

The Bacchae

Translated by Ian Johnston

Dramatis Personae

DIONYSUS: divine son of Zeus and Semele, also called **Bromius** or **Bacchus**.

TIRESIAS: an old blind prophet

CADMUS: grandfather of both Dionysus and Pentheus, an old man

PENTHEUS: young king of Thebes, grandson of Cadmus, cousin of Dionysus

AGAVE: mother of Pentheus, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Semele

FIRST MESSENGER a cattle herder

SECOND MESSENGER: an attendant on Pentheus

CHORUS OF BACCHAE: worshippers of Dionysus who have followed him from Asia, also called **Maenads** or **Bacchants**.

SOLDIERS and **ATTENDANTS** around Pentheus

Supplementary List of Characters and Places

The following names are frequently mentioned but are not speaking characters in the play.

Actaeon: hunter destroyed by his own dogs as punishment for boasting that he was a better hunter than goddess Artemis, son of Autonoe (one of Cadmus' daughters).

Aphrodite: goddess of erotic love and sexuality.

Autonoe: sister of Agave, Ino, and Semele, daughter of Cadmus, mother of Actaeon

Cithaeron: sacred mountain close to Thebes.

Ino: daughter of Cadmus, sister of Agave and Semele

Semele: human daughter of Cadmus, mother of Dionysus, killed by Zeus' lightning bolt.

Thebes: a major Greek city, where (according to some legends) the Greek race originated.

Tmolus: sacred mountain in Asia Minor, associated with Dionysus.

A *thyrsus* (pl. *thyrsoi*) is a hollow plant stalk, usually decorated with ivy, and carried as a symbol of Dionysus in the dancing celebrations (where it can acquire magical powers).

[Scene: The Greek city of Thebes, outside the royal palace. Dionysus, appearing as young man, is alone, with the palace behind him, its main doors facing the audience. He speaks directly to the audience]

DIONYSUS: I've arrived here in the land of Thebes,
 I, Dionysus, son of Zeus, born to him
 from Semele, Cadmus' daughter, delivered
 by a fiery midwife Zeus' lightning flash.
 Yes, I've changed my form from god to human,
 appearing here at these streams of Dirce,
 the waters of Ismarus. I see my mother's tomb
 for she was wiped out by that lightning bolt.
 It's there, by the palace, with that rubble,
 the remnants of her house, still smoldering 10
 from Zeus' living fire Hera's undying outrage
 against my mother. But I praise Cadmus. [10]
 He's made his daughter's shrine a sacred place.
 I have myself completely covered it
 with leafy shoots of grape-bearing vines.
 I've left the fabulously wealthy East,
 lands of Lydians and Phrygians,
 Persia's sun-drenched plains, walled towns in Bactria.
 I've moved across the bleak lands of the Medes,
 through rich Arabia, all Asian lands, 20
 along the salt-sea coast, through those towns
 with their beautifully constructed towers,
 full of barbarians and Greeks all intermingled.
 Now I've come to Thebes, city of Greeks, [20]
 only after I've set those eastern lands
 dancing in the mysteries I established,
 making known to men my own divinity.
 Thebes is the first city of the Greeks
 where I've roused people to shout out my cries,
 with this deerskin draped around my body, 30
 this ivy spear, a thyrsus, in my hand.
 For my mother's sisters have acted badly,
 something they, of all people, should avoid.
 They boasted aloud that I, Dionysus,
 was no child of Zeus, claiming Semele,
 once she was pregnant by some mortal man,
 attributed her bad luck in bed to Zeus,
 a story made up (they said) to trick Cadmus. [30]
 Those sisters state that's why Zeus killed her,
 because she lied about the man she'd slept with. 40
 So I've driven those women from their homes
 in a frenzy they now live in the mountains,
 out of their minds. I've made them put on costumes,

outfits appropriate for my mysteries.
 All Theban offspring or, at least, all women
 I've driven in a crazed fit from their homes.
 Now they sit out there among the rocks,
 underneath green pine trees, no roof overhead,
 Cadmus' daughters in their company as well.
 For this city has to learn, though against its will, 50
 that it has yet to be initiated
 into my Dionysian rites. Here I plead [40]
 the cause of my own mother, Semele,
 appearing as a god to mortal men,
 the one she bore to Zeus. Now Cadmus,
 the old king, has just transferred his power,
 his royal authority, to Pentheus,
 his daughter's son, who, in my case at least,
 fights against the gods, prohibiting me
 all sacrificial offerings. When he prays, 60
 he chooses to ignore me. For this neglect
 I'll demonstrate to him, to all in Thebes,
 that I was born a god. Once these things here
 have been made right, I'll move on somewhere else,
 to some other land, revealing who I am.
 But if Thebans in this city, in their anger, [50]
 try to make those Bacchic women leave,
 to drive them from the mountains forcibly,
 then I, commander of these Maenads,
 will fight them. That's why I've transformed myself, 70
 assumed a mortal shape, altered my looks,
 so I resemble any human being.

[Enter the Chorus of Bacchae, dressed in ritual deerskin, carrying small drums like tambourines]

But you there, you women who've left Tmolus,
 backbone of Lydia, my band of worshippers,
 whom I've led here from barbarian lands,
 my comrades on the road and when we rest,
 take up your drums, those instruments of yours
 from Phrygian cities, first invented
 by mother Rhea and myself. Move round here,
 beat those drums by Pentheus' palace, 80 [60]
 let Cadmus' city see you, while I go,
 in person, to the clefts of Mount Cithaeron,
 to my Bacchae, to join their dancing.

[Exit Dionysus]

CHORUS *[singing and dancing]*

FIRST VOICE: From Asia, from sacred Tmolus
 I've come to dance,

- to move swiftly in my dance
 for Bromius
 sweet and easy task,
 to cry out in celebration,
 hailing great god Bacchus. 90
- SECOND VOICE: Who's in the street? Who's there? Who?
 Let him stay inside
 out of our way.
 Let every mouth be pure, [70]
 completely holy,
 speak no profanities.
 In my hymn I celebrate
 our old eternal custom,
 hailing Dionysus.
- THIRD VOICE: O, blessed is the man, 100
 the fortunate man who knows
 the rituals of the gods,
 who leads a pious life,
 whose spirit merges
 with these Bacchic celebrations,
 frenzied dancing in the mountains,
 our purifying rites
 one who reveres these mysteries
 from Cybele, our great mother,
 who, waving the thyrsus, 110 [80]
 forehead crowned with ivy,
 serves Dionysus.
- FOURTH VOICE: On Bacchae! Bacchae, move!
 Bring home Bromius, our god,
 son of god, great Dionysus,
 from Phrygian mountains
 to spacious roads of Greece
 Hail Bromius!
- FIFTH VOICE: His mother dropped him early, 120
 as her womb, in forceful birth pangs, [90]
 was struck by Zeus' flying lightning bolt,
 a blast which took her life.
 Then Zeus, son of Cronos,
 at once hid him away
 in a secret birthing chamber,
 buried in his thigh,
 shut in with golden clasps,
 concealed from Hera.
- SIXTH VOICE: Fates made him perfect.
 Then Zeus gave birth to him, 130 [100]
 the god with ox's horns,

crowned with wreaths of snakes
 that's why the Maenads
 twist in their hair
 wild snakes they capture.

SEVENTH VOICE: O Thebes, nursemaid of Semele,

put on your ivy crown,
 flaunt your green yew,
 flaunt its sweet fruit!

Consecrate yourselves to Bacchus, 140
 with stems of oak or fir, [110]

Dress yourselves in spotted fawn skins,
 trimmed with white sheep's wool.

As you wave your thyrsus,
 revere the violence it contains.

All the earth will dance at once.

Whoever leads our dancing
 that one is Bromius!

To the mountain, to the mountain,

where the pack of women waits, 150

all stung to frenzied madness

to leave their weaving shuttles,

goaded on by Dionysus.

EIGHTH VOICE: O you dark chambers of the Curetes, [120]

you sacred caves in Crete,

birthplace of Zeus,

where the Corybantes in their caves,

men with triple helmets, made for me

this circle of stretched hide.

In their wild ecstatic dancing, 160

they mixed this drum beat

with the sweet seductive tones

of flutes from Phrygia,

then gave it to mother Rhea

to beat time for the Bacchae,

when they sang in ecstasy.

Nearby, orgiastic satyrs, [130]

in ritual worship of the mother goddess,

took that drum, then brought it

into their biennial dance, 170

bringing joy to Dionysus.

NINTH VOICE: He's welcome in the mountains,

when he sinks down to the ground,

after the running dance,

wrapped in holy deerskin,

hunting the goat's blood,

blood of the slain beast,

devouring its raw flesh with joy,
 rushing off into the mountains,
 in Phrygia, in Lydia, 180 [140]
 leading the dance
 Bromius Evo!

ALL: The land flows with milk,
 the land flows with wine,
 the land flows with honey from the bees.
 He holds the torch high,
 our leader, the Bacchic One,
 blazing flame of pine,
 sweet smoke like Syrian incense,
 trailing from his thyrsus. 190
 As he dances, he runs,
 here and there,
 rousing the stragglers,
 stirring them with his cries,
 thick hair rippling in the breeze. [150]
 Among the Maenads' shouts
 his voice reverberates:
 "On Bacchants, on!
 With the glitter of Tmolus,
 which flows with gold, 200
 chant songs to Dionysus,
 to the loud beat of our drums.
 Celebrate the god of joy
 with your own joy,
 with Phrygian cries and shouts!
 When sweet sacred pipes [160]
 play out their rhythmic holy song,
 in time to the dancing wanderers,
 then to the mountains,
 on, on to the mountains." 210
 Then the bacchanalian woman
 is filled with total joy
 like a foal in pasture
 right beside her mother
 her swift feet skip in playful dance.

