

(Dionysus enters.)

Dionysus:

Here I am, Dionysus, Zeus's son,
the god whom Semele, the daughter of Cadmus,
birthed, with a bolt of lightning for a midwife.
I am back home in the land of Thebes.

My sacred form exchanged for this mere mortal
disguise, I have arrived here where the Springs
of Dirce and the River Ismenos
are flowing. I can see my lightning-blasted
mother's tomb right there beside the palace,
and I can see as well her former bedroom's
rubble giving off the living flame
of Zeus' fire—Hera's immortal grudge
against my mother. I am grateful Cadmus
has set the site off as a sanctuary
to keep her memory. I am the one
who covered it on all sides round with grape vines
and ripe grape clusters.

I have left behind
the gold-rich countries of the Lydians
and Phrygians, the Persians' sun-struck plains,
the battlements of Bactria, and passed through
wealthy Arabia and Asia Minor
where, all along the salty ocean, towns
with handsome circuit walls enclose non-Greeks
and Greeks alike. I came to this Greek city
first of all, made it dance and instituted
my rituals so that the people here
see my divinity with their own eyes.

I have compelled this town to rant and howl,
dressed it in fawnskin, put my sacred staff
into its hands, my ivy-vested spear,
and all because my mother's sisters claim
that Zeus is not the father of Dionysus—
how could they speak such slander? They allege
some mortal sired the child on Semele,
and she blamed Zeus for her disgraceful error

on Cadmus's advice. That's why (they say)
Zeus smote my mother with a lightning bolt—
because she lied about the pregnancy.

So I have maddened them in retribution,
driven them from their homes, and they, unhinged,
have occupied a mountain. I have forced them
to don the vestments of my rites. In fact,
the women of Thebes—all of them, every one—
under my influence have fled their homes
in madness. Mixed among the daughters of Cadmus,
they lounge about in broad daylight on cliffs
beneath the green fir trees. Since Thebes is still
ignorant of my rites, it needs to learn them—
even against its will. I must defend
the honor of Semele by teaching mortals
it was a god she bore to Zeus.

What's more,

Cadmus has handed down the privilege
of kingship to his grandson Pentheus
who, as I see it, wars against the gods—
he bars me from the honors owed to me
and never names me in his prayers. My godhood
therefore must be driven home to him
and all of Thebes. I will be off again,
once matters have been settled here, to show
my glory elsewhere. If the city of Thebes
attempts to rout my Bacchantes from the mountain
with spears and anger, I shall lead the Maenads
against it like a general. To that end
I have disguised my superhuman form
beneath the trappings of a mortal man.

(A chorus of Bacchae from Asia enters. Dionysus turns and addresses them.)

You who have left Mount Tmolus, the bulwark
of Lydia, all you devotees whom I
have led out of exotic lands to serve
as fellow travelers in peace and war,
take up the drum they use in Phrygia,
the one that Rhea and myself invented,
and gather round the royal house of Pentheus!
Beat time until the townsfolk understand!

I meanwhile will go up to Mount Cithaeron,
join my Bacchantes and enjoy their dances.

(Dionysus exits.)

Chorus:

Astrophic

I hastened out of Asia, from the side
of sacred Tmolus, to perform a sweet
duty, my worship of the Roaring God.
Over and over I will shout
“O Bacchus, Bacchus!”

Who is in the road?

Who in the palace? Let them listen well,
their voices hushed in holy dread,
while I praise Dionysus in a mode
approved by custom

Strophe 1

That man is blest who, happy in his heart,
has passed through the initiation rite,
kept his life pure and made his soul a part
of Bacchic ecstasy with dancing feet
upon the mountainside. Blest is the man
who piously respects the secrets of
Great Mother Cybele and, with a crown
of ivy and a brandished sacred staff,
serves Dionysus. Come, you Bacchae, come
guide the divinely fathered Roaring God
down from the Phrygian ridges, lead him home
to Greece's spacious thoroughfares, streets wide
enough to give us room to dance for him.

Antistrophe 1

Struck by Zeus' lightning, Semele
cast Bacchus from her womb before his time
and perished in the fire. Instantly
the son of Cronos, Zeus, accepted him,
sheltered him in a chamber of his thigh,
a manly cavity, and stitched him in
with golden pins so that the child would stay
unknown to Zeus' consort Hera. Soon
the Fates brought round the necessary season,

and Zeus produced a bull-horned deity
and crowned his head with serpents. That's the reason
why Maenads now weave snakes, their mountain prey,
into their hair, a wild accessory.

Strophe 2

Thebes, nurse of Semele, be garlanded
with ivy, dress yourself in bright
yew-leaves and their attractive fruit,
luxuriate in oak and fir-tree boughs
and decorate your dappled fawn-skin clothes
with white sheep shearings. Hallow to the god
your proud, aggressive staffs of fennel wood.
When everywhere starts dancing all at once,
whoever leads the sacred Bacchant choir
becomes the Roaring God, and people dance
up to the mountain, to the mountain where
the women Bacchus goaded from the loom
and shuttle are expecting him.

Epode

Ecstasy is in the mountains when,
clad in the sacred garment, the fawn-skin,
the god is running with his sacred band
and then just up and tumbles to the ground
while in pursuit of raw-flesh joy, a slain
goat's blood. He dashes through the Phrygian
and Lydian mountains. Yes, the Roaring One

is leader of the dance! A-ha! Milk flows
among the grasses, red wine flows, the bees'
sweet nectar flows. Waving a torch of pine
that breathes the scent of Syrian frankincense,
the Bacchic God keeps urging idlers on
with his speed, foot-work and seductive chants,
all the while tossing to the upper air
his superabundant head of hair.

Over the Maenad's joyous cries
his deep voice thunders words like this:

“Come join us, Bacchae; Bacchae, join the dance,
while all around us the luxuriance
of Tmolus shines. Gold courses through the streams.
Come sing for Dionysus; be guided by
the thundering rhythm of the kettle-drums.
Celebrate joyously the god of joy
with Phrygian shouts and noise. The sacred pipe
is playing sweet songs, sacred melodies,
as spurs to stimulate the stragglers up
the mountainside.

Enthusiastic as
a foal beside her grazing mother mare,
a foal who stirs her swift-hooved legs to leap
and leap, the Bacchant relishes her sacred choir.

(Teiresias enters. He is blind and led by a servant, who knocks on the door of the palace.)

Teiresias:

Doorman, go fetch the son of Agenor,
Cadmus, who once left Sidon and established
the citadel of Thebes. Someone go tell him
Teiresias wants him. He already knows
why I have come and what we had agreed on,
one old man with another: to weave together
crowns for our sacred staffs, to dress in fawnskin
and put on garlands made of shoots of ivy.

(Cadmus enters from the palace.)

Cadmus:

My friend, it was a joy to hear, inside,

the wise words of a wise man such as you.
Here I am, ready, vested in the sacred
dress of the god who is my daughter's son.
Everything we have in us, we must give
to worship him, and you, old man, must guide
this old man here. You are the wise one. Never
day or night could I grow tired of drumming
this sacred fennel staff upon the ground.
How good it feels to leave old age behind!

Teiresias:

You and I feel the same! I, too, am young
and more than ready to begin the dance.

Cadmus:

No chariot will bring us up the mountain?

Teiresias:

No, that way the god would lose some honor.

Cadmus:

Old, I will lead you like a child, old man.

Teiresias:

The god will guide us there with perfect ease.

Cadmus:

Are we the only men to dance for Bacchus?

Teiresias:

Yes, we alone are wise; the rest are foolish.

Cadmus:

I'm tired of waiting. Come on, take my hand.

Teiresias:

Yes, come and grip it; meld your hand with mine.

Cadmus:

I am a mortal, so I neither scorn
the gods nor make new-fangled claims about them.

Teiresias:

No, it would not become the wise to scorn
the age-old customs of our forefathers.
No slick new trend will ever overthrow them,
not even something that the sharpest mind
could come up with. So what if there is someone
who says that I disgrace my age by wreathing
my hair and running out to join the dance?
The god himself does not discriminate—
young, old, we all must dance. He wants his worship
to come from all in common. He insists
none be exempt when he is being honored.

Cadmus:

Since you, Teiresias, no longer look
on daylight, I will play the prophet for you:
Pentheus, son of Echion, the man
to whom I ceded kingship of this land,
is rushing toward the house. He seems upset—
I wonder what new thing he has to say.

(Pentheus enters.)

Pentheus:

I happened to be out of town and now
I come back home and hear that strange new mischief
is troubling Thebes: women have left their homes
for sham ecstatic rites and now are running
wild through the mountain shadows, worshipping
with choral song and dance a faddish god—
the hitherto-unheard-of Dionysus.

First they set up full wine bowls to share
and share alike among the coven-members
and then they slip off, one by one, to service
men in private. Their excuse, of course,
is they are Maenads serving pious ends,
but Aphrodite is the god they worship,
not some fraud named Dionysus.

