

TWO SUNS OVER THEBES: IMAGERY AND STAGE EFFECTS IN THE *BACCHAE*

WILLIAM C. SCOTT

Dartmouth College

In the *Bacchae* Pentheus is presented as a determined, stubborn king; his control, however, is undermined by the miraculous stranger who is the god Dionysus.¹ From his first appearance in the Prologue this god intends to show Pentheus that he must admit the Bacchic religion to Thebes. Eventually the god prevails upon the king to go out to Mount Cithaeron himself and view the Theban women. He leads him into the palace, and after the chorus sings a song of joy and hope, Dionysus emerges leading a Pentheus who has been profoundly changed: he wears a Bacchant woman's costume, and the god now commands while Pentheus is the docile, powerless, and unsure follower. His confusion is evident when he says:

καὶ μὴν ὄραν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ,
δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλισμ' ἐπτάστομον·
καὶ ταῦρος ἡμῖν πρόσθεν ἡγεῖσθαι δοκεῖς
καὶ σῶ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι.
ἀλλ' ἦ ποτ' ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν. (918–22)

The vision of the king is blurred: he sees pairs of things that are obviously unique—the sun and the buildings of Thebes, and the god appears to be a bull. The images of animals, architecture, and light which cluster in this short speech are employed and developed throughout the play and appear as the basic elements in the scenery, in the costumes, and in the props. The concentration of these important images

¹ Throughout this paper I am indebted to the fine edition of E. R. Dodds (Oxford 1960²) and to the stimulating study *Euripides and Dionysus* by R. P. Winnington-Ingram (Cambridge 1948). I will refer to both by the authors' names. I have also profited from the work of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Masks of Tragedy* (Austin 1963) esp. 105–52, who has commented upon many of the images treated in this paper.

at a point where the climactic action is rapidly approaching should turn the audience's mind to the basic themes of the play. In terms of these themes it is possible to define with some clarity the changes which have taken place within Pentheus and to examine the source of conflict between Dionysus and the king. I intend to examine these three sets of images and motifs to show how Euripides' use of stage effects functions as an important means of communicating his dramatic themes to a living audience in the theater.²

I. THE CONFUSION OF MEN AND ANIMALS

The god Dionysus and his worship had long been connected with animals,³ and Euripides incorporated this traditional association into his play by referring often to animals and their activities. Most obvious are the many images and similes of animals. For example, in the parodos the chorus of Bacchantes speaks of the ecstatic worshipper dancing in joy "like a colt about its grazing mother" (166 f.). Later as Pentheus goes off to the mountainside they exult, likening themselves to a fawn who has escaped the hunter and taken refuge in the darkness of the trees (866 ff.). Individual characters are also described as animals in metaphors. When the soldier enters with the captured Dionysus, he says:

Πενθεῦ, πάρεσμεν τήνδ' ἄγραν ἡγρευκότες
ἐφ' ἣν ἔπεμψας, οὐδ' ἄκρανθ' ὠρμήσαμεν.
ὁ θήρ δ' ὄδ' ἡμῖν πρᾶος οὐδ' ὑπέσπασεν . . . (434-36)

The first messenger from the hillside tells Pentheus that he and his friends decided that they would "hunt down" Agave, and when she became aware that they were trying to snatch her, she cried out to her fellow-maenads: "My fast running dogs, we are being hunted down by men!" (718 ff.). In these comparisons Euripides is not attempting to characterize any specific figure as animalistic; rather these metaphors

² I am here protesting criticisms like that of R. R. Earp in *The Style of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1948) 72-83 where he claims that Euripides' imagery is conventional ornamentation while Aeschylus uses his imagery to present varied aspects of objects and to deepen their meaning.

³ Most notably in *Homeric Hymn* 7; but cf. also Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* 36.299 where there is indication that Dionysus was worshipped in the shape of a bull. Cf. M. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechische Religion* I (Munich 1967³) 570 ff.

and similes applied indiscriminately to all characters emphasize a basic feature of the Dionysiac religion and ritual.