[Enter Tiresias, a very old blind man, dressed in clothing appropriate for the Dionysian ritual. He goes up to the palace door and knocks very aggressively]
 TIRESIAS: *[shouting]* Where's the servant on the door? You in there, [170]
 tell Cadmus to get himself out of the house,
 Agenor's lad, who came here from Sidon,
 then put up the towers of this Theban town.
 Go tell him Tiresias is waiting for him. 220
 He knows well enough why I've come for him.

I'm an old man, and he's even older,
 but we've agreed make ourselves a thyrsus,
 to put on fawn skins and crown our heads
 with garlands of these ivy branches.

[Enter Cadmus from the palace, a very old man, also dressed in clothing appropriate for the Dionysian ritual]

CADMUS: My dearest friend,
 I was inside the house. I heard your voice.
 I recognized it the voice of a man truly wise.
 So I've come equipped with all this god stuff. [180]
 We must sing his praise, as much as we can,
 for this Dionysus, well, he's my daughter's child. 230
 Now he's revealed himself a god to men.
 Where must I go and dance? Where do I get
 to move my feet and shake my old gray head?
 You must guide me, Tiresias, one old man
 leading another, for you're the expert here.
 Oh, I'll never tire of waving this thyrsus,
 day and night, striking the ground. What rapture!
 Now we can forget that we're old men.

TIRESIAS: You feel the same way I do, then.
 For I'm young and going to try the dancing. 240 [190]

CADMUS: Shall we go up the mountain in a chariot?
 TIRESIAS: The god would not then get complete respect.
 CADMUS: So I'll be your nursemaid one old man
 will take charge of another one?

TIRESIAS: The god himself
 will get us to the place without our efforts.

CADMUS: Of all the city are we the only ones
 who'll dance to honour Bacchus?

TIRESIAS: Yes, indeed,
 for we're the only ones whose minds are clear.
 As for the others, well, their thinking's wrong.

CADMUS: There'll be a long wait. Take my hand. 250

TIRESIAS: *[holding out his hand]* Here. Take it make a pair of it and yours.

CADMUS: I'm a mortal, so I don't mock the gods.

TIRESIAS: To the gods we mortals are all ignorant. [200]
 Those old traditions from our ancestors,
 the ones we've had as long as time itself,
 no argument will ever overthrow,
 in spite of subtleties sharp minds invent.
 Will someone say I disrespect old age,
 if I intend to dance with ivy on my head?
 Not so, for the god makes no distinctions 260
 whether the dancing is for young or old.

He wants to gather honours from us all,
to be praised communally, without division.

CADMUS: Since you're blind to daylight, Tiresias, [210]

I'll be your seer, tell you what's going on
Pentheus, that child of Echion, the one
to whom I handed over power in this land,
he's coming here, to the house. He's in a rush.

He looks so flustered. What news will he bring?

*[Enter Pentheus, with some armed attendants. At first he does not notice
Cadmus and Tiresias, not until he calls attention to them]*

PENTHEUS: It so happens I've been away from Thebes, 270

but I hear about disgusting things going on,
here in the city women leaving home
to go to silly Bacchic rituals,
cavorting there in mountain shadows,
with dances honouring some upstart god,
this Dionysus, whoever he may be. Mixing bowls [220]
in the middle of their meetings are filled with wine.

They creep off one by one to lonely spots
to have sex with men, claiming they're Maenads
busy worshipping. But they rank Aphrodite, 280
goddess of sexual desire, ahead of Bacchus.

All the ones I've caught, my servants guard
in our public prison, their hands chained up.
All those who're still away, I'll chase down,
hunt them from the mountains that includes
Agave, who bore me to Echion, Ino,
and Autonoe, Actaeon's mother. [230]

Once I've clamped them all in iron fetters,
I'll quickly end this perverse nastiness,
this Bacchic celebration. People say 290
some stranger has arrived, some wizard,

a conjurer from the land of Lydia
with sweet-smelling hair in golden ringlets
and Aphrodite's charms in wine-dark eyes.
He hangs around the young girls day and night,
dangling in front of them his joyful mysteries.

If I catch him in this city, I'll stop him.
He'll make no more clatter with his thyrsus, [240]

or wave his hair around. I'll chop off his head,
slice it right from his body. This man claims 300
that Dionysus is a god, alleging
that once upon a time he was sewn up,
stitched inside Zeus' thigh but Dionysus
was burned to death, along with Semele,
in that lightning strike, because she'd lied.

She maintained that she'd had sex with Zeus.
 All this surely merits harsh punishment,
 death by hanging. Whoever this stranger is,
 his insolence is an insult to me.

[Noticing Cadmus and Tiresias for the first time]

Well, here's something totally astounding! 310

I see Tiresias, our soothsayer, all dressed up
 in dappled fawn skins my mother's father, too! [250]

This is ridiculous. To take a thyrsus
 and jump around like this. *[To Cadmus]* You sir,
 I don't like to see such arrant foolishness
 from your old age. Why not throw out that ivy?
 And, grandfather, why not let that thyrsus go?

[Turning to address Tiresias]

Tiresias, you're the one who's put him up to this.
 You want to bring in some new god for men,
 so you'll be able to inspect more birds, 320
 and from his sacrifices make more money.

If your gray old age did not protect you,
 you'd sit in chains with all the Bacchae
 for such a ceremonial perversion. [260]

Whenever women at some banquet
 start to take pleasure in the gleaming wine,
 I say there's nothing healthy in their worshipping.

CHORUS LEADER: That's impiety! O stranger,
 have you no reverence for the gods, for Cadmus,
 who sowed that crop of men born from the earth? 330
 You're a child of Echion do you wish
 to bring your own family into disrepute?

TIRESIAS: When a man of wisdom has good occasion
 to speak out, and takes the opportunity,
 it's not that hard to give an excellent speech.
 You've got a quick tongue and seem intelligent,
 but your words don't make any sense at all.
 A fluent orator whose power comes [270]
 from self-assurance and from nothing else
 makes a bad citizen, for he lacks sense. 340

This man, this new god, whom you ridicule
 it's impossible for me to tell you
 just how great he'll be in all of Greece.
 Young man, among human beings two things
 stand out preeminent, of highest rank.
 Goddess Demeter is one she's the earth
 (though you can call her any name you wish),
 and she feeds mortal people cereal grains.
 The other one came later, born of Semele

he brought with him liquor from the grape, 350
 something to match the bread from Demeter.
 He introduced it among mortal men.
 When they can drink up what streams off the vine,
 unhappy mortals are released from pain. [280]
 It grants them sleep, allows them to forget
 their daily troubles. Apart from wine,
 there is no cure for human hardship.
 He, being a god, is poured out to the gods,
 so human beings receive fine benefits
 as gifts from him. And yet you mock him. Why? 360
 Because he was sewn into Zeus thigh?
 Well, I'll show you how this all makes sense.
 When Zeus grabbed him from the lightning flame,
 he brought him to Olympus as a god.
 But Hera wished to throw him out of heaven. [290]
 So Zeus, in a manner worthy of a god,
 came up with a cunning counter plan.
 From the sky which flows around the earth,
 Zeus broke off a piece, shaped it like Dionysus,
 then gave that to Hera, as a hostage. 370
 The real child he sent to nymphs to raise,
 thus saving him from Hera's jealousy.
 Over time people mixed up "sky" and "thigh,"
 saying he'd come from Zeus's thigh, changing words,
 because he, a god, had once been hostage
 to goddess Hera. So they made up the tale.
 This god's a prophet, too, for in his rites
 the Bacchic celebrations and the madness
 a huge prophetic power is unleashed.
 When the god fully enters human bodies, 380 [300]
 he makes those possessed by frenzy prophets.
 They speak of what will come in future days
 He also shares the work of war god Ares.
 For there are times an army all drawn up,
 its weapons ready, can shake with terror,
 before any man has set hand to his spear.
 Such madness comes from Dionysus.
 Some day you'll see him on those rocks at Delphi,
 leaping with torches on the higher slopes,
 way up there between two mountain peaks, 390
 waving and shaking his Bacchic wand,
 a great power in Greece. Trust me, Pentheus.
 Don't be too confident a sovereign's force
 controls men. If something seems right to you, [310]
 but your mind's diseased, don't think that's wisdom.

So welcome this god into your country.
 Pour libations to him, then celebrate
 these Bacchic rites with garlands on your head.
 On women, where Aphrodite is concerned,
 Dionysus will not enforce restraint 400
 such modesty you must seek in nature,
 where it already dwells. For any woman
 whose character is chaste won't be defiled
 by Bacchic revelry. Don't you see that?
 When there are many people at your gates,
 you're happy. The city shouts your praise.
 It celebrates the name of Pentheus. [320]
 The god, too, I think, derives great pleasure
 from being honoured. And so Cadmus,
 whom you mock, and I will crown our heads 410
 with ivy and will join the ritual,
 an old gray team, but still we have to dance.
 Your words will not turn me against the god,
 for you are mad under a cruel delusion.
 No drug can heal that ailment in fact,
 some drug has caused it.

CHORUS LEADER: Old man,
 you've not disgraced Apollo with your words,
 and by honouring this Dionysus,
 a great god, you show your moderation.

CADMUS: My child, Tiresias has given you 420 [330]
 some good advice. You should live among us,
 not outside traditions. At this point,
 you're flying around thinking, but not clearly.
 For if, as you claim, this man is not a god,
 why not call him one? Why not tell a lie,
 a really good one? Then it will seem
 that some god has been born to Semele.
 We and all our family will win honour.
 Remember the dismal fate of Actaeon
 torn to pieces in some mountain forest 430
 by blood-thirsty dogs he'd raised himself.
 He'd boasted he was better in the hunt [340]
 than Artemis. Don't suffer the same fate.
 Come here. Let me crown your head with ivy.
 Join us in giving honour to this god.

