

## INTRODUCTION

## 1 EURIPIDES

Euripides appears to us as one of the most vivid and distinct poets of the fifth century BC. In comparison to Aeschylus and Sophocles, more than twice as many of his plays have survived complete, while the greater quantity both of quotations in ancient authors and of sizeable papyrus fragments of the lost plays (reflecting his popularity throughout antiquity) gives us a more detailed picture of his dramatic oeuvre.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we possess a variety of sources purporting to chronicle the life of the poet, who even appears as a character in three extant comedies of Aristophanes (*Acharnians*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Frogs*).<sup>2</sup> Yet the very abundance of ancient ‘evidence’ for Euripides’ life and character has had a paradoxically confusing impact on the interpretation of his works (on which more below). For with the exception of a few details securely based on the Athenian didascalic records, all the surviving evidence is of dubious reliability,<sup>3</sup> and the bulk is little more than anecdote based on ‘inference’, whether from the plays themselves<sup>4</sup> or from the absurd caricatures generated by comic poets.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, we have little reliable evidence for Euripides’ dramatic career and know almost nothing about his life. He was evidently dead by the first

<sup>1</sup> For a complete collection of the fragments of Euripides, see *TrGFV* (abbreviations are listed above); also Jouan and Van Looy 1998–2003 with translations and notes (in French) and the Loeb edition of Collard and Cropp 2008. The more substantial fragments are edited in *TrGFS*, and translated with introductions and commentaries by Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995 and Collard, Cropp, and Gibert 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The five major sources for the life of Euripides are edited by Kannicht, *TrGFV* (Testimonia 1–5): these are the Γένος καὶ βίος Εὐριπίδου transmitted in some medieval manuscripts of the plays; a chapter (15.20) in Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights* (published c. AD 180); an entry s.v. Εὐριπίδης in the medieval encyclopedia known as the *Suda*; a sketch of the poet’s life by Thomas Magister (thirteenth–fourteenth century); and papyrus fragments of a longer *Life of Euripides* in dialogue form by Satyrus, a grammarian of the third century BC. For these texts with English translation, see Kovacs 1994: 2–29.

<sup>3</sup> The variety of anecdote and fiction in the ancient lives of the poets is explored by Fairweather 1974; see Lefkowitz 1981: 88–104, Gregory 2005: 252–4, Hanink 2016, Scodel 2017, and Tyrrell 2020 on Euripides.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g. the notion (related in the Γένος: *TrGFV* T 1 III.2) that Euripides wrote his first *Hippolytus* as a response to his wife’s infidelity.

<sup>5</sup> Thus the plot of Ar. *Thesm.* is treated as biography by both the Γένος and Satyrus, with each claiming that the women of Athens conspired to kill Euripides during the Thesmophoria (*TrGFV* T 1 IV.2, T 110).

production of Aristophanes' *Frogs* at the Lenaea of 405 BC, and the *Marmor Parium* (a marble stele from Paros inscribed c. 264/3 BC with various dates from Greek history) puts his death in 407/6 and his birth in 485/4, dates which are as reasonable as any preserved.<sup>6</sup> Like his father Mnesarchides (or Mnesarchus), Euripides belonged to the Attic deme of Phlya (part of the Cecropid tribe and to the north of Mt Hymettus). The musical and poetic training necessary for Euripides' career implies a wealthy background, and it is clear from the range of contemporary intellectual issues handled in his plays that he was a man of great learning and curiosity. The biographical tradition deduced from Euripides' broad cultural interests that he must have been a pupil or friend of nearly every major philosopher, rhetorician, and sophist of his day (*TrGFV* T 35–48). The image of Euripides the radical, even alienated intellectual has had a major (and often misleading) influence on the subsequent interpretation of his works.<sup>7</sup>