Costumes present colorfully and strikingly the mixing of men and animals. Both Teiresias and Cadmus go out to the countryside dressed in fawn skins (249). The chorus' picture of the ideal worshipper in ecstasy prescribes this vestment (136-37). When Pentheus comes out of the palace, he is wearing a fawn skin, and his mother returns to the city from her successful hunt dressed in the same way (835, 915, and 696). Dionysus does carry a *thyrsus* and probably wears an animal skin to complete the ritual requirements (495) as do his followers in the chorus. In fact, there are few people in this play who do not come to try the Dionysiac religion, and when they do, they put on the proper robe—the skin of an animal.⁴

The animal ancestry of the Thebans and Pentheus in particular is stressed.⁵ Cadmus sowed dragon's teeth and from the survivors of the warriors who grew from them the present citizens of Thebes were born (1025 ff.). In a previous ode the chorus has contrasted the ancestry of Pentheus and their lord Dionysus: their god is the child of Zeus (550), while the king is descended from a serpent (539 and cf. 1155). Animals also appear in the future of the royal family; at the end of the play when Dionysus is foretelling their fate to various characters, he says that Cadmus and Harmonia will be changed to snakes and lead a barbarian army to destroy Greece (1330 ff.).

The women in the countryside live like animals (677 ff.). They sleep on the ground in the leaves and when they awake, some of the women suckle wolf cubs in place of their own newborn children. These Bacchantes travel in packs, falling indiscriminately on herds of cattle or small towns, ripping apart their victims, and strewing the area with the bloody remains of their rampage. Snakes are their belts and snakes lick the drops of blood from their cheeks. When they begin their

⁴ It is clear from the descriptions and plates in H. Philippart, *Iconographie des Bacchantes d'Euripide* (Paris 1930), that not all maenads wore animal skins. Euripides emphasizes their animal dress in the words of this play; some vases show how prominent this costuming would have been. Good examples may be found in Arias and Hirmer, *A History of Greek Vase Painting* (London 1962) pls. 206 and 207, or in J. Defradas, "Les Bacchantes d'Euripide, drame de la folie," *L'Information Littéraire* 15 (1963) 121-28.

⁵ Cf. M. Arthur, "The Choral Odes of the *Bacchae* of Euripides," *YCS* 22 (1972) 145-79, especially Appendix A: "The Ancestry of Pentheus."

Bacchic dance in the morning, wild beasts dance with them. The report from the hillside sounds more like a description of a pack of animals living in the wilderness than of the ladies of the town with their queen.⁶

In the actions of Pentheus and Agave the confusion of men and animals enters the narrative and is even brought onto the stage in a bloody scene. Pentheus tries to lock Dionysus in chains, but his vision is blurred and he ties up an innocent bull. Most tragically Agave cannot perceive her own son; the chorus reports her words:

τίς ἄρα νιν ἔτεκεν;
οὐ γὰρ ἐξ αἵματος
γυναικῶν ἔφυ, λεαίνας δέ τινος
ὄδ' ἢ Γοργόνων Λιβυσσᾶν γένος. (987-90)

Then she returns to the city carrying her trophy and wants to hang her lion's head on the palace as a monument to her glorious victory (1211 ff.).

This motif closely connected to the Dionysiac worshipper points up the essential animal nature of this religion—its instinctive ecstasy, its cruelty and viciousness, and also its desultory lack of purpose.⁷ Pentheus is appalled at people acting like this. As he sees the matter, the women of Thebes have deserted the city, are practicing mass immorality, and have destroyed some of the small towns around the foot of Cithaeron—all this in the service of a god who tells them to desert their proper places in the city and takes them to the countryside to enter into the holy ecstasy of religion.

⁶ S. A. Barlow, *The Imagery of Euripides* (London 1971), comments on the identification of the animal-like women with the environment of the countryside on pp. 33-34, 66-67, 76, 112-13, 128.