Now
town constables have jailed and manacled
all of them we have rounded up, and I
will chase the hold-outs down out of the mountains.
When I have locked them up in nets of iron,

I will end once and for all their blasted
Bacchanals. I hear some foreign man
has come, some wizard out of Lydia,
his golden ringlets dripping with perfume,
his eyes replete with love-god Aphrodite's
wine-dark charms. He spends his days and nights
with young girls, tempting them with ritual cries.
Once I have caught that man beneath this roof,
I will compel him to desist from pounding
his ivy-shrouded wand and shaking out
his flowing locks—by cutting off his head.

He claims that Dionysus is a god
that once was stitched inside the thigh of Zeus
after a lightning bolt incinerated
his mother—she, you see, had falsely claimed
that Zeus had wed her. Doesn't all that nonsense
merit an ignominious death by hanging?
Just think of it—some stranger mocking me
with such profanity!

Here's another marvel:

I see Teiresias the seer wearing
a dappled fawn-skin and my mother's father
holding a fennel stalk. Ridiculous!
Grandfather, how ashamed I am to see
your old age so devoid of common sense.
Won't you remove those shoots of ivy? Won't you
throw away that staff? You did this to him,
Teiresias. You pushed him into this.
You want to foist a strange new god on mortals
so you can find his omens in the sky
and rake in still more money. If your gray
senility were not protecting you,
you would be held in chains among the Bacchants
for fabricating wicked heathen rites.
Whenever women use the grape-vine's joys
to celebrate a feast, I say those rites
should not be known as "healthy" any longer.

Chorus:

Sacrilege! Strange man, do you not revere
the gods? A son of Echion, are you out
to shame your lineage, humiliate

Cadmus who sowed the crop of Earth-born men?

Teiresias:

When wise men start to speak on worthy subjects,
they make fine speeches easily, but you,
you have the ready tongue of someone clever
but there's no sense in it. A bold and able
person, someone skilled at speech, becomes
a bad citizen when he loses reason.

This new divinity, the one you mock—
I cannot put in words how all-important
he will become in Greece. Now listen, child,
two things are vital to us mortals: first,
divine Demeter. Call her what you will,
she is the earth and feeds the human race
the drier kinds of food.

But what came next,
the son of Semele, invented something
to go along with grain: the grape's wet quench,
his legacy to mortals. When we wretched
humans drink the river of the vine,
it quenches our despair and gives us sleep
to blot out all the troubles of the day.
There is no other cure for misery.
We pour out Bacchus in the form of wine
as offerings to the gods so that, through him,
we men receive the good things we enjoy.

And Dionysus is a seer like me.
His Bacchic revelry and general madness
have much prophetic power in them. Whomever
this deity exceedingly possesses
conceives a frantic need to tell the future.
The god has part of Ares in him, too—
whenever terror strikes a mass of soldiers
marshalled for battle under arms before
they even touch a spear—that sort of panic
also comes from Dionysus. You
will see him also up on rocky Delphi,
leaping on either of the summits there
with torch in hand, waving the Bacchic wand
that stands for might throughout the land of Greece.

Trust me, Pentheus. Do not go boasting
that royal power alone has power over
humankind. Even if you believe,
yes, even if your mind is so diseased
as to believe, your current course is wise,
receive this god in Thebes, pour him libations,
dance in his rites and crown your head with ivy.

Regarding Aphrodite, Dionysus
does not compel a woman to be wanton.
Those who by nature are unchaste, they always
must be watched, but Bacchic celebration
will not corrupt a woman who is modest.

Consider how exuberant you are
when crowds of people greet you at the gates
and Thebes extols the name of Pentheus.
He also, I am certain, takes delight
in being honored. Cadmus here, the man
you laugh at—he and I will crown our heads
with ivy and join the dance, two grizzled yoke-mates,
but we must dance. Your words will not persuade me
to fight against the gods, since you are mad,
so mad that neither with drugs nor without them
could you recover from your malady.

Chorus:

Old man, your words did not disgrace Apollo
the god of prophets. No, by honoring
a mighty god, you rather show your wisdom.

Cadmus:

Teiresias has given good advice,
my child. Stand here with us, inside what's right
and not outside of it. You now are flitting
about at random, and your thoughts are thoughtless.
Even if, as you argue, he is not
a god, let him be called one anyway:
lie nobly so that Semele will seem
the mother of a god, and our whole family
will grow in honor. You yourself were witness
to Actaeon's sad murder, how the very
raw-flesh-hungry mastiffs he had reared

attacked him in a meadow, shredded him,
because he bragged he was a better hunter
than Aretmis. The same fate may be yours.
Come, put a crown of ivy on your head
and honor Dionysus as we do.

Pentheus:

Don't touch me. Go and celebrate your revels
But don't you wipe your folly off on me.
I will make the teacher of this nonsense
pay for what he has done. Someone be quick, now
go to the station where Teiresias
observes the birds, tear it up, overturn it
with crowbars, toss the whole place upside down.
Throw all his garlands to the wild storm-winds.
That is the way that I will wound him most.

You others go about the streets of Thebes
and hunt down that effeminate outsider
who is infecting women with a new disease
and tainting all our beds. Once you have caught him,
bring him to me in chains, and he will suffer
death by stoning as his sentence. That's what
bringing his Bacchic rites to Thebes will cost him.

Teiresias:

Sad man, how little you must understand
what you are saying. You are mad at present,
but you had lost your wits before now, too.
Cadmus, we need to go and pray for him,
this savage fellow here, and for the city,
before the god does something drastic. Come,
support my body with your ivy staff,
and I will try to hold yours up as well.
Two old men falling down would be disgraceful.
Still, if it happens, let it happen: we
must serve the Bacchic god, the son of Zeus.
Cadmus, beware or Pentheus will bring
misery on your house. This warning I
am giving you is not a prophecy
but comes from simply looking at the facts.
Foolishness—that is all a fool can say.

(Pentheus exits. Teiresias exits, led by Cadmus.)

Chorus:

Strophe 1

Sanctity, you queen of gods, as you
go flying over earth on golden wings,
do you take in the sacrilegious things
King Pentheus has been proclaiming, how
he scorns the Roaring God, Semele's son?
He has the power to bring outsiders in,
to laugh when pipes play and to deaden care
when grape-joy visits sacred feasts
and the abounding wine-bowl casts
sleep over men with ivy in their hair.

Antistrophe 1

An unchecked mouth and rash stupidity
mean ruin, but a peaceful, prudent life
remains untossed by storms and keeps homes safe.
Although the gods live far away on high,
they watch the deeds of mortals all the same.
Smart talk is hardly wisdom; it's unwise
for men to think big and forget their place.
Our lives are short. Given our dearth of time,
who, in pursuing all-too-distant goals,
would lose out on what lies at hand?
That way of living, to my mind,
is for misguided men and crazy fools.

Strophe 2

I want to go to Cyprus, island of
Aphrodite, where the gods of love
reside, the sweet bewitchers of our wits;
to Paphos, where a hundred rivulets
water the plain and there are no rain showers.
Bull-Roarer, Keeper of Ecstatic Powers
and Leader of Bacchants, take me to sublime
Pieria where Muses spend their time,
to a divine Olympian mountain slope.
There, there at last we Bacchants will have scope
to hold, among the Graces and Desire,

the secret rites whose celebrants we are.

Antistrophe 2

Our son of Zeus delights in feasts, and Peace,
the youth-nurse, the purveyor of success,
is precious to him. He distributes wine,
the grief-cure, both to blest and unblest men.
Oh, but he bears a grudge against all those
who scorn the following activities:
living one's whole existence, every day,
every sweet night, in a state of joy;
keeping the inmost thoughts that make one wise
safe from the prying of excessive eyes.
What simple people practice and believe—
that's what I welcome, that's the way I live.

(Pentheus enters with several soldiers. Then a Soldier enters leading The Stranger.)

Soldier:

Pentheus, on your orders we have caught
this quarry here—the hunt was a success.
The beast was tame and didn't try to run.
He freely offered up his hands to us.
His flushed face hardly blanched with trepidation—
no, he just laughed, permitting us to bind him
and lead him back. He made the whole thing easy.
I confessed with some embarrassment,
“Stranger, I bring you in against my will:
Pentheus ordered me to capture you.”

As for the Bacchant women you had bound,
brought in and locked up in the public prison,
they have slipped their chains and skipped away
into the mountain valleys, calling on
their new god Dionysus. On their own
their shackles came undone, and keys unlocked
the cell-doors though there was no human hand
to turn them. All-too-wondrous is this man
who came to Thebes. The rest is your concern.

(The Soldier exits.)

Pentheus:

Release his hands. The prey is in my net,

and he is not so swift as to escape me.

(Turning to The Stranger)

Well, stranger, you are hardly unattractive,
to women—that's why you have come to Thebes.
Your hair is far too long to be a wrestler's—
look how it flows down past your cheeks, abounding
in lust. And your complexion, look how fair
you keep it—by design, no doubt. No, no,
it's not by daylight but at night that you
go hunting Aphrodite with your beauty.