Using the public records of the City Dionysia at Athens, ancient scholars calculated that Euripides had competed twenty-two times (= eighty-eight plays) and seventy-eight plays survived until the Hellenistic period. It is possible that Euripides staged new plays elsewhere, including the large deme theatres of Attica, and that he died in Macedonia while writing plays for king Archelaus (see §2a below). Nevertheless, the bulk of his work was intended for Athenian audiences at the City Dionysia, and it is their world view we must try to reconstruct as we interpret the plays. Euripides won first prize at the Dionysia four times during his lifetime and once posthumously, when his son or nephew, also called Euripides, produced *Bacchae* together with *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Alcmeon in Corinth* (see §2d below). Euripides' four victories (compared to Aeschylus' thirteen and Sophocles' eighteen) have often been taken to show that the Athenians were uneasy with his plays. This, however, is hardly plausible, since Euripides was chosen twenty-two times by the eponymous archon to be one of the three tragic competitors at the city's greatest dramatic festival (indeed there is no evidence that he ever failed to be chosen), and a playwright under such a cloud would not be repeatedly selected to vie for first prize.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For the conflicting and suspiciously synchronizing dates of Euripides' birth and death (including, for example, the tradition of his birth on the island of Salamis on the very day of the great battle in 480 BC), see *TrGFV* T 10a–17c.

<sup>7</sup> See Poli-Palladini 2001, Allan 2005: 74–5, Meltzer 2006: 1–32, Scodel 2020.

<sup>8</sup> If one assumes that a tragedian could compose four plays every two years on average, then Euripides' twenty-two productions over a forty-seven-year career suggest that he was selected for the Dionysia every time he wanted to be; so too with Aeschylus (ninety plays or c. twenty-three productions over forty-one years)

Of Euripides' seventeen surviving tragedies (not including the spurious *Rhesus* or the satyr-play *Cyclops*) we have fairly secure production dates for eight plays (*Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Trojan Women*, *Helen*, *Orestes*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Bacchae*). The remaining nine plays can be dated in relation to these on stylistic grounds, the most important criteria being the rate and type of resolution (i.e. substitution of two short syllables for a long) found in the iambic trimeters, since Euripides' plays show a gradual increase over time in the rate and variety of resolved positions.<sup>9</sup> The cumulative evidence allows us to reconstruct Euripides' theatrical career as follows (extant works are in bold):<sup>10</sup>

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455	Euripides competes for the first time at the City Dionysia (plays included <i>Peliades</i> )
441	first victory at the Dionysia
438	<b><i>Alcestis</i></b> (fourth play in tetralogy with <i>Cretan Women</i> , <i>Alcmeon in Psophis</i> , <i>Telephus</i> ); wins second prize
431	<b><i>Medea</i></b> (first play in tetralogy with <i>Philoctetes</i> , <i>Dictys</i> , and satyr-play <i>Theristae</i> ); wins third prize
c. 430	<b><i>Children of Heracles</i></b>
428	<b><i>Hippolytus</i></b> ; wins first prize
c. 425	<b><i>Andromache</i></b>
c. 424	<b><i>Hecuba</i></b>
c. 423	<b><i>Suppliant Women</i></b>
c. 420	<b><i>Electra</i></b>
c. 416	<b><i>Heracles</i></b>
415	<b><i>Trojan Women</i></b> (third play in tetralogy with <i>Alexandros</i> , <i>Palamedes</i> , and satyr-play <i>Sisyphus</i> ); wins second prize
c. 414	<b><i>Iphigenia in Tauris</i></b>
c. 413	<b><i>Ion</i></b>
412	<b><i>Helen</i></b> (other plays included <i>Andromeda</i> )
411–409	<b><i>Phoenician Women</i></b>

and Sophocles (123 plays or c. thirty-one productions over sixty-two years): cf. Stevens 1956: 92, Netz 2020: 203.

<sup>9</sup> The rate of resolutions in *Bacchae* confirms its lateness in Euripides' career. There are approximately 402 resolutions in 918 iambic trimeters, or in 43.8 per cent of trimeters, compared to 6.7 per cent for *Alcestis* in 438 (only the *Orestes* of 408 has a higher resolution rate, with 49.3 per cent). For the play's other metres, see §5a below and the relevant sections of the commentary.

