

**BACCHAE**

**by**

**EURIPIDES**

**A new translation for performance and study**

**with introduction and notes**

**by**

**Matt Neuburg**

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

It was not so long ago that the translator of a work such as this could speak with pity of the “Greekless reader”, who needed to experience the Classics in his or her native tongue, as an exceptional character, outside the mainstream of educated culture. Anyone who *really* wanted to read a Classical work would do so in the original. In those days, therefore, a translation was really an independent literary creation, an exercise in personal ingenuity, a *tour de force* whose value as a work of art had little to do with that of the original, and everything to do with what the translator brought to it. One thinks of Pope’s *Iliad*, a loose paraphrase of Homer with the unHomeric merit of reading like Pope; and more recently, of Gilbert Murray or Benjamin Bickley Rogers, whose translations of Euripides and Aristophanes respectively imitate Shelley and W S Gilbert, but hardly Euripides and Aristophanes. These translations, for all their delights, are not gateways to the original, nor did they need to be.

Now, however, the cultural situation is wholly altered. Greek and Latin no longer constitute a major part of the curriculum of those destined to pursue their education beyond the secondary level, not even those who will concentrate in the Humanities. On the contrary, the vast majority of those likely to desire some access to literature originally written in Latin and Greek have never read a word in those languages. The Classical languages have thus gone, in less than a century, from being the educational equivalent

of a necessity to that of a rare and abstruse luxury — a revaluation to which classicists, accustomed to regard the status of Greek and Latin as secured by two millennia of educational tradition, have been understandably slow to respond. In particular this change of readership has only very slowly been met by any change in the principles of translation. But the result of this revaluation is that today's translator is charged with a heavy responsibility, for there are people relying upon him or her to be a faithful and dependable mediator for what will be their *only* contact with some of the greatest works of literature in our heritage. This means that my duty as a classical translator, once I have spent a lifetime struggling to know and appreciate the Greek and Latin languages and their cultural context, is (in contradistinction to Pope or Murray or Rogers) to bring if possible *nothing* of myself to the resulting translation. I do not wish to erect a modern stylistic or generic edifice based roughly upon a Classical model; I wish, just the other way, to *remove* as much as possible the barrier between the modern reader and the original, a barrier which is the result of profound changes in mental set, in literary and generic expectations. In short, I must not make the Classics palatable or easy by rendering them more like their modern counterparts: I must instead provide, to the best of my ability, English words which will let the reader see all that I see, and nothing that I do not see, in the original, with all its alien jaggedness, its bony quirks and incomprehensibilities.

My apology for putting before the public this new translation of Euripides' *Bacchae* is twofold. In the first place, the responsibility of which I have spoken is one to which I feel, frankly, that the existing modern translations have mostly failed to rise. This failure is largely an accident of history. In reacting, quite rightly, against the traditional artifices of tragic translation as the use of rhyming verse and poetic diction of the "Verily, thou goest" type — there is no rhyme in Classical Greek poetry, and use of archaic vocabulary

and syntax, besides doing nothing to suggest the actual differences between Greek poetry and prose, serves nowadays to alienate unnecessarily the reader from the text —, modern translations have tended to lose the poetic mystery and subtlety of the original. It is certainly appropriate that a translation be written in contemporary English, but this English should still be our finest English, as Greek tragic poetry is the finest Greek, and not what a colleague of mine once termed (speaking of the Chicago series of translations) “ad agency English”, which, in my experience both as a student and as a teacher, gives readers the false impression that Greek drama was stilted, paltry, dull, prosy, and primitive. The cost of reacting against the artifice of bombast as a way of suggesting grandeur has been the loss of that vibrant tension and bold immediacy which make Greek drama in the original so overwhelmingly appealing. The baby has gone out with the bath-water: if the florid translations of an earlier generation are inaccessible to a modern student, at least it was a lofty inaccessibility! This happened because to write a modern translation at all was to play the *enfant terrible*; the goal of the modern translator seems to have been more to shock the ghost of Gilbert Murray than to put the original honestly at the disposal of the Greekless reader. The present translation is by way of helping the pendulum to swing back to a more neutral position: it tries to serve the public, not to beard the earlier translators.

Secondly, the *Bacchae* is a play with which I have what I may call an intimate dramatic familiarity. It was written in response to the desire of Professor Mira Felner, of the Hunter College Department of Theatre and Film, for a dependable and actable translation of the *Bacchae* for use as the department’s major production in the spring semester of 1982; and my consequent close involvement with the rehearsal and production process has had a marked effect on the nature of the result. And this is entirely appropriate, and indeed necessary. It is all too easy for the translator, especially of a

dead language, to work, like a scholar, so much in the abstract and as it were on paper, as to forget that the original text is not a collection of algebraic equations to be solved by translation, not a static object of scholarly contemplation, but a live and linear progression of dramatically effective and comprehensible utterances. In short, the drama was intended for, and moulded by the needs of, actual performance; and it was all to the good, therefore, that my experience and goals should be made that much more approximate to those of Euripides, by my awareness that whatever words I wrote would have to be spoken by real people before an audience the majority of whom had probably never read or seen a Greek drama before, and to whom nonetheless those words must be instantly comprehensible and effective. Over the course of many months of rehearsal, practical experience dictated many changes in my proposed text, in numerous brainstorming sessions with Professor Felner and the actors, in which the latter would complain that a line would not play or be readily understood, and we would go over every word of a line until we arrived at a reading acceptable both to the theatre's sense of dramatic demands and to my own sense of fidelity to Euripides. Modern playscripts, after all, benefit from a similar treatment and development; and indeed there is no reason to suppose that Euripides' text did not develop in much the same way. It is interesting to observe that after these sessions the translation was almost invariably improved not only from a dramatic standpoint but from a scholarly one as well. And this is not so very surprising; for, though problems of both Euripides' style and the transmission of his text through the obstacle course of the ages have created many obscurities and puzzles for the translator, Euripides himself may generally be relied upon to be a dramatic master craftsman, so that whatever will not work on stage is probably not a very good guess at what the poet originally wrote. Dramatic playability is not always one of the scholar's



stock measures for determining the meaning or correct emendation of the transmitted text; experience has convinced me, at least, that it should be. Indeed, this brainstorming in the dramatic milieu has had positive repercussions for my own scholarly work: it resulted in a number of new emendations of the Greek text, some of which are mentioned in the notes accompanying the text, and four of which have subsequently been published in scholarly Classical journals.

None of this is meant to imply that I make the error of supposing that what constitutes plausible and workable drama is the same for the ancient Greeks as it is for us: nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, the whole problem with Greek drama, in a nutshell, is (as is frequently said, but not often enough believed, even by those who say it) that is so “desperately foreign”. It is, after all, precisely the attempt to render Greek drama plausible to modern expectations that makes so many recent translations such betrayals of the original. Our notions of drama, and more fundamentally of the self and the nature of the individual, seem to require, for example, that the lines spoken by characters on the stage reflect consistently developed mental states, attitudes, and motivations, that their interchanges be in some non-trivial sense mimetic of “real” conversation, that the drama have a shape and pacing in line with our aesthetic, which in turn is rooted in our artistic concentration on the inner life of the individual. Bluntly, Greek drama appears not to be primarily concerned with any of these things: its characters are not individuals in the modern sense, so much as loci of social and situational types; its dialogue is modelled not on conversation but on conventional standards; its aesthetic is rooted in a concern for certain social and functional aspects of life which, while easy to enunciate, have few or no avatars in modern Western consciousness — notions about the family and household, the nature of language, and other concepts peculiar to and indeed definitive

of Greek culture. Thus, to make the dialogue and action “realer”, “more understandable”, as if the poet were simply doing a rather poor job of writing a modern drama, and the job of the translator were to use our modern expertise to help him a little, is not only presumptuous, but also has the effect of rendering the dramas rather paltry, since in fact no amount of patching will make them into very good modern drama. I’m reminded of the complaint of an acquaintance who teaches at a private high school, who bemoaned some translations of a certain Greek play, which, he said, lacked the distinctive imagery of a different translation of the same play, which he liked. I took a look at the specifics, and he proved to be quite right; but the problem ran deeper. The translators my friend didn’t like had heavy-handedly rewritten lines with a view to making the dialogue into conversation that stood a chance of showing the characters as people like you and me. But they aren’t; and they mustn’t be made so, unless you want to call the result something other than “translation”. I’ve no doubt that the translators I criticise here thought they were doing the reader a great service by making comprehensible a thing which was in its original form rather less comprehensible. But if translations today are to function as the common stand-in for the original, that service is no service at all, but the enshrining of a lie.

This, of course, is just what my translation tries *not* to do. The poetry and the Greekness of Euripides lie very much in that which is strange to us, and, as I shall explain in more detail below, this translation bends over backwards to preserve that strangeness. Nothing is modified for the sake of the making the actor’s, the director’s, the reader’s job any easier. I did not, as one recent translator tells me is his method, work myself into a mood consistent with a modern vision of a particular character’s mood during a certain speech and then write words for that character through the medium of that mood; I just

wrote words that seemed to me to say in English what Euripides says in Greek. But — and this is the point of my “playability” notion — neither did I regard those words as static paper exercises. It is in the nature of language and grammar that a sentence unfolds and moves forward in a certain way, that several sentences draw upon, build upon, reverberate from one another as they are uttered in order. And, for all the differences between the Greek mind and our own, our intuitions about this linguistic progression seem to apply pretty well to Greek. Thus it is part of making lines utterable on the stage, to be sure that they are not only grammatically and phonetically comprehensible, but also reflective of a certain unfolding and development of thought as well. It is the error of neglecting the dynamics and details and patterns and structures of this unfolding of thought through language that my insistence on “playability” is meant to preclude. In writing this translation, and in trying to settle with myself questions of nuance and of text that arose in the course of it, my refuge from the foreignness of Greek drama was a conviction that, whatever Euripides’ faults (and he no doubt has some), writing unplayable drama, failing to unfold and to connect thoughts in a deliberate and masterful manner, was not likely to be one of them.

The result is that the reader may rely upon this translation to reflect faithfully in certain fundamental ways the shape and nature of the original. For example, in the matter of diction, my object has been to maintain as much as possible the shape of the Greek words and phrases, and this has meant, among other things, trying to keep to the word-order of the original. Language, as I have said, is linear, so that the sequence whereby words impinge upon the ear, and so their meanings upon the mind, is an important feature of it — and this is especially true of Greek poetry, the more so because Greek word order is otherwise extremely free. In particular, maintaining the sequence of words has had a much higher priority in this

translation than syntactical fidelity, because in English the choice of word order all but determines the syntax that will join those words. The first two lines of the play will illustrate this principle as well as any: they run, *hêkô Dios pais tênde Thêbaiôn chthona / Dionysos, hon tiktei pot' hê Kadmou korê / Semelê*, which means, very roughly and denoting single Greek words by hyphenated English word-groups, “I-have-come Zeus’ son to-this of-Thebians land / Dionysos, whom bore once the Cadmos’ girl / Semele.” A paraphrase which places the subject of each clause before its corresponding verb, thus maintaining the *syntax* of the original, might run, “I, Zeus’ son Dionysos, have come to this land of Thebians, I whom Cadmos’ daughter Semele once bore.” This is a very good literal rendering, such as I would expect a student to produce during an examination, to demonstrate understanding of the Greek; but it misses Euripides’ significant placement of the names of Dionysos and Semele at the beginnings of the second and third lines of verse. To preserve this placement it is necessary, if one is to avoid a stilted quality absent from the Greek, to change the active “bore” to a passive, such as “born of”, rather along these lines: “I, Zeus’ son, have come to this land of Thebians, / Dionysos, born of Cadmos’ daughter / Semele.” This not only maintains pretty well the original word order, but also avoids the clumsy “I whom”, English relative clauses not having anything like the ease and naturalness of their Greek counterparts; and it is in fact, barring some further modifications in line with considerations discussed below, what I have used. The first person pronoun “I” admittedly obtrudes annoyingly at the beginning of the sentence, but since “Here I am, Zeus’ son” has altogether the wrong flavour (not to mention the horrible “I’m back!” with which one recent translation begins), and since it is in fact a feature of Dionysos’ speech that he begins lines of verse with first person

verbs (1 *hêkô*, 6 *horô*, 10 *ainô*), the emphasis on the self, with the repetitive “I” corresponding to the repeated Greek verb-ending *-ô*, seems more appropriate than not.

On an even more fundamental level, maintaining the Greek diction has meant trying to render the same Greek word by the same English word. This is a goal highly appropriate to Greek drama, which, as modern scholarship tends more and more to stress, delineates its key themes and issues by putting into the mouths of the characters repeated words and phrases. For example, when Dionysos has escaped incarceration in the stables, Pentheus threatens him (793), *soi palin anastrepsô dikên*, roughly “On-you back-again I-will-back-turn justice.” Now, of course, what Pentheus *means* is something like, “I will restore your previous punishment,” that is, incarcerate you again. But the actual phrase employed is unique and poetic, and must have sounded strange and innovative to a Greek ear. The verb Pentheus is made to use means “reverse” or “invert”; the Greeks easily used it of reversing the course of a river, overturning a mountain, upsetting the stomach, and inverting the order of words, but to apply it to justice is very bold. There appear to be two reasons, apart from an urge to write memorable poetry, for Euripides’ placing such a phrase in Pentheus’ mouth. The first is that the word for justice, *dikê*, is in this play a leitmotif of Pentheus’: he threatens Dionysos with it at 356, 489, and 676, and later, in a subtle irony, Cadmos, mourning over the dead Pentheus, recalls how the latter always gave wrongdoers “the justice they deserved”. Preservation of what he sees as justice is one of Pentheus’ primary concerns in this play, and it is by constantly characterising as justice his relentless and monomaniacal persecution of Dionysos that he justifies that persecution to himself and others. But this brings us to the second reason for the extraordinary phraseology of 793, namely, that through it Pentheus is made to announce *unintentionally* that his punishing Dionysos

is *not* really just at all, but, precisely as he unwittingly calls it, a reversal, an inversion of justice. Well then, it is clear that a non-literal translation such as “I will restore your previous punishment” will obscure not only the boldness of Euripides’ poetry but also the significant textures and ironies woven into the line by the echoic use of the theme-word *dikê*, and the double significance of the chosen turn of phrase. It is not too much to say, in fact, that the repeated use of *dikê* is one of the main points of the play. Therefore I have translated it the same way every time it occurs (as “justice”), and have rendered this line “I’ll reverse justice on you again”: the English turn of phrase is no odder than the Greek, and the English ear does not, it seems to me, require more elliptical explanation than the Greek. This task, of finding single English words that would suffice for every occurrence in the play of a particular Greek word, and of weighing and trying to match the import of Euripidean phraseology, arose in connection with practically every line. My particular renderings have inevitably been compromises, for Greek vocabulary matches very poorly the significations of English vocabulary — *hybris* does not precisely mean “violence”, nor *deinos* “dreadful” — but the overall textural effect of such rigorous consistency does at least communicate the impression of repeated key-words one has when reading the original, and will assist the auditor and reader in understanding the play, not to mention the Greekless scholarly analyst in interpreting it.

Less frequently Euripides makes use of words which suggest rather than precisely repeat one another. Sometimes such words come in literal semantic families. There are, for example, the *phron-/phren*-words: 33 *phrenôn*, 196 *pronoumen*, 314 *sôphronein*, 1301 *aphrosynês*, and so forth. Here it was not always possible to be perfectly consistent, but even when taking liberties in order to capture the sense of individual usages I have translated in such a way that every time a word of this family appears in the Greek, the English

employs words whose semantic sphere at least is obviously related: “mind”, “thought”, “think”, and so forth. Contrast one well-known recent translation, which has at 33 “mind”, but at 196 “see” and 1301 nothing at all! Where I have been forced in the name of clarity to sacrifice this goal of consistent translation, I have at least called attention to the fact in the notes.

On a still more subtle level Euripides makes use of puns and other rather more subconscious echoic devices. There is, for example, much talk in this play of bunches of grapes growing on the vine, *botrychos*, as well as several significant mentions of the sacred lock of hair worn by Dionysos’ male devotees, *bostrychos*. Etymologically the two words have nothing to do with each other; but it can be no coincidence that Euripides has chosen these rather than other available words to render these notions in this play, and so I have translated both the same way, as “cluster”. Similarly Teiresias makes much use of similar-sounding words in his sophistic encomium of Dionysos; for these and other near puns, which I have rendered as well as I could, the notes can be consulted for a discussion of what the Greek is actually doing.

On the level of pure sound, there is of course much that must inevitably be lost: such is the nature of translation, after all. But even here I have tried to be as attentive as possible to the intentions of the original. Once in a while there is some use of sounds so glaring that it had to be rendered, such as the violent alliteration of Pentheus’ excited 653 *klêiein keleuô panta pyrgôn en kyklôi*, or the chorus’ use at 423 of *alypon* in an antistrophic position exactly responding to the *anombroi* of the strophe (repeating the initial *a-*, “not”); in the former case I tried to match the alliteration with one of my own, in the latter I resorted to rhyme, explaining each time in the notes. An exceptionally heavy use of alliteration in the translation (much commented on by the audiences after the Hunter College performances) is

not gratuitous, either, but is intended to convey the general effect of the Greek language's inevitable use of similar repeated word-endings. No doubt much has escaped my notice; but the reader is asked to believe, at least, that no sonic effect in the English has been created gratuitously, nor any in the Greek intentionally ignored.

Let me now leave the matter of diction, and come to that of versification and metre. The goals of my translation in this area are extremely ambitious, not to say unique, and the reader will need some knowledge of the nature of Greek poetic practice in order to appreciate their significance; those who already possess such knowledge, please skip ahead, to the paragraph beginning "We now come to the conventions...".

The survival of any Greek drama at all often seems little short of a miracle, and one for which we are immensely grateful; but we cannot help feeling keenly the loss of an important component of that drama, a loss which distorts our view of the genre even more than does the general cultural difference between our world and that of the Greeks: I speak of the *music*. In a Greek tragedy, all of the choral interludes, as well as (on average) one single, special scene involving a main character, called a "lyric scene", were sung to musical accompaniment. As the rest of the play was presumably delivered in a manner closer to speech, probably analogous to the recitation of a verse drama (such as Shakespeare) today, the choral interludes must have been very strongly demarcated from the rest of the play. I have seen any number of stagings of Greek tragedy in translation *not* employing music or rhythm for the choral sequences, and the effect, like that of reading the choral sequences in most modern English translations, is a very flat one: the choruses seem tedious and out of place, and one can hardly wait for them to be over and for the "real" action, to which a modern play more closely



corresponds, to recommence, with main characters and advancement of the plot. But this was surely not at all the quality of choral sequences in ancient Greek practice. The demarcation between choral sequences and the “real” action of the drama was *so* strong as to plunge the audience into what amounts to another world. The focus of activity was probably transferred from a platform where the actors stood when they were onstage to the special dancing area below and in front of it where the chorus were arranged. The nature of the delivery changed from speech to song and dance. The subject matter and style of the lyrics, too, differed from the episodes with the main characters; the plot generally ceased to move forward, and instead a frozen moment of emotional and intellectual reaction and evaluation was presented. What we may be led to think of as a choral interlude between bouts of “real” plot was in fact much closer in flavour to the delivery of an aria in Handelian opera, or a song-and-dance number in a Broadway musical: and these latter moments, as every devotee knows, are not at all mere time-marking interludes between the exciting plot moments of the drama, but are rather themselves the point and focus of the whole presentation, the plot serving in many cases as little more than an excuse to hook together the sung numbers. It is possible that I exaggerate somewhat the relative feeling of importance of the choral sequences; but I certainly do not exaggerate when I say that those choral sequences, with their spectacle of song and dance and their heightened emotional tension and versified structure, were far more vivid and exciting and meaningful than most modern translations lead the reader to appreciate.

What can the translator do to render this? The music is lost, true; but some imprint of it remains in the libretto, in the remarkable and various rhythmic effects of the poetic metres in which the choral sequences and lyric scenes are written. This translation, therefore, on the grounds that the

translator is not doing his duty if he robs the Greekless reader or modern theatre-goer of the chance that the Classicist has to appreciate what of the formal and musical side of Greek drama *has* survived, attempts to *reproduce the original Greek metres of the choral and lyric portions of the play*.

This program has not been easy to realise, because of the great differences between Greek and English metre, both in fundamental nature and in variety and complexity. The prosodic feature of English on which English verse depends is the *stress* attached to every word: the arrangement of English words into verse is tantamount, traditionally, to the arrangement of those syllables which in prose would be stressed or unstressed into some simple repetitive pattern. In, for example, a line of English dactylic verse, “This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and hemlocks,” the thing that makes the line verse is the fact that the inherent stresses in the words (“fórest”, “priméval”, “múrmuring”, “hémlocks”) are so arranged as constantly to alternate one stressed with two unstressed syllables throughout the line:

Thís is the fórest priméval, the múrmuring pínes and the hémlocks.