⁷ J. de Romilly, "Le Thème du Bonheur dans les *Bacchantes*," *REG* 76 (1963) 361-80, discusses the gradual unveiling of this religion in the course of the drama; it is revealed as a superficial, immediate, and hedonistic type of pleasure seeking. She stresses the precariousness of the religious ecstasy which can so easily turn to misfortune. Of necessity judgments on the ethical statements of this chorus are subjective. The fair words which they speak in a joyful prayer bring them to an act of repellent violence; I would maintain that the potential for such an act is implicit in the lofty—but general—principles in the earlier blissful stasima of the drama (esp. 424 ff. and 877 ff.). Only gradually are the hidden evils of these broad principles revealed. Cf. M. Arthur (above, note 5) 169-70: "the bourgeois morality of constancy, stability, and moderation which the chorus preach involves a self-denial and repression which engenders an immoderate hostility toward rival value-systems."

For Pentheus such behavior is anarchy since he lacks the ability to accommodate a wild and erratic divinity within his own ordered way of life. He is concerned enough with the disturbance in the city to return immediately and to try to re-establish order by locking the offenders in jail, by stating his intention of hunting down the women on the mountainside, and by threatening to check forcibly the stranger who is the cause of the unrest (226 ff.). Ironically he is ultimately defeated by the emotional qualities in his nature which he is trying to deny to his citizens. When he sees that Teiresias has put on Bacchic vestments, he does not attempt to understand this prophet or even acknowledge the worth of the new religion. Dionysus has disrupted the normal, orderly life of Thebes and, therefore, Pentheus bursts forth in anger:

οὐ μὴ προσοίσεις χεῖρα, βακχεύσεις δ' ἰών,
 μηδ' ἐξομόρξῃ μωρίαν τῇν σὴν ἐμοί;
 τῆς σῆς <δ'> ἀνοίας τόνδε τὸν διδάσκαλον
 δίκην μέτειμι. στειχέτω τις ὡς τάχος . . . (343-46)

For Pentheus, acceptance of the Dionysiac religion is tantamount to betraying reason.

In the next scene when Dionysus is brought before Pentheus, the king strives to ascertain by a series of probing questions what is happening and what this stranger's claims on his people are. His every attempt is immediately rebuffed by the stranger who refuses to play the game of logic with Pentheus; for example:

Πε. τὰ δ' ὄργι' ἐστὶ τίν' ἰδέαν ἔχοντά σοι;
 Δι. ἄρρητ' ἀβακχεύτοισιν εἰδέναι βροτῶν.
 Πε. ἔχει δ' ὄνησιν τοῖσι θύουσιν τίνα;
 Δι. οὐ θέμις ἀκοῦσαί σ', ἔστι δ' ἄξι' εἰδέναι. (471-74)

In this meeting Pentheus, true to character, wants factual information; he asks five questions and receives curt and enigmatic answers to each.⁸ Once the stranger has shown that he is not interested in reasoning with Pentheus but rather that he demands his total surrender, there is nothing left but a matching of insults for the rest of the scene. Everywhere that Pentheus looks for a logical or convincing answer to his questions

⁸ G. Norwood, *The Riddle of the Bacchae* (Manchester 1908) 62 ff., discusses Pentheus' interest in this new religion and Dionysus' surly attitude.

about this religion, he is frustrated. His men report tales of doors flying open under their own power. The messenger from the country tells him that these women are not doing what Pentheus stubbornly concludes would be only natural in the course of such orgies. Even the god's spokesman demands that the king instantly submit even though he will offer him no reasons for submission other than a god's wish. Dionysianism with its emphasis on intuition, unquestioning acceptance, and even a type of madness is totally opposed to everything in Pentheus' character. He wants his city to remain intact; instead the women withdraw and destroy some small towns. He wants a strict law and order preserved; instead a stranger appears encouraging lawlessness and chaos in his land.

Euripides underlines this basic difference of outlook by stressing the mixing of men and animals in both words and costumes. Pentheus puts his trust totally in his own reason and intellect. The Dionysiac religion thereby becomes his adversary since it awakens the animal nature in men; they can be relaxed and less serious but may become cruel, vicious, and unreasoning. They no longer care about the kingdom; rather they choose to live out on their mountain. This is their code:

μισεῖ δ' ὦ μὴ ταῦτα μέλει,
κατὰ φάος νύκτας τε φίλας
εὐαίωνα διαζῆν,
σοφὰν δ' ἀπέχειν πραπίδα φρένα τε
περισσῶν παρὰ φωτῶν·
τὸ πλῆθος ὃ τι
τὸ φαυλότερον ἐνόμισε χρῆ-
ταί τε, τόδ' ἂν δεχοίμαν. (424-32)