<sup>10</sup> For a survey of Euripides' surviving plays, with discussions of dating, see Matthiessen 2002, Gregory 2005, Mastronarde 2010: 28–43, McClure 2017: 61–364, Markantonatos 2020: 1.49–491; on the metrical criteria used to date Euripides' plays, see Cropp and Fick 1985, Devine and Stephens 1981, Stinton 1990: 349–50.

408	<i>Orestes</i>
c. 408	<i>Cyclops</i>
408/7	<i>Archelaus</i> (performed in Macedonia)
407/6	Euripides dies in Macedonia
c. 405	<i>Iphigenia at Aulis</i> , <i>Alcmeon in Corinth</i> , and <i>Bacchae</i> , produced by Euripides' son or nephew of the same name; <sup>11</sup> wins posthumous first prize

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## 2 THE PRODUCTION

### (a) *Date and performance*

After competing at the Dionysia in 408 with plays that included *Orestes*, Euripides went to Macedonia as guest of the 'Hellenizing' king Archelaus, who had seized power by murder in 413 and would rule until his own assassination by two male lovers in 399.<sup>12</sup> Besides the money and prestige, Euripides may well have been tempted by the prospect of a break from a city at war. Euripides died in 407/6, having composed the *Archelaus* (a play about the king's probably invented eponymous ancestor) for performance in Macedonia<sup>13</sup> and the three other tragedies for first performance upon his planned return to Athens.<sup>14</sup>

Some modern scholars have disputed the tradition of Euripides' visit to Macedonia and his death and burial there, but there is no good reason to doubt it.<sup>15</sup> Though probably composed in Macedonia, *Bacchae* and its companion plays differ from the *Archelaus* in having no obvious Macedonian material or focus, and there is no cause to think that Euripides wrote them for performance there or intended to leave Athens permanently. Nonetheless, it is possible that Euripides envisaged *reperforming* the *Bacchae*

<sup>11</sup> Son: scholiast to Ar. *Ran.* 67; nephew: *Suda* ε 3695 Adler (*TrGFV* T3).

<sup>12</sup> The sculptor Zeuxis, tragedian Agathon, epic poet Choerilus, and lyric poet Timotheus also accepted invitations to work for Archelaus. Though the Macedonians were ethnically Greek in terms of their ancestry, language, religion, and customs, their rulers used artistic patronage to counter other Greeks' perception of them as somehow less civilized: cf. Hall 2001, Hatzopoulos 2011.

<sup>13</sup> For Euripides' visit to Macedonia, see *TrGF V T* 112–20; for the surviving fragments of the *Archelaus* itself, see Harder 1985: 125–272. The play told how the king's mythical ancestor and namesake killed the double-crossing Cisseus of Thrace and founded the Macedonian city of Aegae.

<sup>14</sup> Euripides the younger presumably found no fourth play among his father's or uncle's effects to complete the tetralogy typically entered into the dramatic competition.

<sup>15</sup> See Hammond and Griffith 1979: 149–50; Scodel 2017: 37–9; Csapo and Wilson 2020a: 585: 'the evidence is overwhelming that Euripides did spend his last days there [i.e. in Macedonia]'. For the sceptical case cf. Scullion 2003.

(if not the two other plays) in Macedonia, after a first performance in Athens, since two of the chorus' songs include positive descriptions of the region (409–11, 565–75nn.).

(b) *Setting and staging*

*Bacchae* was first performed in or shortly after 405 BC at the City Dionysia in Athens. Unfortunately the archaeological evidence for the theatre in this period is scanty; subsequent rebuilding throughout antiquity has destroyed or obscured earlier layers,<sup>16</sup> and the extant fifth-century remains are controversial.<sup>17</sup> The wooden theatre building, or *skēnē*, had been in use since the production of the *Oresteia* in 458 at the latest.<sup>18</sup> In *Bacchae* the *skēnē* represents the palace of Pentheus in Thebes, described by the chorus as an imposing structure complete with columns, lintels, and triglyphs (591–3, 1214).<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the stage building was decorated to resemble such a palace: scene-painting (*skēnographia*) could be managed by (for example) fixing painted panels to the front of the *skēnē*, though these panels would often need to be changed between plays (in *Iphigenia at Aulis* the *skēnē* represents the tent of Agamemnon in the Greek camp at Aulis, in *Alcmeon in Corinth* it probably stood for the palace of Creon, king of Corinth); however, it is surprising that such physical scene-setting is not exploited for ludicrous effect in Old Comedy. In any case, given the size of the theatre, much of the audience would be unable to see any great level of detail in scene-painting, making verbal scene-setting all the more important.<sup>20</sup>