Similarly, the line “Tiger! tiger! burning bright” is verse because it alternates one stressed and one unstressed syllable throughout:

Tíger! tíger! búrning bríght...

The prosody of spoken Greek on which Greek versification depends, however, is something more or less lacking in English, namely *syllable length*. It appears that Greek was spoken in such a way that syllables containing certain vowels or followed by consonant clusters took longer to utter than others. Greek thus comes equipped with temporally longer and shorter syllables, and it is this quality of the language that Greek arranges into patterns to make poetry. No doubt this effect required some slight exaggeration,

as does English verse, to reveal the pattern: but the difference is, that whereas in English this exaggeration requires punching the stressed syllable, as one might if one were trying to emphasise the dactylic rhythm of the “forest primeval” line above, in Greek it required sitting on the long syllables for noticeably longer than the short, say twice as long, as if the long syllables were musical quarter-notes (crotchets) and the short syllables eighth-notes (quavers).

Now, although *spoken* Greek metres tended, like English metres, to be made up of very simple patterns, — just alternations of a long syllable either with one or, in a different metre, with two short syllables, — Greek *lyric* metres could be, and generally were, far more complex and varied arrangements of long and short syllables, which were moulded into broad and subtle structures extending with little repetition over many lines of verse. Order was introduced into these structures in two ways: (i) by the use of verse-patterns which, while not strictly identical, were felt as thematically similar (in ways which cannot be discussed here, but which the reader will be able to sense in reading this translation), and (ii) more importantly, by the conventional requirement that the large metrical structures themselves be repeated. This repetition could be effected either by arranging different words to form the same large metrical structure twice, like the first and second “verses” of a modern song, where each verse is meant to be sung to the same music, or by repeating the very same words, like a repeated refrain in a modern song: both sorts of device are employed in the *Bacchae*. Both the choral sequences and the lyric scenes, therefore, tend to be arranged in pairs of stanzas, the first member of each pair being called the *strophe*, and the second member, which repeats the large metrical structure but not necessarily the words of the first, being called the *antistrophe*. Euripides likes to coordinate this conventional division into stanzas and pairs of stanzas

with the sense of the lyrics, using the structure as a sort of paragraph division: each stanza tends to deal with some single topic or theme, and one which is related in some way to that of its paired stanza, and the stanza-pair usually deals with rather more separate topics or themes from the next stanza-pair.

We now come to the conventions used in this translation to render the original Greek metres. The lyric portions of the play (the choral sequences and the lyric scene) are, as I have said, presented in exactly the metre of the Greek original. In the absence of syllable-length as a natural prosody in English, this has required the forcible imposition of length onto the English words. What I have done is simply to mark artificially each syllable as having to be read either as “long” or as “short”, using macrons and breves; in reading the lines silently or aloud, one is to hold the “long” syllables roughly twice as long as the “short”, so as to bring out the metrical pattern. For example, the first line of the first strophe of the first choral sequence runs, in Greek (73):

ō mākar hōstis eūdāimōn...

Every syllable in these words is either inherently long or inherently short, and I have marked the long syllables with macrons and the short syllables with breves. This allows us to see the rhythm of the whole phrase, which is roughly equivalent to this musical rhythm:



In the translation, I have rendered these words into English in the same number of syllables as the Greek, and have superimposed onto the English rendering the original syllable-lengths of the Greek, thus:

ō blēssēd hē whō fōrtūnāte...

The reader who speaks these words with the “long” syllables held twice as long as the “short” will therefore be speaking English words in the very same musical rhythm as that of the original Greek. This technique may take some practice, but it is something all Classicists learn to do in reading Greek verse, and there no reason why any English reader should not be able to master it. Part of the challenge for the reader accustomed to letting stress dictate the main positions in a line of verse, is that the English stress (say, in bléssed) does not necessarily correspond to a Greek long syllable: indeed, there is often a resulting tension between the placement of the stressed syllables and that of the long syllables. But this is not an inappropriate tension, because Greek had something corresponding roughly to it: Greek, too, possessed word-accent (although we believe this accent represented a change in vocal pitch, not stress), and this word-accent in Greek verse often does not correspond to the long syllables of the metre. The trick — and I know this can be done, by an individual speaker or by many speakers in unison, with clarity and meaning, because it was done in the original production of this translation — is to maintain *both* the rhythms of longs and shorts dictated by the macrons and breves above the line *and* the natural stress-inflexions of the English words.

I should just add here, that the difficulties of matching English syllable-counts to Greek have compelled me on occasion to take liberties with the syllabification of English words. Sometimes, for example, I syllabify Pentheus’ name as three syllables (“Pēnthēūs”), sometimes as two (“Pēnthēūs”); this is also a Greek phenomenon, known as synizesis. It is for this reason, too, that I have rendered the name of the town in which the action takes place as “Thebai”, and its inhabitants as “Thebians”, reproducing

the Greek syllable-count, rather than translating according the common English convention (“Thebes” and “Thebans”), which would have brought me up at least a syllable short.

Something needs to be said about the colometry, or lineation, of the lyric passages. Scholars comparing the translation with the original will discover that I have not adhered to the Oxford text’s colometry. That colometry is based on principles of analysis of the elementary components of a Greek verse which I feel do not well illuminate the actual colon- and verse-structure of the poetry. What I have printed is, in fact, the colometry I would use if I were printing an edition of the Greek original. The matter is technical and, ultimately, not of terribly great moment; it is sufficient to state here flatly and without elaboration or defence, that my colometry is based upon the divisions within the stanza created by the grammatical cola and units of sense, which I feel are our best indicators as to the poetic units of thought. For the reader, this will mean little more than that the English is laid out legibly on the page, so as to highlight with the thematic metrical patterns that give each lyric portion of the play its own peculiar musical flavour; for the speaker, also that as a rule line-endings will be the best places to pause for clarity and breath.

So much for the lyric metres (those of the choral sequences and the lyric scene). The *Bacchae* also employs, in the episodes with the main characters, two spoken metres. One is iambic trimeter, the Greek functional (though not metrical) equivalent of English blank verse; the other is trochaic tetrameter catalectic, a longer line, matching the pattern of “Once to ev’ry man and nation comes the moment to decide.” Since these are spoken metres, I have not made any attempt to match them precisely, letting the goals of clarity, literalness, and adherence as much as possible to the lineation and word-order

of the original take precedence. The majority of the iambic trimeter lines did in fact turn out in my translation as blank verse of a sort; but generally my rendering of the spoken metres does not maintain any consistent English rhythm. Finally, the closing lines of the drama are anapaests, a chanted marching rhythm similar in flavour to the first theme of the slow movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony; these have been metamorphosed, rather than being transposed syllable for syllable as with the lyric metres, into English anapaests, and marked by macrons and breves, with the units divided by measure-bars. The resulting effect is just that of the original.

The text of the translation deliberately includes no stage directions whatever, despite the usual translating practice and current play-writing style. This is because the manuscripts of the Greek contain no stage directions; since the average reader can generally discern without assistance who is entering and exiting, and can imagine what that character does while on the stage, it seems to me far better not to inject stage directions of my own, which can only give an impression of certainty about action which is in fact completely conjectural. Thus, when Dionysos sends Pentheus indoors to dress as a woman, and then calls him from the house, and when Pentheus' entrance line is, "Indeed, it seems to me I see two suns," it seems otiose to insert a direction such as, "Enter Pentheus, mad, dressed as a woman, and gazing skyward," when to do so would only be to supply what I have guessed from the text, and what the reader can guess every bit as well as I. Both stage activity and setting are on the whole fairly transparent anyway, because, what with the actors' masks, their distance from the spectators, and the simplicity of stage paraphernalia, the Greek dramatists tended to give the actors and chorus lines specifically announcing the nature of the surroundings, the names of entering characters, and the facial expressions and onstage business of themselves and one another. Moreover, in many

cases the insertion of stage directions begs important questions. Take, for example, the matter of whether or not Dionysos is offstage during the Earthquake Scene: he is often flatly said in other translations to be offstage, but all the chorus tell us is that they do not *see* him, which is not at all the same thing. In the Hunter College production Dionysos was onstage during the scene, to great effect. By not inserting stage directions, I maintain my goal of showing the reader all that I see, but no more than what I see, in reading the original; the reader is left with the same freedom the Classicist has, to imagine his or her own staging.

Finally, a word about the text which this translation is made *from*. Any conscientious translator must be brought up short against the harsh fact that, aside from the difficulties of knowing what Euripides means by any given phrase, the nature of the process by which our text of the *Bacchae* has come to us makes it disconcertingly doubtful what phrase Euripides intended to employ in the first place. In a number of instances the problem is sufficiently severe as to warrant the reader's attention; wherever some information about the original text and the translation's relationship to it has appeared to be called for in order to warrant the confidence of the more exacting reader that what he or she is seeing represents faithfully the original, a mark has been placed in the margin, keying the reader to a note on the line or lines in question. The notes then appear together after the translation, indexed by line number. These line numbers are those conventionally applied to the Greek text. The notes themselves have been kept to the minimum needed to supply a picture of the problems with the text and the nature of my solutions. My starting place has been the Oxford Classical Text edited by Gilbert Murray, and the commentary on it by DODDS (consult the bibliography for this and other works referred to by the name of the author in small caps), which definitively takes account of the scholarly debates over matters textual



up to the time of its publication; I have also consulted books and articles published later, and (as mentioned above) have in a few cases published some articles on such matters myself, and I occasionally refer to these for justification of my textual decisions. Readers who find that my notes, which are deliberately restricted to blunt explanations of what my Greek text was and how I arrived at it, are insufficiently detailed, should consult the scholarship, beginning always with DODDS. Nor do my notes provide very much interpretation of the drama, except where this bears upon a textual question; those wishing a commentary on the intent or implication of a passage in the play are urged to consult the translation of KIRK.

# BACCHAE

## by Euripides

### DIONYSOS

I, Zeus' son, am come to this land of Thebai,  
Dionysos, brought to birth of Cadmos' daughter  
Semele, midwived by the lightning-borne fire;  
my godly form I have given over for a mortal one,  
and I am here, at Dirke's river and Ismenos' water. 5  
I see the memorial of my mother's thunderbolt  
nearby, the house and home in ruins,  
smouldering the still-living flame of Zeus' fire,  
deathless, Hera's violence against my mother.  
I commend Cadmos for making this ground inviolate, 10  
a daughter's precinct; the vine concealing it  
around in clustering green is my own doing.  
I left Lydia's gold-rich acreage,  
and Phrygia's, and Persia's sun-blasted flats  
and Bactria's walls and the hard-wintered land 15  
of Media I came upon, and happy Araby,  
and all of Asia that by the salt sea  
lies, its fair-citadeled cities filled  
• with Greeks and foreigners together mingled; 19

**20**           The omitted line reads, "I came first to this city of Greeks." It is not clear how to make it cohere syntactically with 21–2, and it is a virtual doublet for 23. Many solutions have been proposed, none winning universal scholarly approval; the line

my choruses and rites are now set up there, 21  
 to manifest to mortals my divinity.  
 And Thebai is the first of this Greek land  
 I have howled up, the fawnskin fitted to flesh,  
 the thyrsus given to hand, the shaft of ivy: 25  
 because my mother's sisters, of all people,  
 claimed that Dionysos was not sprung from Zeus,  
 and that Semele, deflowered by some mortal,  
 to Zeus referred the trespass of her bed —  
 a sophism of Cadmos' — and that was why Zeus killed her, 30  
 they contended, because she lied about her union.  
 Therefore these same women have I goaded from the house  
 with madness (the mountain is their home, their minds askew)  
 and made them take up the trappings of my orgies;  
 and all the female seed of the Cadmeians, each and every 35  
 woman have I maddened from the house:  
 with Cadmos' children together mingled  
 under green firs they sit, in roofless rocks.  
 For this city, like it or not, must understand  
 its uninitiation to my bacchantising, 40  
 and make amends for mother Semele, that I  
 am manifest to mortals a divinity, birthed through Zeus.  
 Now then. Cadmos gives the prerogatives of tyranny  
 to Pentheus, offspring of his daughter;

was found in production to be on any reading a stumbling-block to the progress of the speech. Therefore I take it to be at the very least both problematic and otiose, and recommend its excision. If the line must be retained, translate: "To this city of Greeks I came, once first / my choruses and rites were set up there"; but (i) I really don't believe the Greek as we have it can mean this, and (ii) the result remains very odd in light of the upcoming 23.

*he wages god-war on me, from his offerings* 45  
*he thrusts me, in prayers nowhere makes mention of me.*  
*And that is why I'll show him I am a god,*  
*and all the Thebians. To another land,*  
*when things are settled here, I shall be off*  
*and show myself; but if the Thebaian city* 50  
 • *is aroused to arm and try to drive the bacchae*  
 • *from the mountain, I'll join the maenads as commander.* 52  
*But, — women from Mount Tmolus, Lydia's gate,* 55  
*my thiasus, that from foreign lands*  
*I brought along as cohorts and companions,*  
*take up those properties of Phrygia's city,*  
*the drums, mother Rhea's invention and my own,*

**51**            The word translated “aroused” is actually the noun *orgê*, which to a Greek ear must have rung with echoes of the word translated “orgies” at 34, *orgia*. I could not come up with a properly echoic translation, so “arouse” is a compromise: it is sexually suggestive, though it does not do real justice to the subliminal suggestion of the Greek, that an armed expedition into the mountains would be more an imitation than a negation of what the women are already doing — a suggestion that is treated more explicitly later in the play, when the women prove more potent militarily than the men.

**53-4**            The omitted lines read, “And that is why I've changed my mortal shape, / and turned my form into a man's nature.” This is (i) a tautology (the scholar Hermann said of it, in Latin of course, “it stinks”); (ii) a near repetition of 4; and (iii) dubious Greek, since the word translated “change”, *allattô*, ought to mean ‘give away in exchange’, not ‘take in exchange’. None of these objections is sufficient to warrant excision — Euripides frequently writes tautologically, repeats key phrases, and innovates linguistically — but the lines are in addition unplayable, since *non sequuntur*, and, as will be immediately apparent in any production, it is his mention of the maenads at 52 which brings to Dionysos' mind at 55 the thiasus waiting offstage, a transition which 53–4 clumsily interrupt. This seems to me a telling support for the spuriousness of 53–4. See WILLINK.

and round the royal house of Pentheus come  
beat them for Cadmos' city to see.  
I'll to the bacchae, to the folds of Cithairon  
where they are, and take part in their choruses.

60

## CHORUS [Parodos]



### Prooimion (64-71)

- Fr̄om āf̄ar, ōt ōf Ās̄iā, Lȳdiā's mōuntain gī vī ng ōv̄er,

Ī dī sp̄atch f̄or Dī ōnȳs̄os lābōur lōvelȳ:

ā trāv̄ail and nō trāv̄ail, crȳi ng thē Bācchī c ōne, ēvōi!

Whō īs thēre? whō īs thēre? whō? Clēar thē wāy, tāke tō yōur hālls,

**64–71** The metre of this Prooimion is not as securely understood as we would like. For the most part it consists of the repeated simple rhythm (1)  but in a few places it shows (2)  instead; in such a simple, repetitive rhythm it would seem logical to assume that instances of (2) are meant to be followed by a quarter-note rest so as to be in fact identical to (1), but this sort of “regularising” analysis of Greek metre, carried to extremes a century ago, has now gone out of fashion. WEST (the current standard discussion) writes: “It is often assumed that the long position in [such instances] was of double length, but there is no ground for this supposition. Greek music was not confined in the strait-jacket of unchanging bar-lengths”; and he supports this opinion with a technical point which shows conclusively that we have no *proof* of such double-length. In printing the Prooimion and showing its metre, I have sat on the fence. I have left the opening rhythm of the first and fourth lines as (2), but have “regularised” one other instance of (2) into (1).

The Greek has, not “Lydia’s mountain”, but “holy (sacred) Tmolos”; the alteration is to eliminate the tongue-twister, and to make the meaning clearer to an audience unfamiliar with ancient Aegean geography. My “Dī ōnȳs̄os” in the second line represents the Greek *Bromiōi*; this is the regularisation from rhythm (2) to rhythm (1) mentioned in the preceding paragraph. In the fourth line I have followed the punctuation and interpretation of Elmsley (see DODDS) in construing and punctuating the third “who?”; most of the other ways require a sense akin to “who is indoors”, and I find it impossible that someone already inside could be told by the entering chorus to get out of the way.

lēt ev'ry mōuth shōw sǎcrēd sīlence ōf dēvotiōn:  
īnstī tūtiōns ēvērlastī ng, Dī ōnysōs ī s mȳ sōng.

### Strophe I (72-87)

Ō b̄less̄ed h̄e whō f̄ort̄un̄ate, thē gōds' m̄yst̄er̄i es knōw̄i ng,

s̄anct̄i f̄i es h̄i s l̄iv̄el̄i hood,

ḡi ves tō thē th̄ī as̄us h̄i s s̄oul, ī n thē m̄ount̄ains b̄acch̄ant̄i ng,

r̄ev̄er̄ent̄i al, p̄ur̄i f̄i ed:

and thē ōrḡi es ōf thē m̄ōth̄er, m̄i ght̄y C̄yb̄ēl̄e, h̄ē ̄esp̄ous̄es,

w̄i th thē w̄av̄i ng ōf thē th̄yrs̄us and ḡarland̄ed ī n ī v̄y,

D̄iōn̄ys̄os ī s h̄i s m̄ast̄er.

Gō ȳē b̄acch̄ae, gō ȳē b̄acch̄ae, Br̄om̄īos, ch̄i ld ōf thē gōd,

god D̄iōn̄ys̄os br̄i nḡi ng w̄i th yōu ōut ōf Ph̄rȳgīa, fr̄om thē h̄i lls d̄own

- īntō H̄ell̄as, tō h̄er h̄i gh̄w̄ays b̄roadl̄y thr̄onḡed, Br̄om̄īos!

**72–87** In the last line, the Greek word rendered “broadly thronged” is *euruchorous*, which actually just means “spacious”, but which feels to a Greek as if it were made up two words, “broad” and “chorus” (*choros*), surely no coincidence in a context where chorusing is made the primary activity of the devotee of Dionysos. A translation “broad-chorused” would be flatly misleading, since the word was not understood to mean this; hence I have compromised.



### Antistrophe I (88-104)

Whom, in the time of her travail, in the straits of labour's pain,  
at the flight of Zeus' thunder,  
his mother, jetsam of her womb, brought to birth, departing life  
in the clap of lightningbolt;  
into chambers of childbirth then accepted him Cronos' son Zeus,  
in his thigh-bone he conceal'd him, and with fast'ners he enfolds  
him  
made of gold, hidden from Hera:  
brought to birth then in the fullness of the fates, horn-bearing bull-  
god, and is garlanded with serpents for his garlands, — such a catch  
now

- do the nature-nursing maenads in their tresses entwine.

**88–104** The last line of the stanza contains an unresolved textual puzzle having to do with the word I have translated “nature-nursing”. Actually, the translation is itself a bit misleading: the real sense is “animal-nursing”, echoed later by uses in the play of the word “animal”; but the metre compelled me. In any case the textual puzzle is: (i) is the word corrupt or not; (ii) does it modify the “catch” (snakes) or the maenads; and (iii) what does it mean? The corresponding arguments are: (i) in the next line appears a word for “nurse” which is the same as the second element in “animal-nursing”, and this could easily have caused a corruption here; (ii) many editors have felt that to leave the word “catch” unmodified is overly harsh; (iii) in the *Phoenissae* (line 820) Euripides uses the same word to modify serpents, apparently in the passive sense “nourished upon animals”. However, in the Epode of Stasimon II of the *Bacchae* the same word occurs again, this time with the undisputable active sense “giving nourishment to animals,” and the maenads do in fact suckle animals (700–1), whereas I don't see that any purpose is served by speaking of the maenads here as entwining in their hair “a catch [serpents] which eats

Strophe II (105-119)

Ō nurse of Sēmēlē, Thebāi, wear an ivy garland,  
būrgeōnī ng būrgeōnī ng wī th greenīng bryōnŷ fair of flower,  
and ī n the bacchāntī sī ng ōaken or pī nŷ bē yōur branches,  
stī pp̄led skī ns of the dōe yōur dress,  
cōv̄er'd ī n garlands of wool, snōwŷ-hāir'd tresses;  
bē rēv̄erēntīal wī th the vīolēnce of the wānd, all of the earth joins ī n the  
chōrus:

Brōmī ōs leadīng the thīāsūs on  
whēre ī n the mōuntāins, the mōuntāins, they wāit,  
wōmēn ī n multī tūdes, the lōoms lēft and the shūttles lēft,  
gōaded by Dīōnŷsos.

animals.” Thus I feel that the word can be kept, but only if it modifies the maenads.