PENTHEUS: Keep your hands off me! Be off with you
 go to these Bacchic rituals of yours.
 But don't infect me with your madness.
 As for the one who in this foolishness
 has been your teacher, I'll bring him to justice. 440

[To his attendants]

One of you, go quickly to where this man,
Tiresias, has that seat of his, the place
where he inspects his birds. Take some levers,
knock it down. Demolish it completely.
Turn the whole place upside down all of it.
Let his holy ribbons fly off in the winds. [350]

That way I'll really do him damage.
You others go to the city, scour it
to capture this effeminate stranger,
who corrupts our women with a new disease, 450
and thus infects our beds. If you get him,
tie him up and bring him here for judgment,
a death by stoning. That way he'll see
his rites in Thebes come to a bitter end.

[Exit Pentheus into the palace]

TIRESIAS: You unhappy man, you've no idea
just what it is you're saying. You've gone mad!
Even before now you weren't in your right mind.
Let's be off, Cadmus. We'll pray to the god [360]
on Pentheus' behalf, though he's a savage,
and for the city, too, so he won't harm it. 460

Come with me bring the ivy-covered staff.
See if you can help support my body.
I'll do the same for you. It would be shameful
if two old men collapsed. No matter
for we must serve Bacchus, son of Zeus.
But you, Cadmus, you should be more careful,
or Pentheus will bring trouble in your home.
I'm not saying this as a prophecy,
but on the basis of what's going on.
A man who's mad tends to utter madness. 470

[Exit Tiresias and Cadmus together on their way to the mountains]

CHORUS: Holiness, queen of the gods, [370]
Holiness, sweeping over earth
on wings of gold,
do you hear what Pentheus says?
Do you hear the profanities he utters,
the insults against Bromius,
child of Semele, chief god
among all blessed gods,
for those who wear their lovely garlands
in a spirit of harmonious joy? 480
This is his special office,
to lead men together in the dance,
to make them laugh as the flute plays, [380]

to bring all sorrows to an end,
 at the god's sacrificial feast,
 when the gleaming liquid grapes arrive,
 when the wine bowl casts its sleep
 on ivy-covered feasting men.
 Unbridled tongues and lawless folly
 come to an end only in disaster. 490
 A peaceful life of wisdom [390]
 maintains tranquillity.
 It keeps the home united.
 Though gods live in the sky,
 from far away in heaven
 they gaze upon the deeds of men.
 But being clever isn't wisdom.
 And thinking deeply about things
 isn't suitable for mortal men.
 Our life is brief that's why 500
 the man who chases greatness
 fails to grasp what's near at hand.
 That's what madmen do, [400]
 men who've lost their wits.
 That's what I believe.
 Would I might go to Cyprus,
 island of Aphrodite,
 where the Erotes,
 bewitching goddesses of love,
 soothe the hearts of humankind, 510
 or to Paphos, rich and fertile,
 not with rain, but with the waters
 of a hundred flowing mouths
 of a strange and foreign river.
 Oh Bromius, Bromius,
 inspired god who leads the Bacchae,
 lead me away to lovely Peira, [410]
 where Muses dwell,
 or to Olympus' sacred slopes,
 where Graces live, Desire, too, 520
 where it's lawful and appropriate
 to celebrate our rites with Bacchus.
 This god, son of Zeus,
 rejoices in our banquets.
 He adores the goddess Peace,
 and she brings riches with her [420]
 and nourishes the young.
 The god gives his wine equally,
 sharing with rich and poor alike.

It takes away all sorrow. 530
 But he hates the man who doesn't care
 to live his life in happiness,
 by day and through the friendly nights.
 From those who deny such common things
 he removes intelligence,
 their knowledge of true wisdom.
 So I take this as my rule
 follow what common people think [430]
 do what most men do.

[Enter a group of soldiers, bringing Dionysus with his arms tied up. Pentheus enters from the palace]

SOLDIER: Pentheus, we're here because we've caught the prey 540
 you sent us out to catch. Yes, our attempts
 have proved successful. The beast you see here
 was tame with us. He didn't try to run.
 No, he surrendered willingly enough,
 without turning pale or changing colour
 on those wine dark cheeks. He even laughed at us,
 inviting us to tie him up and lead him off. [440]
 He stood still, making it easier for me
 to take him in. It was awkward, so I said,
 "Stranger, I don't want to lead you off, 550
 but I'm under orders here from Pentheus,
 who sent me." And there's something else
 those Bacchic women you locked up, the ones
 you took in chains into the public prison
 they've all escaped. They're gone playing around
 in some meadow, calling out to Bromius,
 summoning their god. Chains fell off their feet,
 just dropping on their own. Keys opened doors
 not turned by human hands. This man here
 has come to Thebes full of amazing tricks. 560
 But now the rest of this affair is up to you. [450]

[Soldier hands chained Dionysus over to Pentheus]

PENTHEUS: *[Moving up close to Dionysus, inspecting him carefully]*

Untie his hands. I've got him in my nets.
 He's not fast enough to get away from me.

[Soldiers remove the chains from Dionysus' hands. Pentheus moves in closer]

Well, stranger, I see this body of yours
 is not unsuitable for women's pleasure
 that's why you've come to Thebes. As for your hair,
 it's long, which suggests that you're no wrestler.
 It flows across your cheeks That's most seductive.
 You've a white skin, too. You've looked after it,
 avoiding the sun's rays by staying in the shade, 570

while with your beauty you chase Aphrodite.
 But first tell me something of your family. [460]

DIONYSUS: That's easy enough, though I'm not boasting.
 You've heard of Tmolus, where flowers grow.

PENTHEUS: I know it. It's around the town of Sardis.

DIONYSUS: I'm from there. My home land is Lydia.

PENTHEUS: Why do you bring these rituals to Greece?

DIONYSUS: Dionysus sent me the son of Zeus.

PENTHEUS: Is there some Zeus there who creates new gods?

DIONYSUS: No. It's the same Zeus who wed Semele right here. 580

PENTHEUS: Did this Zeus overpower you at night,
 in your dreams? Or were your eyes wide open?

DIONYSUS: I saw him, he saw me. He gave me [470]
 the sacred rituals.

PENTHEUS: Tell me what they're like,
 those rituals of yours.

DIONYSUS: That information
 cannot be passed on to men like you,
 those uninitiated in the rites of Bacchus.

PENTHEUS: Do they benefit those who sacrifice?

DIONYSUS: They're worth knowing, but you're not allowed to hear.

PENTHEUS: You've avoided that question skillfully, 590
 making me want to hear an answer.

DIONYSUS: The rituals are no friend of any man
 who's hostile to the gods.

PENTHEUS: This god of yours,
 since you saw him clearly, what's he like?

DIONYSUS: He was what he wished to be, not made to order.

PENTHEUS: Again you fluently evade my question,
 saying nothing whatsoever.

DIONYSUS: Yes, but then
 a man can seem totally ignorant
 when speaking to a fool. [480]

PENTHEUS: Is Thebes
 the first place you've come to with your god? 600

DIONYSUS: All the barbarians are dancing in these rites.

PENTHEUS: I'm not surprised. They're stupider than Greeks.

DIONYSUS: In this they are much wiser. But their laws
 are very different, too.

PENTHEUS: When you dance these rites,
 is it at night or during daylight?

DIONYSUS: Mainly at night. Shadows confer solemnity.

PENTHEUS: And deceive the women. It's all corrupt!

DIONYSUS: One can do shameful things in daylight, too.

PENTHEUS: You must be punished for these evil games.

DIONYSUS: You, too for foolishness, impiety
towards the god. 610 [490]

PENTHEUS: How brash this Bacchant is!
How well prepared in using language!

DIONYSUS: What punishment am I to suffer?
What harsh penalties will you inflict?

PENTHEUS: First, I'll cut off this delicate hair of yours.

DIONYSUS: My hair is sacred. I grow it for the god.

PENTHEUS: And give me that thyrsus in your hand.

DIONYSUS: This wand I carry is the god's, not mine.
You'll have to seize it from me for yourself.

PENTHEUS: We'll lock your body up inside, in prison. 620

DIONYSUS: The god will personally set me free,
whenever I so choose.

PENTHEUS: That only works
if you call him while among the Bacchae.

DIONYSUS: He sees my suffering now and from near by. [500]

PENTHEUS: Where is he then? My eyes don't see him.

DIONYSUS: He's where I am. You can't see him,
because you don't believe.

PENTHEUS: *[To his attendants]* Seize him.
He's insulting Thebes and me.

DIONYSUS: I warn you, you shouldn't tie me up.
I've got my wits about me. You've lost yours. 630

PENTHEUS: But I'm more powerful than you,
so I'll have you put in chains.

DIONYSUS: You're quite ignorant
of why you live, what you do, and who you are.

PENTHEUS: I am Pentheus, son of Agave and Echion.

DIONYSUS: A suitable name. It suggests misfortune.

PENTHEUS: *[to his soldiers]* Go now.
Lock him up in the adjoining stables.
That way he'll see nothing but the darkness. [510]
There you can dance. As for all those women,
those partners in crime you brought along with you,
we'll sell them off or keep them here as slaves, 640
working our looms, once we've stopped their hands
beating those drum skins, making all that noise.