The play is set before the royal palace on the acropolis of Thebes.<sup>21</sup> In his opening speech Dionysus draws attention to the still-smouldering tomb of his mother Semele (6–12). Where was the tomb located – on the stage (if it existed) close to the *skēnē* or further forward in the performance space, the *orchestra*? The existence of a low raised stage in the

<sup>16</sup> A monumental stone theatre was built in the time of Lycurgus (330s BC): cf. [Plut.] *X orat.* 841c–e, Pickard-Cambridge 1946: 134–74.

<sup>17</sup> For discussion of the surviving archaeological evidence, with further bibliography, see Csapo and Slater 1995: 79–88, Moretti 1999–2000, Davidson 2005: 195–203, Goette 2007, Papastamati-von Mook 2014, Csapo and Wilson 2020a: 466.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Taplin 1977: 319–20, 458–9; Raeburn and Thomas 2011: xlvi.

<sup>19</sup> For the staging of the palace's destruction, see 576–603n.

<sup>20</sup> On the ancient evidence for *skēnographia*, see Small 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Of Euripides' seventeen surviving tragedies, three other plays are set, like *Bacchae*, in Boeotia (*HF*, *Phoen.*, *IA*), two in or near Troy (*Hec.*, *Tro.*), four in the Peloponnese (*Med.*, *Hipp.*, *El.*, *Or.*), three in central/northern Greece (*Alc.*, *Andr.*, *Ion*), two in Attica (*Heracl.*, *Supp.*), and one each in Tauris and Egypt (*IT*, *Hel.*).

fifth-century theatre of Dionysus seems on balance unlikely (though, given the state of the evidence, it cannot be ruled out).<sup>22</sup> If Semele's tomb was a portable painted prop that stood close to (or up against) the *skēnē*, it would have to be to one side of the main door lest it interfere with the movement and visibility of the actors as they enter and exit the palace. Alternatively, the tomb may have been placed in a more central position in the *orchēstra*.<sup>23</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the tomb of Semele was represented by the altar of Dionysus in the *orchēstra*, creating a fitting link between mother and son, and one that exploited the dramatic focus and power of that space. Unfortunately, however, there is no evidence that a permanent altar of Dionysus existed at the centre of the *orchēstra* in the fifth-century theatre.<sup>24</sup> The likeliest scenario is one where Semele's tomb was simply represented by a painted panel on the *skēnē* (1–63n.).<sup>25</sup>

The *eisodoi*, or 'entrance ways', on either side of the performance space have an identity that is created specifically for, and used consistently in, each drama.<sup>26</sup> In *Bacchae*, one *eisodos* (let us simply call it A, rather than specify left or right) leads to various Theban locations, and the other (B) via the city (352, 434, 855, 971) to Mt Cithaeron and more distant places. *Eisodos* B predominates, especially from 660 onwards, as events on Mt Cithaeron take a more prominent role in the audience's imagination.<sup>27</sup>

The original production featured three male actors, fifteen male chorus members, and several mute extras (servants of Pentheus and Cadmus, and Theban women attending Agave). All speaking parts in Attic tragedy were divided between three actors, which meant not only that an actor often played more than one role, but also that the same role occasionally

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Taplin 1977: 441 n. 2; Csapo and Slater 1995: 64, 268.