## Antistrophe II (120-134)

Ō grōttōs of thē Couretēs, and thē godly Crētān  
Zeūs's prōgenī tōrs thē wōodlānds! thēre, trīple-crēsted īn cāvērns,  
cīrclemēnts strūng wīth lēathēr (sūch ās mīne) Cōrybānts dīscōvēr'd,  
bācchāntī sīng and hīghly-strūng

- whīstlīngs mīnglīng īn, Phrygīan wōodwīnds  
sweet īn thēir cryīng, and tō mōthēr Rhēā gāve īt, bāngīng tō Bācchīc  
ēvoīīng:

sō thāt thē Sātys īn mādnēss āt lāst  
fētched īt frōm hēr, frōm thē mōthēr, thē god,  
and thēn thēy jōined īt wīth thē chorūs āt thē festīvals  
whīch dēlīght Dīōnysos.

**120–34** As the metre becomes wilder the verbal echoes begin to come thicker and faster, and the translation has to stretch a bit to keep up with them. In particular “woodlands” / “woodwinds” is meant to handle *enauloi* / *aulôn*, literally something like ‘forest shelters’ and ‘oboes’.

## Epode (135-169)

- Joyfŭl ĩ n thĕ mōuntāins, whĕn frōm thĭ asŭs and frōm rŭnnĭ ng

**135–169** Epodes are particularly liable to irremediable corruption, because they lack the metrical responion of strophe / antistrophe pairs which can often aid us in spotting and correcting errors, and because we lack internal standards for deciding whether a particularly weird metre is due to corruption or is just a weird metre. The difficulties with this particular Epode are enough to make the text swim before one’s eyes, and to make one doubt the very possibility of translation: it is one of the hardest passages in the entire Euripidean corpus. The metre, which has become steadily wilder, now launches off into a fine Bacchic frenzy, full of sudden changes and rhythms which defy scholarly classification; at the same time the language becomes impressionistic and obscure. The text has accordingly been suspected at nearly every point by scholars, who have suggested that words be emended, lines transposed, lacunae posited, all in the name of comprehensibility. But the translator cannot throw up his hands, as can an editor of the Greek text (who can print a doubtful text supported by the *apparatus criticus*, the list of conjectures at the bottom of the page in a standard edition); since I had to print *something*, I have conservatively translated Murray’s text, except for the first couple of lines where I have accepted some gentle emendations from DODDS to give the metre a little coherence.

In the line “hurtling...Dionysos” I have not got the number of short syllables precisely right, and I have altered the end of the line to a cadence I found more thematically satisfying than the MSS’s “thĕ lĕader ĩs Brōmĭos, ēvoi!”, which looks and feels to me more like the rhapsodising of a commentator than a line of poetry. In the line “Like...dashes” I take *anechōn* to govern the accusatives which follow it, and *aissei* to be, as usual, intransitive. Although I find most of WILLINK’s emendations of the Epode overly clever, I admit I am sorely tempted to accept his recommended excision of “and with booming...evoi”. In the line “Lydia’s...luxury” I have again substituted “Lydia’s” for the Greek “of Tmolos” (see on 64–71).

The Epode is Euripides as his most echoic: “mountains” / “mountains” / “the mountains, the mountains” (cf. the second Strophe); “soil” / “soil”; “flowing” / “flowing” / “flowing” / “gold-flowing”; “holy” / “holy” (which would further have echoed the Prooimion if “holy Tmolos” had been left in); “evoi” / “evoian one evoi”; and, though less obvious in the English, “Bromios” / “booming” / “deep-booming” (all from Greek *brem-* / *brom-*).

hē sī nks tō thē sōil, dōeskī n ĩ s hīs d̄ress, thē hōl̄y drāp̄erȳ,

and huntī ng

gōre ōf thē gōat-kī llī ng,

rāw-ēatī ng plēasūrī ng,

hūrtlī ng tō thē mōuntains ōf Phrygī ā, L̄ydī ā,

thē leader ī s Dī ōnys̄os.

Flōwī ng wī th mī lk ī s thē sōil, flōwī ng wī ne, flōwī ng wī th nēctar ōf thē  
bees.

Lī ke thē smōke ōf S̄yrī an īncēse thē bācchant hōlds ōn hī gh

fī erȳ flāme ōf thē pī newōod

frōm thē wānd ās hē dāshes

wī th rūnnī ng, wī th chōrus,

ī n wānd'rī ng hē ěxcī tes thēm

and wī th cryī ng hē prōpels thēm,

and hīs trēsēs tōssī ng dēlī cate ī n thē brēezēs,

and wī th bōomī ng tō thē call ōf thē ěvoi:

Ō

gō yē bācchāe, gō yē bācchāe,

L̄ydiā's gōld-flōwī ng lūxūrī,

māke Dī ōnys̄os yōur mūsī c sūng tō thē dēep-bōomī ng ōf thē drūm,

and tō thē ěvoiān Ōne ěvoi! glōrī fyī ng thē gōd

ī n thē shriekī ngs and shōutī ngs ōf Phrygī ā,

There are others more subtle that have not come across very well in the translation.

and the lōtūs c̄l̄ear-cl̄amōur̄i ng, hōl̄y, i ts hōl̄i est p̄layf̄uln̄ess i t b̄ooms,  
p̄artner̄i ng p̄assāgēs i ntō thē mōunt̄ains, thē mōunt̄ains,  
and j̄oyf̄ull̄y, j̄ust ās ā f̄oal w̄i th i ts mōth̄er tō f̄eed̄i ng,  
w̄i th sw̄i ft-f̄oot̄ed l̄i f̄t̄i ng of l̄imbs i n thē l̄eap̄i ng,  
thē b̄acch̄ae!

## TEIRESIAS

Anybody at the gates? Call Cadmos from the house, 170  
Agenor's son, who left the town of Sidon  
and citadeled this city of Thebians;  
somebody go tell him Teiresias  
wants him. *He* knows why I've come:  
we arranged it, an old man and his elder — 175  
to tie the thyrsus up, to put on pelts of fawns,  
to garland our heads with ivy shoots.

## CADMOS

My dear friend! I knew it was your voice  
I heard inside — wise, and from a wise man.  
I've come prepared with these trappings of the god; 180  
• we must glorify him great with all our power — 181  
he *is* the child of my own daughter. 183  
Where must we chorus, where set our feet  
and shake our heads of grey? You declare to me, 185  
old man to old man, Teiresias, for you are wise.  
How may I, without wearying neither night nor day,  
with thyrsus clap the earth? it is a joy

**182**           The excised line reads, “Dionysos, manifest a god to men.” Editors are generally agreed that it is a non-Euripidean fabrication and should be omitted; and the director of the Hunter College production, without knowing that there was scholarly doubt, independently asked, on dramatic grounds, for the line to be cut. It interrupts the flow of Cadmos' speech, and puts into his mouth an uncharacteristic phrase: after all, as we find out at 333–5, Cadmos' reason for celebrating Dionysos is only that the latter is a relative, not that he really thinks him divine. But perhaps Cadmos is just reciting a standard formula for the sake of appearances? I was tempted to leave the line in, enclosed in quotation marks.

to forget that we are old.

TEIRESIAS

You feel just as I do, then;

I too grow young, and will attempt the chorus.

190

CADMOS

Can't we take carriages to cross into the mountains?

TEIRESIAS

No no; the god's honour would not be the same.

CADMOS

• Old man to old man, shall I nurse you along?

TEIRESIAS

The god will guide us both there effortlessly.

CADMOS

We alone of the city will chorus the Bacchic One?

195

TEIRESIAS

We alone think well, the others ill.

CADMOS

Long the delaying; come, take my hand.

**193**           The Greek for “nurse” is really a verb “paidagogue”, created from the noun “paidagogue”, lit. ‘child-guide’. A paidagogue was a slave who took a child to and from school each day; the joke lies in the image of the two men having reached such extreme old age that they have to treat one another as children. — The line has been variously understood, as a statement, or as a doubtful proposition (“Am I really going to...?”); but I think that to take it as a serious offer of help is the only unforced reading.



## TEIRESIAS

Here, conjoin and couple our hands.

## CADMOS

I am who am mortal do not think light of gods.

## TEIRESIAS

We use no sophistry on the divine ones. 200

Our fathers' legacies, which we acquired

- as our age-mates in time, — talk cannot confute them,  
though wisdom may be found by sharpest thought.

Someone will say I show old age no shame,  
readying to chorus, ivying my head; 205

the god himself does not discriminate,  
that the young must chorus him, or else the elder:

by everyone he wishes to be honoured  
in common, not glorified in sections.

## CADMOS

Since you, Teiresias, do not see this light, 210

I shall turn prophet of words for you:

here's Pentheus making his way home in haste,

**202**            Meaning disputed. DODDS argues for a sense “age-mates *with* time,” i.e. old as time itself, but that would be both an inaccurate description and an utterly un-Greek way of thinking: the rules of piety are human developments, and hence very old, but not *that* old, and I don't believe the Greeks conceived of time itself as having any age. Teiresias just means that, when he was a child, these rules were already at least as old as he is now: they deserve adherence for that reason, and cannot be rationalised further. Of course, he also will belie himself later in the scene, when he tries to justify the worship of Dionysos on sophistic, hyper-rational grounds.

Echion's son, to whom I grant the land's rule.  
He's so disturbed! what strange thing will he say?

## PENTHEUS

I was away, as it happened, out of the country, 215  
but still I heard strange evils of this city:  
our women gone, abandoning their homes,  
pretending to be bacchae, massing  
in the bushy mountains, this latest divinity  
Dionysos (whoever he is) honouring and chorusing, 220  
filling and setting amidst the thiasus  
wine-bowls, and one by one in solitude  
sneaking off to cater to male bidding, —  
supposedly as sacrificial maenads,  
but Aphrodite ranks before their Bacchic One. 225  
Well then, the ones I've caught, with fettered hands  
are kept attended under the public roof;  
• the ones still missing, I'll hunt them from the mountains 228  
and fit them out in netting made of iron: 231  
I'll stop this damned bacchanting soon enough.  
They tell me that some stranger has arrived,  
a trickster, a charmer, from the Lydian land,  
with tawny clusters of perfumy hair 235  
and Aphrodite's wine-dark graces in his eyes,  
who spends his days and nights consorting and

**229–30**        The omitted lines run, “Ino and Agave, who gave me birth with Echion,  
/ and Actaion's mother, Autonoe I mean.” They are nothing but an impressive paste-up  
of proper names, and contribute nothing to the sense or force of the passage; most editors  
agree in condemning them.

extending his evoian mysteries to maidens.  
If I can just catch him under this roof,  
I'll stop his banging thyrsus, his bouncing 240  
hair: I'll separate his shoulders from his neck.  
The child who burned by the lightning torch with his mother,  
because she lied about her union with Zeus, —  
*he* says that child was Dionysos, a god;  
*he* says she was sewn up in Zeus' thigh. 245  
Now doesn't this deserve a dreadful hanging,  
violence on violence, whoever the stanger is?  
And here's another wonder: the soothsayer  
Teiresias in dappled doeskin I see,  
and my mother's father utterly ridiculous 250  
with a wand, bacchanting! I refuse, father,  
to see your old age so devoid of reason;  
won't you wave off your ivy? won't you free  
your hand and let go the thyrsus, father of my mother?  
This is your persuading, Teiresias; you want 255  
to import this new divinity to men  
to make more money watching flights and fire-signs.  
Your grey old age protects you; otherwise  
you'd be sitting in fetters amidst the bacchae,  
producing your wicked rites. I tell you, when women 260  
have the cluster's refreshment at banquets,  
there's nothing healthy left about their orgies.

## CHORUS

In your impiety, stranger, you disrespect the gods,  
and Cadmos, who sowed the earth-born crop;  
you are Echion's son, and shame your family. 265

## TEIRESIAS

A man who takes a fair basis for speaking,  
a wise man, has no trouble speaking well;  
you have a well-wheeled tongue, as though thinking,  
but in the words you speak there is no thought.

A man empowered by daring and able to speak 270  
becomes a bad citizen, devoid of reason.

This divinity, this new divinity you ridicule, —  
I can't begin to tell you how much greatness  
he'll have in Greece. Two things, my boy,  
are primary for men: goddess Demeter 275

(that's Earth, call her whichever name you like),  
the nourisher of mortals in dry food;  
next comes her rival, the child of Semele:  
the cluster's wet drink he found and introduced  
to men, that stops poor mortals their distress 280  
when they are filled to flowing with the vine,  
giver of sleep, forgetfulness of daily ills,

• nor is there any other drug for pain. 283

**284–5**            The omitted lines read, “He that *is* a god is offered *to* the gods, / so that through him mankind can get good things.” I do not know if their genuineness has been doubted, but they seem to me completely out of place. They are an intrusion syntactically, in that they are in asyndeton (that is, there is no connective particle introducing them in the Greek: in general, all sentences in Greek, except when there is a change of speaker, begin with a particle linking the meaning to that of the previous sentence). They are an intrusion logically, in that Teiresias, who is characterising the power of Dionysos throughout as something that overpowers men's minds, is suddenly made here and only here to take a completely different stance, that Dionysos' value is as a mere medium of exchange with the other divinities for external goods. I am convinced that the lines are interpolated, probably accidentally from some other play: that sort of thing happens quite a bit, since

- You ridicule him that he was sewn up 286  
in Zeus' thigh, but I can explain that.  
When Zeus snatched him out of the lightning fire  
and to Olympus took the baby god,  
Hera wanted to hurl him out of heaven; 290  
Zeus had a counterplan, just like a god:  
he broke a piece off from the earth's encircling  
sky and gave it out as an *alleged*  
Dionysos for Hera's feuding; in time
- mortals said he was sewn in *a leg* of Zeus: 295  
because of this *alleged* god of goddess Hera,  
they changed the word and built a story around it.  
And this divinity is a prophet, since what is bacchic,
  - and therefore manic, has much mantic in it:  
when the god is greatly present in the body, 300  
he makes men mad, and they foretell the future.  
He also shares in Ares' lot somewhat,  
since troops already armed and in formation  
may fly in fear before even touching their spears,  
and this too is a madness from Dionysos. 305

apposite quotations placed in the margin as a form of commentary can work their way, in the course of transmission, into the text.

**295**           The Greek word-play is to the effect that because a false Dionysos was given to Hera as a "hostage" (*homêros*), people said he was sewn in the "thigh" (*mêros*) of Zeus. There is a further pun which I have been unable to capture: the "piece" of the sky that Zeus breaks off to form this "hostage" is a *meros*. — I do not agree with DODDS that a missing line needs to be posited after 293.

**299**           The English word-play here has been made precisely that of the Greek, since both Greek adjectives (*manikos* and *mantikos*) have become part of English.

- You'll see him yet among the Delphic rocks,  
leaping with torches the twin-crested flats,  
tossing and shaking the bacchic branch,  
great throughout Greece. Let me persuade you, Pentheus:  
don't boast that ruling means power for men, 310  
and, if you think, and your thought is diseased,  
don't think you are thinking. Accept the god into the land,  
and offer up, and bacchant, and garland your head.
- Not Dionysos will enforce pure thinking  
in women towards Aphrodite; the question is 315  
whether such purity is in one's nature

**314–16** “Pure thinking” in line 314 is a compromise translation of an untranslatable concept, *sôphrosynê*, a notion “whose metaphysical basis was the Greek view of the meaning of all life,” as one scholar has put it. It is composed of elements meaning ‘safe thought,’ i.e. to think appropriately to one’s mortality, sex, social position, and immediate situation, and also implies the self-control and moderation needed to keep one’s attitude on the proper level. It is one of the cardinal Greek virtues, but does not correspond neatly to any of our “virtues”: the notions of prudence, discretion, temperance, humility (of a sort), and sexual self-control (meaning, in women, chastity and fidelity) are all contained in it. It is a “thought”-word (see the Introduction), and my translation tries to mark it as such while maintaining some flavour of its meaning: *sôphrosynê* does involve an aspect of purity, though not so much in the Judeo-Christian sense as something akin to the purity of contentment and endurance advised in, say, the Upanishads.

In line 315 I have substituted “Aphrodite” for the Greek “Cypris” on the grounds that most English-speaking auditors and readers would not know who is meant by the latter. On the other hand, I have mostly not tampered (except where noted) with the many different names for Dionysos in this play; and I have left “Phoibos” at line 328, as being a relatively familiar title for Apollo.

Line 316 is excised by some editors, but I accept DODDS’s entire discussion of the subject, and with him emend *en* to *ei* in 315.

forever, since even in bacchanting  
 what purity there is won't be corrupted.  
 You see how you enjoy having the masses gathered  
 at the gates, the city magnifying Pentheus' name: 320  
 he too, I think, is happy to be honoured.  
 Well then, I and Cadmos, whom you ridicule,  
 we will be roofed with ivy, and will chorus,  
 a grey couple, but still we have to chorus.  
 I won't wage god-war at your words' persuading; 325  
 you're mad, and grievously: there is no drug  
 • to take to cure you, that's not how you're diseased.

#### CHORUS

Sir, you do not shame Phoibos with your words,  
 and you think purely, honouring Bromios a great god.

#### CADMOS

My boy, Teiresias advises well: 330  
 live with us, and not outside the laws.  
 You're upset now, and think without thinking.  
 Suppose this god does not exist, as you say;  
 still, say that he does, and tell a falsehood fair,

**327**            The Greek literally says "...nor are you diseased without them." The meaning of this has been much disputed; it has largely been taken to mean, "...nor is it due to anything *but* drugs that you *are* diseased," which, despite DODDS's heroic efforts at defense, is simply not what one expects Teiresias to say. My translation is based on an interpretation proposed by LEVY (but arrived at by me independently), that the Greek means, "...nor is it for lack of drugs that you are ill." The near-tautological repetition is typical of Teiresias' sophistic speech.

- that he *is* Semele's, so it may seem she birthed a god, 335  
 and honour be to us, to all our family.  
 You see the wretched fate of Actaion,  
 how the raw-eating dogs that he had raised  
 ripped him to shreds for boasting he was better  
 than Artemis at hunting, in the meadows: 340  
 don't be like him; here, let me garland your head  
 with ivy, give the god honour along with us.

**PENTHEUS**

Don't you lay hands on me! go on, bacchantise,  
 but don't you wipe your folly off on me!  
 Your unreason is this man's teaching; 345  
 I'll give him justice: go, somebody, and quickly,  
 go to the seat where this man birdwatches,  
 pry it with crowbars, turn it upside-down,  
 all helter skelter confound everything  
 and cast his fillets to the winds and tempests. 350  
 It is by doing this I'll bite him best.  
 Go through the city, some of you, track down  
 the female-figured stranger who imports this new  
 disease to women and defiles their beds,  
 and if you get him, fether him and bring him 355  
 back here to meet his justice — death by stoning.  
 A bitter bacchanting he'll see at Thebai!

**335**            Some editors would emend the line so that the Greek would mean, “that he exists, so it may seem a god was borne by Semele,” but, like DODDS, I see no point in this.



## TEIRESIAS

- Poor fool, you've no idea what you are saying;
- you're mad now and were reft of thought before.
- Let's go, you and I, Cadmos, and let's pray 360  
for that man's sake, despite his savagery,  
and for the city's, that the god do nothing  
strange. So come on, and bring your ivy staff.  
You try to keep my body upright, and I yours:  
disgraceful for two old men to fall, but never mind; 365  
to the bacchic son of Zeus we must be slaves.
- Pentheus! let's hope he won't import *repentance*  
to your house, Cadmos. Not as a seer I speak, but  
to the facts; it is a fool who folly speaks.

**359**            There has been more argument over the interpretation of this line than it deserves; this is because Teiresias seems just to repeat himself twice (“You’re crazy”). Therefore much ingenuity has gone into trying to understand Teiresias as making two separate points, such as, “You were out of your head before, but now you’re completely bonkers”; but this is forced and unnecessary. Editors seem to be so wrapped up in minutiae that they don’t realise that unnecessary copiousness of speech is a key characteristic of Teiresias’ portrayal (compare 327). Teiresias, Cadmos, and Pentheus are all carefully characterised by idiosyncratic speech-habits, a master stroke in a play about the inadequacies of human reason.

**367**            A parting word-play from Teiresias; the Greek is *Pentheus* / *penthos* (‘grief’, ‘mourning’). Later in the play, first Dionysos, then Cadmos will use the same word-play, fulfilling Teiresias’ prophetic interpretation.

