

JOHN C. GIBERT, *Euripides: Ion*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 394 pp., £ 25.99 (pb), ISBN 978-0-521-59656-5.

John Gibert writes in his preface that his work was essentially complete when the edition and commentary by Gunther Martin appeared in 2018 (reviewed in *Exemplaria Classica* 2019). The two previous commentaries on *Ion* in English were by K.H. Lee (1997) and A.S. Owen (1939), so it is unfortunate that two have now come out at almost the same time. There have also been recent full-length studies of the play by Katerina Zacharia (2003) and Laura Swift (2008). There is inevitably a good deal of overlap between Gibert's and Martin's books, but also significant differences of emphasis. Gibert is more interested in broader issues of literary interpretation, while Martin devotes more space to detailed discussion of Euripides' language and in particular to textual problems.

Gibert begins with a 66-page introduction which amounts to an interpretative essay on the play which will be of great value even to readers who do not consult the commentary. Martin's introduction is shorter (42 pages), but has much more than Gibert's on the date of the play, a topic on which he has somewhat idiosyncratic views, and on the transmission of the text. Both scholars discuss the myth, including its political implications, but Martin does no more than sketch an interpretation of the play in his introduction, leaving the details to the commentary. Gibert expands his treatment of the myth with illuminating accounts of its relationship to two widespread story-patterns. The first is 'the hero exposed and rescued', discussed by Marc Huys in his book *The Tale of the Hero who was Exposed at Birth in Euripidean Tragedy* (1995), which deals with the birth, exposure, and rescue of the child of an Olympian god. The mother has her own story, termed 'the girl's tragedy' by Walter Burkert in *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (1979), following Propp's theory of narrative functions. Gibert observes that Creusa is in several ways an unusual heroine in this story-pattern, notably in the expression of her subjective experience of being raped and then exposing her child. He stresses that we are meant to see her as the victim of 'a violent sexual assault' (13), but then proceeds to a detailed discussion of rape in the Athenian legal context which remains somewhat evasive about how far Apollo could or should be blamed.

She [Creusa] mostly uses the discourses of gratitude, reciprocity, and justice, within which the fact that Apollo did rescue and raise their child can perhaps be held to vindicate him (16).

Furthermore, secrecy is maintained so that Creusa remains marriageable.

It may also be asked whether blame of Apollo continues to make sense once Creusa herself explicitly renounces blame. She does this because it turns out that Apollo has rescued their son and restored him to her, that is, because of the 'happy ending'. Creusa's words and behavior play an important part in guiding our response, but not necessarily in the sense that earlier blame is entirely discarded or forgotten. As spectators or critics, we can always decline proffered gestures of 'closure', so that Creusa's earlier words remain available to anyone trying to make sense of the play as a whole (17).

These two quotations are characteristic of Gibert's rather indirect approach to assessing Apollo's behaviour ('can perhaps be held', 'it may also be asked', 'not necessarily').

He offers a good discussion, making use of extensive recent work, on the question of political identity in the play (36–46), covering the question of Ion's status in Athens, autochthony, and Athens as an Ionian metropolis. The next section deals with ritual and religion (46–51), pointing out that 'Ion's tasks, which combine the low, the high, and the dramatically convenient, do not add up to a realistic picture of any known kind of religious official, at Delphi or elsewhere' (46–7).

A section entitled 'Revelation and deception' (51–9) addresses the key question of the near-failure of Apollo's plan and the apparent falsity of his oracle to Xuthus. Blame and defence of Apollo have been one of the staple topics in discussion of the play. Gibert states firmly that 'neither simple praise nor simple blame is ultimately convincing' (51–2), but he is in effect very much a defender of Apollo, including his false oracle to Xuthus. He spends two pages trying to find a loophole in the form of some misunderstanding of the oracle by Xuthus, before discussing the idea that it had some special kind of truth:

It is possible that (some) spectators assumed that it [the oracle to Xuthus] was nevertheless true, perhaps in an extraordinary way. They might believe, for example, that the usual categories of truth and falsity do not apply to oracles or, to put it another way, that mortals fail to grasp (some part of) the truth of oracles because of our limited perspective, our need or habit of committing to a single, reductive meaning. This approach goes beyond denying that Apollo lied in this one instance to suggest that it is actually impossible for (oracular) gods to lie, insofar as their language is conceived as separate from ours and full of (partly) inaccessible truth (53–4).

It inevitably follows from this view of Apollo that the consequences of the false recognition demonstrate 'flawed human reasoning':

The idea that mortal error stands opposed to Apollo's divine truth and needs his saving grace is well grounded in Greek beliefs

and not seriously undermined by what Hermes or the human characters say (54).