The contrast between Pentheus and a Bacchante is most clear at the moment of the king's death. As his mother attacks him thinking that he is an animal, he cries out to her in terms of Penthean literalism:

Ἐγὼ τοι, μῆτερ, εἰμί, παῖς σέθεν
Πενθεύς, ὃν ἔτεκες ἐν δόμοις Ἐχίονος·
οἴκτιρε δ' ὦ μῆτέρ με, μηδὲ ταῖς ἐμαῖς
ἀμαρτίαισι παῖδα σὸν κατακτάνῃς. (1118-21)

He is trying to communicate with her as one human to another; this is the kind of communication upon which the systematic and ordered

world of Pentheus depends. But she has a single-minded, vicious intent and cannot reason or communicate and continues her dreadful task with blind fervor.

Pentheus in this play is often called the hunter both by himself and by others (871, 1020, 231, 958 and others). The symbolism is clear: he is the man who seeks to track down and kill the animal. The hunter is guided by reason while his quarry is driven by only animal instincts of survival. It is symptomatic of the confusion of men and animals in this play that the hunting image is used so often of so many different people that it becomes unclear who is the hunter and who is the hunted. Finally, because the god is powerful enough to force his will on men, the most successful hunter is the unfortunate Agave, who calls with joy to Dionysus, her fellow hunter and helper in the chase (1146).⁹

When Pentheus emerges from the palace at line 918 it is clear that something has happened to him. Previously Pentheus was the man of ordered rationality, the hunter, the man who made the distinction between men and animals clearly except when the god befuddled his senses in the stables. Now when he comes onto the stage, looking at the stranger but seeing a bull, he is no longer able to make the distinction between man and animal clearly. In this he is at home with many of the other mortal characters of the play; and as they will suffer great loss because of this disability, so now Pentheus marches to his gruesome death deprived of one of his basic characteristics, his stubborn insistence that the citizens of Thebes act strictly like rational humans. And as each actor on the stage puts on an animal skin, the eventual defeat of strict Penthean rationality is projected.¹⁰ When the king is finally dominated by Dionysus, he also puts on an animal skin completing the symbolic use of costuming in this play.

II. ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

There are many words in this play which describe architecture: buildings, monuments, and shrines. Such words, however, do not

⁹ Cf. R. R. Dyer, "Image and Symbol: The Link between the Two Worlds of the *Bacchae*," *AUMLA* 21 (1964) 15-26, esp. 16 ff. where he goes into great detail in treating this image pattern. Also T. G. Rosenmeyer (above, note 1) 132 ff.

¹⁰ For a good description of the healthy experiential and emotional knowledge of man's animal nature see W. Sale, "The Psychoanalysis of Pentheus in the *Bacchae* of Euripides," *YCS* 22 (1972) 64.

seem to have their roots in the myth; rather they are introduced purposely and stressed by the playwright.

Previous to the play there have been two architecturally significant occurrences: the founding of the city and the fiery death of Semele which destroyed a part of the palace. When Teiresias comes to meet Cadmus, he calls him the son of Agenor, but also the man "who having left his Sidonian city built up towers (*epyrghōse*) around this city of the Thebans" (171 f.). Dionysus in the prologue identifies the location by stating that he is standing near the house and the remains of the former palace which are still smoking from the days of Semele's death.¹¹ These remains are on stage during the play as a reminder to any member of the royal family who thinks that man-made buildings will withstand divine power. When Zeus destroyed Semele, he was not even angry with her; Dionysus is seriously angered at Pentheus, and the palace will be slight defence against such a god. These are both brief mentions of builders and buildings, but they do form part of the pattern of architectural terms and call attention to the firm and solid buildings required as scenery for this play.¹²

The background throughout the *Bacchae* is the palace. Dionysus points it out in the prologue and asks his worshippers to stand around it (60). Teiresias fetches Cadmus from the palace and goes through a bit of bantering with an invisible doorman (170 ff.). By the time the play is underway, the building in the rear is established as the home of the kings of Thebes and the center of authority for the city.

