building, statue, or place, but rather an interaction with a monument that serves to estrange it. *Ion* offers two divergent emotional and physical responses to this activity, that of the chorus and Creusa, both of which underscore that the monument exists in relationship to the Athenian chorus and other characters in the play, the Delphic landscape, as well as Athens and the audience in the theater of Dionysus.

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