First of all I must know your ancestry.

The Stranger:

An easy answer that I freely give you:
I'm sure you've heard of flowery Mount Tmolus.

Pentheus:

Yes, its spurs surround the city of Sardis.

The Stranger:

That's where I come from: Lydia is my homeland.

Pentheus:

From what source come these rites you bring to Greece?

The Stranger:

From Dionysus son of Zeus—he taught me.

Pentheus:

Is there some Zeus out there who sires new gods?

The Stranger:

No, he's the Zeus who lay with Semele.

Pentheus:

Did Bacchus find you in a dream or waking?

The Stranger:

We saw each other when he gave the rites.

Pentheus:

Yes, these rites of yours—what is their nature?

The Stranger:

Only initiates may know about them.

Pentheus:

How do they benefit those who observe them?

The Stranger:

It's not for you to know, but they are worthy.

Pentheus:

You shaped your answer smartly just to tempt me.

The Stranger:

The godhead's rites detest impious men.

Pentheus:

What does he look like, since you say you saw him?

The Stranger:

However he wishes—I do not control him.

Pentheus:

You dodge again by saying nothing smartly.

The Stranger:

The wise come off as foolish to a fool.

Pentheus:

Is this the first place you have brought the god?

The Stranger:

No, all of Asia dances in his honor.

Pentheus:

Because they think far worse than do we Greeks.

The Stranger:

In this case better. But their ways are different.

Pentheus:

Do you observe these rites by day or night?

The Stranger:

Mostly at night, since darkness makes them solemn.

Pentheus:

That's a licentious trick designed for women.

The Stranger:

People can shame themselves by daylight, too.

Pentheus:

You'll pay for your evasive clevernesses.

The Stranger:

And you for your thick-headed blasphemy.

Pentheus:

A brash Bacchant, and not unskilled in speaking.

The Stranger:

Tell me: what awful punishment is mine?

Pentheus:

First I will cut off those luxuriant curls.

The Stranger:

My hair is holy: I grow it for the god.

Pentheus:

Next, you will give that fennel staff to me.

The Stranger:

You come and take it—it belongs to Bacchus.

Pentheus:

We will hold you locked up under guard.

The Stranger:

The god himself will free me when I wish.

Pentheus:

Call on him from your cell next to the Bacchants.

anything it is not my lot to suffer.
But Dionysus—yes, the very god
you claim does not exist—will make you pay
for these offenses. Know that, when you wrong me,
it is the god you're sending off to jail.

(Pentheus and several soldiers lead The Stranger offstage.)

Chorus:

Strophe

Queen Dirce, virgin daughter of Achelous,
your waters bathed a newborn once, when Zeus,
his father, snatched him from the deathless flame,
sealed him inside his thigh and thundered thus:
“Come, Twice-Born God, into my manly womb.
'Bacchus,' yes, 'Bacchus,' you will be renowned—
all Thebes will one day call you by this name.”

But, Theabian River, you refuse me, though
I revel on your banks in ivy-crowned
choirs of women. Tell me: why do you
reject our rites? Why do you run away?
I promise, by the grape-vine-garnished joy
of liquid Dionysus, you will come
to hold the Roaring God in high esteem.

Antistrophe

There's so much anger in the earth-born race,
the serpent race that nurtured Pentheus
the son of Echion. No mortal man,
he is a monster mad for blood, he is
a deity-detesting giant. He soon
will lock me up, although I serve the god.
One of our number is already gone—

a dear believer, gone inside the house,
hidden away in some obscure stockade.
Tell me, Dionysus son of Zeus,
do you perceive your advocates, how we
are in the crucible of necessity?
Descend Olympus, heft your golden rod
and stop his blood-lust and outrageous pride.

Epode

Where, Dionysus, with your sacred wand
are you now running with your worshippers?
On Mt Corycia's slopes? On Nysa nurse
of beasts? Through dense Olympian tracts of land
where Orpheus once, by plucking at his lyre,
made beasts and trees move to the melody?
Blessed Pieria, the God of Joy
thinks highly of you and will come to spur
dancing in you and Bacchic revelry.
Yes, he will lead the whirling Maenad band
once he has crossed the rapid Axios river
and crossed the currents of the Lydias, giver
of wealth and happiness to humankind,

(The voice of Dionysus is heard from offstage.)

Dionysus:

Hear me, Bacchae! Bacchae, heed my voice!

Half Chorus 1:

Who is it? Who is there? From where
are you, O Rapture, calling out to us?

Dionysus:

Again, again I roar,
I, the son of Semele and Zeus.

Half Chorus 2:

O master, master, join our holy band.
Come join us, Roaring God!

Dionysus:

Now, Earthquake Goddess, shake the level ground!

Half Chorus 1:

Ah! Ah! The halls of Pentheus will soon
collapse in ruin. The god is in the house.
Exalt his power.

Half Chorus 2:

We exalt his power.

Don't you see the stone
atop the columns breaking down?
That's Dionysus there inside
roaring a victory ode.

Dionysus:

Come, fire of the lightning-bolt, consume
the house of Pentheus, burn it down!

Half Chorus 1:

Throw your trembling bodies to the ground,
Maenads, to the ground, for Zeus' son,
our Lord, is near at hand
turning everything upside down.

(The Stranger enters.)

The Stranger:

Woman of the East, were you so frightened that you all fell over?
What you heard was Dionysus shaking Pentheus' palace.
Come on, raise your bodies up, be confident and stop your trembling.

Chorus:

I am overjoyed to see you, mighty light of liberation
to our Bacchic coven! I was all alone and desolate.

The Stranger:

Were you frightened when they led me to the palace? Did you think
they were going to keep me locked in Pentheus' dark stockade?

Chorus:

Frightened? Yes. Who would protect me if you met with some misfortune?
After you met with that unholy person, how did you get free?

The Stranger:

I myself released myself with little effort—nothing to it.

Chorus:

How, though? Did he not lash both your hands together with a rope?

The Stranger:

That's the way that I humiliated him: the man imagined he was binding me but never even touched me. No, he fed on idle hopes. He found a bull beside the horse-trough where he led me, where he tried to bind me fast—he bound its legs and hooves instead. Pentheus was panting hard; his body dripped with perspiration. He was gnawing on his lip while I just sat and watched in silence.

Bacchus roared in of a sudden, shook the palace and enkindled flames atop his mother's pyre. When Pentheus perceived the blaze, he assumed the house was burning down and ran around commanding slaves to bring in water—every one of them obeyed his orders, but it was an empty labor.

Fearing that I had escaped him, he forgot about the fire and grabbed a sword, a glossy black one, then ran off into the palace. Next, the Roaring God—I think, that is how it struck me—caused a phantom vision to appear there. Pentheus pursued this ghost a good while, swatting at the air, thinking he was killing me. The Roaring-God did not torment him any further, no, he simply razed the palace to the ground—all of it is rubble now. Such is the very bitter ending Pentheus has met because he jailed me.

Thoroughly exhausted, he has dropped his sword. A man, he dared do battle with a god. I have left the stables and, without a single thought for him, come to you with calmness.

I suspect, because I hear his stomping boots inside, that he will soon come charging out before the palace. After all of this, what will he have to say? It hardly matters. I will easily control the fellow even if he comes out breathing rage. A wise man ought to act with calm and self-control.

(Pentheus enters.)

Pentheus:

Oh, I have suffered such strange blows of fate. A man I bound with rope somehow made his escape. Hey! Hey! He's standing there. What's this?

(to The Stranger)

What are you doing outside the house?

The Stranger:

Slow down your hasty feet and calm your anger.

Pentheus:

How did you slip your chains and come out here?

The Stranger:

Didn't you hear me say someone would free me?

Pentheus:

Who, though? Your answers always sound so strange.

The Stranger:

The god who grows rich-clustering vines for mortals.

Pentheus:

That “gift” is a reproach to Dionysus.

The Stranger:

But he has come here full of such fine things.

Pentheus:

Lock up the gates and towers all round the city!

The Stranger:

But why? Do not the gods leap over walls?

Pentheus:

You're clever, yes—but never when you should be.

The Stranger:

In all things where I should be wise I have
a natural wisdom. Listen to this herald
who has arrived to give you a report
from Mount Cithaeron. I will wait for you
right here; believe me, I will not escape.

(A Messenger enters.)

Messenger #1:

Pentheus, ruler of the city of Thebes,
I have come from Mount Cithaeron where

bright shafts of white snow fall incessantly.

Pentheus:

What urgent message have you come to tell me?

Messenger #1:

King, I have been to see the holy Bacchants
who ran in madness on their bright feet far
outside of Thebes. I've come to tell you, tell
the city they are doing crazy things
more marvelous than marvels. First I need
to learn if I can speak of what occurred
with freedom or if I should be reserved.
Frankly, king, I fear your hastiness,
your irritability and lordly excess.