[Exit Pentheus into the palace, leaving Dionysus with the soldiers]

DIONYSUS: I'll go, then. For I won't have to suffer
what won't occur. But you can be sure of this
Dionysus, whom you claim does not exist,
will go after you for retribution
after all your insolence. He's the one
you put in chains when you treat me unjustly.
[The soldiers lead Dionysus away to an area beside the palace]

CHORUS: O Sacred Dirce, blessed maiden,
 daughter of Achelous, 650 [520]
 your streams once received
 the new-born child of Zeus,
 when his father snatched him
 from those immortal fires,
 then hid him in his thigh,
 crying out these words,
 "Go, Dithyrambus,
 enter my male womb.
 I'll make you known as Bacchus
 to all those in Thebes, 660
 who'll invoke you with that name."
 But you, o sacred Dirce, [530]
 why do you resist me,
 my garland-bearing company,
 along your river banks?
 Why push me away?
 Why seek to flee from me?
 I tell you, you'll find joy
 in grape-filled vines from Dionysus.
 They'll make you love him. 670
 What rage, what rage
 shows up in that earth-bound race
 of Pentheus, born to Echion, [540]
 an earth-bound mortal.
 He's descended from a snake,
 that Pentheus, a savage beast,
 not a normal mortal man,
 but some bloody monster
 who fights against the gods.
 He'll soon bind me in chains, 680
 as a worshipper of Bacchus.
 Already he holds in his house
 my fellow Bacchic revelers,
 hidden there in some dark cell.
 Do you see, Dionysus,
 child of Zeus, your followers [550]
 fighting their oppression?
 Come down, my lord,
 down from Olympus,
 wave your golden thyrsus, 690
 to cut short the profanities
 of this blood-thirsty man.
 Where on Mount Nysa,
 which nourishes wild beasts,

where on the Corcyrean heights,
 where do you wave your thyrsus
 over your worshippers,
 oh Dionysus?
 Perhaps in those thick woods [560]
 of Mount Olympus, 700

where Orpheus once played his lyre,
 brought trees together with his songs,
 collecting wild beasts round him.
 Oh blessed Peiria,
 whom Dionysus loves
 he'll come to set you dancing
 in the Bacchic celebrations.
 He'll cross the foaming Axius,
 lead his whirling Maenads on, [570]
 leaving behind the river Lydias 710
 which enriches mortal men,
 and which, they say, acts as a father,
 nourishing with many lovely streams
 a land where horses flourish.

[The soldiers move in to round up the chorus of Bacchae. As they do so, the ground begins to shake, thunder sounds, lightning flashes, and the entire palace starts to break apart]

DIONYSUS: *[shouting from within the palace]*

Io! Hear me, hear me as I call you.

Io! Bacchae! Io Bacchae!

CHORUS: *[a confusion of different voices in the following speeches]*

Who's that? Who is it? It's Dionysus' voice!

It's calling me. But from what direction?

DIONYSUS: *[From inside the palace]* Io! Io! I'm calling out again [580]

the son of Semele, a child of Zeus! 720

CHORUS: Io! Io! Lord and master!

Come join our company,

Bromius, oh Bromius!

DIONYSUS: *[From inside]* Sacred lord of earthquakes, shake this ground.

[The earthquake tremors resume]

CHORUS VOICE 1: Ai! Soon Pentheus' palace

will be shaken into rubble.

CHORUS VOICE 2: Dionysus is in the house revere him.

CHORUS VOICE 3: We revere him, we revere him. [590]

CHORUS VOICE 4: You see those stone lintels on the pillars
 they're splitting up. It's Bromius calling, 730
 shouting to us from inside the walls.

DIONYSUS: *[from inside the palace]* Let fiery lightning strike right now
 burn Pentheus' palace, consume it all!

CHORUS VOICE 5: Look! Don't you see the fire
 there by the sacred tomb of Semele!
 The flame left by that thunderbolt from Zeus,
 when the lightning flash destroyed her,
 all that time ago. Oh Maenads
 throw your bodies on the ground, down, down, [600]
 for our master, Zeus' son, moves now 740
 against the palace to demolish it.

[Enter Dionysus, bursting through the palace front doors, free of all chains, smiling and supremely confident.]

DIONYSUS: Ah, my barbarian Asian women,
 Do you lie there on the ground prostrate with fear?
 It seems you feel Dionysus' power,
 as he rattles Pentheus' palace.
 Get up now. Be brave. And stop your trembling.

CHORUS LEADER: How happy I am to see you
 Our greatest light in all the joyful dancing.
 We felt alone and totally abandoned.

DIONYSUS: Did you feel despair when I was sent away, 750 [610]
 cast down in Pentheus' gloomy dungeon?

CHORUS LEADER: How could I not? Who'll protect me
 if you run into trouble? But tell me,
 how did you escape that ungodly man?

DIONYSUS: No trouble. I saved myself with ease.

CHORUS LEADER: But didn't he bind up your hands up in chains?

DIONYSUS: In this business I was playing with him
 he thought he was tying me up, the fool!
 He didn't even touch or handle me,
 he was so busy feeding his desires. 760

In that stable where he went to tie me up,
 he found a bull. He threw the iron fetters
 around its knees and hooves. As he did so,
 he kept panting in his rage, dripping sweat [620]
 from his whole body his teeth gnawed his lip.

I watched him, sitting quietly nearby.
 After a while, Bacchus came and shook the place,
 setting his mother Semele's tomb on fire.
 Seeing that, Pentheus thought his palace
 was burning down. He ran round, here and there, 770
 yelling to his slaves to bring more water.

His servants set to work and all for nothing!
 Once I'd escaped, he ended all that work.
 Seizing a dark sword, he rushed inside the house.
 Then, it seems to me, but I'm guessing now,
 Bromius set up out there in the courtyard [630]
 some phantom image. Pentheus charged it,

slashing away at nothing but bright air,
 thinking he was butchering me. There's more
 Bacchus kept hurting him in still more ways. 780
 He knocked his house down, right to the ground,
 all shattered, so Pentheus has witnessed
 a bitter end to my imprisonment.
 He's dropped his sword, worn out, exhausted,
 a mere mortal daring to fight a god.
 So now I've strolled out calmly to you,
 leaving the house, ignoring Pentheus.
 Wait! It seems to me I hear marching feet
 no doubt he'll come out front here soon enough.
 What will he say, I wonder, after this? 790
 Well, I'll deal with him quite gently, [640]
 even if he comes out breathing up a storm.
 After all, a wise man ought to keep his temper.
[Pentheus comes hurriedly out of the palace, accompanied by armed soldiers]
 PENTHEUS: What's happening to me, total disaster!
 The stranger's escaped, and we'd just chained him up.
[Seeing Dionysus]
 Ah ha! Here is the man right here.
 What's going on? How did you get out?
 How come you're here, outside my palace?
 DIONYSUS: Hold on. Calm down. Don't be so angry.
 PENTHEUS: How did you escape your chains and get here? 800
 DIONYSUS: Didn't I say someone would release me
 or did you miss that part?
 PENTHEUS: Who was it? [650]
 You're always explaining things in riddles.
 DIONYSUS: It was the one who cultivates for men
 the richly clustering vine.
 PENTHEUS: Ah, this Dionysus.
 Your words are a lovely insult to your god.
 DIONYSUS: He came to Thebes with nothing but good things.
 PENTHEUS: *[To soldiers]* Seal off all the towers on my orders
 all of them around the city.
 DIONYSUS: What for?
 Surely a god can make it over any wall? 810
 PENTHEUS: You're so wise, except in all those things
 in which you should be wise.
 DIONYSUS: I was born wise,
 especially in matters where I need to be.
[Enter the Messenger, a cattle herder from the hills]
 DIONYSUS: But first you'd better listen to this man,
 hear what he has to say, for he's come here

from the mountains to report to you.
 I'll still be here for you. I won't run off.

MESSENGER: Pentheus, ruler of this land of Thebes, [660]
 I've just left Cithaeron, that mountain
 where the sparkling snow never melts away. 820

PENTHEUS: What this important news you've come with?

MESSENGER: I saw those women in their Bacchic revels,
 those sacred screamers, all driven crazy,
 the ones who run barefoot from their homes.
 I came, my lord, to tell you and the city
 the dreadful things they're doing, their actions
 are beyond all wonder. But, my lord,
 first I wish to know if I should tell you,
 openly report what's going on up there,
 or whether I should hold my tongue. 830
 Your mood changes so fast I get afraid [670]
 your sharp spirit, your all-too-royal temper.

PENTHEUS: Speak on. Whatever you have to report,
 you'll get no punishment at all from me.
 It's not right to vent one's anger on the just.
 The more terrible the things you tell me
 about those Bacchic women, the worse
 I'll move against the one who taught them
 all their devious tricks.