## CHORUS [Stasimon I]

### Strophe I (370-85)

- Rēvērēnce, lād̄y ōf gōds,  
Rēvērēnce upōn thē earth  
(gōldēn are thē wīngs yōu wēar),  
thī s ōf Pēnthēus dō yōu hēar?  
Dō yōu hēar unrēvērēnce,  
vīōlēnce tō Brōmīōs, tō Sēmēlē, tō thē dīvīne, fīrst ōf thē blēssēd  
at thē fair-gārlāndēd glādnessēs ōf thought, hōldēr ōf thī s:  
thīāsūs and chōrūsēs  
and thē woodwīnd and thē lāugh  
and ōf sōrrow thē cēssatiōn, whēn rēfrēshment ōf thē clūstēr  
cōmēs tō bānquēts ōf thē gōds,  
whēn īn thē īvy-bēari ng rēvēls b̄y thē wīne-bōwl slēep īs cāst ābōut mēn.

**370–85** This Strophe represents Euripides at his most poetically successful: no metrical complexities or fireworks, language simple to the point of near-prose, but with gentle echoes and repetitions, neat structural linking of images and ideas, and with a subdued sonority and musicality which translation can barely suggest. (Interestingly, the upcoming Antistrophe falls over the fine line into prosy didactic moralising.) My favourite phrase is *apōpāūsai tē mērimnas*, translated here “and of sorrow the cessation,” which captures the meaning but loses the murmuring wistfulness. The semi-rhyme “wear” / “hear” reflects the homeoteleuton of *phereis* / *aiēis*; though very pleasing to us, such jingles seem to have been felt in Greek as pretentious and perhaps even harsh.

Antistrophe I (386-401)

Wī th nō brī dle tō thē mōuth,

wī th nō lāw and wī th nō thōught,

īn thē end, unhappī nēss.

Būt thē lī fe of quī ētnēss,

- quī ētnēss wī th prōpēr thōught,

wī thōut rōckī ng wī ll rēmain, hōldī ng thē hōuse tōgēthēr, fōr hēavēnlī  
ones dwell

īn thē skī: thōugh fār āway, yēt whāt ī s mōrtāl thēy cān sēe.

Wī sdōm ī s nōt whāt ī s wī se,

nōr tō thī nk nōn-mōrtāl thōughts.

Lī fe ī s flēetī ng; cān ī t bē, thēn, thāt ōne sēeks āftēr whāt ī s grēatēr,

nōt ācceptī ng cī rcūmstānce?

Thēse ārē thē mānnērs ōf ā mādmān ānd, tō mē, ōf evī l-cōunsēl'd pērsōns.

Strophe II (402-16)

Mī ght I cōme ĩ ntō Cýprus,  
ĩ slānd of Āphrōdi tē,  
ĩ nhābĭtēd bŷ Ērōses, thōught-ēnchāntērs tō mōrtāls,  
• and Pāphos, wĭ th ĩ ts hūndrēd-mōuth'd flōwĭ ngs of thē bārbariān strēam,  
fructi fŷi ng and rāinlēs,  
and whēre ĩ s fairēst of thē fair  
Pĭ erĭ ā, thē Mūsēs' ābōde,  
sōlēm̄n, stōrĭ ed Ōlŷmpus!  
Ō thēre cārŷ mē, Brōmĭ ōs, Brōmĭ ōs, dĭ vĭ ne, bācchĭ c, ēvoĭān:  
Ō thēre thē Grācēs, Ō thēre thē yēarnĭ ng,  
Ō thēre thē ōrgĭ es of thē bācchāe māy bē.

**402–16**        The marked line has given scholars much trouble, for the simple reason that Paphos does not contain a hundred-mouthed stream: indeed, anyone hearing the description would think Euripides was talking about the Nile! No convincing solution has been proposed, though. The rhyme “rainless” / “painless” between Strophe and Antistrophe is meant to reflect *anombroi* / *alypon*, with the corresponding *a-* prefix (= English “un-”).

Antistrophe II (417-33)

- Zeus's son, the divine one,  
he rejoices in revels,  
and loves youth-nursing Peace, the goddess prosperity-granting,  
and equal to the prosperous and the humble he gives to have  
wine's enjoyment, and painless;  
he hates those with no care for these,  
both in the dear night and in the light  
living fully the good life.  
Be wise, keeping the heart and the thought apart from superior persons;  
the multitude and the mediocre,  
their law, their usage, I would make it my own.

**417–33** This stanza is steadily corrupt, enough to make most editors doubt a number of particular readings but not the general meaning. I follow DODDS generally, but I'm not at all sure that we have recovered what Euripides really wrote.

## GUARD

Pentheus, here we are, and here's the catch  
you sent us after; our speed was not for nothing. 435

A gentle animal we found him: he never lifted  
a foot to flee, but gave us his hands himself,  
never turned pale, never changed his wine-dark cheek.  
He laughed and told us to tie and take him,  
and waited, putting himself at my disposal. 440

Respectfully I said, "Stranger, not on my own account  
I take you, but at the behest of Pentheus, who sent me."  
And then there are the bacchae you imprisoned, seized  
and bound in fetters under the public roof:  
they're gone! scot-free off to the meadows 445

leaping, invoking Bromios a god;  
all by themselves the fetters freed their feet,  
the bolts let go the doors by no mortal hand.  
Full of many wonders this man is come  
to Thebai. The rest must be your concern. 450

## PENTHEUS

Undo his hands, then; once he's in my nets  
there's no one swift enough to escape me.  
Well, your figure isn't too bad, stranger,  
for women, which is what you came to Thebai for.

Your tresses, long and slender, not an athlete's, 455  
come tumbling to your cheeks full of desire.

Your skin is white, and kept so by design,  
since not in shafts of sunlight but in shadow  
you hunt for Aphrodite with your beauty.  
Now tell me first who you are, what family. 460

DIONYSOS

Nothing to brag of, and easy to tell.

Flowery Tmolus, — you've heard of it, of course?

PENTHEUS

Yes, it circles the city of Sardis round.

DIONYSOS

Lydia is my homeland, and that's where I come from.

PENTHEUS

• And where does this bringing of your rites to Greece come from? 465

DIONYSOS

Dionysos himself embarked us, the son of Zeus.

PENTHEUS

There is some Zeus there, then, who births new gods?

DIONYSOS

No, Zeus who yoked Semele in union here.

PENTHEUS

At night he compelled you, or did you see him?

DIONYSOS

Face to face he handed me his orgies. 470

**465**            The preceding line begins, “*enteuthen* [thence] am I” and Pentheus’ retort begins, “(And) *pothen* [whence] do you bring...”, where “whence” can mean either ‘from what place’ or ‘from what motivation’. The translation captures the sense, and my repeated “come from” copies the repeated Greek place-suffix *-then*.

PENTHEUS

His orgies, which are of what sort, precisely?

DIONYSOS

Unspoken for the unbacchantised to know.

PENTHEUS

But what is the benefit to your initiates?

DIONYSOS

Not for your hearing, though it is worth knowing.

PENTHEUS

Well done! trumped up to make me *want* to hear.

475

DIONYSOS

God's orgies hate the practice of impiety.

PENTHEUS

You claim you saw the god clearly: how did he look?

DIONYSOS

He looked as he liked; I did not dictate to him.

PENTHEUS

Well done again! channeled aside with nonsense.

DIONYSOS

Wise speech seems thoughtless to the ignorant.

480

PENTHEUS

You came here first with your divinity?



DIONYSOS

Every foreigner choruses these orgies.

PENTHEUS

Yes, they think worse than Greeks, by far.

DIONYSOS

In this case, better; their laws are different.

PENTHEUS

The rites — at night or by day you perform them?

485

DIONYSOS

At night, mostly; there's majesty in darkness.

PENTHEUS

And for women there's trickery and smut.

DIONYSOS

Even by day one may discover shame.

PENTHEUS

You must meet justice for your evil sophistry.

DIONYSOS

You too, for your ignorance and impiety towards the god.

490

PENTHEUS

How bold a bacchant, and not untrained in speaking.

DIONYSOS

Say what must happen: what dreadful will you do me?

PENTHEUS

First, your dainty cluster — I'll cut it off you.

DIONYSOS

My tresses are holy, I grow them for the god.

PENTHEUS

Next your thyrsus: here, hand it over.

495

DIONYSOS

Take it yourself, it belongs to Dionysos.

PENTHEUS

And in a prison I shall guard your body.

DIONYSOS

The god himself will free me when I wish.

PENTHEUS

- *If you can get back to the bacchae to call on him.*

**499** Lit., “Yes, when you call on him standing among the bacchae.” Most editors assume, that since the bacchae are no longer imprisoned, the line implies: “Only if you can escape from me to rejoin the bacchae in the mountains, which you’ll never do.” But this seems a bit dense and allusive a point for a live audience to understand, even coming from Euripides. Perhaps the part about standing among the bacchae is not the point of the line, but is just filler (Euripides frequently shows some rough edges when he has to write stichomythic exchanges); Pentheus might then mean to poke sarcastic fun at the notion that Dionysos, who he thinks does not exist, could be summoned at all. In that case, the line might better be translated: “Sure, all you have to do is call, you and your bacchae.”

DIONYSOS

He's nearby now, and sees what happens to me. 500

PENTHEUS

He's where? He's not manifest to *my* eyes.

DIONYSOS

With me; you're impious, so you can't see him.

PENTHEUS

Seize him! He thinks light of me and Thebai.

DIONYSOS

In purity of thought, I say, the impure must not tie me.

PENTHEUS

I'm the one who says tie, and I outrank you. 505

DIONYSOS

- You don't know what you're saying, what you're doing, who you are.

PENTHEUS

Pentheus, Agave's son and Echion's.

DIONYSOS

- A name that makes you ready for misfortune.

**506**            The state of this line in the MSS has driven editors to despair; in particular, the first of the things Pentheus is said not to know is, in Greek, "what you are living," which seems doubtful Greek. Many emendations have been proposed; I accept here DODDS's emendation, but I have a feeling we're missing something.

**508**            Greek audiences were sharp, and significant word-play was important to

## PENTHEUS

Get out. Imprison him in the horses' stables  
nearby, so he can look on gloomy darkness. 510  
There you can chorus. These women you came with,  
your accomplices in evil, we'll sell them off,  
or stop their hands this bang and boom of leather  
and have them at the looms as servant-girls.

## DIONYSOS

Let's go, then — since what must not happen cannot. 515  
And you, you'll be requited for your violence  
by Dionysos, who you say does not exist:  
in wronging me, it's him you put in fetters.

their culture as a way of seeking after hidden truth; Teiresias has already told us (367) how to understand Pentheus' name, and in any case the pun in Greek is obvious, and so Dionysos does not have to make the pun explicit a second time. In performance, though, it might be more effective to give a modern audience a little more help, substituting "...ready for *repentance*", even though Teiresias does not actually use this word-play again here.

## CHORUS [Stasimon II]

### Strophe (519-36)

Daught̄er of Achēlōōs,

lady Dīrcē, vīrgīn lady, it wās yōu thāt tō yōur fōuntains tōok thē baby,  
sōn of Zeūs,

īn thē tīme whēn tō hīs thīgh-bōne Zeūs whō bīrthēd hīm

frōm thē deathlēs fīre snatch'd hīm, ās hē shoutēd:

Cōme Ō Dīthyramb, tō thīs māscūlīne wōmb of mīne nōw enter,  
mānīfest by mē, Ō Bacchīc Ōne, tō hāve thīs nāme āt Thēbai!

Whȳ are yōu, Ō blēssēd Dīrcē,

ās I brīng thē garlānd-bearīng

thīāsūs, thrustīng mē frōm yōu?

Whȳ rēfūse mē? Whȳ āvoid mē?

Ēven sō, clūstērīng plēasūre of thē wīne of Dīōnȳsōs,

ēven sō, Brōmīōs wīll bē yōur cāre.

### Antistrophe (537-55)

- Mānī fēstl̄y ōf thē ēarth,

ōf thē sērpēnt, sprīngs thē famīl̄y ōf Pēnthēus, ōf Ēchī on hē's thē

offspri ng,

ōf thē Ēarth,

sāvāgē mōnster, nōt ā mōrtal, nōt ā pērsōn,

līkē thē rīvāls ōf thē gōds, mūrderōus Gīants:

hē wīll hāve mē, whō bēlong tō Brōmīos, īn nōosēs knōttēd,

and thē māster ōf m̄y thīasūs hē hōlds wīthīn hīs hōusēs.

Hīddēn īn thē prīson dārknēs

dō yōu sēe hīm, Dīonysōs

son ōf Zeūs? sēe yōur āpostles

īn thē cōnflīct ōf cōmpulsīōn?

**537–55** The MSS contain a first line for this Antistrophe to which no line in the Strophe corresponds; the solution is either to make up a responding line in the Strophe or to assume that the line in the Antistrophe is an intrusion and to cut it; I agree with DODDS in taking the latter course. — Observe that to call Pentheus serpent-born has more point in Greek, where the name of his father, Echion, would instantly make the listener think of *echis*, ‘snake’; also, the Greek audience knew that the royal family of Thebai was grown from the teeth of a serpent sown in the earth by Cadmos (referred to at 264 and 1314–5).

The next-to-last line (“Come O golden one...”) has been the object of scholarly controversy; most scholars have taken “golden” to refer to the thyrsus, and have then had to explain the significance of the epithet. For the technicalities of the Greek text I adopt here, and arguments urging its adoption in subsequent editions, see NEUBURG 1986.

Cōme Ō gōlden ōne, wī th wāvīng ōf thē thýrsus, frōm Ōlympūs;  
stāy thē vī olēnce ōf thē mūrđērōus mān.

### Epode (556-75)

• Is it on wild-nursing Nysa that you throng the thyrsus-bearing

thiasus, then, Dionysos, or Parnassus with its peaks?

Is it somewhere in the leafage of the chambers of Olympus,

where the lyre-playing of Orpheus

gather'd greenwoods to his music

gather'd animals of the wild?

Blessed are you,

Pieria!

The Euboian One adores you, and he comes with bacchic choruses,

and fords the flowing swiftness of the Axion,

to the winding of the maenads as he brings them,

fording father Lydias,

mortals' prosperity-granter of happiness, so they say,

for the well-hors'd countryside by his fairest of waters is fatten'd.

**556–75** As usual, the metre of the Epode is in doubt. On the whole I have kept the text and metre printed by Murray, but I have taken liberties with the metre of the lines “Blessed are you, Pieria!” In the second line, I have substituted “Parnassos” for the Greek “Corycian”; the former stands some chance of being recognised by a modern auditor, whereas even a professional might have to consult a reference-book to understand the latter. Also, the Greek does not repeat “fording”, as do I, in the line “fording father Lydias”; my repetition is to make clear in English the syntax which is communicated in Greek by case-usage.



[Lyric Scene] (576-603)

DIONYSOS

• Ō,

hārkēn tō mē,

hārk tō m̄y cāl̄l,

yē bācchāe,

yē bācchāe!

CHORUS

Whō īs īt, whō īs īt,

whēre īs īt cāl̄l̄ng mē frōm, thē shōut ōf thē Evoīan Ōne?

DIONYSOS

Ō,

āgāin ī cāl̄l̄,

thē sōn ōf Zeūs,

Sēmēlē's sōn!

CHORUS

Ō māstēr, Ō māstēr,

**576–603**      A brief lyric scene, entirely *durchkomponiert* (with no strophic structure), rendering the special effect of Dionysos' conjuration of the earthquake. I follow the metrical schema of DODDS throughout, except that I take the Greek cry *iô* to be a monosyllable, and I eliminate one *iô* at the beginning of Dionysos' second line; there can be no harm in this, I think, since it is *extra metrum* anyway.

cōme nōw tō ōur thī āsūs, ōur thī āsūs,

Ō Brōmī ōs Brōmī ōs!

## DIONYSOS

Tremble the soil of the ground, lady Earthshaker!

## CHORUS

Āh, āh,

quīcklŷ wī ll Pēnthēus' pālācēs ūtterlŷ shāke āpart ānd fāl tō rūin.

Nōw Dī ōnŷsōs ī s ī n the pālāce:

Hōnōur yē hī m!

Hōnōur wē hī m.

Look āt the lī ntels ōf stōne ōn the cōlūmns

rūnnī ng āpart ās the crŷī ng ōf Brōmī ōs rī sēs ūp wī thī n the hōuse.

## DIONYSOS

Kīndle the fī ery flāme ōf the lī ghtnī ng-bōlt,

būrnī ng ānd būrnī ng the pālāce ōf Pēnthēus!

## CHORUS

Āh, āh,

fī re, behōld ī t, fī re, dī scern ī t,

there, ābout the hōlŷ sēpūlchre ōf Sēmēlē,

thāt lī ghtnī ng-blāstēd shē dēpartēd, the flāme ōf Zeūs's thūndēr.

Hūrtle, yē māenāds, yōur bōdī es ī n trēmbllī ng dōwnwārd, Ō hūrtle thēm:

cōme ĩ s thē lōrd ũpon thē hōuse, hē turns thē pālāce ōver and ōver, thē  
seed ōf Zeūs!

## DIONYSOS

- Foreign women, look at you, paralysed with fear,  
groveling on the ground! I guess you noticed when the Bacchic One 605  
shook apart the house of Pentheus? Well, pick yourselves up;  
be bold, give over this trembling of your flesh.

## CHORUS

O greatest light to our evoian bacchantising,  
how glad I am to see you in my lonely solitude.

## DIONYSOS

Did it discourage you, when I was sent inside 610  
to be thrown into the darkness of Pentheus' dungeons?

## CHORUS

Of course; what guardian have I, if you meet with misfortune?  
How were you set free, once you had met with that irreverent man?

## DIONYSOS

Oh, I saved myself easily, without any trouble.

## CHORUS

But didn't he knot your hands in the fetters of the noose? 615

**604** From here to 641 the metre of the Greek is trochaic tetrameter catalectic; this is like the metre of "Once to ev'ry man and nation comes the moment to decide," but since it is a spoken metre the translation does not reproduce it. It appears that this metre was felt to have a swifter, less stately quality than the iambic trimeter which is usual for spoken lines in drama, and perhaps it is introduced here to mark the easy, triumphant, bantering lilt of Dionysos' tone; he is certainly sarcastic to the point of humour in several places, and adopts an informal, playful persona with his maenads, quite different from his stolid impassiveness towards Pentheus.

## DIONYSOS

I did *him* violence there. He *thought* he fettered me:  
he never touched me, never grasped me; he fed upon his hopes.  
At the stables where he took and imprisoned me, he found a bull,  
and about *his* knees and hooves did Pentheus cast the noose,  
panting out his spirit, sweat dripping from his body, 620  
his teeth giving into his lips. I was nearby,  
quietly sitting and watching. It was at that moment  
that Bacchos came and shook apart the house, and set fire  
to his mother's tomb; and seeing this, *he* thought the house aflame  
and dashed this way and that, yelling to the servant girls 625  
• to bring water: the work enslaved him utterly, an empty labour.  
Then he left off this trouble because I had escaped,  
and snatched his swarthy sword and set off into the house;  
and then Bromios (this was my impression, I can only guess)  
created a vision in the courtyard, and Pentheus with speed 630  
dashed after it and stabbed the shimmering air to slay me.  
Besides this, the Bacchic One defiles him in other ways:  
the house is broken on the ground, everything is shattered —  
a bitter fettering he's seen of me! — and in fatigue  
he lets go his sword, exhausted: a man, and with a god 635  
he dared to go to battle. I left the house quietly  
and came out here to you with no thought of Pentheus.  
But I think, from the sound of footsteps in the house,  
he's about to come out front. What will he say after this?  
I'll bear with him, whatever airs he gives himself; 640  
a wise man should practice pure thought and good temper.

626           The Greek says, “to bring Acheloös,” a sort of generic metonymy for  
“water” (Acheloös is the chief river-god of the Greeks).

PENTHEUS

A dreadful thing! the stranger has escaped me,  
just when I had him constrained in fetters.

Ha?!

Here is the man. What's this? How did you get out  
to show up in front of my house like this?

645

DIONYSOS

- Stop there! and stop your temper up with quiet.

PENTHEUS

How did you escape your fetters and get outside?

DIONYSOS

Did I not say, did you not hear, one would release me?

PENTHEUS

What "one"? The words you import are always strange.

650

DIONYSOS

Who grows for mortals the much-clustering vine.

PENTHEUS

Yes, that's the right reproach for Dionysos.

- — I want the gates guarded, bolted, and barred!

**647**            The Greek has, "Stop your foot, and give your temper a quiet foot," which sounds very funny in English (though it is not an uncommon mode of poetic speech in Euripides), so I have altered the repeated concept to be "stop" / "stop" instead of "foot" / "foot".

**653**            The Greek just means, "I order every gate closed round," but it is one of the most highly alliterative lines in the play, *klêiein keleuô panta pyrgôn en kyklôi*, and

## DIONYSOS

What for? Cannot gods transcend walls as well?

## PENTHEUS

Wise, wise you are, save where you should be wise.

655

## DIONYSOS

Where I should most be wise is where I am wise.

