

PENTHEUS AND DIONYSUS: HOST AND GUEST

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EURIPIDES' intentions, as he wrote the *Bacchae*, have been much disputed, but his means, at least, can be described with a decent objectivity, and the first of these is the plot that he chose for his play. A rough classification at once identifies this as a plot of divine punishment, for the final achievement of the *Bacchae* action is the destruction, by an offended divinity, of a man who had gone to war with a god. In the beginning of the piece this man is seen at the height of his youth and his princely power; he is seen at its end, an incoherent collection of bloody parts that must be reassembled to become a paradigm of the shattered mortal form. This action of heavenly revenge is the one that moderns associate most closely with antique tragedy; it seems to have been frequently in Aristotle's mind, too, as he wrote the *Poetics*, and examples enough survive to allow a fair description of its "normal" form.¹ Such a description is to the point, for it will cause the "abnormalities" of this particular plot to stand out, and so will allow us to approach the play just where it is most itself.

The unmixed spectacle of a god destroying a man was a difficult one to take pleasure in, and it called forth certain concepts that were unnecessary to any of the other tragic plots. The Greek religious temper demanded that this action be something more than a crude demonstration of demonic power; the cause of the god's anger could not be internal but had to lie outside himself. And the Greek

sense of justice specified that this cause should be contained within some action that the sufferer had taken. The anger of the god and the punishment he enforced had to be, in reference to this cause, exaggerated, for only then would they seem to be not simply an allegorized version of the world's justice but rather true emanations of the supernatural. Excessive, demonic anger could best be roused by a direct attack upon divinity itself, and so the initial cause in plots of this sort came to be a mortal act of *dyssebeia*. When the tragic situation was created after this pattern, the final outcome of the piece, the divine action of destruction, was seen to be a form of Dike. The excessive punishment discriminated between men and gods as an exactly calculated punishment would not, and so it had an inherent quality of didacticism about it that made it appropriate to tragedy. By reminding men of the absolute difference between their human and their divine judges, the punishment of the *theomachos* enforced the laws of *eusebeia* and so made continuing life possible, for those laws were the only terms under which men could exist.

In the plot of divine punishment the principal was necessarily of magnified stature since he was one who had found his enemies among the gods, but he was almost as necessarily a passive figure. He walked on stage that he might be carried off, having suffered for a crime the audience had not seen him commit. The deed which had attracted the punitive notice of the

1. The surviving divine punishment tragedies are *Persians*, *Prometheus*, *Agamemnon*, *Ajax*, *Women of Trachis*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hippolytus*, *Bacchae*; there are also divine punishment

actions, as parts of multiple plots, in *Madness of Heracles* and *Andromache*.

gods, the *aition* of the action, belonged to predramatic time for several very good reasons. The crime was a religious one, and so its direct imitation would be a dangerous thing; in addition it would be almost impossible, aesthetically, for the dramatist could not risk any appearance of the casual or the ordinary in the offense, or heaven would seem cruel indeed, and yet he could not give it a heavy or portentous treatment either, or the offender would seem too brash, if he were knowing, too unfree, if he were blind. Only when the heroic offense was pushed safely into the past could the disaster easily be made to seem both fated and freely chosen, and this duality was one of the chief tenets of the theology of ancient tragedy. In any case, a play that showed both an offense and its punishment within a single fictive day would defy all the old saws about the devious slowness with which heaven was wont to pursue a wrongdoer, while it likewise offended simple credibility. All of which is another way of saying what Aristotle would have put very simply: the *praxis* of this type of play was suffering, not doing, and so, though the old offense might be recounted or even reduplicated in the present action,² it was the *pathos* of the principal that supplied the proper business of the plot.

A résumé of the cause and a depiction of the resulting anguish were enough for those who watched the *Persians* and the *Prometheus*, but as the drama became more sophisticated a more complex stage

2. The offense is recounted at length in the *Persians*, recounted and re-enacted in the form of defiance in *Prometheus*. In *Agamemnon* there are accounts both of the impieties at Troy and of their anticipatory duplication at Aulis, then a symbolic re-enactment in the carpet scene. Hippolytus' refusal to worship Aphrodite is recounted by the goddess and re-enacted in small by the prince as soon as he steps on stage; Ajax' denial of Athena is twice recounted; Neoptolemus' defiance and his re-enactment of that defiance are both recounted in the messenger speech of the *Andromache*. In both of the Heracles plays the offense inheres in the hero's being himself a threat to the boundaries between god and man; in both his more than mortal deeds are recounted with,

action could be mounted and indeed was demanded by spectators who might at other times watch the elaborate intrigues of the vengeance and escape plots. The punishment plot developed its own complexities, but continued to center around the *pathos*, now potentially more bizarre and more wonderfully appropriate to its principal. The spectacle of a Titan struck by lightning had told the tale in a monumental way, but the victorious king stabbed in his bath or the chaste huntsman falsely defamed and then mauled by his horses could suggest a subtlety of transgression and an artistry of destruction that made both god and man far more interesting.³ And when the death or the suffering was no longer personally inflicted by the god, but came instead by way of a human agent, a new dynamism of action and ethos became possible. The hero still had to be the noble host of a single ritual sin; he could be decked out with obvious secular qualities—Ajax's savagery, Neoptolemus' valor, Agamemnon's wisdom or Hippolytus' adolescent self-righteousness—but he could not reflect anything of ordinary or slightly subscale humanity, for if he became a shade too frail he was no longer a fitting target for a god. The new role of god's agent, on the other hand, paradoxically allowed for a much fuller portrait of human nature in all its mortal limitations. This second figure encouraged dramatists to work out ever more delicate systems of double motivation as they showed a deeply flawed mortal fitting

in the *Madness*, the harrowing of hell especially emphasized. Oedipus is the punishment principal most like Pentheus, for he has not committed a well-defined act of impiety in the past, though he has committed crimes; he failed to recognize himself in the sinner Apollo described to him on his first visit to Delphi, and it is this failure that he re-enacts in the course of the play, while he also commits a definable religious offense in denying, with Jocasta, the power of god and the truth of his oracles.

