

bewilder him with madness. For sane of mind  
this man would never wear a woman's dress;  
but obsess his soul and he will not refuse.  
After those threats with which he was so fierce,  
I want him made the laughingstock of Thebes,  
led through the town in woman's form.

855

But now

I shall go and costume Pentheus in the clothes  
which he will wear to Hades when he dies, butchered  
by the hands of his mother. He shall come to know  
860 Dionysus, son of Zeus, consummate god,  
most terrible, and yet most gentle, to humankind.

*(Exit Dionysus into the palace.)*

CHORUS [*singing*]

STROPHE

*When shall I dance once more  
with bare feet the all-night dances,  
tossing my head for joy  
865 in the damp air, in the dew,  
as a running fawn would frisk  
for the green joy of the wide fields,  
freed from fear of the hunt,  
870 freed from the circling beaters  
and the nets of woven mesh  
and the hunters hallooing on  
their yelping packs? And then, hard pressed,  
she sprints with the quickness of wind,  
bounding over the marsh,  
875 leaping for joy by the river,  
joyous at the green of the leaves,  
where no man is.*

*What is wisdom? What gift of the gods°*

*is held in honor like this:  
to hold your hand victorious  
880 over the heads of those you hate?  
Honor is cherished forever.*

ANTISTROPHE

*Slow but unmistakable  
the might of the gods moves.  
It punishes that man  
who honors folly  
885 and with mad conceit  
disregards the gods.  
The gods are crafty:  
they lie in ambush  
a long step of time  
890 to hunt the unholy.  
Beyond the old beliefs,  
no thought, no act shall go.  
Small, small is the cost  
to believe in this:  
whatever is god is strong,  
895 whatever long time has sanctioned,  
and the law of nature.*

*What is wisdom? What gift of the gods<sup>o</sup>  
is held in honor like this:  
to hold your hand victorious  
900 over the heads of those you hate?  
Honor is cherished forever.*

EPODE

*Blessed is he who escapes a storm at sea,  
who comes home to his harbor.  
Blessed is he who emerges from under affliction.  
In various ways one man outraces another in the  
905 race for wealth and power.*

*Ten thousand men possess ten thousand hopes.  
A few bear fruit in happiness; the others go awry.*  
910 *But he who garners day by day a happy life,  
him I call truly blessed.*

*(Enter Dionysus from the palace.)*

DIONYSUS

Pentheus! If you are still so curious to see  
and do forbidden sights, forbidden things,  
come out. Let us see you in your woman's dress,  
915 disguised in maenad clothes so you may go and spy  
upon your mother and her company.

*(Enter Pentheus from the palace, dressed as a  
bacchant and carrying a thyrsus.)*

Why,  
you look exactly like one of the daughters of Cadmus.

PENTHEUS

I seem to see two suns blazing in the heavens.  
And now two Thebes, two cities, and each  
920 with seven gates. And you—you are a bull  
who walks before me there. Horns have sprouted  
from your head. Have you always been a beast?  
Well, now you have become a bull.

DIONYSUS

The god  
was hostile formerly, but now declares a truce  
and goes with us. You now see what you should.

*(Coyly primping.)*

PENTHEUS