MESSENGER: The grazing cattle
 were just moving into upland pastures, 840
 at the hour the sun sends out its beams
 to warm the earth. Right then I saw them
 three groups of dancing women. One of them [680]
 Autonoe led. Your mother, Agave,
 led the second group, and Ino led the third.
 They were all asleep, bodies quite relaxed,
 some leaning back on leafy boughs of pine,
 others cradling heads on oak-leaf pillows,
 resting on the ground in all modesty.
 They weren't as you described all drunk on wine 850
 or on the music of their flutes, hunting
 for Aphrodite in the woods alone.
 Once she heard my horned cattle lowing,
 your mother stood up amid those Bacchae,
 then called them to stir their limbs from sleep.
 They rubbed refreshing sleep out of their eyes, [690]
 and stood up straight there a marvelous sight,
 to see such an orderly arrangement,
 women young and old and still unmarried girls.
 First, they let their hair loose down their shoulders, 860

tied up the fawn skins (some had untied the knots
 to loosen up the chords). Then around those skins
 they looped some snakes, who licked the women's cheeks.
 Some held young gazelles or wild wolf cubs
 and fed them on their own white milk, the ones [700]
 who'd left behind at home a new-born child
 whose breasts were still swollen full of milk.
 They draped themselves with garlands from oak trees,
 ivy and flowering yew. Then one of them,
 taking a thyrsus, struck a rock with it, 870
 and water gushed out, fresh as dew. Another,
 using her thyrsus, scraped the ground. At once,
 the god sent fountains of wine up from the spot.
 All those who craved white milk to drink
 just scratched the earth with their fingertips
 it came out in streams. From their ivy wands [710]
 thick sweet honey dripped. Oh, if you'd been there,
 if you'd seen this, you'd come with reverence
 to that god whom you criticize so much.
 Well, we cattle herders and shepherds met 880
 to discuss and argue with each other
 about the astonishing things we'd seen.
 And then a man who'd been in town a bit
 and had a way with words said to us all,
 "You men who live in the holy regions
 of these mountains, how'd you like to hunt down
 Pentheus' mother, Agave take her [720]
 away from these Bacchic celebrations,
 do the king a favour?" To all of us
 he seemed to make good sense. So we set up 890
 an ambush, hiding in the bushes,
 lying down there. At the appointed time,
 the women started their Bacchic ritual,
 brandishing the thyrsus and calling out
 to the god they cry to, Bromius, Zeus' son.
 The entire mountain and its wild animals
 were, like them, in one Bacchic ecstasy.
 As these women moved, they made all things dance.
 Agave, by chance, was dancing close to me.
 Leaving the ambush where I'd been concealed, 900
 I jumped out, hoping to grab hold of her. [730]
 But she screamed out, "Oh, my quick hounds,
 men are hunting us. Come, follow me.
 Come on, armed with that thyrsus in your hand."
 We ran off, and so escaped being torn apart.
 But then those Bacchic women, all unarmed,

went at the heifers browsing on the turf,
 using their bare hands. You should have seen one
 ripping a fat, young, lowing calf apart
 others tearing cows in pieces with their hands. 910
 You could've seen ribs and cloven hooves [740]
 tossed everywhere some hung up in branches
 dripping blood and gore. And bulls, proud beasts till then,
 with angry horns, collapsed there on the ground,
 dragged down by the hands of a thousand girls.
 Hides covering their bodies were stripped off
 faster than you could wink your royal eye.
 Then, like birds carried up by their own speed,
 they rushed along the lower level ground,
 beside Asopus' streams, that fertile land 920
 which yields its crops to Thebes. Like fighting troops, [750]
 they raided Hysiae and Erythrae,
 below rocky Cithaeron, smashing
 everything, snatching children from their homes.
 Whatever they carried their shoulders,
 even bronze or iron, never tumbled off
 onto the dark earth, though nothing was tied down.
 They carried fire in their hair, but those flames
 never singed them. Some of the villagers,
 enraged at being plundered by the Bacchae, 930
 seized weapons. The sight of what happened next, [760]
 my lord, was dreadful. For their pointed spears
 did not draw blood. But when those women
 threw the thrysoi in their hands, they wounded them
 and drove them back in flight. The women did this
 to men, but not without some god's assistance.
 Then they went back to where they'd started from,
 those fountains which the god had made for them.
 They washed off the blood. Snakes licked their cheeks,
 cleansing their skin of every drop. My lord, 940
 you must welcome this god into our city,
 whoever he is. He's a mighty god [770]
 in many other ways. The people say,
 so I've heard, he gives to mortal human beings
 that vine which puts an end to human grief.
 Without wine, there's no more Aphrodite
 or any other pleasure left for men.
 CHORUS LEADER: I'm afraid to talk freely before the king,
 but nonetheless I'll speak this Dionysus
 is not inferior to any god. 950

PENTHEUS: This Dionysian arrogance, like fire,
 keeps flaring up close by a great insult
 to all the Greeks. We must not hesitate.
[To one of his armed attendants]
 Go to the Electra Gates. Call out the troops, [780]
 the heavy infantry, all fast cavalry.
 Tell them to muster, along with all those
 who carry shields all the archers, too,
 the men who pull the bowstring back by hand.
 We'll march out against these Bacchae.
 In this whole business we will lose control, 960
 if we have to put up with what we've suffered
 from these women.

DIONYSUS: You've heard what I had to say,
 Pentheus, but still your not convinced.
 Though I'm suffering badly at your hands,
 I say you shouldn't go to war against a god.
 You should stay calm. Bromius will not let you [790]
 move his Bacchae from their mountains.

PENTHEUS: Don't preach to me! You've got out of prison
 enjoy that fact. Or shall I punish you some more?

DIONYSUS: I'd sooner make an offering to that god 970
 than in some angry fit kick at his whip
 a mortal going to battle with a god.

PENTHEUS: I'll sacrifice all right with a slaughter
 of those women, just as they deserve
 in the forests on Cithaeron.

DIONYSUS: You'll all run.
 What a disgrace! To turn your bronze shields round,
 fleeing the thyrsos of those Bacchic women!

PENTHEUS: *[turning to one of his armed attendants, as if to go]*
 It's useless trying to argue with this stranger [800]
 whatever he does or suffers, he won't shut up.

DIONYSUS *[calling Pentheus back]*
 My lord! There's still a chance to end this calmly. 980

PENTHEUS: By doing what? Should I become a slave
 to my own slaves?

DIONYSUS: I'll bring the women here
 without the use of any weapons.

PENTHEUS: I don't think so.
 You're setting me up for your tricks again.

DIONYSUS: What sort of trick, if I want to save you
 in my own way?

PENTHEUS: You've made some arrangement,
 you and your god, so you can always dance
 your Bacchanalian orgies.

DIONYSUS: Yes, that's true.
I have made some arrangement with the god.

PENTHEUS: *[to one of his armed servants]*
You there, bring me my weapons.
[to Dionysus] And you, 990
No more talk! Keep quiet!

DIONYSUS: Just a minute! *[Aaaaaaa!]* [810]
[moving up to Pentheus]
How'd you like to gaze upon those women out there,
sitting together in the mountains?

PENTHEUS: I'd like that.
Yes, for that I'd pay in gold and pay a lot.

DIONYSUS: Why is that? Why do you desire it so much?

PENTHEUS: I'd be sorry to see the women drunk.

DIONYSUS: Would you derive pleasure from looking on,
viewing something you find painful?

PENTHEUS: Yes, I would
if I were sitting in the trees in silence.

DIONYSUS: But even if you go there secretly, 1000
they'll track you down.

PENTHEUS: You're right.
I'll go there openly.

DIONYSUS: So you're prepared,
are you, to make the trip? Shall I lead you there?

PENTHEUS: Let's go, and with all speed. I've got time. [820]

DIONYSUS: In that case, you must clothe your body
in a dress one made of eastern linen.

PENTHEUS: What! I'm not going up there as a man?
I've got to change myself into a woman?

DIONYSUS: If they see you as a man, they'll kill you.

PENTHEUS: Right again. You always have the answer. 1010

DIONYSUS: Dionysus taught me all these things.

PENTHEUS: How can I best follow your suggestion?

DIONYSUS: I'll go inside your house and dress you up.

PENTHEUS: What? Dress up in a female outfit?
I can't do that I'd be ashamed to.

DIONYSUS: You're still keen to see the Maenads, aren't you?

PENTHEUS: What sort of clothing do you recommend?
How should I cover up my body? [830]

DIONYSUS: I'll fix up a long hair piece for your head.

PENTHEUS: All right. What's the next piece of my outfit? 1020

DIONYSUS: A dress down to your feet then a headband,
to fit just here, around your forehead.

PENTHEUS: What else? What other things will you provide?

DIONYSUS: A thyrsus to hold and a dappled fawn skin.

PENTHEUS: No. I can't dress up in women's clothes!

DIONYSUS: But if you go fighting with these Bacchae,
you'll cause bloodshed.

PENTHEUS: Yes, that's true.
So first, we must go up and spy on them.

DIONYSUS: Hunt down evil by committing evil
that sounds like a wise way to proceed. 1030

PENTHEUS: But how will I make it through the city
without the Thebans noticing me? [840]

DIONYSUS: We go by deserted streets. I'll take you.

PENTHEUS: Well, anything's easier to accept
than being made a fool by Bacchic women.

Let's go into the house. I'll think about what's best.

DIONYSUS: As you wish. Whatever you do, I'm ready.

PENTHEUS: I think I'll go in now. It's a choice
of going with weapons or taking your advice.

[Exit Pentheus into the palace. Dionysus turns to face the chorus]

DIONYSUS: My women! that man's now entangled in our net. 1040

He'll go to those Bacchae, and there he'll die.

That will be his punishment. Dionysus,
you're not far away. Now it's up to you.

Punish him. First, make sure he goes insane
with some crazed fantasy. If his mind is strong, [850]

he'll not agree to put on women's clothes.

But he'll do it, if you make him mad.

I want him made the laughing stock of Thebes,

while I lead him through the city, mincing

as he moves along in women's clothing, 1050

after he made himself so terrifying

with all those earlier threats. Now I'll be off,

to fit Pentheus into the costume

he'll wear when he goes down to Hades,

once he's butchered by his mother's hands.

He'll come to acknowledge Dionysus,

son of Zeus, born in full divinity, [860]

most fearful and yet most kind to men.