3. This does not mean that the *Prometheus* must be archaic; the poet may have felt that an archaizing plot form was most suitable to his subject.

himself with apparent freedom into the divine hand to which he was merely a necessary tool.⁴

Of the nine surviving tragic actions of divine punishment (in addition to the *Bacchae*) four are of the archaic type concerned simply with the display of a *pathos*. These are the *Prometheus*, the *Oedipus Rex*, the first section of the *Ajax*, and the central section of the *Madness of Heracles*. Four others are of the more complex type, with a human agent who is the direct instrument of the hero's suffering: these are *Agamemnon*, *Women of Trachis*, *Hippolytus*, and the Neoptolemus section of the *Andromache*. The final example, the *Persians*, is of a peculiar type all its own since its action is made, not of the immediate experience of suffering but of its retrospective experience, felt first by a sounding-board figure, Atossa (the prototype of the figures of Theseus, Hyllus, Peleus, and Cadmus), and then by the principal. It should be noted however that in the fiction of the *Persians*, as distinct from the stage action, there was a human agent, the Greek army.

The simpler and the more complex versions of this plot show each its distinctive pattern. In the first the principal is present from the beginning of the action; his *pathos* is drawn out, resisted, self-molded; it may or may not require a messenger speech for its full delineation, but it is always itself on display. Suffering, not death, is plainly the subject; in three of the four examples the principal survives, and even Ajax dies by his own hand, not by a direct blow from heaven. The other

4. In the *Prometheus* the agent is another divinity, Hermes, and he might be considered an aspect of Zeus. The *Agamemnon* overtly expresses the idea that a human agent is both free and unfree by giving Clytemnestra fully effective human reasons for her action while simultaneously describing her as a *menis*, an *eriny*, or an *alastor*. Deianira, Phaedra, and the Orestes of the *Andromache* are particularly notable for their human weakness, testifying to a kind of tact in the divinities

four examples, the punishments that make use of a human agent, show a radical change in the orientation of the stage action. In every case the first major section of the drama (one third to one half of its length) is given over to the agent—to the investigation of his character and the development of his motives. (In one case, the *Hippolytus*, there is a second divine agent, the Nurse, who must work upon the first before she is ready to fulfil her destructive assignment, which in turn requires a third agent for its completion.) In these actions the principal does not make a significant appearance until the plot is well begun, sometimes not until the drama is half over, and when he does enter it is not to resist (to any appreciable degree) the religio-secular machine that has been prepared for his demolition. He does not always walk his carpet as smoothly as Agamemnon did—he may turn and fight at the last minute like a Neoptolemus, he may protest like a Hippolytus—but his punishment comes swiftly on, well before the end of the play.

In the dramas of divine punishment that make use of a human agent the rationale of suffering has replaced suffering itself as the true meat of the drama. The *pathos* proper occurs briefly, about two-thirds of the way through the total staged action; its preparation has occupied the opening section and its interpretation will account for the post-*pathos* scenes. This latter tendency is plainest in the *Women of Trachis* and *Hippolytus* (where the dramatists counterbalance it with a prolongation of the agony), but it is perfectly clear too in Clytemnestra's final

who chose these inherently flawed creatures as their tools. The only case of a knowing and virtuous agent is that of the Greek army in the *Persians*, and there of course the agent does not appear. Conscious virtue in this figure would put the whole action out of balance by bringing the agent's heroism to our attention and making of the whole a sort of police action against a malefactor.

scenes and in the staged part of the Neoptolemus tragedy, the exodus of the *Andromache*. The god's means are displayed as the agent is manipulated to his purpose; his anger and his power are felt in the *pathos* proper; then his act is investigated and elucidated in scenes which make this particular divine vendetta a part of a general description of the way heaven works. Thus the dramaturgical practices that developed around the secondary figure of the human agent meant that the principal, the mortal offender, while he was punished by the outraged divinity, was also obscured as a stage personage.

II

The *Bacchae* clearly belongs to the second type of the divine punishment action, for the dismemberment of Pentheus is achieved by means of a human agent. Indeed, the play's entire latter section, from line 811 to the end, is a faithful formal replica of the other punishment tragedies. Except for the split in the agent's role (seen also in *Hippolytus*) all goes according to rule: the robing scene is parallel to Clytemnestra's welcome as the hero is tempted to give a symbolic re-enactment to his deed of impiety; the messenger describes the physical *pathos*, as do similar messengers in six other punishment actions (*Persians*, *Women of Trachis*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, and the *Madness of Heracles*); the final scene with its tableau of agent and victim repeats the formal arrangements found at the end of *Agamemnon* and *Hippolytus*.⁵ Yet in spite of this perfect conformity as the play closes, we see at once that the *Bacchae* is absolutely and essentially different from the other plays of divine punishment. It is different

formally, for its opening scenes are unlike those of any of the others, and it is also different in subject. In every other case, though with all the marvelous variety that great dramatists brought to the plot, the *praxis* was a monolithic representation of suffering, whereas here in the *Bacchae* the *pathos*, sensational when it does come, can only be said to be the subject of the second half of the play.

An unprecedented relationship between the god and his victim is established at the outset of the *Bacchae*. Dionysus comes on in his own person to speak the prologue speech, and in this he is formally like the other prologue divinities of punishment tragedy, the Kratos of the *Prometheus*, the Athena of the *Ajax*, the Iris of the second prologue of the *Madness of Heracles*, and the Aphrodite of the *Hippolytus*. Dionysus, however, does not say what these others say. Each of them makes a statement of his own (or another god's) determination to punish the principal of the piece, and most of them indicate the crime that has so offended them or their masters. Dionysus, however, announces quite a different determination, a positive one, for he says that it is his desire to establish certain rites at Thebes (25; 39–42; 49). He has already been defied by the city, but punishment is only a potential contingency (50–52); Dionysus has chosen thus far to destroy the defiance, not those who are guilty of it, and he has sent the women out, possessed, to undertake the rites they should have embraced before (26–38). Pentheus is mentioned in passing, and is called a *theomachos* (45; cf. 1255) because he has refused to include Dionysus among the gods he would have his city honor, but there is no fixed divine purpose attached to him when the

5. The exact formal parallel occurs at the end of the punishment section of the *Madness of Heracles*, where there is likewise an agent of destruction who must be led by his old

father to recognize what he has done. That play, however, has managed to make its apparent agent actually the victim of Hera's punishment.

play begins.⁶ Dionysus and Pentheus are not yet inextricably connected as the author and the subject of a particular fate; war has not yet been declared between them, and Pentheus is, at this moment, free.