But listen to this man first, learn from his words:

he's here from the mountains to report to you.

my translation expands on the meaning a little in order to match the sound.

One of the most interesting scholarly disputes on this play rages over precisely what should precede this line. My translation gives what the MSS have, but many scholars have felt that in a strict stichomythia Pentheus should not be permitted two successive lines, and that the sense is abrupt and difficult. This pair of difficulties (what DODDS calls a “double breach”) has convinced many that a line is missing, and then there is debate over whether the missing line is (a) between 651 and 652, belonging to Pentheus (and, if this is right, what 652 could mean in Dionysos’ mouth), or (b) between 652 and 653, belonging to Dionysos. The arguments on both sides are often acrimonious and always entertaining, but I am still not persuaded that there is any problem with the text as it stands. A two-line interjection *is* permitted during stichomythia; witness 1269–70 of this play, where no one thinks a line has been omitted. 652 makes easy sense in Pentheus’ mouth, and as a reply to Dionysos’ 651; the only question then is whether the transition from 652 to 653 is too abrupt, and I don’t think it is. Of course there *is* an abrupt change of addressee, and this abruptness is reinforced by asyndeton in the Greek (see on 284–5 for an explanation of this term); but the abruptness is perfectly appropriate, as the over-wrought Pentheus replies gruffly to Dionysos and then turns suddenly to deliver a rapid order to a guard, and the reinforcement by asyndeton is thus deliberate. See further WILLINK, who also rightly explains 655: Pentheus is annoyed because in 654 Dionysos has wilfully misunderstood 653; Pentheus just wants to hold the Stranger in, but the Stranger pretends that Pentheus wants to shut out Dionysos, in whom Pentheus still claims not to believe.

We'll wait for you, we will not run away.

**COWHERD**

Pentheus, ruler of this Thebaian land, 660  
I come to you from Cithairon, where never  
does the white snow leave off its glistening blasts.

**PENTHEUS**

And what's the haste of words that brings you here?

**COWHERD**

I've seen the bacchae, who from this land 665  
were goaded to propel their white limbs;  
I've come to inform you and the city, lord,  
what dreadful deeds they do, and more than wonders.  
But I want to know whether to inform you  
freely what happened there, or furl my speech:  
I fear the swiftness of your thought, lord, 670  
and sharp spirit, and kingliness too much.

**PENTHEUS**

Speak with complete impunity from me;  
one ought not to be angry with the just.  
The more dreadful what you tell me of the bacchae,  
the more this man, supplier of their arts 675  
to women, will I afflict with justice.

**COWHERD**

The herds of cattle, come to graze upon the uplands,  
were just reaching the top, just when the sun  
sends forth his beams and warms the earth.



I saw the thiasus, three choruses of women, 680  
one led by Autonoe, the second chorus  
by Agave your mother, the third by Ino.  
They were asleep, their bodies all relaxed,  
some with their backs propped up against a fir-tree,  
some with their heads tossed carelessly on the ground 685  
in oak-leaves, purely, — not, as *you* say,  
drunk with the wine-bowl, nor to the lotus' sound  
hunting Aphrodite's solitude in the wood.  
Hearing the mooing of horn-bearing cows,  
your mother stood up amidst the bacchae 690  
and gave a howl to move their forms from sleep.  
They cast the freshening sleep out of their eyes  
and leapt upright, a marvel of grace to look at,  
young ones, and old ones, and maidens still unyoked.  
First they let their hair down to their shoulders, 695  
and fastened on their fawnskins, where the cords  
that bound them were undone, and girdled round  
the stippled pelts with snakes that licked their lips.  
Some that had newly birthed, whose breasts still swelled  
for babies they had left, gave their white milk 700  
to fawns or wild cubs of wolves  
they took into their arms. They put on garlands  
of ivy, oak, and flowering bryony.  
One took a thyrsus and beat against a rock,  
and from it sprang the dewy wet of water; 705  
another sank her wand into the soil,  
and there the god sent up a fount of wine;  
and some, smitten with the white drink's desire,  
scratched at the soil with their fingertips

till jets of milk appeared; and from their ivy 710  
thyrsus were sweet streams of honey dripping.  
So that had you been there, the god you now rebuke  
you would approach with prayer, once you saw this.  
We shepherds and cowmen were met together  
to give each other rivalry of words, 715  
what dreadful deeds they did, worthy of wonder,  
when some city prowler, an old hands with words,  
said to us all: You dwellers in the mountains  
on the majestic flats, why don't we hunt  
Pentheus' mother Agave from bacchanting 720  
and find favour with our lord? This was well said,  
we thought, and hid ourselves in the bushes  
and lay in wait. At the appointed hour  
they moved the thyrsus into bacchanting,  
crying in unison Iacchos, the Seed of Zeus, 725  
Bromios, and all bacchanted with them, mountain  
and animals, and by their running nothing was unmoved.  
It happened that Agave bounded by near me,  
and as I jumped up, purposing to snatch her,  
emptying the lair where I had hid my form, 730  
she shouted out: O running hounds of mine,  
we're being hunted by these men; but follow me,  
follow me armed with the thyrsus in your hands.  
Well, we escaped, and managed to avoid  
the bacchae's mangling; but the cattle grazing 735  
in the grass they set upon with their bare hands:  
one could be seen to take a well-uddered heifer  
and pull it apart mooing in her hands;  
others carried off calves and mangled them;

you might have seen a rib or cloven hoof 740  
 hurled helter-skelter; things hung  
 and dripped beneath the firs, befouled with blood;  
 bulls, violent and raging in their horns  
 before, were stumbling their forms upon the earth,  
 driven by thousands of maidenly hands, 745  
 that swifter stripped the garment of their flesh  
 than you could close your lids on kingly eyes.  
 Then they were off like lifted birds, and running  
 through the low-lying plains by Asopos' streams  
 that send up Thebai its well-fruited crops. 750

- Upon the towns that situate the foothills  
 of Cithairon, like enemies they fell,  
 and carried off everything helter-skelter,  
 even snatching children from the houses  
 and placing them on their shoulders, where without tying 755
- they held and did not fall, and in their hair 757

**751**            The Greek text actually names the towns, “Upon Hysia and Erythra...,” but these were found in performance to be not only gratuitous intrusions of burdensome proper names but also distractingly amusing.

**756–7**            The Greek, starting at 755, has: “Whatever they put upon their shoulders, without tying / held, and did not fall to the black earth, / not bronze, not iron; and in their hair...”. The sudden mention of bronze and iron is very puzzling in a sentence which otherwise would obviously be about the maenads carrying off children: *what* bronze and iron? Kitchen utensils might be carried off from houses, but this is an odd way to refer to them, and to mention their theft seems bathetic; weapons, the usual bronze and iron objects, are out of place in this context. One theory is therefore to assume that the context is wrong, and to posit a missing line after 756; but I have preferred the solution of Jackson (see DODDS), who points out that if the second half of 756 and the first half of 757 be deleted, and the two remaining half-lines melded into one line, the resulting line

they carried fire and did not burn. The men were aroused  
 at the bacchae's plundering, and went for their weapons, —  
 and then there was a dreadful sight to see, lord: 760  
 the men never bloodied their spear-tipped shafts,  
 but *they* let go the thyrsus from their hands  
 and wounded them and made them turn and flee,  
 women wounding men! and not without some god.  
 Then back they went to whence they had set out, 765  
 to those same springs the god had sent them up,  
 and washed the blood; the droplets on their cheeks  
 serpents with their tongues cleared from their skin.  
 Whoever this divinity is, master,  
 receive him to this city; he is great in many things, 770  
 and this especially they say of him,  
 the sorrow-ceasing vine he gives to mortals.  
 • Without wine there is no Aphrodite,  
 nor longer any other delight for men.

## CHORUS

I shudder to make the words I speak too free 775

is metrical Greek and makes good sense. The question then remains as to how the two spurious half-lines were introduced. Jackson rightly points out that “to the black earth” could easily be a copy from 1065; and WILLINK may be quite correct in supposing that the corruption has something to do with the fact that one of our two MS sources for this play gives out exactly at 755; but the intrusion of the “bronze and iron” is still not easily explained. KOENEN notices that the phrase is close to the opening of *Hippolytos* 621, and if an ancient commentator had for some reason noted that line in the margin of manuscript it might easily have worked its way into the text; but what is there about that line which would bring it to mind here in the first place? The mystery remains unsolved.

773                    “Aphrodite” = the MS’s “Cypris”, as in line 315.

before the tyrant, but still they shall be said:

Dionysos is inferior to no god.

## PENTHEUS

Already near and kindled like a fire,  
this bacchic violence is a great blot on Greece.

We must not shirk: go to the Electran gate 780

- and order all shield-bearers to meet,  
all riders on swift-footed horses,  
all that wield the pelta, all that pluck  
the bow-strings with their hands, and we will march  
against the bacchae. I tell you, it's too much 785  
that women should do what's being done to us.

## DIONYSOS

You hear my words, but won't let me persuade you,  
Pentheus; still, despite the way you've treated me,  
I tell you not to take up arms against a god,  
but hold your peace: Bromios will not permit 790  
moving the bacchae from the evoian mountains.

## PENTHEUS

Don't you dictate my thoughts; you escaped your fetters,  
hang on to that, or I'll reverse justice on you again.

## DIONYSOS

I'd make an offering to him, not offend him,

**781**            A tremendous rush of apoplectic k- and p-sounds follows over the next three or four lines; my repeated "all" is a poor substitute.

- a mortal with god's bit between his teeth.

795

## PENTHEUS

I'll offer female blood, as they deserve;  
there's plenty to rile up in Cithairon's folds.

## DIONYSOS

You'll all be put to flight; shameful, that shields  
of bronze should turn before a bacchic thyrsus.

## PENTHEUS

- He's impossible! This stranger tangles with me,  
• but win or lose he will not hold his tongue.

800

## DIONYSOS

Sir, these matters can still be set right.

## PENTHEUS

How? By slaving to my own slaves?

**795** In 794, “offer” / “offend” represents Greek *thyoim' / thymoumenos*. The two lines say literally, “I'd sacrifice to him rather than angrily kick against the pricks, a mortal against a god.” But “kick against the pricks”, while proverbial in Greek, is no longer so in English, and might provoke laughter. “Take the bit between the teeth” is a more familiar phrase, and keeps the metaphor of rider and ridden.

**801** “Win or lose” renders Greek “doing or done to”, which conveys nothing to modern ears. It is an antithesis of which the Greeks were fond, though its use here has provoked some scholarly debate; my translation gives my interpretation, which is that Pentheus is continuing the wrestling metaphor from the previous line, exactly as today we refer to one's position in a wrestling bout as “active” or “passive”.

DIONYSOS

I'll bring the women here without their weapons.

PENTHEUS

Aha, so that's the trick you've planned against me.

805

DIONYSOS

What trick, to wish to save you by my arts?

PENTHEUS

You arranged this together, to bacchantise forever.

DIONYSOS

Indeed I did arrange it, with the god.

PENTHEUS

Bring me my arms out here! and you, stop talking.

DIONYSOS

• Ah!

810

Do you want to see them sitting in the mountains?

**810**            The Greek exclamation *â* appears to be a sort of inarticulate response to pain, shock, and emergency: it is the kind of thing liable to come out of one's mouth when something terrible is about to happen, but one cannot for a moment do more to prevent it than cry out and wave one's arms, as it were. DODDS cites several examples. Granted, it is hard to imagine Dionysos in such an inarticulate state, and furthermore this moment is so obviously the turning-point of the play (from here on Pentheus is Dionysos' plaything) that the line may seem a trifle cheap; it is *extra metrum*, and it would be just like to some overly clever actor or commentator to insert a gasp at the play's critical instant, so as to mark it. Still, Pentheus is about to dismiss Dionysos and to take irrevocable action, and line 811 alone would not be enough to halt and reverse this action. DODDS translates "Stop!", and in performance it might be better for Dionysos to say this.

PENTHEUS

Yes yes, I'd give a thousand-weight of gold.

DIONYSOS

What, into so great a passion are you fallen?

PENTHEUS

It *would* pain me to look upon them drunk...

DIONYSOS

But still you'd like to see what's bitter to you?

815

PENTHEUS

Exactly, sitting in silence beneath the fir-trees.

DIONYSOS

Why, they'll track you down if you go secretly.

PENTHEUS

Why, openly then; that's very well said.

DIONYSOS

Then shall I take you? will you attempt the journey?

PENTHEUS

Yes, right away; I grudge the time that passes.

820

DIONYSOS

Then clothe your skin with the linen peplos.

PENTHEUS

What for, to be reclassified as female?



DIONYSOS

They'll kill you if you're seen there as a man.

PENTHEUS

Well said again! how wise you're being now.

DIONYSOS

Dionysos has inspired us to this.

825

PENTHEUS

So how can your good advice become a fact?

DIONYSOS

We'll go inside the house, and I will clothe you.

PENTHEUS

What clothes? a woman's? But shame prevents me.

DIONYSOS

You're no longer eager to witness the maenads?

PENTHEUS

What clothing do you say to put about my skin?

830

DIONYSOS

The hair upon your head I'll stretch out slender.

PENTHEUS

And what's the second feature of my dress?

## DIONYSOS

- A full-length peplos, and on your head a ribbon.

## PENTHEUS

And besides this, what else will you add to me?

## DIONYSOS

A thyrsus for your hand, and stippled fawnskin.

835

## PENTHEUS

I really couldn't put on women's clothing.

## DIONYSOS

- But you must learn before you fight the bacchae.

**833**            The “ribbon” is the *mitra*, the head-band visible in vase paintings of maenads.

**837**            A textual problem. The MS appears to say, “But you will put blood [*haima thêseis*] having fought the bacchae”; this expression is difficult and unparalleled. Various emendations have been proposed, but most of these, which try to keep the sense of “blood” somewhere, seem to me to fail to come to grips with the problem of Pentheus' reply at 838. If Dionysos is to lead Pentheus on to make the fatal error of spying on the women dressed as a woman, he mustn't appeal to Pentheus' fears about the consequence of armed attack, for it is Pentheus' conceit that he has no such fears; rather, he must continue to appeal to Pentheus' voyeurism (words for “see” predominate in Dionysos' lines in this part of the scene: 811, 815, 823, 829). I therefore agree with Nauck's and with Housman's sense that whatever Dionysos says must have something to do, not with blood, but with learning (*mathêsei* = ‘you will learn’), and that this was the key concept of the Greek before it was corrupted. I haven't been able to reconstruct the Greek precisely, but I think the sense of the line as I give it has three important and persuasive virtues: (i) it is *prima facie* the sort of approach we expect Dionysos to use; (ii) it perfectly provokes Pentheus' actual response; and (iii) it is masterfully duplicitous, in the same way as are so many of Dionysos' lines in this part of the play, especially in the next

PENTHEUS

You're right, we must go first to spy on them.

DIONYSOS

That's wiser than to hunt evils with evils.

PENTHEUS

And how will I go through the Cadmeians' city in secret? 840

DIONYSOS

We'll take deserted roads, and I will lead you.

PENTHEUS

- That's better than being laughed at as a bacchant.

DIONYSOS

Let's go inside, and I will dress you. 843a

PENTHEUS

- No, you stay here; let me decide what's best. 843b

scene (955, 963, 967, etc.), for Pentheus takes “learning” to mean “spying”, but Dionysos has in mind a very different sort of learning,, as his final speech in this scene shows.

**842**           The MS has, “Anything but that the bacchae should laugh at me.” But why would Pentheus worry about this? Presumably the bacchae aren't even going to see him, and if they do they'll either recognise him as a man and kill him, or see him as a woman and think nothing of his presence; either way, their laughter is not in question. On the other hand, the context has to do with Pentheus' concern that he not be seen by the inhabitants of Thebai as he goes to the mountains, and they might certainly laugh at him — indeed, as 854–55 shows, Dionysos intends them to do so. I therefore emend the line, and my translation is of this emendation; for technical discussion, see NEUBURG 1987a.

**843b**           Line 843 as it stands in the MS is syntactically incoherent and completely

## DIONYSOS

Very well, I am entirely at your disposal.

## PENTHEUS

I'm going. Either I'll make my way in arms 845  
or else I'll be persuaded by your counsel.

## DIONYSOS

- He'll reach the bacchae, and meet his justice — death.

Women: the man is settled in the net.

Dionysos: now it's up to you; you are not far away.

Let's make him pay. First confound his thought, 850

inject a fickle frenzy; in his right mind

he won't be willing to put on female clothing,

but driven from his thought he'll put it on.

I want him made a laughing-stock at Thebai

and taken female-figured through the city, 855

meaningless, and destroys the alternation of the speakers; the suggestion of Jackson, cited by DODDS, is obviously correct: there must originally have been two lines, but the eye of the scribe fell from the middle of the first to the middle of the second, and so the MS line is made up of the first half of the first and second half of the second. Thus I have made up “and I will dress you” and “No, you stay here” to fill out the sense. 844–5 seems to suggest that Pentheus expects to go inside and think matters out for himself; but it is true that Dionysos does follow Pentheus in, so perhaps Pentheus said, “You can come in, but...”.

**847** Murray's text reverses the MS order of this line with the one that follows, but I do not see why. DODDS tries to justify the transposition by saying that Dionysos “must turn to the Chorus *before* he speaks of P. in the third person,” but again I don't see why; on the contrary, it makes sense that Dionysos should speak of Pentheus, who has just left, before he apostrophises the chorus and then “Dionysos”, and the two apostrophes one after the other make for powerful and effective rhetoric.

after his earlier threats, and he so dreadful.  
I'll go; the dress he'll take with him to Hades,  
when he goes slain at his mother's hands,  
to Pentheus I'll provide. He shall know Zeus' son  
Dionysos, that he is in his fulness a god  
most dreadful, and to men most mild.

## CHORUS [Stasimon III]

### Strophe (862-81)

In the nocturnal choruses  
shall I ever set my stepping  
in bacchanti singing, to toss my throat into the dewy sky  
like a frolicking fawn in the green singing joy of the meadowland?  
when from fearfulness she is fled  
the hunt, the well-woven nets escaping, and the sentinels,  
as the huntsman with his halloo  
tenses the running of the hounds;  
storms of swift-footedness and straining  
and leaping along on the plain beside the stream in her joy,  
in solitude of mortals, and in the sprouting shadowy-hair'd trees.

- What is wisdom, ah! what fairer thing

**862–81** The refrain, “What is wisdom...”, has been variously punctuated, interpreted, and emended. The word translated “fair”, comparative “fairer”, is *kalon*, a general and important word for ‘beautiful, fine, morally good’. The Greek original of my “wisdom” is actually “the wise”; such Greek expressions (“the F”) are often used where we would use an abstract noun (“F-ness”), but in this case some scholars would take me to task for treating the two modes of expression as interchangeable, because the chorus have earlier told us (in the first Antistrophe of Stasimon I) that “wisdom is not what is wise”, i.e. is not “the wise”. The word I have translated “ah!” might be just an exclamation, but with a change in accent the same Greek word can mean “or”, i.e. “or, to ask a better question...”. My translation and metre tries to skirt most of the uncertainties, allowing the reader to enter the interpretive arena and decide what the chorus mean here, and how it squares or does not square with what they say elsewhere.

tō mōrtāl mēn cān thē gōds bēstōw  
thān hōldīng hīgh ōvērhead  
ā fīrmēr fīst ōvēr thē foe?  
Thē fāir īs dēar, and fōrēvēr.

## Antistrophe (882-901)

Scarcely speeding, but all the same

the strength of the gods is certain,

and calls mortals to account who hold hardness of heart in honour,

nor that which is god's glory, such madness is in their minds.

They conceal in complexity

time's gradual stepping, and they hunt down the unholy, for

one must practice and one must know

nothing is greater than the laws.

- The price is petty, of believing

that here is the power of whatever the divine is, in this:

**882–901** The last three lines of the Antistrophe before the refrain have been variously punctuated and emended, with corresponding variations in the scholarly interpretation of the philosophy which the chorus are putting forward. The problem is that there is grammatical ambiguity as to how much of what follows the word “believing” is to be taken as part of the belief, and that there is more than one way to couple and divide the various items constituting this belief. For example, DODDS mentions a view which would understand the lines as, roughly, “[believing] that this has power, namely, whatever is divine, and what is instituted by time and has existed [or, been natural] forever.” His own view, on the other hand, is that the lines mean, “[believing] that whatever is divine has power, and that what is instituted by time has always been true.” It will be seen at once that these interpretations are very different from one another, and that my translation is very different from both of them. An explanation of and argument for my translation may be found in NEUBURG 1986; as I say there, I think the point of the lines is to assert that the divine consists in a paradoxical combination of two apparent opposites, namely instituted law and permanent natural truth (the well-known Greek *nomos / physis* polarity).



wh̄at tī me h̄as īnstī tūtēd̄ and wh̄at b̄y n̄ature f̄orev̄er h̄as b̄een.