[Exit Dionysus]

CHORUS: Oh, when will I be dancing,
leaping barefoot through the night, 1060

flinging back my head in ecstasy,

in the clear, cold, dew-fresh air

like a playful fawn

celebrating its green joy

across the meadows

joy that it's escaped the fearful hunt

as she runs beyond the hunters,

leaping past their woven nets [870]

they call out to their hounds
 to chase her with still more speed, 1070
 but she strains every limb,
 racing like a wind storm,
 rejoicing by the river plain,
 in places where no hunters lurk,
 in the green living world
 beneath the shady branches,
 the foliage of the trees.
 What is wisdom? What is finer
 than the rights men get from gods
 to hold their powerful hands 1080
 over the heads of their enemies? [880]
 Ah yes, what's good is always loved.
 The power of the gods
 is difficult to stir
 but it's a power we can count on.
 It punishes all mortal men
 who honour their own ruthless wills,
 who, in their fits of madness,
 fail to reverence the gods.
 Gods track down every man 1090
 who scorns their worship,
 using their cunning to conceal
 the enduring steady pace of time. [890]
 For there's no righteousness
 in those who recognize or practice
 what's beyond our customary laws.
 The truth is easy to acknowledge:
 whatever is divine is mighty,
 whatever has been long-established law
 is an eternal natural truth. 1100
 What is wisdom? What is finer
 than the rights men get from gods
 to hold their powerful hands
 over the heads of their enemies? [900]
 Ah yes, what's good is always loved.
 Whoever has escaped a storm at sea
 is a happy man in harbour,
 whoever overcomes great hardship
 is likewise another happy man.
 Various men out-do each other 1110
 in wealth, in power,
 in all sorts of ways.
 The hopes of countless men
 are infinite in number.

Some make men rich;
 some come to nothing.
 So I consider that man blessed
 who lives a happy life [910]
 existing day by day.

[Enter Dionysus from the palace. He calls back through the open doors]

DIONYSUS: You who are so desperately eager 1120
 to see those things you should not look upon,
 so keen to chase what you should not pursue
 I mean you, Pentheus, come out here now,
 outside the palace, where I can see you
 dressed up as a raving Bacchic female,
 to spy upon your mother's company.

[Enter Pentheus dressed in women's clothing. He moves in a deliberately over-stated female way, enjoying the role]

DIONYSUS: *[admiringly, as he escorts Pentheus from the doors]*

You look just like one of Cadmus' daughters.

PENTHEUS: Fancy that! I seem to see two suns,
 two images of seven-gated Thebes.
 And you look like a bull leading me out here, 1130 [920]
 with those horns growing from your head.
 Were you once upon a time a beast?
 It's certain now you've changed into a bull.

DIONYSUS: The god walks here. He's made a pact with us.
 Before his attitude was not so kind.

Now you're seeing just what you ought to see.

PENTHEUS: How do I look? Am I holding myself
 just like Ino or my mother, Agave?

DIONYSUS: When I look at you, I think I see them.
 But here, this strand of hair is out of place. 1140
 It's not under the headband where I fixed it.

PENTHEUS: *[demonstrating his dancing steps]*
 I must have worked it loose inside the house, [930]
 shaking my head when I moved here and there,
 practising my Bacchanalian dance.

DIONYSUS: I'll rearrange it for you. It's only right
 that I should serve you. Straighten up your head.

[Dionysus begins adjusting Pentheus' hair and clothing]

PENTHEUS: All right then. You can be my dresser,
 now that I've transformed myself for you.

DIONYSUS: Your girdle's loose. And these pleats in your dress
 are crooked, too, down at your ankle here. 1150

PENTHEUS: *[examining the back of his legs]*
 Yes, that seems to be true for my right leg,
 but on this side the dress hangs perfectly,
 down the full length of my limb.

DIONYSUS: For everyone
 you'll have become someone to celebrate.

PENTHEUS: That's why I'm going.

DIONYSUS: You'll be carried back . . .

PENTHEUS: *[interrupting]* You're pampering me!

DIONYSUS: *[continuing]* . . . in your mother's arms.

PENTHEUS: You've really made up your mind to spoil me.

DIONYSUS: To spoil you? That's true, but in my own way.

PENTHEUS: Then I'll be off to get what I deserve. 1200 [970]

[Exit Pentheus]

DIONYSUS: *[speaking in the direction Pentheus has gone, but not speaking to him]*
 You fearful, terrifying man on your way
 to horrific suffering. Well, you'll win
 a towering fame, as high as heaven.
 Hold out your hand to him, Agave,
 you, too, her sisters, Cadmus' daughters.
 I'm leading this young man in your direction,
 for the great confrontation, where I'll triumph
 I and Bromius. What else will happen
 events will show, as they occur.

[Exit Dionysus]

CHORUS 1: Up now, you hounds of madness, 1210
 go up now into the mountains,
 go where Cadmus' daughters
 keep their company of worshippers, [980]
 goad them into furious revenge
 against that man, that raving spy,
 all dressed up in his women's clothes,
 so keen to glimpse the Maenads.
 His mother will see him first,
 as he spies on them in secret
 from some level rock or crag. 1220
 She'll scream out to her Maenads,
 "Who's the man who's come here,
 to the mountains, to these mountains,
 tracking Cadmean mountain dancers?
 Oh my Bacchae, who has come?
 From whom was this man born?
 He's not born of woman's blood
 he must be some lioness' whelp
 or spawned from Libyan gorgons." [990]

CHORUS: Let justice manifest itself 1230
 let justice march, sword in hand,
 to stab him in the throat,

that godless, lawless man,
unjust earthborn seed of Echion.

CHORUS 2: Any man intent on wickedness,
turning his unlawful rage
against your rites, O Bacchus,
against the worship of your mother,
a man who sets out with an insane mind, [1000]
his courage founded on a falsehood, 1240
who seeks to overcome by force
what simply can't be overcome
let death set his intentions straight.
For a life devoid of grief is one
which receives without complaint
whatever comes down from the gods
that's how mortals ought to live.
Wisdom is something I don't envy.
My joy comes hunting other things
lofty and plain to everyone. 1250
They lead man's life to good
in purity and reverence,
honouring gods day and night,
eradicating from our lives
customs lying beyond what's right. [1010]

CHORUS: Let justice manifest itself
Let justice march, sword in hand,
to stab him in the throat,
that godless, lawless man,
unjust earthborn seed of Echion. 1260

CHORUS 3: Appear now to our sight, O Bacchus
come as a bull or many-headed serpent
or else some fire-breathing lion.
Go now, Bacchus, with your smiling face [1020]
cast your deadly noose upon
that hunter of the Bacchae,
as the group of Maenads brings him down.

[Enter Second Messenger, one of Pentheus' attendants]

SECOND MESSENGER: How I grieve for this house, in earlier days
so happy throughout Greece, home of that old man,
Cadmus from Sidon, who sowed the fields 1270
to harvest the earth-born crop produced
from serpent Ophis. How I now lament
I know I'm just a slave, but nonetheless . . .

CHORUS *[They sing or chant their responses to the Messenger]*
Do you bring us news?
Has something happened,
something about the Bacchae?

SECOND MESSENGER: Pentheus, child of Echion, is dead. [1030]

CHORUS: O my lord Bromius,
 Now your divine greatness
 is here made manifest! 1280

SECOND MESSENGER: What are you saying? Why that song?
 Women, how can you now rejoice like this
 for the death of one who was my master?

CHORUS LEADER: We're strangers here in Thebes,
 so we sing out our joy
 in chants from foreign lands.
 No longer need we cower here
 in fear of prisoner's chains.

SECOND MESSENGER: Do you think Thebes lacks sufficient men
 to take care of your punishment? 1290

CHORUS: Dionysus, oh Dionysus,
 he's the one with power over me
 not Thebes.

SECOND MESSENGER: That you may be forgiven, but to cry
 aloud with joy when such disasters come,
 women, that's not something you should so. [1040]

CHORUS: Speak to me, tell all
 How did death strike him down,
 that unrighteous man,
 that man who acted so unjustly? 1300

SECOND MESSENGER: Once we'd left the settlements of Thebes,
 we went across the river Asopus,
 then started the climb up Mount Cithaeron
 Pentheus and myself, I following the king.
 The stranger was our guide, scouting the way.
 First, we sat down in a grassy meadow,
 keeping our feet and tongues quite silent,
 so we could see without being noticed. [1050]

There was a valley there shut in by cliffs.
 Through it refreshing waters flowed, with pines 1310
 providing shade. The Maenads sat there,
 their hands all busy with delightful work
 some of them with ivy strands repairing
 damaged thyrsos, while others sang,
 chanting Bacchic songs to one another,
 carefree as fillies freed from harness.
 Then Pentheus, that unhappy man,
 not seeing the crowd of women, spoke up,
 "Stranger, I can't see from where we're standing.
 My eyes can't glimpse those crafty Maenads. 1320 [1060]
 But up there, on that hill, a pine tree stands.
 If I climbed that, I might see those women,