Pentheus:

Speak freely—you will be immune from harm,
since one should not be angry with the just.
The more you say the Bacchants have committed
horrible acts, the more I will avenge them
on this man here, who taught our women wiles.

Messenger #1:

Our grazing herds of cattle had just started
climbing to the uplands, and the sun
was sending out its beams to warm the earth—
that's when I first discerned three choirs of women:
Autonoë led one, your mother Agave
led another, and Ino led the third.
They were at ease, asleep. Some were reclining
on boughs of firs, and others lay their heads
among the oak leaves here and there—all chastely,
not drunk, as you assert, on cups of wine
and flute-song, not pursuing Aphrodite
by slipping off into the groves.

Your mother

Agave heard our twin-horned cattle lowing,
started up amid the Bacchant women
and whooped to warn them it was time to wake.
They rubbed sleep from their eyes and rose as one—
the wedded women, the unmarried maidens.
Their languid discipline amazed me.

First

they let their hair flow free onto their shoulders,
then those whose knots had come unfastened tied
their fawnskin garments up again, but not
with straps, no, rather snakes with flicking tongues.
Those women who had newborns back at home
and breasts still swollen cradled fawns and wolf-pups
and gave them suck. They crowned themselves with garlands
woven from ivy, oak and flowering yew.
One struck her fennel wand against a rock,
and glistening water leapt out of the crack.
Where another struck the ground, the god
sent forth a jet of wine, and those who wanted
white drink rooted with their fingernails
until a milky river started forth.
All on their own, the wands began to drip
honey. If you had been there and perceived
these miracles, you would be worshipping
the god you now are treating with contempt.

All of us herdsmen—cowherds, shepherds—held
a meeting to decide through argument
what strange and shocking things were going on.
One man, a city person skilled in speaking,
said to us, “You who dwell in Mount Cithaeron’s
holy valleys, do you want to chase
the mother of Pentheus from the Bacchic revels
to do the king a favor?” We agreed
with his proposal, hid among some bushes
and lay in ambush. When the time came round,
the Bacchants all began to wave their wands
in celebration, and they cried, in concert,
to Iacchus Zeus’ son, the Roaring God.
The mountain moved along with them, beasts roared
and everything was running with their running.

Agave happened to be leaping near me,
so sneaking from the blind that kept me hidden,
I ran to catch her, but she shouted, “See there,
my hunting dogs, what men are chasing us!
Arm yourselves, arm yourselves with sacred staffs
and follow me.” By running we escaped
a raw-flesh-shredding at the Bacchants’ hands.

Yes, though they held no weapons made of iron,
they still attacked a herd of grazing cattle.
You could see one woman with her bare hands
shredding a roaring fatted calf, while others
were rending heifers limb by limb. Raw ribs
and cloven hooves were readily apparent
as they were tossed this way and that, and bloody
pieces dangled dripping from the pines.

Countless hands of women grabbed and toppled
bulls that had proven difficult to deal with,
the sort that gore a herdsman with their horns.
The Bacchantes tore away their rinds of flesh
faster than you could blink your kingly eyelids.
Like birds in flight, they darted through the plain
that bears so bountiful a crop for Thebes
beside the river Asopus. Swooping down
like warriors on Hysiae and Erythrae,
little towns that lie below the rock-line
of Mount Cithaeron, all the women started
making a shambles of them. They were stealing
children from their homes. Whatever armor,
whether bronze or iron, they put on
stayed fastened without any fastenings
and never fell and struck the ground. Their hair
took fire, but the fire never burned them.
The citizens they had been stealing from
angrily took up arms, and what came next,
my lord, was truly terrible to witness:
the sharp spears hit their marks but drew no blood.
The women hurled their fennel wands like spears
in answer, struck the townsfolk, drove them back.
Yes, these were women wounding men—they surely
had the help of some divinity.
Off they went back to where they came from. There
they washed the blood off in the very fountains
the god had started for them. The tongues of serpents
licked the blood-stains off the women's cheeks.

King, please accept this hitherto unknown
divinity into the city. He
has proven he is great in many ways,
and this is said of him as well, I hear—

that he has given humankind grape-vines
that bring an end to grief. If there were no more
wine, there would be no more Aphrodite
for mortals, no more pleasure in the world.

(The Messenger exits.)

Chorus:

I am afraid to make this statement freely
to you, a tyrant, but it must be said:
no god's more glorious than Dionysus.

Pentheus:

The Bacchants' outrage like a conflagration
blazes near us now, a great disgrace
in Greece's eyes. There must be no delay.
You go to the Electran gate and muster
the infantry, the cavalry who ride
on swift-hooved steeds, the bearers of the light shield
and all those men who make the bowstring sound.
There will be all-out war against the Bacchants!
No, we cannot endure continuing
to suffer what we suffer from these women.

The Stranger:

You've heard me speaking, Pentheus, and yet
you just won't change your mind. Though I have suffered
ill-treatment from you, still I will advise you
not to take up arms against a god.
Keep calm; the Roaring God will not abide
any attempt to drive his tribe of Bacchants
down from the mountains that resound his name.

Pentheus:

Don't lecture to me. You have once escaped
the chains we bound you in: protect your freedom.
Or should I punish you a second time?

The Stranger:

Rather than kicking lustily against
the goad that drives you, you should, as a man,
offer up sacrifice to him, a god.

Pentheus:

I'll give him sacrifice—blood-sacrifice
of women, that's what they have earned. I'll spatter
lots of it all along Cithaeron's valleys.

The Stranger:

You and all your soldiers will be routed.
It will be shameful when the Bacchants use
their fennel stalks to break your bronze-backed shields.

Pentheus:

How slippery is this stranger I am wrestling!
Doing or suffering, he just won't hush!

The Stranger:

My friend, you still can fix this situation.

Pentheus:

How, though? By taking orders from a slave?

The Stranger:

No need for spears: I'll bring the women here.

Pentheus:

Nonsense. That's just a ploy you are devising.

The Stranger:

What ploy? This is the one way I can save you.

Pentheus:

You've schemed to dance forever with the Bacchants

The Stranger:

Yes, if that scheme's our pact with Dionysus.

Pentheus:

Servants, my armor! You there, shut your mouth!

The Stranger:

Ah!

You want to see them gathered in the mountains?

Pentheus:

Greatly. I'd pay a ton of gold to see them.

The Stranger:

What, has so great a lust to see them struck you?

Pentheus:

It would disturb me if I saw them drunk.

The Stranger:

Still, you would gladly see what might 'disturb' you?

Pentheus:

Yes, if I sat there hushed beneath the pine trees.

The Stranger:

They will hunt you if they catch you spying.

Pentheus:

Openly, then: you give me good advice.

The Stranger:

Come, let me guide you. You will make the journey?

Pentheus:

Take me there now, right now—I just can't wait.

The Stranger:

First, you must don a gown, a long and sheer one.

Pentheus:

What, must I play a woman and not a man?

The Stranger:

Yes, otherwise the women there will kill you.

Pentheus:

More good advice! You always have been clever.

The Stranger:

Yes, the god I serve has taught me well.

Pentheus:

How can we put your teachings into practice?

The Stranger:

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

Pentheus:

What kind of clothes? A woman's? Shame forbids it.

The Stranger:

So you no longer burn to see the Maenads?

Pentheus:

How exactly do you plan to dress me?

The Stranger:

First I will stretch your close-cropped hair out long.

Pentheus:

What will come next, my costume's second part?

The Stranger:

A gown down to your ankles, then a headband.

Pentheus:

Will you give me something more to wear?

The Stranger:

A spotted fawnskin and a sacred staff.

Pentheus:

I just can't bear to put on woman's clothing.

The Stranger:

There will be bloodshed if you fight the Bacchantes.

Pentheus:

Yes, I should go and scout them out beforehand.

The Stranger:

That's wiser than pursuing bad with worse.

Pentheus:

How shall I go in secret from the townsfolk?

The Stranger:

Through empty streets—I'll be the one to guide you.

Pentheus:

That's better than the Bacchants laughing at me.

The Stranger:

Let's go inside and get you all dressed up.

Pentheus:

Wait. I myself will choose what's best for me.

The Stranger:

Of course. My aid is wholly at your service.

Pentheus:

Let's go in. I will either march out dressed
in weaponry or yield to your advice.

(Pentheus enters the palace.)

The Stranger:

Women, our net is closing round the man.
He will go join the Bacchants where his sentence,
death, will meet him. Everything depends
on you, now, Dionysus—you are near.
Come, let us punish Pentheus. First, though, drive him
out of his wits, afflict him with a dizzy
insanity. If he is in his right mind,
he won't agree to put on women's clothing;
but, driven far outside his senses, he
will put it on. I want the people of Thebes
to laugh at him as he is led through town
in feminine attire, because of all
the ugly threats he made. Now I will go
dress Pentheus in the gown that he will wear
to Hades' house, slain by his mother's hands.
The man will learn that Dionysus is
a god indeed, a god most dangerous
to mortals, though he can be very gentle,

(The Stranger enters the palace.)