Wh̄at ī s wī sd̄om, ah! wh̄at f̄air̄er thī ng

tō mōrtāl mēn cān thē gōds bēstōw

thān hōldī ng hī gh ōv̄erhēad

ā fī rmer fī st ōv̄er thē fōe?

The f̄air ī s dēar, and f̄orev̄er.

Epode (902-11)

Hāppȳ hē frōm thē sēa ęscāpī ng

ōut ōf thē stōrm, ārrī vī ng āt ānchōrāge;

hāppȳ hē flēēī ng lābōur's strāinī ng;

īn mǎnȳ mǎnnērs mǎy mēn sūrpass ōthēr mēn

īn prōsperī tȳ and ī n pōwēr.

Thōusānd-fōld ūpōn thōusānd-fōld

hōpes cōme crōwdī ng ūpōn ūs,

ānd sōme fī nǎllȳ prōsper

fōr mōrtals, sōme āre vānī sh'd:

whō dāy bȳ dāy hās ā lī velī hōod ōf hāppī nēss, hē ī s blēssēd.

## DIONYSOS

You who are eager to see what you should not see,  
you who want the unwanted, Pentheus I mean:  
come out before the house into my sight  
with women's, maenads', bacchae's trappings on, 915  
a spy upon your mother and her band.  
O, the very figure of one of Cadmos' daughters!

## PENTHEUS

Indeed, it seems to me I see two suns  
and a double Thebaian city seven-mouthed,  
and that you are a bull, my guide before me, 920  
and that horns are implanted on your head.  
*Are you an animal, then? you're very like a bull.*

## DIONYSOS

The god is with us — not gracious before,  
but now he makes a truce, and you see what you should see.

## PENTHEUS

So how do I look? Is not this Ino's attitude 925  
I take, or Agave's, my own mother?

## DIONYSOS

Their very selves I seem to see, looking at you.  
But here, your tress has gotten out of place  
from how I fastened it beneath your ribbon.

## PENTHEUS

Inside, shaking it back and forth 930  
bacchanting, I dislodged it from its place.

DIONYSOS

Well, since it's my job to take care of you,  
I'll fix it again: hold your head up, will you?

PENTHEUS

Here, you dress me; I'm in your hands, after all.

DIONYSOS

And your girdle's loose, and your peplos is out of line 935  
where the pleats extend below your ankles.

PENTHEUS

I think so too, at the right foot anyway;  
over here at the heel it hangs all right.

DIONYSOS

You'll surely count me foremost of your friends  
when you see how surprisingly pure the bacchae are. 940

PENTHEUS

Should I take the thyrsus in my right hand  
• or this one, to look most like the bacchae?

DIONYSOS

In your right, and in time to your right foot  
you must lift it. I commend your change of thought.

**942**            The Greeks habitually refer to sinister entities euphemistically (so perhaps  
“the dear night”, 424); thus there is no special significance to Pentheus’ “this one”, and  
in performance one might as well say “or the left”.

PENTHEUS

Could I carry the folds of Cithairon, 945  
bacchae and all, upon my shoulders?

DIONYSOS

You could if you wanted. Your former thoughts  
were not healthy; now they are as they must be.

PENTHEUS

Shall we take crowbars, or with my hands shall I pull up  
the peaks and thrust my arm or shoulder underneath? 950

DIONYSOS

Now, you mustn't destroy the temples of the nymphs  
and Pan's places where he plays his pipes.

PENTHEUS

You're right: the women are not to be defeated  
by strength. In the fir-trees I'll hide my form.

DIONYSOS

You'll hide, and you'll be hidden as you should be, 955  
coming to trick the maenads as a spy.

PENTHEUS

Indeed, it seems to me I have them in their lairs  
like birds in the delicious toils of love.

DIONYSOS

For this precisely you're dispatched as keeper;  
perhaps you'll catch them, if you're not caught first. 960

PENTHEUS

Bring me through the midst of Thebai's land:  
alone of them I am the man that dares this.

DIONYSOS

Alone for this city you suffer, you alone,  
and so the struggles await you that must be.  
Come on, and I will come as your safe conduct.  
Another will bring you back.

965

PENTHEUS

Who gave me birth.

DIONYSOS

• Noted by everyone.

PENTHEUS

That's why I'm going.

DIONYSOS

You'll be carried back.

**967** "Noted" does not satisfactorily translate Dionysos' word. It does mean "noted", in the sense of 'famous' as well as 'notorious', but it comes from the word for "mark" and can in fact mean '(physically) marked', as a coin is stamped, or as a sufferer from a disfiguring disease is scarred. I suspect this to be another of the many phrases of double meaning uttered by Dionysos during this scene: Pentheus thinks it means he will be famous, and indeed he will be, though not in the way he intends; he will become a lesson, not a hero, and will also be physically scarred (to say the least). Perhaps translate: "And all will mark you"?

PENTHEUS

You talk of splendour.

DIONYSOS

In your mother's arms.

PENTHEUS

• You'll make me delicate.

DIONYSOS

Such delicacy.

PENTHEUS

What I deserve is in my grasp.

970

DIONYSOS

You dreadful, dreadful man, to dreadful things you go,  
to find a fame that will fasten onto heaven.

**969** Dionysos actually says, "In your mother's hands," which is echoed in 973 and a number of times later in the play; but to translate this way would have made it sound in English as if Dionysos were giving away more than in fact he does, since the Greek phrase *could* mean simply, "With your mother holding you," though of course Dionysos secretly hints at the fact that Pentheus will be reduced to a portable object (his head). Hence I have translated "arms" here, and then, to capture the echoing, throughout.

The nuances of the word I have translated "delicate" / "delicacy" are difficult to capture, and indeed to understand: the root-word, *tryphân*, means 'be delicate, luxuriate, be overly dainty, be enfeebled or enervated by too much luxury'. KEPPLE supposes that the word would be heard as similar to *thryptô* 'shatter', but I think there are no grounds for this. Nevertheless there must, as he says, be some hidden intention to Dionysos' reply, such as, [P:] "You'll make me feeble" (i.e. such luxury will be too much for me), [D:] "Feeble indeed" (i.e. dead). But this interpretation must remain somewhat conjectural.

Reach out your hands, Agave, and Cadmos' daughters  
of the same seed: I bring this boy  
to a great struggle, and the winner will be I,  
and Bromios. The rest shall speak for itself.


975



## CHORUS [Stasimon IV]

### Strophe (977-96)

- Yē dōgs ōf frēnzȳ, gō, swī ft tō thē mōuntains gō,  
thē thī asūs ōf Cādmūs' dāughters ī s there;  
and gōad thēm āfter hīm, āfter thē mān-prētēnder ī n wōmēns' clōthes,  
īn hīs frēnzȳ ōn thē māenāds ā spȳ.  
Fīrst hīs mōthēr frōm thē smōothnēss ōf ā stōne  
wīll sēe hīs fōrm āfār ōbsērvīng, and tō thē māenāds wīll cāll:  
Whō cōmes tō pry ī ntō our mōuntain-rūnnīng?

**977–96** This stasimon, invoking the violence of Pentheus' death, employs a basic rhythm which was itself felt as suited to violence and emotional urgency (so WEST), the “dochmiac”. The dochmiac is one of the most difficult and complex Greek metres. The basic metrical pattern is: ; upon the pulsing syncopation of this pattern is built a wide variety of variant forms, with longs being substituted for some of the shorts, or two shorts being substituted for some of the longs, so that the pattern can appear as five longs, or as eight shorts, or as any of many variants in between. I have taken a few very slight liberties with the metre of the Strophe and Antistrophe, to regularise the responsion between them, and to clarify the metre, but the metre is still basically faithful to Euripides.

The Greek words corresponding to “will see his form afar” are suspect on grounds of sense and metre; the translation is partly a construct to skirt the difficulties. Also, Agave's cry actually begins, roughly, “Who comes to pry into the Cadmeian mountain-runners?” but I couldn't fit “Cadmeian” into the translation. (I follow Maas and WILLINK in reading *Cadmeiân*, a feminine referring to the bacchae: DODDS is wrong, I think, to translate, “Who of the Cadmeians is coming,” for the word-order is against it, and in any case Agave is about to say that, so far from being Cadmeian, Pentheus is not even human; whereas the bacchae now on the mountain are specifically referred to as “Cadmeian” in Stasimon V, and indirectly earlier in this Strophe.)

Intō the mōuntains, the mōuntains, whō ī s cōme, yē bācchāe?

Whō cān hāve gī vēn hī m bīrth?

Hē wās nōt frōm the blōod ōf wōmān bēgōt,

būt ōf sōme lī ōnēss ōr Gōrgōn ī s hē, ānd Lībyā hī s hōme.

Gō jūstī ce, gō mānī fēst, gō jūstī ce wī th ā swōrd

ānd mūrder hī m rīght thrōugh the throāt,

the gōdlēss ānd lāwlēss ānd jūstī celess Ēchīōn's sōn,

the seed ōf the earth.

## Antistrophe (997-1016)

- B̄lōatēd wī th l̄awl̄essn̄ess ānd j̄ūdḡm̄nt j̄ūstī cel̄ess

ōv̄er th̄ b̄acchī c̄ orgī es hī s mōth̄er l̄eads,

wīth m̄adn̄ess īn hī s h̄eart ānd r̄esol̄utiōn āll āsk̄ew m̄akes hī s w̄ay:

wh̄at n̄one c̄an s̄ūbd̄ue, b̄y f̄orce h̄e w̄ōuld r̄ule.

**997–1016** The entire Antistrophe is tremendously difficult and disputed; the following explanation of my text is necessary to justify the translation, but is also technical and will be of little interest to those who cannot confront the Greek directly.

Clearly a stop is wanted after *bīai*, for reasons of metrical clause structure and sense; the initial *hos* must refer backwards (like the initial *hon* in the first Antistrophe of the Parodos). But then it is hard to believe that there is no verb until *stelletai*, and besides I do not see how someone can have a “lawless temper concerning” the orgies; hence I take *orḡai* as a verb, “swells [with unjust and lawless judgment concerning...]”.

The orgies are not the orgies of Semele, and therefore *matros te s̄as* must be corrupt; and from this it follows that *Bacchi'* is not vocative, nor in any case would it be heard as such, in the middle of a line with no *ô*. To meet the second point, I read *ta Bacchi' orgia*; to meet the former, I emend to *matros t' hēas*, “and those of his own [Pentheus'] mother” (Agave’s leadership of the orgies is very much in point in this part of the play).

I’m not sure what’s going on in 1002, but a stop after *thanatos*, to give some brief maxim, and no punctuation after *ephu*, seems best, as DODDS suggests. Nevertheless, 1002–4 (“Reason’s chastener...free from pain”) are fraught with metrical complexities, and I’m not at all sure we are in any position to guess what Euripides wrote or meant.

The difficulties of 1005–7 (“It is abundant joy...eternal are”) I meet as follows. Given what the chorus have said again and again about wisdom, one expects the general sense to be, “Wisdom is one thing, but living piously is even more important.” Hence I read *ou phthonôî* (with Tyrell), with no stop after it; and, to supply the first of the *hetera*, for the MS *bion* I read *bioun* (so too, independently, WILLINK). As for *tôn aei*, the words scan, and the hiatus is not a problem (we are at clause-end and line-end, as the Strophe shows), so I keep them.

Rēason's chāstēner īs dēath; ōnl̄y thē mān

ūnquēstīōnī ng ōf gōds ānd mōrtal ōf mēin cān lī ve frēe frōm pāin.

Īt īs ābūndānt jōy hūntī ng fōr wī sđom,

ānd yēt ōthēr thī ngs mānī fēst, grēat, ānd ētērnāl āre:

lī vī ng fōr thī ngs thāt āre fāir,

dāil̄y ānd nī ghtl̄y sānctī fī ed, rēvērēnt,

thī ngs ōutsīde thē ūsāge ōf jūstīce rējēctī ng, hōnōurī ng gōds.

Gō jūstīce, gō mānī fēst, gō jūstīce wī th ā sward

ānd mūrder hī m rī ght thrōugh thē throāt,

thē gōdlēss ānd lāwlēss ānd jūstīcēlēss Ēchīōn's sōn,

thē sēed ōf thē ēarth.

### Epode (1017-23)

Bē mānī fēst ā būll, bē ā sērpēnt ānd hūndrēd-hēadēd,

ā fī rē-flāmī ng lī on āppēar:

- būt cōme, Bācchī c Ōne, ānd lēad thē bācchī c hūnt,

knōtī ng thē nōosēs ōf dēath ābout hī m ās hē fālls bēnēath

thē bācchāntī ng bānd.

**1017–23** Most editors emend so as to make the notion of “leading the hunt” modify Pentheus: but Pentheus is nothing so honourable as a huntsman, but is a spy, a pretender, whereas Dionysos is several times later called the leader of the hunt (1146, 1189, 1192). Hence I take *thêragrota* as vocative, and emend for metrical reasons to *tân bacchân*; see NEUBURG 1987b.

The MS then has two words usually taken to mean “with smiling face”. Many scholars have found the picture of Dionysos slaying Pentheus while smiling to be very appealing and suggestive; but I think the words are corrupt. The sense is dubious: the Greek actually says “with laughing face”, and I do not think this can mean “with a laughing expression on the face”. The syntax is also very rough: there is already a dative in the sentence, representing Dionysos’ victim, and so I would expect a Greek audience to hear the whole line as meaning “cast the noose upon the one smiling with his face”, which makes Pentheus, not Dionysos, the smiler. The words are not guaranteed by the metre; the line will scan as perfect dochmiacs even without them. Hence I agree with Tyrrell in seeing the words as intrusive — perhaps introduced by some commentator? — and have cut them.

I have taken some liberties with the metre of the Epode, choosing occasionally a different variety of dochmiac from the original to ease the task of metrical translation.

## SERVANT

- O house that once was happy throughout Greece,  
of the aged man of Sidon, who sowed 1025  
the serpent's earth-born harvest in the ground,  
• I groan for you — a slave, but still I groan. 1027

## CHORUS

What is it? What news do you bring from the bacchae? 1029

## SERVANT

Pentheus is dead, the son of Echion. 1030

## CHORUS

- Lōrd Brōmīōs thē gōd, māñ fēst nōw, ānd grēat!

## SERVANT

What are you saying? What do you mean? Do you  
delight in my master's evil fortune, women?

**1027** The line actually ends, “but all the same...”. This manner of breaking off is common in Euripides, and was not felt as omitting anything. The MS's line 1028, which reads “to a good slave, [his] misfortune [is] the things of his master,” was interpolated, copied from the *Medea*, by someone who did not realise that 1027 was satisfactory, and does not make sense here; it is excised, rightly, by most editors.

**1031** The chorus break into dochmiac celebration. The line as the MS has it is unmetrical, but since the chorus' following utterances are mostly dochmiacs, I have accepted Hense's emendation, inserting *hōs* before *phainêi* (see DODDS). — In this and the following choral utterances I have sometimes used a different variety of dochmiac from that of the original, to ease metrical translation.

CHORUS

Ī crȳ thē ēvōi, thē bārbariān strāin,  
nō longēr fōr fēar ōf fētters tō quāil.

1035

SERVANT

• Do you take Thebai to be so manless...?

CHORUS

Būt Dī ōnysōs, yēs, Dī ōnysōs, nōt Thēbai,  
hās r̄ule ōvēr mē.

SERVANT

Forgivable, then; but still, to delight  
in the commission of evils, women, is not good.

1040

CHORUS

Tēll mē and lēt mē knōw bȳ whāt fātē hē dī ed,  
thē mān ōf ĩ njūstī ce whō ĩ njūstī ce cōntrī ved.

SERVANT

We left the villages of this Thebaian land

**1036**            The line in the Greek does not make up even a full verse of iambic trimeter. It is just possible that it still represents what Euripides wrote; Euripides is an inveterate innovator, and might have had the chorus interrupt the Servant's line in the middle. The Servant may, however, have originally spoken a complete couplet, as in his preceding and following lines, perhaps something to this effect: "Do you take Thebai to be so manless, then, women, / as to let such insolence go unpunished?" — The first line of the chorus' response does not scan as a dochmiac, and attempts have been made to emend it; but I have given the metre as the MS has it.

and passed the streams of Asopos,  
 and struck out for the heights of Cithairon, 1045  
 Pentheus, and myself (for I went with my master),  
 and the stranger who conducted our embassy.  
 At first we settled in a grassy grove,  
 keeping the silence of our feet and tongues  
 so as to see without being seen. 1050  
 There was a hollow, steeply walled, watered by streams  
 and shadowed in with pines, and there the maenads  
 were sitting with their hands at happy labours:  
 some of them, whose thyrsus had come loose,  
 garlanded it again with locks of ivy; 1055  
 others, like foals loosed from the painted yoke,  
 descanted bacchic strains to one another.  
 But Pentheus, poor man, did not see the female throng,  
 and said: Stranger, from where we're standing  
 my eyes don't reach these spurious maenads; 1060  
 but from the bank, climbing a high-necked fir-tree,  
 I'd have a clear view of their obscenities.  
 And then I saw the stranger work a wonder:  
 he took the end of a fir-tree's skyward branch  
 and pulled it, pulled it, pulled it down to the black earth; 1065  
 • as a bow is rounded, or a curving wheel

**1066**            The precise significance of this and the following line is in some dispute, largely owing to our ignorance (which may never be satisfactorily resolved) of the precise Greek method of lathe-turning, and of the technical terms involved. In particular, some have argued that the “or” is corrupt and that the “bow” is not a separate item, but rather is the name of the upright spring-pole whose elasticity was the source of the lathe's power; the simile would then lie in the way this pole was bent as the lathe was



drawn on a lathe pulls round its running rim,  
 thus was that mountain branch the stranger held  
 and bent to earth, no mortal deed to do.  
 He seated Pentheus on the fir-tree bough, 1070  
 and let the stem go upright through his hands  
 carefully, not to shake it and unseat him.  
 It fastened upright to the upright sky  
 with my master seated on its back.  
 But he was seen more than he saw the maenads: 1075  
 for barely was he clear on his high seat  
 when suddenly the stranger was nowhere to be seen;  
 and from the sky a voice, I think it was  
 Dionysos, cried out: Maidens,  
 I bring the man who makes a mockery of you 1080  
 and me and my orgies; take vengeance on him!  
 As he addressed them, a light of awesome fire  
 was fastened on the heaven and the earth;  
 the air fell silent, in the mountain glen  
 silent the leaves, the animals made no cry. 1085  
 The women's ears had not caught the sound clearly,  
 and they stood upright, turning their heads about.  
 Again he gave the call; and when they recognised  
 the clear call of the Bacchic One, Cadmos' daughters  
 • dashed off with all the swiftness of a dove, 1090

wound up. But there is not the slightest evidence that Greek lathes worked this way, nor that the word "bow" had this technical meaning; and I think that the result would not be as pretty or impressive as what the MS seems to say.

**1091–2**            The excised lines read: "having, with a tense running of feet, / mother Agave and her sisters of the same seed." 1091 is an ungrammatical interpolation by

and all the bacchae, through the torrent hollow 1093  
 and the boulders bounding, maddened by the blasts of god.  
 As they saw my master sitting in the fir-tree, 1095  
 at first they stood upon a towering rock  
 and threw at him with mighty-pelting stones,  
 and with the boughs of fir-trees cast at him;  
 others let fly their thyrsus through the sky  
 at Pentheus, a cruel shooting, but without success, 1100  
 since higher than their eagerness could reach  
 he sat, poor man, caught in uncertainty;  
 finally they sheared off branches from an oak-tree  
 and tore at the roots with crowbars not of iron.  
 And when they could not achieve their labour's goal, 1105  
 Agave said: Come on, stand round in a circle  
 and grab the trunk, maenads, that we may take  
 this climbing animal, so he'll never tell  
 of the god's secret choruses. A thousand hands  
 pulled at the fir and ripped it from the earth, 1110  
 and, hurled from the height where high above he sat,  
 down to the ground and with a thousand screams  
 fell Pentheus, close to evil, and he knew it.  
 First came his mother, high priestess of the murder,  
 and fell upon him, while he threw the ribbon 1115  
 from his hair so she might recognise him and not kill him,  
 poor Agave, touching her cheek and saying:

someone who did not realise that no verb is needed to govern the accusative "swiftness" in 1090, padded with an expression based on 872. 1092 is an explanatory expansion of 1091 (like 229–30), based on 973–4. The 2nd-c. AD papyrus P. Oxy. 2223, which covers lines 1070–1136, lacks 1091–2, and surely ought to be followed.