The prologue thus at once establishes an unconventional tragic situation, and another anomaly is evident when the first episode begins, for the opening scenes have been cleared of their usual content. Ordinarily this part of the play belonged to the agent, but we find that Agave has been ejected from it. When the crucial time comes she will do her work with terrible effectiveness, and certainly she fulfills all the external requirements of her role; she is a woman (and a woman may be put to such a use and retain her nobility, as a man cannot; viz., Orestes in the *Andromache*), close kin to the principal, and obedient to the divine power that is inimical to that principal. Yet Agave does not function dramaturgically as the other agents do; she does not appear when they do, nor is she described as they are, and this means that the preparation of the divine plot against a man is not given its ordinary exposition. Clytemnestra, Deianira, and Phaedra take almost exclusive possession of the stage in the beginning of their respective pieces; their motives and their characters are described in firsthand action as they move with varying degrees of blindness into the role they have been called upon to play. Not so with Agave, who is not even allowed to appear until after the disaster is complete, her part in it already played with thorough effect. She has no dramatic existence at all until the exodus; she is merely one of the host of absent women, and there is no memory of Iphigenia, no heart-piercing Iole figure, no genial,

fawning Nurse to explain how she became an agent of destruction. Agave is blatantly a tool, literally possessed by the superhuman force at work in this tragedy; her only stage function is to lament, for all her other visible duties have been repossessed by the god who is making use of her.

Instead of the agent and the preparation of the mechanism of the *pathos*, the opening scenes of the *Bacchae* show us the victim, and he is a victim unlike any of the others. In his dominance of this part of his drama he can be compared to a Prometheus or to an Oedipus, victims of simpler, agentless punishments, but his actions are not like theirs. He is not struggling magnificently within the meshes of his determined fate, he is not moving blindly or open-eyed along the path that leads from transgression to punishment. His free mobility and easy assertiveness are not deceptive, as they are in Oedipus' case, but actual, for no god has yet decided upon his destruction. Pentheus, unlike any other hero of punishment tragedy, begins his play before he has committed a decisive offense. He will outrage his divine antagonist here, on this stage, as a part of the action of this play, making the *Bacchae* the one tragedy that encompasses in its spectacle both an act of *hybris* and its consequent experience of *nemesis*.

The drama of *Bacchae* 1-810 is the imitation of the commission of a religious crime. In choosing to depict this subject Euripides chose to run all the risks mentioned above, and his consummate technique can be observed as he brings off the impossible. The poet treats his offender like a vengeance or a sacrifice hero, depicting his resolution in the normal way, with a series of situations that tempt him

6. Compare Aphrodite's *τιμωρήσομαι* 'Ιππόλυτον ἐν τῇδ'

ἡμέρᾳ (*Hipp.* 21-22), and Iris' 'Ηρα προσάψαι κουνὸν αἷμ' αὐτῷ

θέλει (*HF* 831).

to abandon his purpose. His task is made to look now unnecessary, now impossibly difficult, but Pentheus brushes aside all who would dissuade him. The scenes are so contrived, however, that his firmness does not evoke a wholehearted response of admiration; rather the audience experiences an increasing sense of fear, shame, and apprehension, for these persuaders, unlike the usual Chrysothemis or Ismene figures, are urging truth and promising blessedness instead of dealing in compromise and inglorious survival. They are the dramatist's means of insisting that Pentheus' crime is freely and knowingly committed, and one by one they remove from it all claim to virtue, reason, or even magnificence. There is no ignorance or blindness, either, to serve as a palliative, aside from the ignorance that the prince insists upon preserving; there is no ironic concatenation of events that keeps him from a recognition of his deed. True, he mistakes the exact identity of his opponent, but he knows his affiliation, and his mistake is made in spite of a full sequence of instructions and demonstrations meant to reveal the nature of the divine enemy he would attack. It is precisely this attempt to enlighten the "victim" that has replaced the setting of the catastrophic trap as the subject matter of the drama's opening scenes.

When Pentheus arrives before the palace he knows the situation at Thebes only by hearsay. He has been told that a representative of the cult of Dionysus has come with his band of followers, and he has been told that the women of the city have been seized with an enthusiasm and have run raving to the hills. It is his conviction that the Stranger is a charlatan, his "religion" a form of depravity, and it is his intention to protect his city from an influence not only disgusting but dangerous. Civil order and the peaceable transfer of property depend

upon legitimacy in the family and are threatened by widespread promiscuity among the wives of citizens, and for this reason the women must be brought down from the mountain. Cadmus speaks for the royal house and Tiresias for the established church in the first attempt to make him see matters differently, but neither is in himself a very powerful advocate, and it is perfectly possible to make a case for Pentheus' refusal to hear their testimony, though his actions toward them do betray a portentous lack of *aidos*. He breaks every unwritten law, showing disrespect for parent, stranger, and god, but he does this believing that there is a clear and present danger to Thebes which must be dealt with strenuously.

It is on the basis of imperfect information as to the nature of his visitor that Pentheus determines to imprison the foreign Bacchants, to hunt down and incarcerate the Theban Maenads, and to put the Stranger to death. He soon has the opportunity to learn much more, however, and to check his judgment of the supposed threat against the actualities of the situation. He hears the guard who has captured the Stranger testify to the gentleness of the "beast" (436-40); he hears too of the miracles that accompanied an attempt to imprison the Stranger's band (443-50), and then he hears from the Stranger himself. As he interviews his prisoner and finds, because of his prejudice, that everything the other says confirms his worst suspicions, the scene measures, in its likeness to another from another punishment tragedy, the degree of aberration that is present here. Pentheus takes the same stance that Theseus (a secondary agent of destruction) does in his first scene with his son, while the "destroying" god plays the victim's role! We begin to see why an earthquake was necessary, for the words of family, city, church, and now of god himself have failed to reach

the mind of this prince, nor has he been in the least impressed by the miraculous escape of the Maenads from his prison. If the god really means to persuade him, the obvious next step is some form of direct revelation, and so, when the prince actually seizes his adversary and attempts to lock him up, he is answered first by a display of the god's animal forms, and then by a display of his power over nature.