<sup>23</sup> Though not necessarily at the centre of a circle, since there is no irrefutable evidence of a circular *orchēstra* before Epidaurus c. 330 BC, and the earliest theatres, including the Attic deme theatres, have *orchēstrai* that are more or less rectangular in shape: Csapo and Slater 1995: 79, 83; Moretti 1999–2000: 392–6; Paga 2010; Powers 2014: 13–23.

<sup>24</sup> See Poe 1989, Rehm 2002: 41.

<sup>25</sup> Free-standing structures would be required when they were dramaturgically important, as with the places of refuge that feature in many suppliant scenes or full-blown suppliant dramas (e.g. *Heracl.*, *Andr.*, *Suppl.*, *Hel.*). By contrast, the tomb of Semele is addressed by Dionysus to stress his coming home to Thebes but does not play a major role in the subsequent action (596–9n.).

<sup>26</sup> In a production by the fourth-century tragedian Carcinus, Amphiarus was returning from a shrine but entered from an inappropriate direction and the work was hissed off the stage (Arist. *Poet.* 1455a25–8). Thus the poet will have taken care in the staging of entrances and exits and these will have been rehearsed with basic logic and suitability in mind.

<sup>27</sup> On the play's use of theatrical space, see Oranje 1984: 143–55, Rehm 2002: 200–14, Powers 2014: 23–8, Konstantinou 2018: 116–24.

had to be divided between two or more actors (both practices were made easier because each figure had a characteristic costume and mask). The importance of the actor's art is clear from the fact that a prize for best actor was established at the City Dionysia in 449 BC, and this also shows that audiences and judges were able to tell actors apart, despite their masks and multiplicity of roles.<sup>28</sup> Using masks, costume, vocal delivery, and gesture, an actor would change his identity from scene to scene (as would a chorus from play to play). Acting was, then, a highly skilled profession, and also one that could bring wealth and celebrity (increasingly so as the fifth and fourth centuries progressed).<sup>29</sup>

Assuming (as seems likely) that the protagonist and deuteragonist took the major roles of Dionysus/stranger and Pentheus, the speaking parts of *Bacchae* can be divided as follows:

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Actor I:	Dionysus (1–63, 434–518, 576–861, 912–76, 1330–51), Teiresias (170–369)
Actor II:	Pentheus (210–369, 434–518, 642–846, 918–70), Agave (1165–1387)
Actor III:	Cadmus (178–369), servant (434–518), herdsman/ first messenger (657–774), attendant/second messenger (1024–1152)

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The first actor played both the stranger/Dionysus and Teiresias (religious authorities and supporters of the god, the latter of whom is the only Theban to escape punishment); the second actor both Agave and Pentheus (mother and son, killer and victim, and the two primary opponents of the god); and the third actor four figures who all counsel or imply that Pentheus should accept (or should have accepted) the god, including all three lower-class characters (servant, herdsman, attendant).<sup>30</sup> The versatility required of the two leading actors is particularly clear: the first plays an attractive foreigner, a frail old prophet, and a powerful god, while the second plays in succession two characters who are similar in some

<sup>28</sup> Only protagonists could win the prize for acting, and the prize did not always go to the main actor of the successful group of plays: in 418 BC, for example, the victorious tragic production at the Lenaean festival had Lysicrates as protagonist, but the prize for acting went to Callipides (*TrGF1* DID A 2b.77–83).

<sup>29</sup> This culminated in Aristotle's complaint that 'in dramatic contests actors are now more important than poets' (*Rh.* 3.1403b33); on the rise of the actor, cash prizes, and the development of a theatrical star circuit, see Easterling 2002: 331–2, Csapo 2010a: 83–116.

<sup>30</sup> For a single actor taking parallel or directly antithetical roles, see Damen 1989: 321–9.

respects (both resist the god and are punished with madness) but strikingly different in others, and distinct in age and gender.