Gibert eventually admits that Athena's words *ex machina* (1559–62) make it unambiguously clear that Apollo intended to deceive, but he is not daunted even by this: 'It does not follow that we are meant to be scandalized that Apollo told a lie or to lose faith in oracles' (54). He correspondingly considers parallels for Creusa as a *theomachos*: 'In acting like a Giant or a Gorgon, Creusa courts disaster, which only the benevolence of Olympian Apollo prevents' (43). Nevertheless, he seems uncomfortable with Athena's statement 'Apollo accomplished everything well' (1595: see his note ad loc, and p. 58 of the introduction). He might have done more to consider the view, which he mentions in passing (p. 15 n. 80) that the actions of the 'earthborn' Creusa lead to a better result than if Apollo's original plan had been successful. Martin's notes on key lines (10–11, 69–73, 355, 859–922, 1532–48, 1553–1605, 1558, 1610) add up to a better-written and more convincing prosecution of Apollo than Gibert's defence. A curious feature of Gibert's introduction is that it has relatively little to say about *Ion* as a play by Euripides, which might among other things be expected to include criticism of the gods. He does not even align himself explicitly with the view that Euripides' presentation of the gods is relatively traditional.

Textual criticism is not his main interest, and he mostly follows Diggle's text; the few exceptions (helpfully listed on p. 68) generally involve staying closer to the paradosis. He prints an emendation of his own at 1063–4, rightly following Headlam's demonstration that a form of φέρβειν ('nourish') is needed: ὧν νῦν ἐλπίς ἔφερβεν ('hope of which things was sustaining her'); compare Kovacs' Loeb ὧν νῦν ἐλπίσι φέρβεται ('by hopes of which things she is now sustained'), where the passive is closer to L's φέρετ'.

1–2. 'Atlas, who wears out heaven with his bronze back' is a striking opening, and 'wears out' is possibly corrupt. Gibert explains rather fancifully: 'while the opening image implies in retrospect that Creusa, like Atlas, must finally bend to the will of heaven, it suggests equally that some part of her wears away or outlasts even Olympian Apollo'. 20–1, 23–4. Gibert offers full and helpful notes on Erichthonius and the Aglaurides. 57–8. Xuthus wins Creusa by his prowess in war, Oedipus wins Jocasta by saving Thebes from the Sphinx (Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*), and Heracles fights Achelous for Deianira (Sophocles, *Trachiniae*), so the category of 'marriage by prowess' in tragedy is a valid one. It is less clear that Jason and Medea (Euripides, *Medea*) and Ajax and Tecmessa (Sophocles, *Ajax*) belong in it.

67–8. Λοξίας δὲ τὴν τύχην | ἐς τοῦτ' ἐλαύνει, κοῦ λέληθεν, ὡς δοκεῖ. Both Gibert and Martin think Apollo is the subject of λέληθεν, although Gibert thinks he is also the subject of δοκεῖ, which would highlight Apollo's error further: 'and he has not escaped my notice, as he thinks' (Gibert), 'and he has apparently not gone unnoticed' (Martin). Both are influenced by the argument of Walther Kraus (*WSt* 102 [1989], 35–110, at 35–6) that Hermes boasts of his abi-

lity to detect the plan which Apollo wanted to remain secret, although neither accepts Schömann's conjecture λέληθέ μ' (advocated by Kraus), which would make this sense clearer. The problem with this interpretation is that there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Apollo wanted to escape Hermes' notice or thought that he was doing so. The whole idea of Hermes' 'playful rivalry with his brother Apollo' (Gibert, p. 60) is a fantasy. Apollo asked him to convey Ion's cradle from Athens and leave it outside his temple in Delphi, τὰ δ' ἄλλ' (ἐμός γάρ ἐστιν, ὡς εἰδῆς, ὁ παῖς) | ἡμῖν μελήσει ('I shall take care of the rest, for the child is mine just so that you should know', 35–6). Note that Apollo does not try to conceal his paternity. Hermes, far from being aggrieved that he has not been told the whole story, describes how he did what Apollo asked and adds that he then helpfully (and unasked) opened the lid of the cradle so that the baby should be seen. Apollo's 'I shall take care of the rest' does not imply 'the rest is none of your business', but rather 'you do not need to worry about what will happen to the baby'. Lee (on 67–8) rightly objects that an interpretation like that of Gibert and Martin 'introduces unwanted opposition between Apollo and Hermes', translating 'and things have not passed him [Apollo] by, as they seem to have done'; the change of subject is undoubtedly difficult, but the resulting sense is far more pointed. 80–1. Gibert thinks that 'Hermes takes pride ... in usurping Apollo's privilege' by naming Ion, in keeping with his misguided interpretation of Hermes' character. Martin is correct that ὀνομάζω here means 'to call somebody by a name' rather than 'to give somebody a name'; Ion is named by Xuthus at 661.