When Pentheus re-enters at 641 he is no longer uninstructed as to the demonic nature of the visitors to his city. With the earthquake and the thunderbolt the demonstration of the divinity of Dionysus (though not of the Stranger) is complete, and consequently Pentheus' error is manifest. He knows now, and at first hand, that the power he means to defy is not human and he knows too that his original justification for that defiance is at least pragmatically at fault. He had intended to fight off corruption and preserve his city, but his defense has come close to destroying Thebes physically, and the earthquake is plainly only a hint of what may come if he continues in his present course. The Stranger marks the fact that the earthquake was meant to be instructive, and might well be enough to change Pentheus' attitude when he says at 639, "It will be interesting to see what he says to all this." Then Pentheus comes on, having just confronted a prophet who can change his form and a force that can shake the earth; as soon as he sees that his prey has not got away, he makes a rude remark about the god whom this prophet proclaims,⁷ and then he orders the locking of the city gates! His wits do seem to have been affected—he thinks wood and stone can coerce the maker of an earthquake—but his temper has not been altered by the recent revelations; his anger (649) has only increased.

The Stranger's words (639) have created the impression that this postearthquake moment may be the crucial test point for the defiant prince. His offense might well seem to be complete in its definition at this moment, but this is not the case, for the poet is still at work, eliminating the last irrelevant aspects of Pentheus' defiance so that he can show an absolute purity in his blasphemy. For the moment the prince's continued impiety provokes no alteration in the manner of his adversary; there is no retaliation, only further instruction. Tiresias had warned that Pentheus might actually harm the city (217; 367) and the Bacchants have reminded all who would listen that only piety can preserve the social order, but still it might be argued that something is missing from this rhetoric of word and deed. Perhaps Pentheus, as ruler of Thebes, might yet be justified in continuing to resist if it were true that the effects of this now obviously dangerous and demonic power were harmful. As if to elucidate just this point, a messenger now arrives, and the Stranger with his usual forked speech smilingly reassures the impatient tyrant. "Learn from him," he urges (*mathe*, 657; cf. the *ekmathein* of his statement of purpose at 39, and the charges of *amathia* at 480 and 490 and in the god's ultimate reproach, 1345). "I'll not run away. I shall wait for you."

The whole demonstration now begins again, and this time it is complete. The statesman hears the direct testimony of his city as the Messenger explains that he is in error about the Theban Bacchants (686) and therefore about the nature of the new cult, and that he is also in error about its god, Dionysus (712–13). The women in the mountains are not engaged in libidinous orgies but are organized and chaste; their activities do not threaten the city's

7. The remark is lost, but must be inferred from the *ōvelūcas* of 652.

morals or its property-owning structure, and the women clearly should be treated with respect, for they have a terrible power and can kill a bull with ease. More important, the god they serve is plainly one who is intent upon benefactions and not upon evil, for he manifests himself in the kindly miracles of gushing water, wine, milk, and honey (704-11). The Messenger, as citizen and rational man, concludes that this is a cult and a god that should be made welcome at Thebes (769-70), but when he has done Pentheus, exactly as if he had been deaf, labels the Bacchic rite a shameful outrage that threatens to sweep through Greece like a fire. And then he orders a military action against that conflagration (778-86).

Pentheus' offense now appears to be secular as well as religious. The prince has refused to "learn"; he means to risk his city against a beneficent but powerful god, and neither reason nor revelation, neither citizen nor prophet, has been able to reach him in his stubborn impiety (502-6). He has ordered an attack upon his own family and his own city and has become a kind of Polynices, engaged no longer in the preservation but in the destruction of Thebes. With his command he has stepped across the line laid down by the prologue, and seems now to have made its contingent punishment necessary. There Dionysus had said: "If the city of Thebes attempts to bring the women down by force then, with the Maenads, I shall march against them" (50-52). And so for a second time we expect the god to lay aside his disguise and to turn his now fully provoked anger upon this trampler of sacred things, but for a second time we are disappointed. The Stranger neither rages nor withdraws to the mountain to prepare this unnatural war; he stays, quieter now than ever, and a scene

unlike any other in tragedy is played between the god and the mortal prince (787-810).

"Have you then learned nothing as you listened to me, Pentheus? Though I have suffered at your hands I would yet advise you: do not take up arms against a god, but hold your peace! Bromios will not tolerate an attempt to move his Bacchants from the mountain of their delight." So the Stranger begins, almost pleading, but Pentheus exhibits all the folly of his wilful blindness in his answer. Forgetting his recent experiences with the Asiatic Maenads and with this form-changer, he growls with arrogant contempt, "As one who has just escaped from jail you'd best keep your advice to yourself, or do you wish to be locked up again?" The Stranger tries a mixture of pun and gnome for his next admonition: "Smoke of incense, not insensate wrath, a man should offer to a god, and never kick against the goad." This, however, only provokes another ugly irreverence from Pentheus. "Better than that!" he boasts, "I'll offer blood—women's blood to a women's god, and shed on Cithaeron's slopes!" The Stranger warns him directly that he would be humiliated and defeated if he were to attempt such a thing, for his armed men would be put to flight by the women's wands. At this Pentheus turns aside and says with unknowing irony, "You wrestle with this fellow but you can never get a grip on him, and whether he's up or down he will not hold his tongue!"

There is a deadlock between them, and the beginning of a new phase in this strangely intimate scene is signalized by a shift from speeches of two lines each to simple stichomythia. The style of an elegant duel of wits is abandoned for a new one of paralyzing directness as the Stranger says with solemn courtesy: "My lord, there

is yet a way to set this matter right" (812). His words revive in the remembering ear those of the prologue's end, and they bear out the god's statement there that his ultimate purpose in coming to Thebes was the setting right of affairs of cult in his holy city (49).

Pentheus' answer is rough: "What am I expected to do, enslave myself to my women?" The Stranger ignores his rudeness and goes quietly on to make his offer clear in its details. "I shall bring the women back, without the use of arms." Pentheus accuses him of trickery, and the Stranger picks up his word to make his intention as plain and perfect as he can. "Suppose," he urges, "that my 'tricks' are meant for your salvation?" Unfortunately Pentheus, in spite of all he has seen and heard this day, has no suspicion that he stands in need of saving. He simply repeats his charge. "You are in league with the women," he says, and once more, with loaded emphasis, the Stranger tries to enlighten him and make clear the substance of his own proposal. "I am in league (and such a league is possible!) only with the god."

