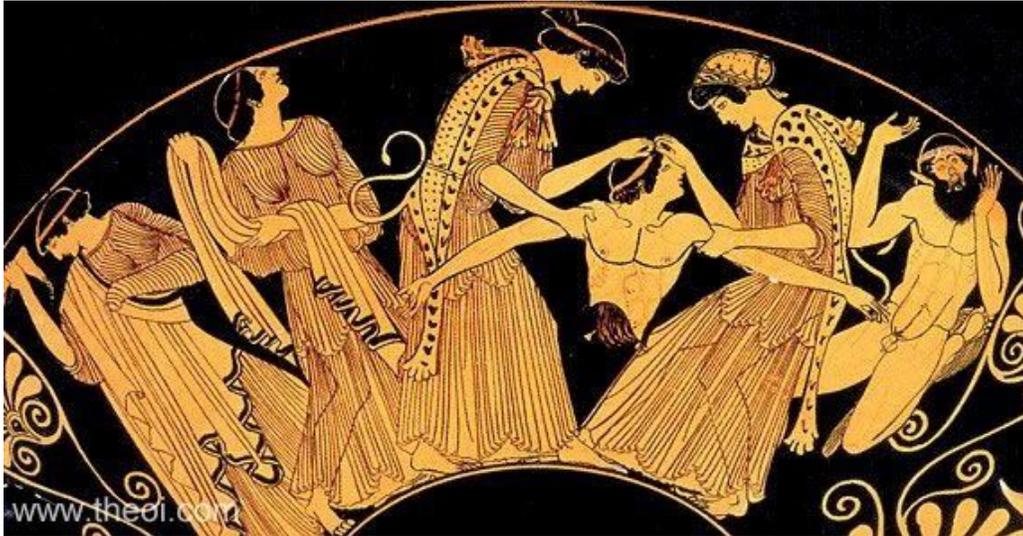


Save Ancient Studies Alliance

January 2021 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group

**The Bacchae of Euripides:
On Priestesses, Orgasmic Dancers, and Other Decadent
Women**



Ancient Greek Tragedies: before reading the text, right from the cover, they seem to tell us something special, as if they emanate a sacred and misty energy. Indeed, a terrible charm is theirs.

In this group on Euripides' play *Bacchae*, as we closely read the text together, we will enter the world of the sublime, reflecting on some of the most extraordinary and bewitching characters from the ancient world. The Bacchae – followers of Dionysus, that 'other' god, the god of subliminal drives, of the unbridled fecundity of life – are mostly symbols of a wounded and grieving as well as ecstatic and overjoyed feminine. As mythic images of earthly goddesses stained with madness, they disturb us with their mere existence – the feminine symbolized by bitches, female wolves, panthers. The Bacchae constantly orgasm for being part of *zoe*, life that knows no end – an impossible experience to be held in one singular and mortal life, body, *bios*.



And still they do. In our conversations, we will reflect on the several masks of Dionysus, his traumatic births, and the irreducible protest of life that characterizes his cult. We will ask how the Bacchic experience speaks to us today, at a time when the capitalist imaginary draws its nourishment from the consumption and fetishization of the female body. We shall then heal in reading together, recovering the right to think of ourselves as tragic texts, bearers of a knowledge made of flesh and yet capable of the divine in a way that is otherwise than the trappings of metaphysics.

Your SASA Educational Ambassadors:

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Tuhin Bhattacharjee

Dates (3 weeks):

Thursdays @ 10am EST (4:00 pm Italian time, 8:30 pm Indian time)

- Session 1: January 14th
- Session 2: January 21st
- Session 3: January 28th

Location:

Zoom Meeting Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84082125168?pwd=RIhDcnlZYkM1NGpvWk9SNXZrZjRRdz09>

Zoom Meeting ID

840 8212 5168

Zoom Meeting Password

638850

Structure: TBD

Link to Main Reading: [Euripides, *Bacchae*](#)



Meeting I

Possible Discussion Questions:

- Who is Dionysus? What does his arrival in Greece, after a long journey through the East, represent?
- The play begins with Dionysus introducing himself and his followers. Why do you think he needs to introduce himself in such an elaborate manner to an audience participating in his own festival?
- In the play's prologue, Dionysus describes the strange circumstances of his birth. How do you think his traumatic (re)birth might have (symbolically) shaped his figuration and attributes?

After meeting In addition:

Hey guys, I'm Alessandra. Just to briefly write the Greek words we mentioned today as promised (of course you don't have to know them - someone would call it a posh thing, someone compulsive preciseness, someone else intellectual masturbation...ha ha!). In the introduction, first 10 lines, there could be seen these topics (but this is just my own personal reading):

- *Genos* (γένος): the origin
- *Morphe* (μορφή): the form and its fluidity
- *Topoi* (τόποι): literal places as symbols
- *Eros* (ἔρως): emotive thrust/desires

Plus: the line I mentioned was (probably too technical, I apologize but) the 4th (*morphen d'ameipsas ek theou brotesian*, μορφήν δ'ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτοτήσιν)

with the literal translation of "having turned (*ameipsas*) shape (*morphen*) from god (*ek theou*) to human (with this particularity of "*brotesian*" that refers to humans as, let's say, bleeding creatures, wounded creatures, more than under the political aspect - as, for the example, the difference between the Latin *homo* and *vir*, I would say obviously speaking reductively)." "I also referred to the first verb ἦκω (*heko*) in a symbolic sense of "having arrived" coming from a big voyage but also as to say "Here I am!" in a sort of remarking of



his existence (I do exist). Then you enriched this with all your splendid thoughts about mirrors and self-determination. Sorry, the transliteration is not perfect because I do not know how to do the long vowels in this document, my bad. Hope it's enough! =)

Hey guys, something that can nourish reflections and thoughts for our next meeting. See you! =)

By which side is Euripides staying? By Pentheus' side against the orgiastic excesses of the Dionysian religion? Or rather he celebrates Dionysus' mystic grandiosity? Yet there must be a thesis in the Euripidean speech. What else Bacchae could be if not a reflection on dionisysm, the expression of a point of view on religion? Solutions to the riddle insert on the stereotype, already spread in the Ancient world, of one atheist Euripides, corrupted by the Sophistic. And hence, Bacchae appeared to some as a palinode, the fruit of a sort of redemption: the conscience crisis of an old man at that point who, one step from dying, discovers again gods, and fathers' religion. Or rather, on contrary, one could see in the tragedy Euripides' extreme protest towards traditional gods. [Giorgio Ieranò, Bacchae, Mondadori, Milano, 1999, p. VII. The translation is mine.]

**After meeting II. In addition:
Lines 314-318:**

**“On women, where Aphrodite is concerned,
Dionysus will not enforce restraint —
such modesty you must seek in nature,
where it already dwells. For any woman
whose character is chaste won't be defiled
by Bacchic revelry.”**

Here's a link to Judith Butler's excellent discussion of “kinship trouble” in ancient Greek tragedy, with particular focus on Euripides' *Bacchae*:

[Butler - Reflections on Kinship Trouble](#)



Full Zoom Meeting Invitation:

Time: Jan 14, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Thu, until Jan 28, 2021, 3 occurrence(s)

Jan 14, 2021 10:00 AM

Jan 21, 2021 10:00 AM

Jan 28, 2021 10:00 AM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZAtf-uprD4rHNz94eUYIQfiWbf8ZClibD7/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGsrjMoG9aQsR-PRpwlAoaqga-vzpiVcgo1HxUvgNhlUwX_AeBEaohcHNHf

Join Zoom Meeting

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