101. Imperative infinitive gives less convoluted syntax than epexegetic (Gibert, following Diggle), and would be highly appropriate here: see R.J. Allan, 'The *infinitivus pro imperativo* in ancient Greek: the imperative infinitive as an expression of proper procedural action', *Mnemosyne* 63 (2010), 203–28. 528. γέλως = 'cause of laughter' is not 'an internal stage direction for a derisive laugh', any more than it is at *Tro.* 983: 'The idea that you are my father is a joke'. 561. *Ion.* χαῖρέ μοι, πάτερ. *Ξο.* φίλον γε φθέγγμ' ἔδεξάμην τόδε. (*ION:* Greetings, father! *XUTHUS:* I accept [aorist] these welcome words). Gibert comments on ἔδεξάμην: 'the verb is formulaic for accepting what another says as an omen ...; the tense marks "sudden access of emotion" and perhaps also politeness in what is essentially an expression of thanks'. He needs to make up his mind, as these are three different and incompatible explanations. If the verb is performative then sudden emotion has nothing to do with the aorist, and it would be insanely superstitious for Xuthus to treat 'Greetings, father!' as an omen. 578–81. Gibert defends these lines against Diggle's deletion, which is convincingly supported by Martin, but even he thinks it 'odd' that Xuthus should say 'not suffering either, you will not be called both'. 622–3. Gibert has some interesting observations on how 'Ion repeatedly frames his opinions in terms of pleasure and pain', and relates this to the 'hedonism' of other quietists such as Hippolytus (Euripides, *Hippolytus*), Creon (Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*), and Amphion (Euripides, *Antiope*). 692–3. Gibert plausibly suggests that ἔχει δόλον τέχνην θ' ὁ παῖς | ἄλλων τραφεῖς ἐξ αἰμάτων means 'Ion's upbringing in the temple involves a trick', with ὁ παῖς ... τραφεῖς equivalent to τὸ τὸν παῖδα τραφεῖναι. This gives

good sense to ἔχει, and makes unnecessary the conjectures of Diggle and Martin. 728. Gibert does well to note the frequency of συν- words in this scene, emphasizing the closeness of Creusa and the Old Man.

922. On ‘the gardens of Zeus’, Gibert might have cited E. Kearns, ‘Pindar and Euripides on sex with Apollo’, *CQ* 63 (2013), 57–67, at 64–5. 947–9. Creusa says that she gave birth ‘alone in the cave’, whereas Hermes had said that she did so at home (16). Gibert, like Martin, plays down the significance of this factual discrepancy, but unlike some other inconsistencies in Euripides it is an important and memorable detail. We do not need to be as censorious as Owen (‘She is apt to tell untruths, and it looks as though she were adding picturesque touches in order to gain the maximum of pity’), and Lee is more sensitive to the nuance: ‘she combines the site of Apollo’s rape with the place of Ion’s birth and subsequent exposure, not deliberately to excite pity, but unconsciously as an expression of her own despair and grief’. Lee’s point is reinforced by Creusa’s account of the baby reaching out to his mother (961), since Euripides was presumably aware that newborns do not behave in this appealing way. 1029. C. Collard, *Colloquial Expressions in Greek Tragedy* (Stuttgart, 2018), 84, cites the doubts of M. Labiano (*Glotta* 93 [2017], 45) whether οἷσθ’ οὖν ὁ δρᾶσον is colloquial at all, but rather ‘a specifically tragic idiom reformulated and innovated mainly by Euripides ... a fossilized expression confined to the literary language of tragedy’. 1549–50. Ion, on the point of entering the temple to question Apollo about his paternity, sees Athena appearing above it and asks which god is revealing its ἀντήλιον πρόσωπον. Gibert, in agreement with most commentators, translates ‘face turned towards the (rising) sun’, since the *skēnē* represents the east façade of the temple, although Martin prefers ‘radiant like the sun’. Gibert remarks further (following Loraux and Zeitlin) that the adjective also suggests ‘instead of the sun’ and thus ‘instead of Apollo’, but offers no arguments that the word can bear this meaning or that the sun could so allusively be identified with Apollo, or indeed that Ion has any idea at all who the god is. 1606–8. ὦ Διὸς Παλλὰς μεγίστου θύγατερ, οὐκ ἀπιστιᾶ | σοὺς λόγους ἔδεξάμεσθα, πείθομαι δ’ εἶναι πατρὸς | Λοξίου καὶ τῆσδε· καὶ πρὶν τοῦτο δ’ οὐκ ἄπιστον ἦν (‘O Pallas daughter of greatest Zeus, with complete belief do I accept your words, and I am convinced that I am the son of Loxias and this woman; even before this was highly credible’). Gibert rightly observes that ‘the two double-negative formulations, like the simple affirmation they enclose, are strong assertions of belief’. Less plausibly, he suggests that Ion responds to Athena’s speech with ‘impatience’, ‘implying that he would like to get past what was already believable (“Apollo is my father”) to what interests him at least as much (“Does Apollo prophesy in vain?”), but now he knows that he must do without an answer to this question’. This unlikely interpretation derives from his determination to take the aorist ἔδεξάμεσθα (‘I accept’) as ‘instantaneous’, whereas the whole context makes it inevitable that Ion’s words are as deferential and polite as he can make them.

In conclusion, this is a very competent edition of Euripides’ *Ion*, which shows comprehensive familiarity with modern work on the play and its background. Specialists will need to consult Martin’s edition for its fuller treatment of textual

and linguistic matters, but Gibert's is likely to be more widely read if only because of its price (even the hardback is considerably cheaper than Martin's), and it will be detailed enough for the majority of readers.

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