Here at the heart of this play of destruction the divinity has offered his victim peace (804), rescue (806), alliance (808), and blessedness (note the retrospective 1343, *εὐδαιμονεῖτ' ἀν σύμμαχον κεκτημένοι*, and cf. the chorus' description of the Bacchic life, 135 ff.; 416 ff.). It is as if the prayers of the two old men (360 ff.) had reached him, for he has looked into the face of a man who has offended him and has proposed salvation for that offender and his city. In response Pentheus performs his quintessential deed, the one for which he pays in blood. It is one that can be staged, for it is not ritually ill-omened, and yet it is the most dangerous and blasphemous act of man. Pentheus, who has been offered the love of god,

refuses it, and turns his back upon divinity. Once again he gives the formal command for troops, and once again, as after the earthquake, as after the command at 780, we expect Dionysus to reveal himself in all his justified wrath.

There is no new earthquake, however, nor does a ravening lion stand where the Stranger had stood; there is not even a miracle that carries the prophet suddenly out of the locked city and up to the mountain forces of Dionysus. And yet a wonder does occur, and appropriately enough it is a version of the peculiarly Dionysiac feat of form-changing. Quite suddenly a prophet who has been kind, effeminate, languid, weak, scorned and threatened with death, imaged as a hunted animal, becomes hard, bull-like, energetic and powerful, one who controls the lives of others and is described as a hunter is. In exactly the same moment a ruling prince undergoes the reverse transformation; forgetting his cruel, masculine strength, his contempt, and his public role, he becomes a creature who is pliable, womanish and weak, who is scorned, disguised and hunted like a beast. In the next moment the Bacchants' persecutor will out-maenad the Maenad in his fussy ritual concern. All this happens in a swift and magical pause that is marked by a break in the stichomythia and signalized by an apparently senseless sound that issues from the lips of the god.

"Ah!" says Dionysus to himself, speaking outside the measured iambics of the dialogue (810). It is an exclamation not of pain or disappointment, for a god knows no such feelings; it is the sound of readjustment. At this point, and only at this point, Pentheus becomes an object not of beneficence but of justice and Dionysus begins to function as an agent of punishment. Not a second is wasted; his smile, his rich color, his sweet insinuations in this

instant become the instruments for the destruction of an enemy, and the divine vengeance begins with his very next word. "You wish, I think, to see the women at their rites?" the Stranger suavely asks (811), and with this suggestion Pentheus' carpet scene is inaugurated, his dismemberment begun.

III

If it is true that up to line 810 the Euripidean Dionysus has refused to play the role of agent of destruction left empty by the absent Agave—if indeed he has refused to view the *Bacchae* as a punishment tragedy until this moment, it is surely important to consider just how he has been cast and what sort of an action he has been attempting to promote. The crime of Pentheus can only be fully understood when we understand exactly what it was that Dionysus was trying to do. Certainly he has not been presented simply as a fixed and rigid target for blasphemy—a mere statue, like that of Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus*, would have sufficed for that. This Dionysus has been shown to be a vital and flexible creature, at one moment thundering, at another pleading softly, and at the crucial turn in the action he was seen to break unex-

8. Gods in service with mortals: Apollo with Admetus (Paus. 3. 18. 6; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 9. 15; Hyg. *Fab.* 50, 51; Eur. *Alc.* 1–14; the details may have originated with Hesiod according to Wilamowitz, *Isylos*, pp. 68 ff.; see also J. T. Kakrides, *ΔΔΜΗΤΟΥ ΕΡΑΣΤΑΙ*, *Hermes*, LXVI [1931], 235 ff.); Apollo and Poseidon with Laomedon (*Il.* 21. 441–57; Pindar *O.* 8. 31 and schol. *ad loc.*; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3. 12. 3 and 8); Heracles with Syleus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2. 6. 3; Diod. Sic. 4. 31; Philo *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 101; Tzetz. *Chil.* 2. 429 ff.; Conon *Narr.* 17; Euripides, *Frags.* 687–94, Nauck 2); Heracles with Omphale (Soph. *Trach.* 247 ff.; Diod. Sic. 4. 31. 5–8; Lucian *Dialog. deorum* 13. 2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2. 6. 3).

Gods in exile: Dionysus and Amphictyon (Paus. 1. 2. 5; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 7. 2; 3. 14. 6; schol. *Acharn.*, p. 383 G.; Athen. *Deipn.* 2. 38c); and Brongos (Nonnus *Dionys.* 17. 37–86); and Eleuther (Hyg. *Fab.* 225); and Falernus (Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 7. 161 ff.); and Oeneus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 8. 1; Hyg. *Fab.* 129); and Icarius (see E. Maas, *Analect. Eratosth.*, 106 ff.; Frazer *ad Paus.* 1. 33. 8; Nonnus *Dionys.* 47. 35–264; Hyg. *Astron.* 2. 4; *Fab.* 130; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3. 14. 7; Serv. *ad*

pectedly with a previously announced intention and to make a direct and friendly offer to a man he still treated with civility. It is plain that Dionysus, in the early scenes, has a purpose, that his passivity is only apparent and that in fact he is gently striving for a particular end. And it is equally plain that he is not, in those scenes, trying to provoke Pentheus' blasphemy—he does that only in the moments immediately after 810—but is working for something else entirely. He has come, as he explained in the prologue, with the intention of having his rites received.

As a god in disguise, seeking a human reception, Dionysus' only tragic analogue is the (no longer disguised, no longer seeking) Apollo of the *Alcestis*, but he is a familiar figure all the same, for epic and folk tale had told of many such divinities. Gods often wandered on earth incognito, as Antinous was reminded:

καὶ τε θεοὶ ξένοισιν ἔουκότες ἀλλοδαποῖσι,
παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόλησας,
ἀνθρώπων ὑβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες
[Od. 17. 485–87].

Sometimes they took service with mortals; sometimes they were in exile; sometimes they were engaged in quests or on general tours of inspection, but the pattern of their adventures was always roughly the same.⁸

Virg. *Georg.* 2. 384; Lucian *Dial. deorum* 18. 4; J. E. Harrison, *Myths and Monuments*, xxxvii ff.; M. P. Nilsson, *Eranos*, XV [1915], 188–96; and Lycurgus (Aesch., *Frags.* 23–25; 57–67; 146–49; 124–26, Nauck 2; *Il.* 6. 130 ff.; Diod. Sic. 3. 64; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3. 5. 1; Hyg. *Fab.* 132; Nonnus *Dionys.* 20. 149–81); and Pegasus (Paus. 1. 2. 5; schol. *ad Acharn.* 243; Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, pp. 659 ff.); and Semelchus (Steph. Byz., s.v. Σεμελχεῖ; Euseb. *Chron.* 30; Gruppe, *Gr. Myth.*, 737, 4); and Staphylus (schol. *ad Plutus* 1022; Pliny *NH* 7. 199; Nonnus *Dionys.* 17. 37 ff.; 18. 13 ff.).