Chorus:**Strophe**

Should I, my roused feet gleaming, dance all night
in sacred exaltation? Should I shake
my neck in dewy air, exultant like
a fawn that dashes through the green delight
of meadows? She has shaken dread pursuit,
slipped from the hunters and their woven nets.
Their leader spurs the mastiffs on with shouts,
but she, in headlong haste, with storm-swift speed,
races beside the river, through the plain,
relishing her escape from men,
exulting in the thickets of the leaf-dark wood.

Refrain

What, then, is wisdom? What finer prize
do gods bestow on humankind
than to hold a mighty hand
over the heads of enemies?
People always should acclaim
whatever gives a noble name.

Antistrophe

The gods are slow to mete out discipline
but certain when they strike. They come down hard
on those who live in foolish disregard
and those mad souls who outrage the divine.
While hunting down unholy men,
how cleverly they hide the slow way time
moves ever onward. One must never scheme
anything that would overthrow their laws.
It costs so little to believe that all
that is divine is powerful,
that every sacred inborn edict never dies.

Refrain

What, then, is wisdom? What finer prize
do gods bestow on humankind
than to hold a mighty hand
over the heads of enemies?
People always should acclaim
whatever gives a noble name.

Epode

Happy the man who cruises to a dock
after a stretch of nasty weather.

Happy the man who overcomes hard luck.
One person will surpass another
in this or that, in wealth or influence.
A thousand souls, a thousand different plans.
Some end up prosperous;
others only fail. I say
that man is a success
whose life is happy day by day.

(The Stranger enters from the palace.)

The Stranger:

You there, so keen to see what you should not
and all-too-eager to pursue what never
should be pursued—I mean you, Pentheus—
come out before the house, show yourself to me,
you who have donned a Bacchant woman's clothing
to spy upon your mother and her band.

(Pentheus enters from the palace dressed as a Bacchant.)

You look exactly like a daughter of Cadmus.

Pentheus:

I seem to see two suns, the city of Thebes
doubled, and twice the seven-gated walls.
I think you walk before me as a bull;
twin horns, it seems, have sprouted from your head.
Were you an animal before this moment?
You really have been changed into a bull.

The Stranger:

The god is walking with us now, although,
beforehand, yes, he was our enemy.
Now you are seeing things as you should see them.

Pentheus:

Whom do I most resemble? Do I walk
like Ino maybe? Like my mother Agave?

The Stranger:

Looking on you, I see their perfect likeness
before me. There's a curl, though, that's come loose
from where I tucked it underneath your headband.

Pentheus:

Inside, when I tossed my head in Bacchic
ecstasy, I must have shook it free.

The Stranger:

Because it is my job to wait upon you,
I'll put it back in place. Now lift your chin.

Pentheus:

Thank you, beautician. I am in your hands.

The Stranger:

Your sash is drooping, and your dress's pleats
are hanging crooked there below your ankles.

Pentheus:

Over my right heel maybe. On the left, though,
the dress falls to the tendon as it should.

The Stranger:

You will regard me as your best friend when
you find the Bacchants purer than you thought.

Pentheus:

To look more like a Bacchant, should my right
hand hold the sacred staff or should my left?

The Stranger:

Your right, and lift it as you lift your right foot.
I'm proud that you have changed your way of thinking.

Pentheus:

Could I lift the valleys of Cithaeron
atop my shoulders, and the Bacchants with them?

The Stranger:

Yes, if you wished. Your thoughts were sick before
but now they are the way they ought to be.

Pentheus:

Should I bring levers? Could I use my fingers?
Or maybe put a shoulder or arm beneath the summits?

The Stranger:

No, no, you would destroy the places where
the Nymphs live and the god Pan plays his pipes.

Pentheus:

What good advice. We shouldn't charge the women
violently. I will hide among the pine trees.

The Stranger:

You will hide just where you should be hidden—
the hideout best for spying on the Maenads.

Pentheus:

I think they are like birds inside of bushes,
held snugly in the snares of sweet love-making.

The Stranger:

Isn't that what you are going there to watch for?
Yes, you will catch them, if you're not caught first.

Pentheus:

Escort me through the middle of Thebes, since I
alone am brave enough to dare this deed.

The Stranger:

You are the man who labors for the city,
you alone. The challenge you deserve
is waiting for you. Come, now, follow me,
and I will be your guide and your salvation,
though someone else will bring you home. . .

Pentheus:

. . . my mother. . .

The Stranger:

. . .for everyone to see.

Pentheus:

That's why I'm going.

The Stranger:

You will be carried home. . .

Pentheus:

. . . a luxury. . .

The Stranger:

. . . in your own mother's arms.

Pentheus:

What, are you trying
to spoil me rotten?

The Stranger:

To spoil you in my way.

Pentheus:

Well, I receive only what I deserve.

(Pentheus exits)

The Stranger:

A marvelous, marvelous person, you are heading
for marvelous sufferings; you will achieve
a fame that touches heaven.

(gazing off-stage toward Mt Cithaeron)

Reach your hands out,
Agave; you, her fellow daughters of Cadmus,
reach out your hands. I'm leading this young man
into a mighty contest. Dionysus
the Roarer—he and I will be the victors.
Coming events themselves will show the rest.

(The Stranger exits.)

Chorus:

Strophe

Swift dogs of Madness, seek the mountain slope
where Cadmus' daughters worship. Stir them up
against the madman dressed in women's attire,
the Maenad spy. Perched on a sharp outcrop,
his mother will be first to notice where
he waits in ambush. We will hear her scream:
"What man has come

to spy upon us women? What man is on
the mountain, on the mountain? Who is this?
What mother could have whelped out such a son?
Surely no product of a woman,
he only can be the inhuman
spawn of a Gorgon or lioness.”

Refrain

Let Justice now be known.
Let her appear with sword in hand
and slit the throat
of the impious, unrestrained
and reprobate
offspring of Echion,
the Sown Man’s son.

Antistrophe

Bacchus, when someone comes with wicked thoughts
to wrong your and your mother’s holy rites,
when someone in contempt and frenzy tries
to vanquish the invincible, he gets
death as his punishment. There’s no excuse
in matters that concern the sacredness
of deities.
Live like a mortal—that’s the pain-free way.
No foe to wisdom, I love hunting it,
but other things are greater: night and day
we all must live for goodness, be
observant, praise divinity,
and banish customs that oppose what’s right.

Refrain

Let Justice now be known.
Let her appear with sword in hand
and slit the throat
of the impious, unrestrained
and reprobate
offspring of Echion,
the Sown Man’s son.

Epode

Reveal yourself, now, Bacchus, as a bull,
a many-headed dragon or a wild
fire-breathing lion, frightening to behold.

Go, Bacchus, as an animal
and with a laughing face
hurl destruction's noose
around the Bacchant-hunter. Let him fall
into the Maenads' crush and press.

(A Messenger enters.)

Messenger #2:

O house once blessed in Greece, house of the old
Sidonian man who sowed the serpent's crop
of earth-born soldiers, how I groan for you—
I, a mere slave, because a loyal servant
makes the master's business his concern.

Chorus:

What is it? Is it news about the Bacchae?

Messenger #2:

Pentheus, son of Echion, is dead.

Chorus:

Loud-Roaring God, you are revealed as great.

Messenger #2:

What do you mean? What outrage are you speaking?
Are you delighting in my master's downfall?

Chorus:

I whoop and trill in my exotic way.
No longer will I cower in fear of prison.

Messenger #2:

Don't think, because our kind is dead, that Thebes
is manless. You can still be made to pay.

Chorus:

Dionysus son of Zeus—he is
the one with power over me, not Thebes.

Messenger #2:

I understand but, all the same, it's wrong
to greet a man's demise with exultation.

Chorus:

Come then and tell me how the fellow died,

the wicked one who plotted wicked deeds.

Messenger #2:

Pentheus set out, and I went behind him—
sightseers, with the Stranger as our guide.
When we had left the city of Thebes behind us
and crossed the river Asopus, we went up
and marched along a spur of Mount Cithaeron.
We settled first inside a grassy hollow
and kept our feet muted, our tongues in check,
so we could *see* and not ourselves *be seen*.
There was a rocky dale where springs were flowing,
and pines spread shade, that's where we found the Maenads—
they all just sat there busying their hands
with pleasant tasks. Some of them wound the threadbare
wreaths atop their fennel stalks with ivy;
others, like fillies loosed from fancy saddles,
were singing Bacchic songs to one another.
Since he could not make out the band of females
well enough, poor Pentheus fretted, "Stranger,
from where we are, my eyes can't quite discern
their Baccant madness. If I climbed the tallest
fir tree on that ridge, though, I could fully
investigate the Maenads' shameful acts."