An actor's costume and mask covered his entire body and head, which facilitated the changing and sharing of roles and the impersonation of female, foreign, and even divine figures. Costumes seem to have been elaborate and formal, suiting the aristocratic status of the central heroic characters, but differences in gender, class, and ethnicity will have been visible too (the details remain obscure, since no depictions of tragic actors survive on fifth-century Attic vases).<sup>31</sup> The chorus of Asian Bacchantes enter in full Dionysiac regalia, beating orgiastic drums (*tympana*: 58–9, 124, 156), and costume was one of the key ways in which a dramatist could evoke other peoples and places.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the actor playing Dionysus disguised as a Lydian acolyte will have been immediately recognizable as non-Greek: his costume (with pale arms and legs) and mask (also pale-skinned, with long hair attached) will have reflected Pentheus' contemptuous descriptions (235–6, 453–9nn.).<sup>33</sup> The same actor was then re-masked and re-costumed for Dionysus' final epiphany in fully divine form (1330–51n.).

Bacchic regalia (fawnskin, thyrsus, ivy crowns) are exploited for comic effect when Teiresias and Cadmus don them in a rush of Dionysiac enthusiasm (170–369n.). Maenadic costume is redeployed in mocking fashion when Pentheus dons actual female dress as well as the fawnskin and thyrsus (925–44n.). Euripides often utilizes clothing's deceptive potential,<sup>34</sup> and in *Bacchae* costuming takes centre stage as the unwitting Pentheus believes he is assuming a clever disguise by dressing as a Bacchant (821–43). But his disguise convinces no one (854–6), and all the while,

<sup>31</sup> On costume in tragedy, see Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 177–209, and for its role in *Bacchae*, see Wyles 2011: 67–9, 99–100. Tragic masks seem to have been fairly conventionalized (contrast the exaggerated masks of comedy), allowing the audience to project their emotions (or impressions of the characters' emotions) onto the mask. In a large outdoor theatre the nuance of facial movements would be lost, so a mask can be more effective and expressive: for the Greek tragic mask, see Halliwell 1993, and on the expressive potential of masks in many cultures, see Stewart 2002: 55–7.

<sup>32</sup> Whereas the female Greek choruses of *Iphigenia at Tauris*, *Helen*, and *Andromeda* highlight the plight of endangered Greek women in distant lands, the *Bacchae* stages the seemingly dangerous incursion of foreign women into the Greek world (cf. 13–22, 511–14, 556–75). On the play of near and far in Euripides, see Lightfoot 2021: 110–11, 119–37, 150–3.

<sup>33</sup> The popular idea that the stranger wore a 'smiling mask' throughout is untenable: see 439n.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. *Alc.* 1087–1120, where Admetus unwittingly accepts the veiled Alcestis; *Hel.* 1204–1300, where Helen and Menelaus use the latter's bedraggled appearance, dressed in pieces of torn sailcloth, to deceive Theoclymenus.

ironically, he is himself deceived by Dionysus, disguised as a mortal. And there is a moment of stunning theatricality when the actor who played Pentheus disguised as a maenad re-enters as an actual female devotee, his deranged mother Agave, carrying the mask he had worn earlier, which now represents the head of Pentheus triumphantly impaled on Agave's thyrsus (1141–2n.).<sup>35</sup>

(c) *Structure and dramatic technique*

The basic structural elements of a Greek tragedy are episodes of spoken dialogue and the choral songs that come in between them.<sup>36</sup> Yet the general pattern was flexible, allowing the dramatist to vary the length and complexity of an episode (by increasing the number of internal 'scenes', distinguished by the entrance and exit of speaking characters: 576–861n.), or to modify an episode's emotional register (by introducing songs and chanted verses, delivered by actors or chorus: 576–603, 1168–99nn.). With twelve tragedies and satyr-plays produced each year at the City Dionysia alone, audiences will have been familiar with such basic narrative patterns as recognition and revenge, and will have appreciated a poet's ability to compose variations upon them, as seen, for example, in Euripides' various uses of the popular motifs of disguise and deception (*Alc.*, *El.*, *IT*, *Hel.*, *Or.*; cf. *Soph. El.*, *Phil.*). But the *Bacchae* is almost unique in that here disguise is donned by a god,<sup>37</sup> and the audience's knowledge of the stranger's identity magnifies their sense of Pentheus' arrogance as well as the certainty of his destruction (4, 53–4nn.).