Gods on quests: Heracles and Admetus (Eur. *Alc.*); and anonymous lady (Alkimos, *FHG*, IV, p. 296); Leto and Delos (*Hom. Hymn. Apollo* 25–88; Callim. 4. 55–204); and nameless mortal who gave onion (as implied in ritual at *theoxenia* at Delphi, Athen. *Deipn.* 9. 372A); Demeter and Aitheras (Paus. 2. 35. 3); and Dysaules and Baubo (*Pap. Ber.* 44, Bücheler; Paus. 1. 14. 3; Ovid *Fasti* 4. 507 ff.; Virg. *Georg.* 1. 165; Clement *Protr.* 15 f., Stähli; L. Malten, *ARW*, XII [1909], 417 ff.; *Hermes*, XLV [1910], 506 ff.); and Hecale-Iambe (A. Körte, *Hermes*, LXVI [1931], 449);

Seeking aid or acceptance or hospitality, they were either rejected or received, and in response they visited those who refused them with flood, plague, or other natural disaster (like the exemplary earthquake of the *Bacchae*), while they rescued their hosts and rewarded them with plenty (crops, marriage, children, victory).⁹

The story of the divine visitor, like most fairy tales and unlike most surviving tragedy, is quite devoid of the sense of fate; it shows a mortal who either does or does not pass a test and who is then rewarded or punished, in exaggeration but according to his performance. The fiction could thus exist in a positive or a negative form, but most often it mixed the two as does, for example, the story of Dionysus and the pirates in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*. This particular anecdote nicely embodies another point, which is that the god is usually not quite perfectly disguised.¹⁰ In crudest fairy tale mere foolish good nature can win the god's reward (as it does in the case of Simpleton and the dwarf, in the *Golden Goose*), but in more sophisticated myths the welcoming host displays his

and Mysios (Paus. 7. 27. 9); and Metanira and Keleus (*Horn. Hymn Demeter* 101; 185 ff.; Paus. 1. 39. 1-2; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 5. 1; Nonnus *Dionys.* 19. 80 ff.; Ovid *Fasti* 4. 539); and Pelagus (schol. *ad Eur. Or.* 920; Hyg. *Fab.* 145; Paus. 1. 14. 2; 2. 24. 1); and Phytalus (Paus. 1. 37. 2-4; Plut. *Thes.* 12).

Gods on tours of inspection: Zeus-Apollo (?) with Macelio and Dexitheia (*Bacchyl.* 1, see Jebb, p. 443; schol. *ad Ovid Ibis* 475, see *CR*, XII [1898], 66; Nonnus *Dionys.* 18. 35; Serv. *ad Virg. Aen.* 6. 618); Zeus-Poseidon-Hermes with Hyrieus (Ovid *Fasti* 5. 495-536); Zeus-Hermes with Philemon and Baucis (Ovid *Metam.* 8. 618-724; see Fontenrose, *CPCP*, XIII [1944-50], 97 ff.); Zeus with Lycaon (Ovid *Metam.* 1. 211-41; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3. 8. 1 f.; Nic. Damasc. Frag. 43, Mueller; Eratosthenes *Catast.* 8; see Fontenrose, *ibid.* p. 98, n. 17).

Castor and Pollux wandered for various purposes; they had been received by Pamphaes (Pindar *N.* 10) and had *theoxenia* commemorating their reception by the Emmenidae at Agri-gentum (Pindar *O.* 3 and schol.) and at Paros (Rangabé, *Ant. hell.*, 770c); other *theoxenia* were celebrated, for Demeter at Pellene (Paus. 7. 27. 9), for Apollo at Delphi (Athen. *Deipn.* 9. 372A), for Isis at Ceos (LeBas Waddington, *Voy. arch. As. min.*, 1143); Heracles was honored with a *xenismos* at many places (Kos: Roscher *s.v. Heros*, 2508 f.; Plut. *Quaest. gr.* 58; Mesogea: *IG*, II², 1245; Athens: Athen. *Deipn.* 6. 239D; cf. Gruppe in *RE*, Suppl. III [1918], 925 and

innate piety by his suspicion of the special quality of those he entertains. Any man who has a true sense of the divine will presumably feel, if only dimly, the physical presence of god.¹¹

The visiting divinity masquerades in part that he may discriminate between those who do and those who do not keep the ancient rules of pious conduct in their daily actions (cf. *Bacchae* 201), but he masquerades also to shield mortals from a fate like that of Semele. Thus his very disguise is an indication of potential benevolence and also of power; disguise belongs only to the greater deities, for from the glory of a nymph or satyr, or even from a river god, a man did not have to be screened.¹² Dionysus announces himself, in the *Bacchae*, as a wandering god with a mission; he has come to demonstrate his divinity, that he shall no longer be ignored in the city's festivals (45-48), but he has had to assume a disguise (53-54). In the first section of the play he behaves as any visiting god might, walking about Thebes in his gentle mufti while his followers beg the citizens to receive them. The only exceptional thing about him is that he,

930; see in general, Arist. *Lysistr.* 928 and schol. *ad loc.*; J. E. Harrison, *Themis*, p. 372 and note; O. Walter, *AM*, LXII [1937], 41 ff.

On the wandering gods, see L. Malten, "Motivgeschichtliche Unters. zur Sagenforschung," *Hermes*, LXXIV (1939), 176-206, esp. 179 ff., "Theoxenie u. Bewirtung."

9. A variant on the refused reception is the flawed reception that can be seen in the tales of Tantalus, Lycaon, Laomedon, and Metanira. Laomedon and Lycaon (in the versions in which he is guilty) are given the normal punishment; Metanira simply has her reward withdrawn (the child is not made immortal, and she is not excepted from the general disaster), but Tantalus has his reward withdrawn and also gets a special punishment.