It's me, mother, me, your son  
Pentheus, whom you gave birth to in Echion's house;  
take pity on me, mother, and for my 1120  
trespassing do not kill your own son.  
But she foamed at the mouth, twisting her eyes  
about, not thinking as she ought to think,  
possessed by Dionysos, and would not listen.  
She took hold of his left arm below the elbow 1125  
and braced her foot against his ribs, poor man,  
and ripped the shoulder out — and with no effort;  
the god had made it easy for her hands.  
Then Ino set to work on the other side,  
rending his flesh, and Autonoe and all the throng 1130  
of bacchae set on him, shouting together,  
he groaning out whatever breath he had left  
while they were cheering. One carried off an arm  
and one a foot, shoes and all; the ribs  
lay naked through the mangling, and all the women 1135  
bloodied their hands, playing with Pentheus' flesh.  
The body lies in pieces, some of it hidden  
under rocks, some in the deep-wooded foliage of the trees,  
no easy search; and his wretched head,  
that his mother chanced to be holding in her hands, 1140  
fixed to the end of her thyrsus like a lion  
of the mountains, she bears it through the midst of Cithairon,  
leaving her sisters in the maenads' chorus,  
and comes prideful of her ill-fated hunt  
within these very walls, invoking the Bacchic One 1145  
her Huntsman, Partner of the Catch,  
the Triumphant — but tears will be her triumph.

Now let me get away from this misfortune  
before Agave arrives at the house.

Pure thought, and reverence for what is god's —  
this is the fairest and, I think, the wisest  
possession mortals can employ.

1150

CHORUS [Stasimon V]

Ode (1153-64)

Nōw lēt ũs chōrūs thē Bācchī c Ōne,

nōw lēt ũs rāi se thē cry of thē dōom

of Penthēus, offspring of thē serpēt, thē dōom:

in thē clōthī ng of wōmēnkī nd

and holdī ng thē wand, thē thyr̄sus,

hē wēt tō cērtain dēath,

and leadī ng on hī s dōom bēfore hī m was thē bull.

Cādmeīan bācchāe,

fāmōus thē sōng of tri ũmph you hāve māde ī ntō weepī ng and ī ntō

grōanī ng:

fāir ī s thē strūgglē, drēnchī ng yōur hānds ī n blōod,

cāstī ng thēm on yōur chī ld.

But I see hastening to the house

Pentheus' mother Agave, with twisting

eyes; take up the revel of the evoian god.

1165

[Lyric Scene]

Strophe (1168-83)

AGAVE

• Bācchāe ōf Āsīan lānds!

CHORUS

Whŷ dō yōu cāl mē, Ō?

AGAVE

Ōut ōf thē mōuntāin, sēe, nēwly cūt tēndrils Ī brī ng tō thē pālācēs,  
blēssēd thē hūntī ng thēre.

CHORUS

Ī sēe and āccēpt yōu, rēvel wīth mē.

**1168–83** The metrical and verbal antiphony between Agave and the chorus give this astonishing lyric scene a peculiar emotional and ritualistic power, confronting us, more than anywhere else in the play (perhaps more than anywhere else in all surviving tragedy), with our regrettable ignorance of Greek musical, choreographic, and visual dramatic elements, and of the cultural background of ritual, which must have added, in production, to the quality of gruesome awe that we can detect in shadowy form even in our purely verbal record of it.

The scene is very difficult to translate, mostly because of the brevity of the utterances and the general lack, in English, of syntactic markings in the form of individual words. The word “Cithairon” is uttered in the original only twice in a row, not three times as I have it. The actual Greek response to Agave’s “Of Cadmos” is, “Of Cadmos, what?”. I have slightly regularised the metre of the first two lines of the Strophe and Antistrophe, to make metrical translation easier, and to clarify the motivic dochmaic rhythm for our ears, which are not conversant with it.

AGAVE

I captured hī m wī thout ā nōose,

thē mountāin chī ld of ā lī onēss, sēe hī m, lōok āt hī m.

CHORUS

Whēre ī n thē wī ldērness?

AGAVE

Cī thāiron...

CHORUS

Cī thāiron...?

AGAVE

Cī thāiron mūrđered hī m.

CHORUS

Whō wās ī t hī t hī m?

AGAVE

Mī ne wās thē prī vī lēge fī rst;

Āgavē's nāme ī s blēst ī n thē thī asūs nōw.

CHORUS

Whāt others?

AGAVE

Ōf Cādmōs...

CHORUS

Ōf Cād̄mōs...?

AGAVE

...thē chī̄ ld̄rēn̄ āft̄er mē, āft̄er mē ālsō̄ tōuch̄ed thē ānī̄ mā̄l:

hōw hāpp̄y ā cā̄tch!



Antistrophe (1184-99)

AGAVE

- Join ī n thē fēastī ng nōw.

CHORUS

Join ī n thē fēast, pōor thī ng?

AGAVE

Yōung ī s thē cūb, and tēndēr-tuftēd thē hāir ōf hī s hēad ūpōn hī s chēek,  
nēwlŷ bēgūn tō blōom.

CHORUS

Thē māne ōf ān ānī māl ōf thē wī ld.

AGAVE

Thē hūntsmān wās thē Bācchīc Ōne,  
and wī se and wī sely prōpellī ng thē māenāds āftēr hī m.

**1184–99** The “him” after whom Agave says the Bacchic One propelled the maenads is the victim, not the Bacchic One; this is a bad ambiguity in my translation (the original is not ambiguous). My repeated “Amazing!” is not a precise repetition in the Greek: the Chorus’ word is an adjective modifying the “catch”, whereas Agave’s is an adverb, and the word itself is the same as that which is translated “superior” towards the end of Stasimon I (so that a Greek audience might recognise that Agave has committed a deed corresponding to a type of person whom the chorus have earlier warned us away from). The Greek says “great, great and manifest,” not “manifest, manifest and great.”

CHORUS

Hē ĩ s ous hūntī ng lōrd.

AGAVE

Yōu prāise mē?

CHORUS

Ī prāise yōu.

AGAVE

Sōon thē Cādmeāns tōo.

CHORUS

Yōur chīld Pētheūs...?

AGAVE

Pētheūs hīs mōthēr wī ll prāise;  
shē cāptured hī m, thē lī on-bēgōttēn, thē cāch.

CHORUS

Āmāzī ng!

AGAVE

Āmāzī ng!

CHORUS

Thē glōry!

## AGAVE

The glādness! Mānī fěst, mānī fěst and grēat ĩ s thē dēed, thē cāch,  
cōmmī ttēd bŷ mē!

## CHORUS

Then, miserable woman, show the citizens 1200  
your triumphant catch that you've brought with you.

## AGAVE

Fair-citadeled city of the Thebaian land,  
you who dwell here, come look at this catch,  
the animal that Cadmos' daughters caught,  
• not with the shooting of Thessalian spears, 1205  
not with nets, but with the tips of our white arms,  
our hands. So it must be an empty boast  
that needs the tools of ironmongery,  
when we with just our hands have taken this,  
and parted from the beast his plundered limbs. 1210  
Where is my aged father to come beside me,  
and my son Pentheus, where is he, to raise  
and fix ascending scaffolds to the house  
and nail this lion's head up to the rafters,  
the lion that I have come back from hunting? 1215

## CADMOS

Come with me, and bear the wretched weight  
of Pentheus, come with me, men, before the house.  
After the labour of a thousand searchings  
I bring his body, found in Cithairon's folds

**1205** The Greek says, "not with the thonged shootings of Thessalians." The invention of the spear was commonly ascribed to the Thessalians; the "thong" refers to the fact that a common variety of Greek spear had a leather loop for the fingers, to improve power, grip, and range. The reference would be mysterious to a modern hearer; hence the translation modifies the line.

all mangled, and none of it in one place, 1220  
 lying throughout the woods, hard to discover.  
 I heard about the darings of my daughters  
 when I was back inside the city walls  
 with aged Teiresias, come from the bacchae;  
 I bent my way back to the mountains, and now 1225  
 • I bring this boy, dead at the maenads' doing. 1226  
 Agave, I was told, had come back here 1230  
 with bacchic step, and what I heard was true,  
 since I behold her now, and not a happy sight.

## AGAVE

Father, the greatest boast is yours to make,  
 that you have sown by far the greatest daughters  
 of any mortal, all of us, but especially me, 1235  
 I that have left the shuttles and the looms  
 for greater things, to catch animals with my hands.  
 I carry in my arms for you to see  
 the prize I took, to be hung up

**1227–9**        The omitted lines run, “She that to Actaion with Aristaios / gave birth I saw, Autonoe, and Ino with her, / still amid the oaks, goad-smitten, wretched.” The list of names was found distracting in performance, and holds up the flow of Cadmos’ speech; it looks to me like an interpolation, akin to 229–30, by someone who found it odd that Cadmos adverts to Agave without mentioning his other daughters. In fact, though, Cadmos’ attention is by now upon his return to Thebai, and so turns to the probability of his encountering Agave here; there is no particular reason why he should talk about his other daughters. On the other hand, 1229, with its strange “goad-smitten”, seems Euripidean. If the lines are for that reason to be left in, it might be better in performance to substitute for 1227–8 a single line, to this effect: “I left the other bacchae on the mountain...”.

before your house: here, father, take it; 1240  
be prideful of my catching,  
and call friends to the feast, for you are blessed,  
blessed that I have committed such a deed.

#### CADMOS

- Repentance without measure, impossible to look on,  
murder by miserable hands committed! 1245  
A fine sacrifice you've struck down for the divine ones,  
to summon me and Thebai to a feast!  
Ah, what evils, first yours, then mine:  
the god — justly, yes, but too much! —  
lord Bromios has destroyed us, his own family. 1250

#### AGAVE

Old age is such a grumpy thing for men,  
such a frowning of the eyes! If only my son  
were a good hunter, after his mother's manner,  
when together with the Thebaian youths  
he goes grabbing after game! but he is only good 1255  
for waging god-war. He should be warned, father;  
won't someone call him here into my sight  
to see how fortunate I am?

#### CADMOS

Horrible! When you can think what you have done  
you'll grieve a dreadful grief; if in the end 1260  
you stay forever in the state you are now,

**1244** See the note on 367. This line fulfills the meaning of Pentheus' name.

- you won't be happy, but you'll think you are.

AGAVE

Why, what is not well here? What is so painful?

CADMOS

First cast your eyes this way, into the sky.

AGAVE

All right; what do you suggest I see there?

1265

CADMOS

Is it still the same, or does it seem changed to you?

AGAVE

It's brighter than before, and clearer.

CADMOS

Is this disturbance still upon your soul?

AGAVE

I don't know what you mean; I'm becoming...  
reasonable, changed from my former thoughts.

1270

CADMOS

Can you listen, then, and answer clearly?

AGAVE

But I forget what we were saying before, father.

**1262** Literally, "you won't be happy, but you'll think you're not unhappy."  
This figure works well in Greek, but the point is difficult to understand in English, so the translation clarifies it.

CADMOS

To what house did you go when you were married?

AGAVE

You gave me to Echion, called one of the Spartoi.

CADMOS

And in that house, who was your husband's child?

1275

AGAVE

Pentheus, by my union with his father.

CADMOS

And so whose face do you have in your arms?

AGAVE

A lion's — so they told me at the hunting.

CADMOS

Then look right at it; brief is the toil to see it.

AGAVE

Ah! what do I behold? what am I carrying in my hands?

1280

CADMOS

Examine it and understand more plainly.

AGAVE

I see the greatest grief — oh, misery!

CADMOS

It doesn't look like a lion to you, does it?



AGAVE

No, it's Pentheus — misery! it's Pentheus' head.

CADMOS

• You mourn before you recognise the truth.

1285

AGAVE

Who killed him? How did he come into my hands?

CADMOS

Terrible truth, to come at such a moment.

AGAVE

Tell me! the delay makes my heart leap.

CADMOS

*You* killed him, and your sisters with you.

AGAVE

Where did he die? at home? where was the place?

1290

**1285** Most editors, including DODDS, understand the line to mean, “[Already] mourned by me before you recognised him,” making the word “mourned” refer to Pentheus; but to me this seems empty. The source of the error may be a misunderstanding of the concept of *anagnôrisis*, “recognition”, which Aristotle in his *Poetics* regards as part of the culmination of a good tragedy; Aristotle means, not a recognition that some person is really so and so, but that the situation is such and such. Thus the word *gnôrisai* “recognise” in 1285 has been taken to refer to Agave’s recognition of Pentheus’ head, which has just taken place; but her full “recognition” of the truth does not come until 1296, and this, I think, is Cadmos’ point: the tragedy is not just that Pentheus is dead, but that Agave has killed him. Hence I take “mourned” to be impersonal, referring to Agave’s preceding utterance.

CADMOS

Where once the dogs divided Actaion.

AGAVE

But why did he go to Cithairon, unhappy man?

CADMOS

To sneer at the god, and at you, the bacchae.

AGAVE

We? How did *we* come to end up there?

CADMOS

You were mad; the whole city went bacchanting. 1295

AGAVE

Dionysos has destroyed us; at last I understand.

CADMOS

Violence on violence; you did not believe him a god. 1297

AGAVE

• But Pentheus — how did *my* wrong thinking touch *him*? 1301

**1301–2** We are now approaching the part of the play where our text is in worst shape. The order of ideas in the MS runs: “[1297 Ca:] That’s because you didn’t honour Dionysos.” “[1298 Ag:] Where is the body...?” “[1299 Ca:] I have it here.” “[1300 Ag:] Are the limbs assembled?” “[1301 Ag:] How did my folly touch Pentheus?” “[1302 Ca:] He was like you, impious.” “[1303 Ca:] Therefore he joined you all into one disaster...”. That there is a problem with the MS is obvious, since 1301 cannot directly follow 1300. At the very least Cadmos must have answered Agave’s question in 1300. Murray, it is true, thought that Cadmos could simply have remained silent, choked with emotion, and indicated the body by a gesture, but this misunderstands Greek dramatic convention,

CADMOS

He was like you, impious towards the god. 1302

AGAVE

Where is the body of my child, father? 1298

CADMOS

I have it here, after a toilsome quest.

AGAVE

Are the limbs all put together properly? 1300

CADMOS

• Look for yourself; I have no words to tell you. 1300a

which always has the actors comment on their actions, because the masks ruled out facial expressions, and gestures did not read well from the house. Further, it is unbelievable that Agave could have seen the body without reacting and commenting upon it, as would happen if 1301 followed 1300. Moreover, there is another problem with the lines: 1303 cannot follow 1302, because the unannounced change of subject from Pentheus (“*he* was like you”) to Dionysos (“*he* joined you all”) is impossible in Greek.

The easiest solution comes from recognising that 1301 seems to belong to an earlier stage of the exchange, in which Agave is still ascertaining the facts; and in this case it would seem best for it to follow 1297, since the “folly” referred to in 1301 is exactly the failure to honour Dionysos explained in 1297. But if we move 1301, we must move 1302, for is 1302 the only good response to 1301. This solves both difficulties at once. Therefore I adopt the transposition proposed by Wilamowitz; see DODDS for this and other suggestions.

**1300a-j**        Once 1301–2 are moved to after 1297, the train of thought of the text runs, “[1300 Ag:] Are the limbs assembled?” “[1303 Ca:] Therefore he joined you all into one disaster.” Clearly, if we leave 1300 where it is, we must posit (i) a line or lines giving Cadmos’ answer; (ii) lines giving Agave’s response to seeing the state of the body; and (iii) a line in which Dionysos is the subject, to lead into 1303 (see previous

note). Wilamowitz, to be sure, tried to solve the problem by excising 1298–1300, which he thought had wandered in from the Great Lacuna after 1329; but this is a very long way for the lines to wander, and this solution still does not face the problem of the change of subject from Pentheus to Dionysos between 1302 and 1303. Besides, we need 1298–1300 where they are: Agave has not yet at 1301 recognised the full import of her horror; not only is Pentheus dead, not only has she killed him (1296–7 and 1301–2), but the body is irreparably mangled (1298–1300), a terrible thing for Greeks, women especially, who unlike us could not be content, as we reluctantly can be, with a closed-casket funeral, but regarded it as essential to proper funeral rites, one of the most crucial and sanctified of all Greek ceremonies, to keen over and physically embrace the body. This, after all, is the culmination of her “recognition”, and it is at this moment that we expect her fullest reaction; in addition to having killed her son, which pollutes her, she now cannot even give him proper burial. This is why I say that we need not only a line from Cadmos answering Agave’s question at 1300, but also some lines from Agave reacting to the sight of the mangled body. Moreover, we expect Agave’s lines of reaction to come *now*; we do not expect her to hold her peace on this matter, having seen the body, waiting all the way through Cadmos’ speech 1303–26, as Wilamowitz would have her do. So her reaction to the state of the body will not have been part of her speech in the Great Lacuna after 1329, but must have been part of what fell out between 1300 and 1303.

Now, we cannot of course know exactly what Agave said. But it may be that we have a significant and fortunate clue. It was argued by a scholar named Kirchoff in 1856, that a 12th-century passion play by an unknown Byzantine, called by scholars the *Christus Patiens*, is made up in large part of lines adapted from Euripides (a common practice, known as a *cento*); that we possess all of the plays from which such lines are adapted; and that accordingly any lines of the *Christus Patiens* which are decidedly Euripidean in syntax and vocabulary, but *not* found in any of these plays, must stand a chance of having been adapted from the portion(s) of the *Bacchae* that we lack, but which the author of the *Christus Patiens* presumably possessed. Moreover, the correctness of this thesis, which had already been accepted by most scholars, has received apparent confirmation from the chance discovery in the 1950’s of a 5th-c. AD papyrus fragment, called P. Ant. 24. This papyrus consists of two scraps, the first of which contains some lines from the *Bacchae*; the second scrap, found with the first and in the same handwriting,

## AGAVE

Oh, horror on our house, and you, and me!	1300b
What corpse is <i>this</i> I see before my eyes?	1300c
How can I mourn <i>this</i> — oh, misery!	1300d
how take it to my breast, how give	1300e
a mother's cry for her dead son,	1300f
or kiss this flesh, this flesh that once I nourished?	1300g
Ah, horror, horror on all our house!	1300h

## CADMOS

This is a punishment from Dionysus;	1300i
he saw how you and your sisters dishonoured him,	1300j
and so he joined you all into one disaster,	1303
you women and this man here, to destroy my house	

contains pieces of lines unknown to us, except that one line contains traces of a strange and rare word (*katelokismena*) found also in a line of the *Christus Patiens* already conjectured to be Euripidean. Hence it seems reasonable to suppose that the second scrap is from the Great Lacuna after 1329, and that it confirms Kirchoff's thesis.

Rather than simply leaving a blank, therefore, I have provided a hypothetical restoration of the lines missing after 1300, with as high a percentage as possible of the lines coming from the *Christus Patiens*. Actually it isn't so much a restoration, which would be presumptuous, as simply an attempt to get smoothly and convincingly through this part of the play. I have made up as few lines as possible, and those I have made up are minimal and conservative in character, consonant with Euripidean language and practice elsewhere in the play. **1300a** is made up as a reply by Cadmos to Agave's question in 1300. **1300b** is made up as an exclamation of reaction by Agave to the sight of the body, so the audience will know she is looking at it. **1300c-g** are based on *Chr Pat* 1311–15 and 1256–7. **1300h** is made up to round off Agave's speech; and **1300i-j** are made up to provide a lead-in to 1303, setting up Dionysos as subject. The full import of her gruesome plight is borne in upon Agave; after describing this plight, she gives a final cry and falls silent, and the lamentation is taken up by Cadmos.

and me, who never had male children, 1305  
and now must see this scion of your womb  
most shamefully and evilly put to death.  
You gave my house new sight, my child; you held  
my halls together, child of my daughter,  
a terror to the city: none who saw your face 1310  
would do violence to the aged man,  
for you gave them the justice they deserved.  
Now I shall be outcast from my house, dishonoured,  
Cadmos the Great, who sowed the Thebaian race  
and reaped the fairest harvest of them all. 1315  
Dearest of men: though you no longer live,  
still you are counted dear to me, my child;  
no more to touch this beard with your hand,  
or call me “father of my mother” and embrace me, child,  
or say: Who wrongs you? who dishonours you, old man? 1320  
Who riles up your heart, who gives you pain?  
Tell me; I’ll punish him that wrongs you, father.  
Now I am wretched, and you miserable,  
and pitiful your mother, and wretched all our family.  
If any man thinks light of the divine ones, 1325  
let him consider this man’s death, and believe in gods.

## CHORUS

I grieve for you, Cadmos, but your child’s child  
has the justice he deserves, though grievous to you.

## AGAVE

- Father: look upon the change in me,...

1329

### [Great Lacuna after 1329]

**1329** We have now reached the Great Lacuna. In the MS, 1329 is followed immediately by 1331, “be beastified, changed to a serpent’s shape.” But 1331 is clearly of a piece with what follows it, and hence is spoken by Dionysos; whereas, 1329 is spoken by Agave, and its grammar demands a continuation of her speech. Therefore some lines have fallen out of the tradition in the course of the text’s transmission; indeed, we know this for a fact, since an independent source preserves 1330 for us, quoting it together with the next two lines and so guaranteeing its place. But between 1329 and 1330, how many lines have we lost? Scholarship has mustered evidence that points to the loss being very large, justifying the designation of a Great Lacuna after 1329.