and witness the disgraceful things they do."
 Then I saw that stranger work a marvel.
 He seized that pine tree's topmost branch
 it stretched up to heaven and brought it down,
 pulling it to the dark earth, bending it
 as if it were a bow or some curved wheel
 forced into a circle while staked out with pegs
 that's how the stranger made that tree bend down, 1330
 forcing the mountain pine to earth by hand,
 something no mortal man could ever do.
 He set Pentheus in that pine tree's branches. [1070]
 Then his hands released the tree, but slowly,
 so it stood up straight, being very careful
 not to shake Pentheus loose. So that pine
 towered straight up to heaven, with my king
 perched on its back. Maenads could see him there
 more easily than he could spy on them.
 As he was just becoming visible 1340
 the stranger had completely disappeared
 some voice, I guess it was Dionysus
 cried out from the sky, "Young women,
 I've brought you the man who laughed at you, [1080]
 who ridiculed my rites. Now punish him!"
 As he shouted this, a dreadful fire arose,
 blazing between the earth and heaven.
 The air was still. In the wooded valley
 no sound came from the leaves, and all the beasts
 were silent, too. The women stood up at once. 1350
 They'd heard the voice, but not distinctly.
 They gazed around them. Then again the voice
 shouted his commands. When Cadmus' daughters
 clearly heard what Dionysus ordered,
 they rushed out, running as fast as doves, [1090]
 moving their feet at an amazing speed.
 His mother Agave with both her sisters
 and all the Bacchae charged straight through
 the valley, the torrents, the mountain cliffs,
 pushed to a god-inspired frenzy. 1360
 They saw the king there sitting in that pine.
 First, they scaled a cliff face looming up
 opposite the tree and started throwing rocks,
 trying to hurt him. Others threw branches,
 or hurled their thyrsos through the air at him,
 sad, miserable Pentheus, their target. [1100]
 But they didn't hit him. The poor man
 sat high beyond their frenzied cruelty,

trapped up there, no way to save his skin.
 Then, like lightning, they struck oak branches down, 1370
 trying them as levers to uproot the tree.
 When these attempts all failed, Agave said,
 "Come now, make a circle round the tree.
 Then, Maenads, each of you must seize a branch,
 so we can catch the climbing beast up there,
 stop him making our god's secret dances known."
 Thousands of hands grabbed the tree and pulled.
 They yanked it from the ground. Pentheus fell, [1110]
 crashing to earth down from his lofty perch,
 screaming in distress. He knew well enough 1380
 something dreadful was about to happen.
 His priestess mother first began the slaughter.
 She hurled herself at him. Pentheus tore off
 his headband, untying it from his head,
 so wretched Agave would recognize him,
 so she wouldn't kill him. Touching her cheek,
 he cried out, "It's me, mother, Pentheus,
 your child. You gave birth to me at home,
 in Echion's house. Pity me, mother [1120]
 don't kill your child because I've made mistakes." 1390
 But Agave was foaming at the mouth,
 eyes rolling in their sockets, her mind not set
 on what she ought to think, she didn't listen
 she was possessed, in a Bacchic frenzy.
 She seized his left arm, below the elbow,
 pushed her foot against the poor man's ribs,
 then tore his shoulder out. The strength she had,
 it was not her own. The god put power
 into those hands of hers. Meanwhile Ino,
 her sister, went at the other side, 1400
 ripping off chunks of Pentheus' flesh,
 while Autonoe and all the Bacchae, [1130]
 the whole crowd of them, attacked as well,
 all of them howling out together.
 As long as Pentheus was still alive,
 he kept on screaming. The women cried in triumph
 one brandished an arm, another held a foot
 complete with hunting boot, the women's nails
 tore his ribs apart. Their hands grew bloody,
 tossing bits of his flesh back and forth, for fun. 1410
 His body parts lie scattered everywhere
 some under rough rocks, some in the forest,
 deep in the trees. They're difficult to find.
 As for the poor victim's head, his mother [1140]

stumbled on it. Her hands picked it up,
 then stuck it on a thyrsus, at the tip.
 Now she carries it around Cithaeron,
 as though it were some wild lion's head.
 She's left her sisters dancing with the Maenads.
 She's coming here, inside these very walls, 1420
 showing off with pride her ill-fated prey,
 calling out to her fellow hunter, Bacchus,
 her companion in the chase, the winner,
 the glorious victor. By serving him,
 in her great triumph she wins only tears.
 As for me, I'm leaving this disaster,
 before Agave gets back home again.
 The best thing is to keep one's mind controlled, [1150]
 and worship all that comes down from the gods.
 That, in my view, is the wisest custom, 1430
 for those who can conduct their lives that way.

[Exit Messenger]

CHORUS: Let's dance to honour Bacchus,
 Let's shout to celebrate what's happened here,
 happened to Pentheus,
 child of the serpent,
 who put on women's clothes,
 who took up the beautiful and blessed thyrsus
 his certain death,
 disaster brought on by the bull.
 You Bacchic women 1440 [1160]
 descended from old Cadmus,
 you've won glorious victory,
 one which ends in tears,
 which ends in lamentation.
 A noble undertaking this,
 to drench one's hands in blood,
 life blood dripping from one's only son.

CHORUS LEADER: Wait! I see Agave, Pentheus' mother,
 on her way home, her eyes transfixed.
 Let's now welcome her, 1450
 the happy revels of our god of joy!

[Enter Agave, cradling the head of Pentheus]

AGAVE: Asian Bacchae . . .

CHORUS: Why do you appeal to me?

AGAVE: *[displaying the head]* From the mountains I've brought home [1170]
 this ivy tendril freshly cut.
 We've had a blessed hunt.

CHORUS: I see it.
 As your fellow dancer, I'll accept it.

AGAVE: I caught this young lion without a trap,
as you can see.

CHORUS: What desert was he in?

AGAVE: Cithaeron.

CHORUS: On Cithaeron?

AGAVE: Cithaeron killed him.

CHORUS: Who struck him down? 1460

AGAVE: The honour of the first blow goes to me.
In the dancing I'm called blessed Agave. [1180]

CHORUS: Who else?

AGAVE: Well, from Cadmus . . .

CHORUS: From Cadmus what?

AGAVE: His other children laid hands on the beast,
but after me only after I did first.
We've had good hunting. So come, share our feast.

CHORUS: What? You want me to eat that with you?
Oh you unhappy woman.

AGAVE: This is a young bull. Look at this cheek
It's just growing downy under the crop 1470
of his soft hair.

CHORUS: His hair makes him resemble
some wild beast.

AGAVE: Bacchus is a clever huntsman [1190]
he wisely set his Maenads on this beast.

CHORUS: Yes, our master is indeed a hunter.

AGAVE: Have you any praise for me?

CHORUS: I praise you.

AGAVE: Soon all Cadmus' people. . .

CHORUS: . . . and Pentheus, your son, as well.

AGAVE: . . . will celebrate his mother, who caught the beast,
just like a lion.

CHORUS: It's a strange trophy.

AGAVE: And strangely captured, too.

CHORUS: You're proud of what you've done?

AGAVE: Yes, I'm delighted. Great things I've done 1480
great things on this hunt, clear for all to see.

CHORUS: Well then, you most unfortunate woman, [1200]
show off your hunting prize, your sign of victory,
to all the citizens.

AGAVE: [*addressing everyone*] All of you here,
all you living in the land of Thebes,
in this city with its splendid walls,
come see this wild beast we hunted down
daughters of Cadmus not with thonged spears,
Thessalian javelins, or by using nets,
but with our own white hands, our finger tips. 1490

After this, why should huntsmen boast aloud,
 when no one needs the implements they use?
 We caught this beast by hand, tore it apart [1210]
 with our own hands. But where's my father?
 He should come here. And where's Pentheus?
 Where is my son? He should take a ladder,
 set it against the house, fix this lion's head
 way up there, high on the palace front.
 I've captured it and brought it home with me.

[Enter Cadmus and attendants, carrying parts of Pentheus' body]

CADMUS: Follow me, all those of you who carry 1500
 some part of wretched Pentheus. You slaves,
 come here, right by the house.

[They place the bits of Pentheus' body together in a chest front of the palace]

I'm worn out.

So many searches but I picked up the body.
 I came across it in the rocky clefts
 on Mount Cithaeron, ripped to pieces, [1220]
 no parts lying together in one place.

It was in the woods difficult to search.
 Someone told me what my daughter'd done,
 those horrific acts, once I'd come back,
 returning here with old Tiresias, 1510
 inside the city walls, back from the Bacchae.

So I climbed the mountains once again.
 Now I bring home this child the Maenads killed.

I saw Autonoe, who once bore
 Actaeon to Aristeius and Ino,
 she was with her there, in the forest,
 both still possessed, quite mad, poor creatures.

Someone said Agave was coming here, [1230]
 still doing her Bacchic dance. He spoke the truth,
 for I see her there what a wretched sight! 1520

AGAVE: Father, now you can be truly proud.

Among all living men you've produced
 by far the finest daughters. I'm talking
 of all of us, but especially of myself.
 I've left behind my shuttle and my loom,
 and risen to great things, catching wild beasts
 with my bare hands. Now I've captured him,
 I'm holding in my arms the finest trophy,
 as you can see, bringing it back home to you,
 so it may hang here.

[offering him Pentheus' head]

Take this, father 1530 [1240]
 let your hands welcome it. Be proud of it,

of what I've caught. Summon all your friends
 have a banquet, for you are blessed indeed,
 blessed your daughters have achieved these things.

CADMUS: This grief's beyond measure, beyond endurance.

With these hands of yours you've murdered him.
 You strike down this sacrificial victim,
 this offering to the gods, then invite me,
 and all of Thebes, to share a banquet.

Alas, first for your sorrow, then my own. 1540

Lord god Bromius, born into this family,
 has destroyed us, acting out his justice, [1250]
 but too much so.

AGAVE: Why such scowling eyes?

How sorrowful and solemn old men become.

As for my son, I hope he's a fine hunter,
 who copies his mother's hunting style,
 when he rides out with young men of Thebes
 chasing after creatures in the wild.

The only thing he seems capable of doing
 is fighting with the gods. It's up to you, 1550
 father, to reprimand him for it.

Who'll call him here into my sight,
 so he can see my good luck for himself?

CADMUS: Alas! Alas! What dreadful pain you'll feel
 when you recognize what you've just done. [1260]

If you stay forever in your present state,
 you'll be unfortunate, but you won't feel
 as if you're suffering unhappiness.

AGAVE: But what in all this is wrong or painful?