10. H. J. Rose, "Divine Disguisings," *HTR*, XLIX (1956), 63 ff., points out that in Homer the rear view often gives the god away, as if he or she had been somewhat carelessly costumed.

11. Rose, *ibid.*, p. 71, remarks, "An observant man, at all events one of high and so partly divine lineage, can sometimes penetrate the disguise, at least enough to know that he is confronted with something more than a fellow-mortal."

12. "If they do not come to destroy . . . , they veil their terrible splendor, though they may do so but thinly," Rose, *ibid.*, p. 71.

unlike most such visitors, gives outright promises of blissful rewards to any who will accept him (105 ff.). When Pentheus proves unfriendly, the chorus would depart for other places where welcome is secure (402 ff.), but Dionysus stays on, spending his stage time in giving signs and betraying, to an ever increasing degree, his real identity. Like Zeus before Lycaon¹³ (or like Aphrodite before Anchises!) he drops repeated hints and finally lets his divinity plainly show through his assumed mortal form. Pentheus, however, is not like the other hosts; the god tries every wile, and still he cannot persuade the prince to take him in.

Dionysus is a sociable god (416 ff.). The chorus describes the kind of reception he is looking for (430–32), but there is also another way to understand what it is that Pentheus is refusing to do. What Dionysus expected can be seen in the many popular tales of the other princely hosts who did not refuse him and his cult, but caused their cities to welcome him. These, in Attic myth, were Eleuther, Semachus, and Amphictyon, and they, when amalgamated, are seen to have offered a three-part reception to the god. They feasted him; they gave physical expression to the acceptance of his cult by paying honor to an image, altar, or shrine; and one of them dedicated a female relative to the service of the god. This was Semachus, who became a priest himself and made a priestess of his daughter; she was rewarded with the gift of the *nebris* and so became the first Bacchant of Attica (Euseb. *Chron.* 30).

The tale that offers the closest parallel to the *Bacchae* plot is that of Pegasus, who came, like the Stranger, bringing the new religion to Attica. What he actually carried

was a phallic image, and the people, like those of Thebes, were shocked and refused the new cult out of a false sense of propriety. As a result they too were stricken with a general disorder; it was not their women, however, who felt the god's displeasure, but their men, who were suddenly afflicted in their private parts. At this point the Attic case is roughly that of Thebes at the start of Euripides' play, but there are two differences of enormous significance. The people of Attica had no proud prince to prolong their defiance, and they, unlike Pentheus, saw that their problem was not physical but spiritual. In direct contrast to the prince who insults Tiresias, the Athenians took the advice of Apollo and learned how to appease the god they had made angry. They received him and commemorated both his first *agalma* and their own expiation by placing phallic images in houses and market places everywhere (schol. *ad Acharn.* 243). As at Thebes, the god was interested primarily in the establishment of his cult, not in punishment, and so those who had refused him a welcome were given a second chance.

The rewards, in the Attic tales of Dionysus' reception, are particularly relevant to the case of Pentheus. These stories do not show the standard gifts of plenty but instead portray the god's gratitude in terms of cult; Semachus and his descendants become priests and priestesses, while both Amphictyon and Pegasus are instructed in the mixing of water with wine. These offices and honors remind us of Pentheus' final unwilling participation in a Dionysiac ritual where members of his own family function as priestesses, and they also remind us that the Theban story, like these Attic ones, represents the

13. J. Fontenrose, "Philemon, Lot, and Lycaon," *CPCP*, XIII (1944), 100, notes, of the Lycaon story: "Zeus gives signs of his divine nature . . . It appears to be an important

device in this type; the god comes in disguise, but he gives a sign that no ordinary visitor has come."

religion of Dionysus as in an advanced state already characterized by solemn ritual (and even by rationalizing theology, judging from Tiresias), not by orgiastic violence.

All of the stories mentioned so far were in a sense sequels to (or bowdlerized duplicates of) the older, violent tale of Icarius. This was the poor man's country version of the Dionysiac reception; its subject was the introduction not of certain religious practices, but of the vine itself, and its mood was very different. Icarius was Dionysus' first Attic host; like Falernus he was a simple man, but he welcomed the god and in return he was taught to plant the vine and to use its fruit. He was made a missionary and told to carry the wine to his countrymen but he, like the god, was attacked by rude creatures who did not understand his gift. His daughter grieved and killed herself, but the peasants were punished while she and Icarius were given eventual immortality.

The story of Icarius, complemented by those of Amphictyon and Semachus and Pegasus, reflects the popular notion that there were two forms that the Dionysiac experience might take. The religion of Dionysus had a pure, wild form that was infinitely dangerous, tainted with human sacrifice, but suggestive of life after death. It also had a familiar form as part of the ordinary festival round of the civilized polis. In this second form, wine was mixed with water, animal *sparagmos* replaced the tearing of human flesh, and orderly Maenadism gave a pale imitation of the frenzy of Erigone and the girls who hanged themselves after her example.¹⁴ In the *Bacchae* Euripides has made his Dionysus come to Pentheus in person, as he came to Icarius, but he has made him

offer the civilized, public cult that was received by Eleuther and Amphictyon. The chorus make this plain in their description of the Bacchic life, and the Messenger bears them out when he describes the women on the mountain; water and milk join wine as their drink; they are not inebriate nor do they want human blood; the capturing and tearing of animals satisfies the extremes of their frenzy. Only when the watered wine of these more advanced cult practices has been refused does the god cause the women to recapitulate the rage of the Attic peasants who attacked Icarius.

Dionysus, then, plays divine visitor in the traditional way, but his adventures show a remarkable deviation from the norm. The divinity as a rule is unrecognized by the many but known and taken in by one, and as a result he often destroys whole communities while he rescues and rewards his friendly host. Here at Thebes the situation is reversed. Agave and the women have slandered Semele, but they have now, though all unwillingly, put themselves in the service of her son; Cadmus had formally recognized Dionysus even in the past, keeping Semele's tomb as a shrine, and in the staged action both he and Tiresias (for whatever reasons) act out their welcome of the god. They dedicate themselves formally with thyrsus and garland, quite as an Amphictyon or a Semachus might. The guard who captures the Stranger is filled with awesome respect for the curious quality of acquiescence that his ward shows, and he separates himself expressly from the intentions of Pentheus (441-42). And finally the Messenger resumes this popular unanimity when he pleads for the reception of the new cult and its god (769-70).

