

Ion

Euripides 485/4-406 B.C.

(1074-1089)

*would be ashamed before the oft-hymned God,
If on the twentieth day a stranger stood
Beside the Wellspring of Fair Dances [kallichoroisi pagaisj
And saw, sleepless at night, the torch and holy envoy,
When Zeus' star-eyed sky
Has begun its choral dance [anechoreusen].
And the moon is dancing [choreuei],
And the fifty Nereid maidens
Who dwell beneath the sea,
Beneath the whirlpools of the ever/lowing streams,
Are hymning in their choral dance [choreuomenai]
The gold-crowned maid Persephone
And her majestic mother Demeter.
There Ion hopes to rule,
Rushing in upon the work of other men,
That vagabond son of Phoebus!*

ION epode

*Ye rustic seats, Pan's dear delight;
Ye caves of Macraï's rocky height,
Where oft the social virgins meet,
And weave the dance with nimble feet;
Descendants from Aglauros they*

*In the third line, with festive play,
Minerva's hallow'd fane before
The verdant plain light-tripping o'er,
When thy pipe's quick-varying sound
Rings, O Pan, these caves around;
Where, by Apollo's love betray'd,
Her child some hapless mother laid,
Exposed to each night-prowling beast,
Or to the ravenous birds a feast;
For never have I heard it told,
Nor wrought it in historic gold,
That happiness attends the race,
When gods with mortals mix the embrace.
ION re-enters.*

Translated by Robert Potter