Pentheus is especially dependent on buildings in his conduct of the kingship. He threatens to lock the Bacchic women in the public jail and feels that he will destroy the power of Teiresias by overturning his place of prophesy (227 and 345 ff.). When he wants to restrain the stranger, he tells his guards to lock him in the stables (509). After Dionysus escapes and tells Pentheus that the god was his accomplice, it is typical of Pentheus' calculating mind to order the gates of the city

¹¹ N. C. Hourmouziades, *Production and Imagination in Euripides* (Athens 1965) 51 f., calls Semele's tomb "entirely decorative" even though he feels that it is odd for Euripides to spend seven lines describing it. Surely it is a prop which is related to the architectural motif. Also it allows a flame to be constantly present on the stage; cf. below, section III on "Light and Darkness."

¹² See the comments on the architectural elements of the set by D. Sutherland, *The Bacchae of Euripides* (Lincoln, Nebraska 1968) 75-77.

shut; but it is also typical of his dependence on stone walls (653).

It is Pentheus' misfortune to oppose a god who refuses to be bound by architectural structures. The Bacchic women are freed when the doors of their cells open magically. The stranger is unmoved by Pentheus' threat to incarcerate him; he merely says: "The god himself will free me, whenever I wish it" (498). This is true, even though Pentheus cannot understand it. When the king orders the gates of the city shut, the stranger informs him that it will do no good (653 f.).

In spite of these signs Pentheus continues to trust in walls and doors. It is only expected that when the king goes out to the country where there are none of the architectural reinforcements to his rule, he will be in a weak position—exactly the position in which the god wants him. The city is the place where the power of the king and the voice of reason are prevalent; the countryside, where there are no restraining forces and where the architectural elements—like those powerless towns at the foot of Cithaeron—are ripped apart (751 ff.). This contrast appears in the Prologue; Dionysus says that the women are sitting in the country on "roofless rocks"—*anorophois petrais* (38). The word "roofless" could be a traditional epithet, but is more likely an indication of the contrast between the city, where the king can be strong in his fortifications, and the country, where there is little architectural support for his power.¹³ In the messenger speech at 1043 the descriptions of nature are lavish and present a world far different from the architectural monuments of the city:¹⁴

ἐπεὶ θεράπνας τῇσδε Θηβαίας χθονὸς
λιπόντες ἐξέβημεν Ἀσωποῦ ῥοάς,
λέπας Κιθαιρώνειον εἰσεβάλλομεν . . . (1043-45)

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ποιηρὸν ἵζομεν νάπος . . . (1048)

ἦν δ' ἄγκος ἀμφίκριμνον, ὕδασι διάβροχον,
πεύκαισι συσκιάζον . . . (1051-52)

σίγησε δ' αἰθήρ, σῖγα δ' ὕλμος νάπη
φύλλ' εἶχε, θηρῶν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἤκουσας βοήν . . . (1084-85)

μήτηρ Ἀγαθή σύγγονοί θ' ὁμόςποροι
πᾶσαι τε βᾶκχαι· διὰ δὲ χειμάρρου νάπης
ἀγμῶν τ' ἐπήδων θεοῦ πνοαῖσιν ἐμμανεῖς . . . (1092-94)

¹³ LSJ, however, list only this occurrence of the word.

¹⁴ This contrast is well drawn by S. A. Barlow (above, note 6) 33 f. and 76 f.

At line 1097 the maenads throw stones at Pentheus after climbing up on a rock which is *antipyrgon*. This could mean "towering opposite," but Dodds admits that it could also mean "like a tower." In fact, the features of nature are the disordered and undefined architecture of the countryside which is the appropriate background for the Bacchantes and their god; Pentheus is in a situation where he has no power over his surroundings. He may be king in the city—but in the country he is mere man.¹⁵

The scene which brings this motif into the stage action is the palace miracle. Pentheus threatens the stranger with imprisonment and the stranger tells Pentheus that he will escape. The king asserts his authority in the city by vaunting his architecture while Dionysus shows how strong the authority of Pentheus actually is. The god makes Pentheus tie up a bull and think that the house is burning down, and finally he watches him shadow-box with a phantom; the shaking of the palace is a part of these humiliations. In trusting in buildings Pentheus is trying to maintain order in his city by traditional methods; but he has met a foe who does not believe in prisons, and he is deluded in attempting to deal with this enemy in the way a king normally would.