That's where I saw the Stranger work a wonder:
he grabbed the high tip of the pine in question
and bent it down, down to the level earth.
It bellied like a short bow, like a circle
drawn by the arcing motion of a compass.
That's how the stranger bent the mountain pine
down to the earth—a labor no mere mortal
could have performed. Once Pentheus was set
among the topmost boughs, he let the upper,
then lower branches slide up through his fingers
until the whole tree stood upright again.
He did it gently, so as not to topple
Pentheus, and it rose straight up toward heaven,
my master on its back. The Maenads now
saw Pentheus better than he could see them.
When he was obvious atop his perch,

the Stranger up and vanished, and a sudden voice, the voice, I think, of Dionysus, roared from the upper air:

“Women, I’ve brought you the man who has been mocking you and me and all our holy rites. Avenge me now!” While he spoke these words, a sacred fire struck sky and earth. The upper sky was calm; the wooded hollow hushed its sundry leaves; and forest beasts were nowhere to be heard. The Maenads hadn’t fully taken in that order with their ears—they stood erect and swung their eyes around. A second time the bull-god roared his order. When the daughters of Cadmus knew at last the god’s commandment, swift as doves, they darted at the man, and all the Bacchants darted in behind them. Driven to madness by the breath of Bacchus, they hurdled boulders as they bounded down the rain-choked valley.

When they saw my master sitting in the fir-tree, they ascended a ridgeline opposite and started launching rocks at him. Next they threw, like javelins, the branches they had ripped from nearby pine trees. Others hurled their fennel wands at him, a most unlucky target, but they missed.

Though treed and helpless, Pentheus was far too high for them, for all they strained to reach him. So they started ripping up the roots beneath the tree with crowbars not of iron but oakwood. When this effort failed as well, Agave shouted, “Make a circle round it, Maenads; grip the trunk and we will snare the beast beyond our clutches. Otherwise he will divulge our secret sacred dances to all the world.” A hundred hand-grips seized the fir-tree, ripped it straight out of the earth. Tumbling earthward from his lofty perch, Pentheus hit the ground and shrieked and groaned. His end was coming, and he knew it well.

His mother, as priestess, led the sacrifice—
she leapt at him. He wrenched his headdress off
so that the cursed Agave would perceive
he was her son and stop attacking him.
He touched her cheek and pleaded, “Mother, look,
it’s me, your dear son Pentheus, the child
you bore in Echion’s palace. Pity me.
Do not destroy me to avenge my errors!”
Her lips were dripping foam; her eyes were rolling;
her thoughts were scarcely what they should have been.
The Bacchic power was there possessing her,
so all his pleas were moot.

Gripping his hand,

she dug her foot into the poor man’s side
and tore his arm off at the shoulder. No,
her strength was not her own—the god had put
the power to kill with ease into her hands.
Ino was also shredding Pentheus—
she ripped the flesh out on the other side.
Autonoë and all the other Bacchants
joined in as well. War-whoops were everywhere.
He groaned out all the breath he still had in him.
The women trilled. One of them held an arm;
One held a booted foot. Their raw-meat-madness
had stripped the ribcage naked, and they all
were rearing bloody hands to catch and throw
morsels of flesh like they were playing ball.
The bulk of him was scattered, parts out under
the rugged cliffs, parts in the forest brush—
it won’t be easy to collect it all.
As for the wretched head Agave claimed,
she fixed the thing atop her sacred staff
and carried it about on Mount Cithaeron
as if it were a prize, a lion’s head.
Her sisters stayed behind among the Maenads.
Glorying now in her accursed hunt
and back inside of Thebes, she is invoking
the Bacchic god as mighty victory-giver,
sharer-in-the-quarry and fellow hunter
with whose assistance she has won her prize
of lamentation. I am leaving now
before Agave marches back into the palace.
I want to get away from the disaster.
Self-control and reverence toward the gods—

these are the best possessions for us mortals,
the wisest virtues we can cultivate.

(The Messenger exits.)

Chorus:

Astrophic

Come let us dance in honor of
Lord Bacchus, let us celebrate
with whoops and jubilation the fate
of Pentheus the Dragon-Spawn,
the man who put on feminine
attire and held a sacred staff—
a certain death for him. A bull
led him to his disastrous end.

Bacchae of Thebes, you have attained
the greatest triumph of them all,
though it will make you weep and groan.
A fine accomplishment indeed—
to lay one's hands on blood,
the blood of one's own son.

Chorus:

But look who's coming—frenzy-eyed Agave,
the mother of Pentheus. Come, let us greet
the God of Rapture's victory parade!

(Agave enters with Pentheus' head on the tip of her sacred staff.)

Agave:

Bacchae of the East. . .

東方からのバックイ、、、

Toho karano Bacchae...

Chorus:

Why do you hail me with your shout?

Agave:

Home from the mountain, I have brought
a fresh-cut tendril, the blest beast
that fortune made my prey.

山より戻りました。

この切りたての巻き毛 運良く
仕留めた聖なる獣が手土産です。

Yamayori modori mashita.

kono kiritateno makige un yoku

shitometa seinaru kemonoga temiyage desu.

Chorus:

I see your prey
and welcome you to play
your part as fellow reveler.

Agave:

As you can see, I caught
this lion cub without a net.

ご覧のとおり この若獅子を
網も使わずに捕らえました。

Goran no tori kono wakajishi o

ami mo tsukawazuni torae mashita.

Chorus:

Lion cub? Where in the wild did this occur?

Agave:

Cithaeron. . .

キタイロン、、、

Chithaeron...

Chorus:

Cithaeron?

Agave:

laid him low.

打ち倒しました。

Uchi taoshi mashita.1

Chorus:

Who struck the blow?

Agave:

I struck him first—that honor is my due.
My fellow Bacchants now
call me Agave the Blest.

私が最初ですーなんとも名誉な事です。

Watashi ga saisho desu - nantomo meiyona koto desu.

今や 仲間のバッカスの信者たちは私を

Imaya nakamano Bacchus no shinjatachiwa watashi o

祝福されたアガヴェと呼ぶのですよ。

shukufuku sareta Agave to yobuno desuyo.

Chorus:

Whom else should we give credit to?

Agave:

Cadmus' other. . .

カドモスの他の、、、

Cadmus no hokano...

Chorus:

Cadmus' daughters?

Agave:

his other daughters touched the beast,
but after me. Such luck! Will you
come join me in the feast?

他の娘たちも獣に触れましたけれど

Hokano musumetachimo kemononi furemashita keredo

私より後にです。なんという幸運! 皆様も

watashi yori atoni desu. Nantoiu koun! Minasamamo

お祝いの宴にいらっしゃいませんか?

oiwaino utageni irasshai masenka?

Chorus:

Woman of woe,
did you say 'join me in the feast?'

Agave:

This little bull
is young yet, see?, his cheeks
have only started growing fur
along his tender skull.

この仔牛は

Kono koushiwa

まだ若くてほら？ やわらかい頭蓋骨の
頬骨に沿ってようやくヒゲが
生えてきたばかりです。

mada wakakute hora? yawarakai zugaikotsuno
hoboneni sotte yoyaku higege
haetekita bakari desu.

Chorus:

You're right. His tuft of whiskers looks
like that of some young animal.

Agave:

That cunning huntsman Bacchus sure
was wise to turn the Maenads loose
upon this creature.

賢くも巧みなる狩の名手のバッカスが

Kashikokumo takuminaru karino meishuno Bacchus ga

私ら信女をこの獣に

watahira shinnyo o kono kemononi

嫉けたのです。

keshikaketano desu.

Chorus:

Yes,
our lord is good at catching prey.

Agave:

Do you approve of me?

私を認めてくださいますか？

Watashi o mitomete kudasai masuka?

Chorus:

Yes, we approve of you.

Agave:

The Theban people. . .

テーバイの人々は、、、

Thebai no hitobitowa...

Chorus:

and your child Pentheus, too—

Agave:

will soon revere
the mother who dispatched the cub.

褒め称えることでしょう。

獅子を打ち倒したこの母を。

Hometataeru koto desho.

Shishi o uchitaoshita kono haha o.

Chorus:

You went too far.

Agave:

Yes, I went far to capture him.

それも類稀なるやり方で捕らえたのです。

Soremo taguimarenaru yarikatade toraetano desu.

Chorus:

You must be proud.

Agave:

Ecstatic. I have earned a deathless name.

Today, while hunting game,

I was the one who did the greatest deed.

最高。不死の名誉を賜りました。

本日の狩において

一番の手柄をたてたのは この私。

Saiko. Fushino meiyo o tamawari mashita.

Honjituno karini oite

ichiban no tegara o tatetanowa kono watashi.

Chorus:

Come now, wretched women, show the Thiebans
the spoils, the triumph, you have brought for them.

Agave:

Inhabitants of handsome-towered Thebes,
come and admire the prey we daughters of Cadmus
have hunted down. We caught this beast without

the sling-borne spears of the Thessalians,

without the help of nets—our fair white fingers

were all we used. From now on why would someone

hurl a spear or wield an armorer's weapons?