14. The Icarius story seems to have Orphic connections; cf. the low-life versions of Demeter's reception, especially the tale of Dysaules and Baubo, where the same motifs of the

female double and the divine gift misunderstood are present; see L. Malten, "Altorphische Demetersage," *ARW*, XI (1909), 417 ff.

It is as if all the pirates of the *Homeric Hymn* had honored the beautiful young man who came aboard their ship, and only the steersman had urged his exploitation, and this means, of course, that the traditional ending of the story cannot stand. Its ordinary rewards and punishments must be dealt out differently.

Here is the reason for the notorious change in Dionysus' stated program. The god had said that if the city (50) should try to attack the women on the mountain, he would see to its defeat, but by the time that Pentheus has issued his first call for troops it is apparent that though an attack may be made, it will not be made according to the will of the city. There has been a division between Thebes and its leader, the city wishing now to take the foreigners in and to learn to worship their god, while the prince, not to be satisfied with merely driving them out, means to enslave (511–14) and to kill (241). The Messenger knows that an expedition against possessed women would be madness (758 ff.) and Pentheus' is the only voice in favor of the call to arms. He has decided that all the men of Thebes shall share in his chosen crime which is, as far as he can recognize it, the shedding of female kin-blood. This, according to the dispensation of the prologue, is tantamount to condemning his city to a grotesque defeat, for the arms of masculine Thebes would necessarily be destroyed by the female rage of the Bacchic wand. In fact, however, though he has decided his own fate, Pentheus does not thus condemn his citizen subjects. He has been shown to have a terrible freedom in his refusal to learn, but the god, after all, is no less free. He can dissolve his own dispensation, and can in the space of a syllable create an alternate fate for the city, one that takes cognizance of its tardy decision to make him welcome.

The wandering god has made his dis-

crimination and he arranges his appropriate punishments. He does not cause a general holocaust from which he excepts his host; rather he invents a particular destruction for the inhospitable man that will itself be a means of salvation for the many who would have taken him in (*μόνος ὁ πόλεως τῆσδ' ὑπερκάμψεις, μόνος*, 963). The prince who could not be persuaded either to call off his attack or to accept the Stranger's peaceable intervention is simply bewitched into forgetting the attack and himself playing the Stranger's proposed part. He alone brings back the women and makes civil war unnecessary, just as the Stranger had earlier offered to do. More than this, he is bewitched into becoming a worthy substitute for the Stranger and a suitable ransom for his now Dionysiac city. He is made to become, in externals at least, a devotee of the god he scorned, before he becomes an imitator of that god in his passion. He could not be forced into faith, but he is cozened into making its outward gestures, and so is given a punishment that is a frightful reverse of the reward of Semachus.

Pentheus' free decision had been to destroy the city that he ruled; his unfree action in going to the women destroys himself but saves Thebes and his subjects. Tiresias had seen part of this in the beginning when he said that Pentheus was poisoned beyond the power of any charm to cure (326–27). He had foreseen that even revelation would not be able to heal the impiety of this prince, but he had not seen that this tainted man could become the *pharmakos* for the cure of his community. The crime of Thebes was its early refusal to accept the gentle god and his civilized rite of animal *sparagmos* (1341–43; 1351); this crime had been exacerbated by the stubborn impiety of Pentheus and so, in atonement, Thebes had to go further than the mere founding of a festival or erection of

sacred monuments. The city had to satisfy a harsh god under the old dispensation of human sacrifice, before it could know peace and that milder version of his cult that the Asiatic Bacchants had described (417 ff.).

The essentially merciful quality of this resolution is demonstrated by the final dramatic situation. The results of Pentheus' death are the results that he himself, when not maddened by impiety, had always wished to obtain. Thebes is in the end the Dionysus-worshiping city the god had meant it to be, but it is also the healthy and united city that Pentheus was ready to defend. The Theban women will return to hearth and sanity, their piety now all their own, not forced on them by possession; from now on they will rave only as the city directs, for the god's anger is appeased. Agave and her sisters of course must go into exile, for they are touched with kin-blood, but so would they have been, if Pentheus had had his way and the women had massacred all the Theban men instead of only one.¹⁵ Cadmus and Harmonia are given the Dionysiac punishment of the pirates, it is true, but they will later receive the reward of Icarus and Erigone, for though they are to be beasts for a time, they will finally become immortals living in the Blessed Isles. The Asiatic women depart and Thebes enters a new phase in her history.

In the *Bacchae* Euripides has used a mixing of plots, as he did in the *Ion*, to describe the mixing wills of god and man. In the opening section of his play he showed the head-on collision of a god-come-to-visit piece with a drama of

hybris, and let a happy action that tends toward the reward of its principal be blighted by that principal's inability to penetrate the Stranger's disguise, his refusal of all instruction, and his belief that he could bully the supernatural. Pentheus would not play host to the god in disguise; he gave him, in fact, the only kind of defeat a god can know, for he refused even to be pardoned for his errors and finally left his visitor with no alternative to making a punishment tragedy of the piece.

In the *Ion* the god's benevolent will was particular: Ion's return to Athens had to take place and therefore the mortal vengeance tragedy that threatened to interrupt was itself interrupted and encompassed in a divine action of positive overturn. In the *Bacchae*, however, the god's will is general; Thebes must be converted and the Asiatic Bacchants must survive to continue their proselytizing journeys. Pentheus, though he might have served them, is not necessary to these ends and therefore Pentheus, unlike Creusa, can be allowed to play out the tragedy he has fashioned as his vehicle. Measured by his power to resist heaven he is perhaps the strongest and freest of all the heroes of tragedy,¹⁶ but his self-determination is finally only that of another Ajax. In the liberty of his stubborn blindness he makes his own way toward his unnecessary death, after a scene of temptation that has shown how easily even titanic strength can melt into witless effeminate foolishness, when a god has been forced to design a punitive catastrophe.

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15. Hyg. *Fab.* 184, 240, 254, reports Agave's journey to Illyria and her marriage there with King Lycotherses, whom she later murdered that she might give his throne to Cadmus.

16. Philoctetes surely deserves comparison, for he spends his entire play in defiance of the will of heaven. What he

resists is no mere gracious divine whim but one of the gods' settled purposes, and so his near success would seem to prove him stronger than Pentheus, though the fact that he, when he recognizes a divine ally beside him, capitulates at once, has made him seem weak to some.