First of all, the “hypothesis”, a plot summary which was attached to the play at an early date, says that “Dionysos appears and speaks to everyone, making clear what will happen to each, so as never again to be despised as mortal by anyone.” But when our MS picks up Dionysos speaking at 1330, he is already in the middle of speaking of Cadmos’ fate, and discusses no one else’s: hence we may presume that we are missing at the least his prediction of the fate of Agave and her sisters. Moreover, Dionysos is not likely to have begun speaking these predictions immediately upon entering, but will have first made some general remarks, revealing his true identity (since everyone has up to now believed him to be a mortal bacchant from Lydia); this makes logical and dramatic sense, and is in any case the usual pattern of Euripidean *deus ex machina* speeches from this period. Furthermore, such *deus ex machina* speeches are usually quite long: the speech of the Dioscuri at the end of the *Electra* is over 50 lines long, the first ten being introductory material and the balance consisting of commands to and predictions about the characters; Athene’s speech in *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* is 40 lines, her speech in the *Suppliant Women* nearly 50, her speech in *Ion* even longer. As only 14 lines of Dionysos’ speech here survive, it is not unreasonable to suppose that roughly 30 or 35 lines from Dionysos’ speech alone have been lost.

But then we come to Agave's speech — for she has just begun to speak at 1329, when the lacuna begins. It is incredible that she would not have had a long speech, summing up the sorrow of her situation, as Cadmos has just summed up his; and 1329 certainly looks like the opening of such a speech. Further, Euripides is fond of formal balancing of speeches; so, to match Cadmos' speech, Agave's will probably have been about 25 lines long, and followed by a two-line comment by the chorus.

We can confirm the size of the lacuna by reference to the question of how the lines were lost in the first place. They were not lost early in the manuscript transmission, for at that time books were written on continuous papyrus rolls, and though a copyist might accidentally miss a line or two, he would not miss fifty; sometimes the beginning or the end of a play, that is, one entire end of the roll, will break off and be lost, but a fifty-line hole is improbable. On the other hand, starting in the 2nd-4th centuries AD, literature was copied and bound in codex form, like a modern book with pages; a single page might easily fall out (or, with slightly less probability, be skipped in the copying process), and since our comparable codices consist on average of 30 or so lines per side, we could easily be missing 60 lines of the *Bacchae* here. Moreover, as DODDS reports, our discovery of the papyrus P. Ant. 24 seems to confirm this indirectly (see previous note). The two scraps are inscribed on both sides, and date from the 5th-c. AD; hence they are from a codex. The first scrap consists of known lines from the *Bacchae*, and allow us to calculate that the number of lines to a side in that edition was about 35. The second scrap contains fragments of unknown lines, so that if these are in fact from the *Bacchae*, they confirm the existence of a continuous block of at least 45 lines later lost from the tradition.

We can therefore posit a long lacuna, 50 or 60 lines, consisting of the rest of Agave's speech (roughly 25 lines), a 2-line choral response to it, and 20 or 30 lines of the beginning of Dionysos' speech. (There could, of course, have been lines between the choral response to Agave's speech and the beginning of the speech of Dionysos, such as a mourning interchange between Cadmos and Agave; but as it is impossible to confirm this, we may as well waive this point.) We come now to the question of what each character said.

We can dismiss the problem of what Dionysos said as fairly trivial. As mentioned above, he will first have introduced himself; then he will have predicted or dictated the fate of Agave and her sisters, which must have consisted at least of exile from Thebai. There



will then have been a transition to the fate of Cadmos, which is what Dionysos is talking about when our MS picks up again at 1330.

The question of what Agave said is more complex. It may be that we have an important clue in the statements of a 3rd-c. rhetorician named Apsines, who tells us that “in Euripides, Pentheus’ mother Agave, when she recovers her sanity and recognises that her son has been mangled, accuses herself and evokes pity,” and that “Euripides arouses pity for Pentheus [? or, perhaps, ‘in the Pentheus,’ an alternate name for the *Bacchae*] when his mother takes each of his limbs and laments them individually.” The problem is how to use this information. Many scholars have thought that a long-drawn-out putting together of the body is involved, although I would object that this is not what Apsines says, and that such a procedure would be tasteless beyond belief. At least, however, she ought to restore the head, which she is carrying in her hands, to the body in the casket. I assume that she did this in the Great Lacuna, not in the lacuna after 1300, because: (i) I think it is better to assume as brief as possible a lacuna after 1300; (ii) if the restoration of the head is in the lacuna after 1300, we are left without enough for Agave to say and do in the Great Lacuna; and (iii) to have Agave accuse herself, as Apsines says, and *then* replace the head and mourn briefly some more, seems to me far and away the most effective procedure dramatically, completing the train of movement of the MS up to 1329, and creating a satisfactory stopping-place for Agave’s speech, so that the chorus can comment and Dionysos can begin.

My “reconstruction” is assembled as follows. (See the previous note for my principles of reconstruction, and for the significance of the *Christus Patiens*.) **1329a** is from *Chr Pat* 1011, as suggested by DODDS. **1329b-j** are made up, based on expressions from elsewhere in the play, to provide Agave’s self-accusation, as mentioned by Apsines. **1329k** is a line quoted for us by the ancient commentator on Aristophanes’ *Wealth* 907. **1329l** is made up to provide a transition to **1329m-o**, which are based on *Chr Pat* 1466–8, and **1329p** is based on *Chr Pat* 1449. **1329q-r** are based on *Chr Pat* 1470–1; but *Chr Pat* 1471 probably corresponds to P. Ant. 24 2a, line 3 (containing the key word translated “ploughed”), so **1329s-u** are suggested by DODDS’ reconstruction of P. Ant. 24 2a, lines 4–6, and I think that lines 5–6 of that scrap must clearly be the chorus’ two-line response to Agave’s speech, so we are now ready for Dionysos’ speech. **1329v-y** are made up as a beginning for Dionysos’ speech, in which he reveals his identity (he would certainly do

(AGAVE)

...so miserable, who once was proud and happy:	1329a
I claimed Semele's union with Zeus was false,	1329b
and would not believe her child was Dionysos	1329c
a god, nor that he was Zeus' son;	1329d
haughty and proud, with my sisters at the looms	1329e
I laughed at those who worshipped Dionysos.	1329f
But Dionysos was stronger, a great god:	1329g
he goaded us to madness, and we bacchanted to him,	1329h
and many dreadful deeds we did upon the mountains, —	1329i
though even so my life would still be bearable,	1329j
had I not taken my own pollution into my hands	1329k
and killed my own son, and boasted of the killing.	1329l
Unhappy Pentheus! Give me his head, father:	1329m
we ought to try to join it properly,	1329n
and make the body decent as we may,	1329o
in scanty consolation to the dead.	1329p
Now cover him, someone, cover him with a shroud,	1329q
and take away the ploughed and bloodied limbs	1329r

this first of all, as our other *deus ex machina* speeches show; 1340–1 merely repeats the point). **1329z-b'** are based on *Chr Pat* 1360–2. **1329c'** is from *Chr Pat* 1664. **1329d'** is made up to provide a transition to **1329e'**, which is based on *Chr Pat* 1663. **1329f'-g'** are made up to provide a transition to **1329h'**, which is based on *Chr Pat* 1668. **1329i'** is made up to provide a transition to **1329j'-m'**, which are based on *Chr Pat* 1674–7 and 1756. Then **1329n'-o'** are made up to lead us back into the MS 1330.

Again, the reconstruction is minimal to the extent possible (the original was no doubt considerably longer), and the made-up lines are mostly made up out of echoic phrases from other parts of the play; and I have availed myself of nearly all those *Christus Patiens* lines which, following Murray and DODDS, stand a chance of being based on lines from the missing portions of our play. Observe the conspicuous absence of the often-quoted *Chr Pat* 1469, “O dearest face, O cheek of youth”; Murray lists it in his

of Pentheus, and perform his funeral labours. 1329s

## CHORUS

Let mortals look on these things and be taught: 1329t

Dionysus is a god, the seed of Zeus. 1329u

## DIONYSOS

Women of Asia, and people of Cadmos' city: 1329v

I am no mere mortal from the Lydian land, 1329w

but Dionysos, the god, the son of Zeus, 1329x

now manifest to mortals a divinity. 1329y

The Cadmeans heaped improper words on me, 1329z

falsely claiming I was begotten by some mortal; 1329a´

nor was this violence enough for them, 1329b´

but Pentheus dared to mock and fetter me. 1329c´

As these, my mother's family, should least have done all this, 1329d´

so Pentheus died by those who should least have killed him. 1329e´

Thus has dishonour come to all the house of Cadmos, 1329f´

and all the house will pay the price of folly: 1329g´

I make no secret of what must happen to you. 1329h´

You, Agave, together with your sisters 1329i´

must leave this city, for the rest of time 1329j´

an exile, with kindred blood upon your hands; 1329k´

it is forbidden that a murderer shall stay 1329l´

in impious pollution of his native land. 1329m´

You, Cadmos, must remain, bereft of all your family, 1329n´

dishonoured, childless; but in the end... 1329o´

catalogue of possible fillers for the lacuna, and DODDS does not counter him, but, although the line has seemed effective to many translators, it is in reality (as a student of mine first pointed out to me) based on *Andromache* 1181.

(DIONYSOS)

be changed into a snake, and your wife too 1330  
be beastified, changed to a serpent's shape,  
Harmonia, Ares' daughter, that you, a mortal, married.

Zeus' oracle foretells that you shall pull  
an ox-cart with your wife, leading barbarians,  
and with your countless army sacking many 1335

- cities — though when they plunder Apollo's  
temple, they shall have a wretched homecoming.

You and Harmonia, Ares shall rescue,  
and settle your life in the land of the blessed.

No mortal father's son am I to tell you this, 1340  
but Dionysos, child of Zeus; had you been inclined  
towards pure thinking when you were not, the seed of Zeus  
you would now have as your ally, and be happy.

CADMOS

Dionysos, we beg of you — we have done wrong...

DIONYSOS

You learn too late; you did not know me when you should. 1345

CADMOS

But *now* we know: you prosecute us too much.

DIONYSOS

It was you that did violence to me, a god.

1336            "Apollo" is, in the original, "Loxias".

## CADMOS

A god's anger should not be like a mortal's.

## DIONYSOS

Long ago was all this approved by Zeus, my father.

## AGAVE

Ah, father, it is decided: unhappy exile. 1350

## DIONYSOS

• Why then delay what is compulsory? 1351

**1352–62** The omitted lines are a speech of Cadmos, as follows: “My child, to what a dreadful evil are we come, / all of us, you, poor woman, and your sisters, / and me, poor me: I will come and dwell, an old man, / among barbarians, and then there is the oracle / that I must lead a mixed barbarian horde on Greece. / And Ares' daughter, Harmonia, my wife, / will have a serpent's wild nature, and I, a serpent, / will bring her against Greek altars and graves, / leading with the spear; nor will I cease / from evils, wretched me, nor even by sailing / falling Acheron will I find rest.” My grounds for regarding the lines as spurious are as follows:

(i) The lines merely recite at length the fate of Cadmos which Dionysos has already predicted; they add nothing new, in all that length, to the audience's knowledge, so that the repetition appears gratuitous. (ii) Cadmos does not appear to have gotten the knowledge he here recites from Dionysos' speech at all. He says he will not find rest after death (“by sailing falling Acheron”); but Dionysos has told him (1338–9) that he will be specially rescued, to dwell in the Islands of the Blessed. To try, with DODDS, to justify Cadmos' words psychologically by claiming that being sent to the Islands of the Blessed could count in this context as something other than a blessing, is feeble. (iii) The lines are formally most unusual. Euripides' usual practice after a *deus ex machina* speech is either to have one character reply directly to the speech and then to empty the stage as quickly as possible, or else to begin at once to empty the stage, with short speeches by whoever is present; the latter is just the structure of this scene when 1352–62 are absent. (iv) It is unusual for a stichomythia to be interrupted by a long speech. (v) 1363 makes a

good response to 1351, which itself confirms 1350: the train of thought runs, “[Ag:] It’s no use arguing with Dionysos, father; I’m to be banished.” “[Di:] That’s right.” “[Ag:] I’ll miss you, then, father.” These lines, as well as what precedes and follows them, concentrate on Agave’s exile; 1352–62 interrupt the train of thought. (vi) Cadmos has already had his lamentation speech, at 1300i-1326, balanced by Agave’s in the Great Lacuna; why should he get another one here, especially when Agave does not get another one? (vii) Cadmos’ speech is astonishingly self-centered, even for him; he mentions Agave and his sisters without describing their fate, and only to pass on to himself. Moreover, Cadmos’ concentration on his future adventures is not consonant with the thematic structure of the rest of the scene; in the surrounding lines, all the concern of the scene is for Agave’s and her sisters’ exile, and Cadmos’ powerlessness to prevent it. In 1344 and 1346 Cadmos speaks only of “we”, showing that he is trying to intercede for his daughters; it is incredible that he should thus change the subject so violently, concentrating only on himself, and then returning to his sympathy for Agave for the rest of the scene.

In short, if any lines bear the earmarks of interpolation, they are these. They must, however, have entered the manuscript tradition fairly early, since the *Christus Patiens* uses one of them. I suspect, in fact, that they entered the play *very* early, written by some actor playing Cadmos who felt that his character was given too little pathos at the end of the drama, and who therefore tastelessly blew up Cadmos’ centrality out of all proportion to the dramatic demands of the story; it is, as Apsines notes, Agave for whom we feel pity at the end, and it is *her* fate that is central to the stichomythic lines and the anapaests that end the play.

The astute reader may object, that in the absence of 1352–62, no one on stage shows any sign of having heard Dionysos’ prediction of Cadmos’ fate at 1330–7. This is absolutely true; my reply is, that I have my secret doubts about 1330–7 as well. As DODDS says, 1330–9 have “puzzled mythologists”, seeming to have been “put together at a relatively late date out of heterogeneous older elements,” of which “none...appears in extant literature before the fifth century.” Suppose, for a moment, that Euripides in fact had Dionysos say of Cadmos only that he would be forced to live out an unhappy old age until his transportation to the Islands of the Blessed. This would explain why Cadmos’ lines (once we cut 1352–62) all concentrate on his sympathy for Agave’s fate: his own fate is

AGAVE

Father, I shall be deprived of you and banished. 1363

CADMOS

Why throw your arms around me, miserable child,  
like a young swan round a grey and useless elder? 1365

AGAVE

Where shall I turn to, cast from my fatherland?

CADMOS

I don't know, child; your father is little help.

relatively benign, as is only reasonable given that his wrongs are not very great. Perhaps the same actor who wrote 1352–62 also interpolated illogically 1330–7, predicting something unhappy for Cadmos just so as to be able to have Cadmos lament that prediction later.

It may finally just be added, that in the Hunter College production we cut 1330–9 and 1352–62, and we *still* found that the scene did not end fast enough to make it play well. The presence of either speech would have intensified an already harsh dramatic problem.

## [ANAPAESTS]

### Strophe (1368-73)

#### AGAVE

- Fārewēll thē pālāce, | fārewēll thē fāthērland;  
cī tŷ, Ī lēave yōu, | bōund fōr mī sfōrtune,  
cāst frōm mŷ chāmbērs.

**1368–73** Anapaests are a regular chanted rhythm, probably fairly slow, like the first theme of the slow movement of Beethoven’s 7th Symphony; a long syllable may in most positions freely be interchanged with or respond to two shorts, creating a great variety of anapaestic measures all of which were regarded as equivalent. My rendering keeps the verse- and measure-structure of the original; but it freely uses for each measure whatever variety of anapaest would aid translation, without forcing the metre to reflect Euripides’ exact choice of anapaest. — I accept the view of Hermann (cited by DODDS), who saw that there is strophe-antistrophe structure here, indicated and guaranteed by the symmetrical distribution of speeches and their corresponding lengths.

The line, “son, now Echion’s; none shall succeed me” is my own creation. That a line has dropped out is indicated by the strophic respension, and confirmed by the fact that the previous line ends ungrammatically: if *ton Aristaiou* could mean “to the house of Aristaios,” there would be no grammatical problem, but Hermann showed that it could not. On the other hand, it could certainly mean “the *son* of Aristaios”; and I reason that, while it makes little dramatic sense for Euripides to introduce suddenly a gratuitous detail that Agave is to meet her sisters at Aristaios’ *house*, it makes great sense for Cadmos to speak here of Aristaios’ *son*, Actaion, whose death (as the play has hinted many times) is parallel to Pentheus’. Indeed, I suspect that the point of Cadmos’ calling Pentheus his house’s “new sight” at 1308 is in part that Pentheus had made up for the loss of Cadmos’ only other male heir, Actaion. Hence my reconstruction of the line.



CADMOS

Chīld, thēn dēpart nōw: | fīrst Ārīstaiōs'  
sōn, nōw Ēchiōn's; | nōne shall sūccēed mē.

AGAVE

Fāthēr, Ī grōan fōr yōu.

CADMOS

Ī grōan fōr yōu, chīld,  
and fōr yōur sīstērs, | thēsē tēars ārē fōr thēm.

## Antistrophe (1374-80)

### AGAVE

- Āh, fāthēr, drēadfūl, | drēadfūl thē outrāge  
lōrd Dīōnysōs | sēnds tō affli ct us,  
sēnds ōn ōur hōusēs.

### CADMOS

Yēs, fōr hē sūffēred | drēadfūllŷ frōm yōu,  
hāvī ng hī s nāmē dī s- | hōnōured ī n Thēbāi.

**1374–80** The first two lines of this stanza are, in the MS, not anapaests, falling short of being so by a syllable each. In the first line, I accept Hermann’s *gar toi* for *gar*. The second line ends *tous sous eis*, literally “on your [houses].” This is strange logically: the house and punishment are Agave’s too, after all. It is also strange syntactically: the line ends with a preposition, *eis* ‘into’, which is odd in itself, and the preposition is postponed when the metre does not require it, which is also odd. Hence I emend to *tous hēmeterous*, “to our”. This has the additional advantage that it makes a better reply to what Cadmos has just said, that he weeps for Agave and her sisters; Agave’s line begins with *gar*, “Yes, for...”, so that for her to speak of “your houses” in her reply would seem a strange line of reasoning, whereas for her to speak of “our houses” (mine and my sisters’) makes perfect sense. The reading in the MS must be in part due to someone who did not know anapaests, and who did not realise that in poetry the accusative “[to] our houses” needs no preposition.

The next speech has as its verb in the MS “I suffered”, in which case it would have to be spoken by Dionysos; but I agree with Hermann that the *deus ex machina* figure is out of place speaking here (and seems indeed to have left the stage already). Since a tiny change gives us “he suffered”, and since the line would then be Cadmos’, and since this would perfect the correspondence between speakers across Strophe and Antistrophe, I accept Hermann’s reading here.

AGAVE

Fāthēr, fārewēll thēn.

CADMOS

Fārewēll, wrētchēd ōne:

īt wīll bē hārd, thōugh, |fōr yōu tō dō sō.

## Epode (1381-92)

### AGAVE

C̄ome, then, c̄onduct mē, | fr̄iends, tō m̄y s̄i s̄ters,  
p̄i t̄i f̄ul cr̄eatur̄es, | m̄y f̄ellōw-ex̄i les;  
l̄et mē gō s̄omewh̄ere  
f̄ar fr̄om thē ḡaze of | bl̄ood-gūilt̄y C̄ith̄air̄on,  
f̄ar, s̄o th̄at m̄y ēȳes | sh̄all n̄ot s̄ee C̄ith̄air̄on,  
f̄ar fr̄om thē th̄yrs̄us, | f̄ar fr̄om ĩ ts m̄em̄ory:  
l̄et oth̄er b̄acch̄ae | m̄ake ĩ t th̄eir c̄are. ||

### CHORUS

- M̄an̄y thē gūi s̄es | of thē d̄i v̄i ne ones,  
m̄an̄y s̄urp̄ri s̄es | ḡods m̄ay ācc̄ompl̄i sh;  
and thē ēx̄pect̄ed | f̄i nds n̄o fr̄ūi t̄ion,  
all un̄ex̄pect̄ed | ḡod f̄i nds ā p̄athw̄ay.  
S̄uch w̄as thē out̄c̄ome | ĩ n th̄i s, our p̄lay. ||

**1381–92** The chorus' speech here is found in more or less identical form at the end of four other Euripidean plays. It seems to be just a set of tag lines, serving only to obey the apparent convention that the chorus must be speaking in order to move off the stage. In production it may be more effective to omit the lines.