CADMUS: First, raise your eyes. Look up into the sky. 1560

AGAVE: All right. But why tell me to look up there?

CADMUS: Does the sky still seem the same to you,
 or has it changed?

AGAVE: It seems, well, brighter . . .
 more translucent than it was before.

CADMUS: And your inner spirit, is it still shaking?

AGAVE: I don't understand what it is you're asking.

But my mind is starting to clear somehow.

It's changing . . . it's not what it was before. [1270]

CADMUS: Can you hear me? Can you answer clearly?

AGAVE: Yes. But, father, what we discussed before, 1570
 I've quite forgotten.

CADMUS: Then tell me this,
 to whose house did you come when you got married?

AGAVE: You gave me to Echion, who, men say,
 was one of those who grew from seeds you cast.

CADMUS: In that house you bore your husband a child.

What was his name?

AGAVE: His name was Pentheus.

I conceived him with his father.

CADMUS: Well then,

this head your hands are holding, whose is it?

AGAVE: It's a lion's. That's what the hunters said.

CADMUS: Inspect it carefully. You can do that 1580
without much effort.

AGAVE: [*inspecting the head*] What is this?

What am I looking at? What am I holding? [1280]

CADMUS: Look at it. You'll understand more clearly.

AGAVE: What I see fills me with horrific pain . . .
such agony . . .

CADMUS: Does it still seem to you
to be a lion's head?

AGAVE: No. It's appalling,
this head I'm holding belongs to Pentheus.

CADMUS: Yes, that's right. I was lamenting his fate
before you recognized him.

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

CADMUS: Harsh truth, 1590
how you come to light at the wrong moment.

AGAVE: Tell me. My heart is pounding in me
to hear what you're about to say.

CADMUS: You killed him,
you and your sisters.

AGAVE: Where was he killed?
At home? In what sort of place? [1290]

CADMUS: He was killed
where dogs once made a common meal of Actaeon.

AGAVE: Why did this poor man go to Cithaeron?

CADMUS: He went there to ridicule the god
and you for celebrating Dionysus.

AGAVE: But how did we happen to be up there?

CADMUS: You were insane, the entire city 1600
was in a Bacchic madness.

AGAVE: Now I see.
Dionysus has destroyed us all.

CADMUS: He took offense at being insulted.
You did not consider him a god.

AGAVE: Father, where's the body of my dearest son?

CADMUS: I had trouble tracking the body down.
I brought back what I found.

AGAVE: Are all his limbs laid out
just as they should be? And Pentheus, [1300]
what part did he play in my madness?

CADMUS: Like you, he was irreverent to the god. 1610
That's why the god linked you and him together
in the same disaster, thus destroying
the house and me, for I've no children left,
now I see this offspring of your womb,
you unhappy woman, cruelly butchered
in the most shameful way. He was the one
who brought new vision to our family.
[Addressing the remains of Pentheus]
My child, you upheld the honour of our house,
my daughter's son. You were feared in Thebes. [1310]
No one who saw you ever would insult me, 1620
though I was old, for you would then inflict
fit punishment. Now the mighty Cadmus,
the man who sowed and later harvested
the most splendid crop, the Theban people
will be an exile, banished from his home,
a dishonoured man. Dearest of men,
even though, my child, you're alive no more,
I count you among those closest to me.
You won't be touching my cheek any more,
holding me in your arms, and calling me 1630
"grandfather," as you ask me, "Old man,
who's injuring or dishonouring you? [1320]
Who upsets your heart with any pain?
Tell me, father, so I can punish him
anyone who treats you in an unjust way."
Now you're in this horrifying state,
I'm in misery, your mother's pitiful,
and all your relatives are in despair.
If there's a man who disrespects the gods,
let him think about how this man perished 1640
then he should develop faith in them.

CHORUS LEADER: I'm sorry for you Cadmus you're in pain.
But your grandson deserved his punishment.

AGAVE: Father, you see how all has changed for me.
[From being your royal and honoured daughter,
the mother of a king, I'm now transformed
an abomination, something to fill
all people's hearts with horror, with disgust
the mother who slaughtered her only son,
who tore him apart, ripping out the heart 1650
from the child who filled her own heart with joy

all to honour this god Dionysus.
 But, father, give me your permission now
 to lay out here the body of my son,
 prepare his corpse for proper burial.

CADMUS: That's no easy task to undertake.

His body, all the parts I could collect,
 lies here, in this chest, not a pretty sight.
 My own eyes can hardly bear to see him.
 But if you think you can endure the work,
 then, my child, begin the appropriate rites.

1660

AGAVE: *[removing Pentheus' limbs and placing them on the ground in front of her]*

Alas, for my poor son, my only child,
 destroyed by his mother's Bacchic madness.
 How could these hands of mine, which loved him so,
 have torn these limbs apart, ripped out his flesh.
 Here's an arm which has held me all these years,
 growing stronger as he grew into a man,
 his feet . . . oh, how he used to run to me,
 seeking assurance of his mother's love.

His face was handsome, on the verge of manhood.

1670

See the soft down still resting on these lips,
 which have kissed me thousands of times or more.
 All this, and all the rest, set here before us.

Oh Zeus and all you Olympian gods

[She cannot complete the ritual and collapses in grief]

It makes no sense, it's unendurable.

How could the god have wished such things on me?

CHORUS LEADER *[helping Agave get up]*

Lady, you must bear what cannot be borne.

Your suffering is intense, but the god is just.

You insulted him in Thebes, showed no respect,
 you've brought the punishment upon yourself.

1680

CHORUS: What is wisdom? What is finer

than the rights men get from gods,
 to hold their powerful hands
 over the heads of their enemies?

Ah yes, what's good is always loved.

So all praise Dionysus,

praise the dancing god,

god of our revelry,

god whose justice is divine,

whose justice now reveals itself.

1690

[Enter Dionysus]

DIONYSUS: Yes, I am Dionysus, son of Zeus.

You see me now before you as a god.

You Thebans learned about my powers too late.
 Dishonouring me, you earn the penalty.
 You refused my rites. Now you must leave,
 abandon your city for barbarian lands.
 Agave, too, that polluted creature,
 must go into perpetual banishment.
 And Cadmus, you too must endure your lot.]
 Your form will change, so you become a dragon. 1700 [1330]
 Your wife, Harmonia, Ares' daughter,
 whom you, though mortal, took in marriage,
 will be transformed, changing to a snake.
 As Zeus' oracle declares, you and she
 will drive a chariot drawn by heifers.
 You'll rule barbarians. With your armies,
 too large to count, you'll raze many cities.
 Once they despoil Apollo's oracle,
 they'll have a painful journey back again.
 But Ares will guard you and Harmonia. 1710
 In lands of the blessed he'll transform your lives.
 That's what I proclaim, I,
 Dionysus, [1340]
 born from no mortal father, but from Zeus.
 If you had understood how to behave
 as you should have when you were unwilling,
 you'd now be fortunate, with Zeus' child
 among your allies.
 CADMUS: O Dionysus,
 we implore you, we've not acted justly.
 DIONYSUS: You learn too late. You were ignorant
 when you should have known.
 CADMUS: Now we understand. 1720
 Your actions against us are too severe.
 DIONYSUS: I was born a god, and you insulted me.
 CADMUS: Angry gods should not act just like humans.
 DIONYSUS: My father Zeus willed all this long ago.
 AGAVE: Alas, old man, then this must be our fate, [1350]
 a miserable exile.
 DIONYSUS: Why then delay?
 Why postpone what necessity requires?
 CADMUS: Child, we've stumbled into this disaster,
 this terrible calamity, you and me,
 both in agony, your sisters, too. 1730
 So I'll go out to the barbarians,
 a foreign resident in my old age.
 And then for me there's that oracle
 which says I'll lead a mixed barbarian force

back into Greece. And I'll bring here with me
 Harmonia, Ares' daughter, my wife.
 I'll have the savage nature of a snake,
 as I lead my soldiers to the altars,
 to the tombs, in Greece. But even then,
 there'll be no end to my wretched sorrows. 1740 [1360]
 I'll never sail the downward plunging Acheron
 and reach some final peace.

AGAVE: [*embracing Cadmus*] Father, I must be exiled without you.

CADMUS: Why do you throw your arms about me,
 my unhappy child, just like some young swan
 protecting an old one, gray and helpless.

AGAVE: Because I've no idea where to go,
 once I'm banished from my father's land.

CADMUS: Child, I don't know. Your father's not much help.

AGAVE: Farewell, then, to my home. 1750
 Farewell to my native city.

In my misfortune I abandon you,
 an exile from spaces once my own. [1370]

CADMUS: Go now to Aristeus' house, my child.

AGAVE: How I grieve for you, my father.

CADMUS: And I grieve for you, my child,
 as I weep for your sisters.

AGAVE: Lord Dionysus has inflicted
 such brutal terror on your house.

DIONYSUS: Yes. For at your hands I suffered, too 1760
 and dreadfully. For here in Thebes
 my name received no recognition.

AGAVE: Farewell, father.

CADMUS: My most unhappy daughter,
 may you fare well. That will be hard for you. [1380]

AGAVE: Lead on, friends, so I may take my sisters,
 those pitiful women, into exile with me.
 May I go somewhere where cursed Cithaeron
 will never see me, nor my eyes glimpse
 that dreadful mountain, a place far away
 from any sacred thyrsus. Let others 1770
 make Bacchic celebrations their concern.

[*Exit Agave*]

CHORUS: The gods appear in many forms,
 carrying with them unwelcome things.
 What people thought would happen never did.
 What they did not expect, the gods made happen.
 That's what this story has revealed.

[*Exeunt Chorus and Cadmus, leaving on stage the remains of Pentheus' body*]