There's no good reason. With our naked hands

we caught the beast and tore him limb from limb.

Where is my aged father? Someone go

and call him. Where is Pentheus my son?

Let him set up a ladder on the palace,

so he can nail this head up on the gable.

I am the one who caught the lion it came from.

美しき塔のそびえ立つテーバイに住む人々よ

Utsukushiki tonosobietatsu Thebai ni sumu hitobitoyo

さあ 私らカドモスの娘たちが仕留めてきた

Sah watahira Cadmus no musumetachiga shitometekita

獲物を讃えてください。この獣を
 テッサリアの槍も使わず 網の助けも借りずに
 一私たちの華奢な白い指だけで 捕らえました。
 これからは 誰が槍を投げたり
 武器を使ったりする必要があるでしょうか？
 私たちは 素手で獣を捕らえて
 その身体をバラバラに引き裂いたのですから。
 年老いたお父様は どちら？ だれかお呼びして来て
 倅のペンテウスは どこかしら？
 あの子に 梯子をかけさせましょう。そして
 切妻屋根に この首を打ち付けてもらいましょう。
 私こそがこの獅子を捕らえた者なのです。

emono o tataete kudasai. Kono kemono o
 Thessalia no yarimo tsukawazu amino tasukemo karizuni
 - watashi tachino kyashanashiroi yubidakede torae mashita.
 Korekarawa darega yari o nagetari
 buki o tsukattari suru hitsuyoga arude shoka?
 Watashi tachiwa sudede kemono o toraete
 sono karada o barabarani hikisaitano desukara.
 Toshi oita otosama wa dochira? Dareka oyobishite kite.
 Segareno Pentheus wa dokokashira?
 Anokoni hashigo o kakesase masho. Soshite
 kirizumayaneni kono kubi o uchitsukete morai masho.
 Watashi kosoga kono shishi o toraeta mononano desu.

(Cadmus enters with several servants. They are carrying the pieces of Pentheus' body.)

Cadmus:

Follow along behind me, servants, lugging
 the burdensome remains of Pentheus
 inside the palace. After looking for him
 endlessly, after endless toil, I found
 his body strewn all over Mount Cithaeron.
 The forest proved an awkward place to search,
 and no two pieces lay in the same place.
 When I had left the Bacchants and returned
 inside the city walls with old Teiresias,
 I learned of what my girls had perpetrated
 so I had to go back up the mountain
 and gather up the boy the Maenads killed.
 There I saw Ino and Autonoe,

both of them still out of their minds, still raving

among the thickets. Someone said Agave
was gallivanting homeward like a Bacchant—
news that now has proved to be correct,
since I can see her, an unholy sight.

Agave:

Father, you have the right to boast, and loudly,
that you have sired by far the greatest daughters
in all the world. Yes, all of us are great,
but me especially: I left the shuttle
and loom behind and rose to greater things:
hunting a savage beast with my bare hands.
Look what I'm holding in my arms—a trophy
worthy to be nailed up on your roof.
Come take it in your hands and celebrate
the hunt and ask your friends to feast with us.
You are a very blessed man because
we have accomplished deeds of such renown.

お父様 声も高らかにご自慢なさってよろしいですよ。

Otosama koemotakarakani gojiman nasatteyoryoshi desuyo.

この世で最も優れた娘たちをお持ちに

Konoyode mottomo sugureta musumetachi o omochini

なったのですから。ええ 娘たちは みんな立派ですけれど

nattanodesukara. Eh musumetachiwa minna rippadesukeredo

とりわけて この私が一番。機織りの杼を捨てて

toriwakete kono watashi ga ichiban. Hataorino hi o sutete

獐猛な獣を 素手で狩るという

domona kemono o sudede karutoiu

素晴らしいことをやってのけたのですから。

subarashikoto o yattenoketano desukara.

ご覧ください この腕に抱えておりますもの一

Gorankudasai kono udeni kakaete orimasu mono -

お屋敷の屋根の上に 打ち付けてしかるべき武勇の証。

oyashikinoyaneno ueni uchitsuketeshikarubeki buyuno akashi.

さあ お手にとって この狩をお祝いください。

Sah oteni totte kono kari o oiwaikudasai.

お友達を祝宴にお呼びになってください。

Otomodachi o shukuen ni oyobininatte kudasai.

お父様は本当にお幸せ者ですよ。私たちが

Otosama wa hontoni oshiawasemono desuyo. Watashitachiga

このような誉れ高い仕事を成し遂げたのですから
konoyona homaretakai shigoto o nashitogetano desukara.

Cadmus:

A grief past measure. Can you not perceive
the crime you and your sisters have committed
with your appalling hands? You are inviting
the gods and me and Thebes to take part in
a handsome sacrifice indeed. I grieve
first for your miseries, then for my own.
The god has justly but excessively
destroyed our house, whatever we deserved.

Agave:

Here among humankind old age is always
sour and peevish-faced. I wish my son
could, like his mother, be a consummate hunter
whenever he goes off with young men chasing
wild beasts. But, no, he's only good
at waging war on gods. Talk to him, father.
Will someone please go summon Pentheus
so that he can admire my lucky catch?

歳をとるということはいつでも 私ら人間を

Toshi o toruto iukotowa itsudemo watashira ningen o

不機嫌で気難しい顔にさせるものですね。

fukigende kimuzukashikaoni saserumono desune.

倅がこの母に似て 若い衆と獯猛な獣を追う時には

Segaregakonohahaninite wakaishuto domonakemono o outokiniwa

優れた狩り人であればよいと願うのに

sugureta karibitode arebayoito negaunoni

それも叶わず。あの子が上手なのは 神様がたに

soremo kanawazu. Anokoga jozunanowa kamisamagatani

楯つくことばかり。お父様からも話してやって下さい。

tatetsuku kotobakari. Otosama karamo hanashiteyatte kudasai.

だれか ペンテウスを呼んできておくれ。

Dareka Pentheus o yonde kite okure.

きっと私の幸運な獲物に感服することでしょう。

Kitto watashi no koun na emononi kanpukusurukoto desho.

Cadmus:

Ah, if you ever grasp what you have done,
how great will be the torment you will suffer.

But, if you stay just as you are forever,
though you will not be truly fortunate,
you will at least not ever feel accursed.

Agave:

What here is not quite right? What here is painful?

何が不都合なのですか？何が苦痛なのでしょうか？

Naniga futsugo nanodesuka? Naniga kutsu naonode shoka?

Cadmus:

First, direct your gaze up to the sky.

Agave:

I have. What do you want me to observe?

はいおっしゃる通り。何を観察しましょうか？

Hai ossharutori. Nani o kansatsu shima shoka?

Cadmus:

Does all appear the same to you or changed?

Agave:

The sky is brighter than before and clearer.

空は前より明るく澄んでいます。

Sorawa maeyori akaruku sunde imasu.

Cadmus:

And is there still a fluttering in your mind?

Agave:

I don't quite understand you but I think

I'm coming round. My former thoughts have altered.

仰ることがよくわかりませんが、正気が戻ってきた

Ossharukotoga yoku wakarimasenkeredo shokiga modottekita

ような気がします。先程の考えも変わってきました。

yona kiga shimasu. Sakihodono kangaemo kawatteki mashita.

Cadmus:

Will you listen well and answer clearly?

Agave:

Father, I can't recall what I was saying.

お父様、自分が申していたことを思い出せません。

Otosama jibunga moshiteitakoto o omoidasemasen.

Cadmus:

Whose house became your own when you were married?

Agave:

Echion's, they say, a Sown Man's house.

エキオンです。龍の歯の種から生まれたという。 Echion desu. Ryuno hano tanekara umaretato iu.

Cadmus:

Who was the son you bore there to your husband?

Agave:

Pentheus, my son and Echion's.

ペンテウスが私とエキオンの息子です。

Pentheus ga watashi to Echion no musuko desu.

Cadmus:

Whose head is there, the head between your hands?

Agave:

My fellow hunters said it is a lion's.

狩のお伴をした者たちがこれは獅子の首と。

Karino otomo o shitamonotachiga korewa shishinokubito.

Cadmus:

Look rightly. Does it seem to be a lion?

Agave:

What's this I see? What's this that I am holding?

私が見ているのは何? 私が抱えているのは何?

Watashi ga miteirunoha nani? Watashi ga kakaeteirunowa nani?

Cadmus:

Look at it closely; understand more clearly.

Agave:

I see the most great pain. Oh, I am wretched.

目に見えますのはこの上ない痛み。ああ憐れな私。

Meni miemasunowa konouenai itami. Ah awarena watashi.

Cadmus:

Does the head still seem to be a lion's?

Agave:

Oh, wretched! It is Pentheus' head.

ああ 憐れな! これは ペンテウスの首。

Ah awarena! Korewa Pentheus no kubi.

Cadmus:

I mourned the loss before you ever knew it.