There are some odd phrases in this play connected with the architectural imagery. Cadmus advises his grandson to: "Live (*oikei*) with us, not outside the doorway (*thyrae*) of the laws" (331). He is saying: come into our house which is really the roofless rocks of the countryside and do not stay outside our doorway. We have a god who does not see things the way you do. Your buildings here mean nothing. If you want the protection that you get in a house, then desert your house and come out to the mountain where the god will be your roof and shelter.

The chorus sings (389 ff.): "The life of calmness and wisdom remains unshaken and holds its house together" (*synechei dômata*). Commentators are embarrassed by this line and think that it may refer to the rift

¹⁵ R. R. Dyer (above, note 9) 19 states: "Kithairon itself in its wildness becomes a giant symbol for the kingdom of Dionysus." He then continues to discuss this other world of Dionysus; physical details are symbols of the underlying difference from the world of Pentheus. N. C. Hourmouziades (above, note 11) 124-25 refers to Euripides' technique of creating in the words of the play an "imaginative 'scenery', which will serve later on as a background to an important off-stage event."

between Pentheus and his family.¹⁶ It is, however, only another element of the architectural imagery and foreshadows the destruction of the palace and the shattering of Pentheus' kingship.

When Pentheus comes out of the palace at line 918, he sees two Thebes and two cities of seven gates. Previously this king controlled the architecture of the city and used his buildings to enforce government on his people. Now he has changed, as is evident when he looks around at the stage set. The buildings are now no longer clear and simple; the architecture in which he placed so much trust has become blurred and fuzzy. His buildings are useless when he confronts a god who is all-powerful. One of the tools of his kingship has been taken from him—that with which he, like an architect, sought to impose an ordered environment upon his people.

III. LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Pentheus wants clear and distinct answers to all his questions. He wants to know exactly who this god is, what he does, when and why, and finally what claim this god can make on Thebes. It is significant that during the course of the play Pentheus asks far more questions and gets far more reports than any other character (cf. 460–81; 642–59; and the reports brought to Pentheus—443 ff. and 677 ff.). He is continually interested in detailed and definite information.¹⁷ The response to his attempts is discouraging. Dionysus never satisfactorily answers any one of his questions and even tells him that some things cannot be explained to a non-initiate. This is not totally evasion; the stranger is the representative of a mystic religion which is deeply involved with miracle. For a rational man like Pentheus the true answer, “the god did it,” is too unclear to satisfy.

This difference in the two characters appears in words and images which are related to clarity and obscurity, namely, light and darkness. Pentheus in his first speech states that the women are racing about on the shady mountainside (218), and in fact, the words “shady” and

¹⁶ Cf. Dodds on lines 389–92; also notice the similar phrasing of Kadmos' comments on Pentheus at line 1308.

¹⁷ Cf. Winnington-Ingram 164 ff. where he lists the words for “seeing” and “understanding;” they are repeated sufficiently to demonstrate Euripides' interest in this theme.

"dark" are connected with this religion. At 485 he asks the stranger whether he practices his rites during the day or at night; the response is, "Many of them at night; darkness possesses a certain reverence." The grove where the maenads worship is shadowed over by fir trees (1052). The king sarcastically tries to oblige this god by locking him in the darkness of the stables, and the chorus yearns to be like the fawn who seeks shelter in the shady wood (510 and 875). This is also a god of vague and indistinct light—not sunlight or daylight but fire light. In the darkness the Bacchante carries a pine torch (146); the god Dionysus is not constrained by the dark prisons of Pentheus but rather lights a fire at the monument to Semele and casts an illusory blaze around the palace (622 ff.). When he emerges from the dark prison, he is greeted by his worshippers as the "greatest light for us of our Bacchic revelry!" (608 ff.). Dionysus is at home in the darkness or in the ambiguous light which flickers in the darkness.