Revenge is one of the most productive story patterns in Greek literature from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* onwards, and half of all surviving tragedies culminate in revenge killings (Eur. *Med.*, *Heracl.*, *Hipp.*, *Andr.*, *Hec.*, *El.*, *HF*, *Ion* (attempted), *Or.*, *Bacch.*, Aesch. *Ag.*, *Cho.*, *Soph. Aj.*, *Trach.*, *El.*). As *Bacchae* makes clear, the differences between human and divine vengeance are significant, since whereas humans must face the consequences of their actions, which in the heroic society of tragedy means the certainty of further personalized violence, gods can punish their mortal enemies with impunity (compare, for example, Athena in Sophocles' *Ajax* or Hera in Euripides' *Heracles*). Euripides' *Hippolytus* most resembles *Bacchae* in

<sup>35</sup> On the use of Pentheus' mask and other props in the play, e.g. the stretcher bearing Pentheus' dismembered body (1216–20), see Chaston 2010: 179–237.

<sup>36</sup> See Jens 1971; Taplin 1977, 1978; Halleran 1985; Mastronarde 2002: 74–80.

<sup>37</sup> The only other tragic example also involves Dionysus, who takes on human form to punish Lycurgus in Aeschylus' fragmentary *Edonians*, an important influence on the *Bacchae* (see §3 below).

its stark portrayal of divine vengeance directed at a human opponent. Aphrodite's vengeance provokes Artemis (Hippolytus' patron goddess) to retaliate, but this will lead only to further *human* suffering (*Hipp.* 1416–22).

As well as being a revenge drama, *Bacchae* is a gripping example of what one might call the 'someone digs their heels in' plot. The audience know from the start that Pentheus is making a disastrous mistake and will be punished for it, and they see various opportunities where he could have changed his mind – in response to the uncanny escape of the maenads (443–50) and the stranger (616–41) or the herdsman's awestruck description of the maenads' miracles (677–774) – but each time Pentheus sticks to his futile resistance and brings his own ruin closer. Here he perhaps most resembles Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, who similarly rejects wise advice from his son Haemon and the prophet Teiresias, and only decides to release Antigone and bury Polynices when it is too late (1118–21n.). Like *Antigone*, *Bacchae* is a powerful example of 'late learning', a leitmotif of tragedy, as Pentheus' moment of recognition (*anagnōrisis*) comes only as he faces death (1111–13n.), Agave's after she has murdered her son (1296), and Cadmus' after the god's punishment of him has been decreed (1344–5). Thus, in its use of disguise, revenge, and too-late recognition, *Bacchae* displays Euripides' ability to manipulate and combine various typical plot structures, and to do so in a way that expresses the individuality of each play's tragic scenario, yet also maximizes the psychological and emotional impact of the drama.

It is often claimed that *Bacchae* displays 'archaism' in its relatively simple linear plot, integrated and prominent chorus, lack of monody and *agōn* scene, and extensive use of narrative (from the servant, stranger, and two messengers).<sup>38</sup> However, 'archaizing' suggests something that has not been seen for a long time and which is intended to seem old-fashioned (as if a dramatist today were to write a play in iambic pentameters). While it is true that *Bacchae* lacks some features found in Euripides' later plays, such as actor's monody (see §5a below) or longer and more complex episodes with many characters (cf. *Hel.*, *Phoen.*, *Or.*, *IA*), these are choices made for dramatic reasons: the former suits the play's foregrounding of an active chorus, while the latter derives from its continuous structure, especially its shaping as a revenge tragedy. In any case, *Bacchae* does not reject all of the stylistic trends of the later plays, as can be seen in its high rate of iambic resolution (n. 9 above) and its use of the trochaic tetrameter (604–41n.).

<sup>38</sup> See Dodds 1960: xxxvi–xxxviii; Michelini 1987: 278–9; Rutherford 2012: 218, 276–7; Weiss 2018: 241–3; Billings 2020: 389–91.