Agave:

Who murdered him? Why is he in my hands?

だれが殺しました? どうして私の手に?

Darega koroshi mashita? Doshite watashi no teni?

Cadmus:

You're asking me who murdered Pentheus?

Agave:

Speak. My heart leaps up to hear what's coming.

仰ってください。不吉な予感に胸の動悸が収まりません。

Osshatte kudasai. Fukitsunayokan ni munenodokiga osamarimasen.

Cadmus:

You killed your son—you and your sisters killed him.

Agave:

Where did he die? At home or somewhere else?

どこで亡くなりました? 家でしょうか それとも他のところで?

Dokode nakunarimashita? Uchide shoka soretomo hokanotokorode?

Cadmus:

He died where Actaeon was shredded by his dogs

Agave:

Why did my curst son go to Mount Cithaeron?

不幸なこの子は どうしてキタイロンの山に行ったのでしょうか?

Fukonakonokowa doshite Cithaeron noyamani ittanodeshoka?

Cadmus:

Your son went to Cithaeron to mock the god.

Agave:

But how did all of us end up there, too?

でも私ら皆もまたどうやってそこに行き着いたのでしょうか？

Demo watashiraminamomata doyatte sokoni yukitsuitanode shoka?

Cadmus:

You women all went mad and ran up there.

Agave:

Bacchus has destroyed us—now I know.

バックスが私たちを打ちのめした—今わかりました。

Bacchus ga watashitachi o uchinomeshita - ima wakari mashita.

Cadmus:

You—you enraged the god when you denied his godhood.

Agave:

Father, where is my son's dear body now?

お父様 可愛いあの子の亡骸は今どこにございます？

Otosama kawai anokono nakigarawa ima dokonigozaimasu?

Cadmus:

There is his body. It was hard to find it all.

Agave:

Has it been pieced together, limb to limb?

亡骸に手足は揃いましたでしょうか？

Nakigarani teashiwa soroimashitade shoka?

Agave:

Why did he have to share in my mistake?

どうして私の過ちがあの子に及ばねばならなかったのでしょうか？

Doshite watashi no ayamachiga anokoni oyobanabanarakattanode shoka?

Cadmus:

Pentheus, like the rest of you, did not
respect the god and so the god has linked you,
all of you, in one catastrophe,
one that has ruined both my house and me.
I never had a son and now have seen
your fruit, poor woman, the product of your womb,
murdered in utter shame and agony.
Grandson, daughter's child, in you the house

had learned to see again. You were protecting
our lineage from decay. The city feared you.
When you were present, no one dared disparage
my age, since you would surely make him pay.
I will be cast out of the house, shamed—me,
Cadmus the Great, who sowed and harvested
the handsome crop that is the people of Thebes.

Child most dear to me (since you are still
among those whom I hold most dear to me),
how will you stroke my beard now, hug me, call me
grandfather and inquire, “What man has wronged you?
Who has offended you? What wicked person
has pained your heart. Tell me, and I will punish
the perpetrator.” No, I now am helpless;
you are dead; your mother pitiable;
her sisters wretched. If there is a man
who doubts the gods’ existence, let him look
upon this man and know that they are there.

Chorus:

Cadmus, I mourn your loss: your grandson earned
a just punishment, but it’s hard for you.

Agave: (*to Cadmus*)

Father, you see how much my life is changed,

お父様 ご覧の通り私の人生は 変わり果ててしまいました。

Otosama goran no tori watashi no jinseiwa kawarihateteshimai mashita.

Cadmus:

There, there. Though the labor will be heavy
I will, rest assured, take up the blood-soaked
Limbs of Pentheus, carry them in state
Elsewhere and give them proper burial.

(Dionysus enters on high.)

Dionysus:

All of you who have witnessed these events
you can be certain: it was Zeus who fathered
Dionysus. Given what has happened,
you can be certain that I am a god.

You Thebans slandered me; you said that I
was human-born. All of you spread this smear,
but Pentheus of course was most to blame.
That massacre was just.

Now I will tell you
about the well-earned wretched sufferings
you people must endure:

(Turning to Agave)

Daughter of Cadmus, you who killed the man—
who gave him birth—you now must leave the city
and pay the penalty of banishment

No longer will you look
upon your homeland. It would be impious
for you to stand as mourner at his grave.
I save the pure but loathe those who insult me.

(Turning to Cadmus)

You next—what are you fated to endure?

[Here ends the reconstruction]

Cadmus, you will be changed into a serpent.
Harmonia, the daughter of Aries, the woman
you took in marriage though you were a mortal
she, too, will be debased; she, too, will turn
into a snake.

I, Dionysus born of no mere mortal
but Zeus himself, proclaim this must be so.
Cadmus, if you had learned how to be wise
despite yourself, you would be happy now
and have the son of Zeus as your protector.

Cadmus:

Bacchus, we wronged you and we beg for mercy.

Dionysus:

You learned too late. You lacked the sense you needed.

Cadmus:

We know this, but you punish us too harshly.

Dionysus:

I am a god, and I was scorned by you.

Cadmus:

Gods shouldn't be like mortals in their rage.

Dionysus:

My father Zeus ordained this long ago.

Agave:

Father, our wretched exile is decreed.

お父様 惨めにも 追放の裁きは降りました。

Otosama mijimenimo tsuihono sabakiwa kudari mashita.

Dionysus:

Why, then, delay to go? Begin your exile.

Cadmus: (*to Agave*)

What have we come to, what strange misery?
Just think of us—you wretched, and your sisters
wretched, and I here cursed. Already old,
I must go off and live with foreigners.
Still worse, there is a prophecy that I
must lead barbarian troops, a mix of races,
against my native Greece. Harmonia
my wife, the daughter of Ares, will be turned
like me into a snake, and I must lead her
against my native tombs and altars. I
must guide the spearmen here myself.
A wretched man already, I will find
no respite from my troubles, no, not ever
go sailing down the river Acheron's
infernal tide and take my rest below.

Agave:

But, father, I must live in exile, too.

でもお父様 私も国を追われて生きねばなりません。

Demo otosama watashi mo kuni o owarete ikineba narimasen.

Cadmus:

Why, sorry child, embrace me, like a swan
embracing its decrepit, gray-winged father?

Agave:

Where shall I go in exile from my homeland?

故国を追われてどちらに行けばよろしいでしょう？

Kokoku o owarete dochirani yukeba yoroshide sho?

Cadmus:

I cannot say what exile will be yours.

Agave:

Farewell, palace; farewell, city of my ancestors.
An exile from my bedroom, I leave you in misfortune.

さらば 城よさらば 父祖の街よ。

Saraba shiroyo saraba fusono machiyo.

自分の寝屋からも追われ 悲運のうちに 旅立つ私。

Jibun no neyakaramo oware hiun no uchini tabidatsu watashi.

Cadmus:

Go, daughter, to the land of Aristaeus.

Agave:

I grieve for you, father.

お父様を思って深く悲しみます。

Otosama o omotte fukaku kanashimi masu.

Cadmus:

I grieve for you as well my child.
And I am weeping for your sisters.

Agave:

Lord Dionysus ruthlessly has brought
this misery into your house.

ダイオニシス様は無情にも我が家に
この不幸をもたらしました。

Dionusus samawa mujounimo wagayani
kono fuko o motarashi mashita.

Dionysus:

Because I suffered vicious things from you—
just think of how my name was scorned in Thebes.

Agave:

Farewell, father.

ご機嫌よう お父様。

Gokigen yo otosama.

Cadmus:

I hope you do fare well, sad daughter.
since you have gone thus far in sorrow.

(Cadmus exits.)

Agave:

I, with my pitiful sisters, now am heading
into exile. May I end up where
accursed Mt Cithaeron never sees me,
where my eyes will never look on Mt Cithaeron,
where no sacred staff has been set up
as offering. Such matters are for other Bacchants.

護衛の者たちよ 国を追われる私と憐れな姉妹たちを

Goeino monotachiyo kuni o owareru watashito awarenashimaitachi o

見送ってください。願わくば 私らの行く先は

miokutte kudasai. Negawakuba watashirano yukusakiwa

呪わしいキタイロンの山から二度と目の届かないところ

norowashi Cithaeron no yamakara nidoto menō todokanai tokoro

私がキタイロンの山を二度と目にしないところ

watashi ga Cithaeron no yama o nidoto meni shinai tokoro

神聖な杖が奉納されることのないところでもありますように。

shinseina tsuega honosarerukoto no nai tokoro dearimasuyoni.

そのような事どもは他のバッカスの信者らに勝手に崇めさせておけばよい。

Sonoyona kotodomowa hokano Bacchus no shinjarani katteni agamesaseteokeba yoi.

Exodos

Chorus:

Astrophic

The supernatural has many shapes and ways;
our deities are given to surprise.
Whenever one wants to astonish us,
the unexpected comes about,
and that is how this play turned out.

(The Chorus exits.)