Pentheus distrusts the darkness because it is dangerous for the women of the town (487); he would prefer to see things done in the open light of day. He feels that it will make the stranger ineffective when he puts him into the darkness (510). Dionysus is suspect because his skin is pale; he has not been in the sunlight but rather seeks the delights of Aphrodite in the shadows (457 ff.). Pentheus favors the clear sunlight and dislikes darkness and shadows.

Euripides expresses this motif in several ways. For example, there is no reason for the poet to include Teiresias in this story of Thebes, and yet the seer is deeply involved in the light-darkness theme since he is the blind man who does not see the light of day (210). The blind man, however, can actually see more clearly with his intellect than Pentheus can with his clarity of vision.

Most relevant to this theme is the awakening of Agave at the end of the play:

Κα. πρῶτον μὲν ἐς τόνδ' αἰθέρ' ὄμμα σὸν μέσες.

Αγ. ἰδοῦ· τί μοι τόνδ' ἐξυπείπας εἰσορᾶν;

Κα. ἔθ' αὐτὸς ἢ σοι μεταβολὰς ἔχειν δοκεῖ;

Αγ. λαμπρότερος ἢ πρὶν καὶ διειπετέστερος. (1264-67)

Previously, while she was in the Bacchic frenzy, her vision was dimmed; when she recovers and can see what she is carrying in her hands, the whole world becomes brighter and clearer.

When Pentheus emerges from the palace under the guidance of Dionysus and says that he can see two suns in the sky, he is losing his precise vision of things as they are. Smokey flames and bright flashes dominate the staging. The sun—the symbol for a clear and distinct view—has now blurred to a double image in Pentheus' view. In this state he goes to his death. He is willing, but only because another of his basic characteristics has been taken from him—his constant insistence on clarity and precision.

IV. CONCLUSION

When Pentheus comes out of the palace seeing two suns, two cities of Thebes, and the stranger who looks like a bull, Euripides is indicating that something fundamental has changed within him.¹⁸ The sun is a word which has been connected with the clarity and precision which Pentheus demanded in making vital decisions; the flashy fire-conjuring of Dionysus seems a superficial trick to him. The city of Thebes is related to the other architectural devices by which Pentheus attempted to impose law and order upon his state; his palace, city walls, and prisons were important tools of government and buildings fill the stage. The bull, which before was a man, is only one of a number of animal-human confusions to which the characters in this play, themselves costumed in animal skins, seem prone—except for Pentheus, who was insistent on making sharp distinctions between human aspirations and the short-range, instinctive goals of the animal. Pentheus' speech is a clear indication that these qualities are of little avail when a man opposes a god who refuses to be defined clearly, who is not able to be constrained by normal means of preserving law and order, and who will not even think or reason in terms of logic.

Probably Pentheus does not himself realize what is happening when his vision is clouded by the god, but that is only to be expected. The

¹⁸ The fact that Pentheus perceives a mysterious truth when he sees Dionysus as a bull should not force us to see other mysterious truths in the double view of the sun or the city. There is no need for parallelism here. The point of the passage is the change within Pentheus; this change is expressed by the three images. Euripides chose to develop the imagery of animals in a more complex fashion allying it to the basic elements of the Bacchic ritual. The sun and the city have no part in the ritual and suggest no underlying religious truth. Each image, however, in its own way indicates that there has been a change in the king.

development of patterns of imagery and symbolic motifs within a work of art is intended more for the conditioning of the spectators than for the motivation of the characters themselves. The *Bacchae* juxtaposes two totally diverse ways of looking at the world. One is serious, orderly, and disciplined; this is the position of Pentheus. The other view is instinctual, ecstatic, unreasoned, and unrestrained. Most probably representatives of these two extreme views would fight endlessly. It is the tragedy of Pentheus that he is only a mortal and his opponent is a god—and, therefore, more powerful.

The basic issues of this conflict between man and god are represented primarily by the two characters and their speeches; the imagery and stage devices serve only to intensify themes which the playwright has already developed dramatically in the action of the play. In the *Bacchae* images and visual motifs are not merely coloring for the particular scene or decoration for the plot; rather they relate directly to and inform the vital issues of the drama. Once these motifs are firmly fixed in the minds and eyes of the spectators, Euripides can draw upon them in a speech like that of Pentheus which reveals the awful changes within the unfortunate king as he is led off to the hunt.