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**Euripides' *Bacchae* as Inverted Model for Ovid's *Procne***

Many texts have been identified as influencing Ovid's *Procne* (*Met.* 6.424-674): Sophocles' and Accius' *Tereus*, Accius' *Atrous*, Euripides' *Bacchae* and Pacuvius' *Pentheus*, Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Euripides' *Hecuba*. But one of these texts suspected of "influencing" Ovid's presentation is in fact its inverted model: Euripides' *Bacchae*. This discovery explains why Ovid makes two curious poetic choices in his presentation of this episode: to drain the tale of all divine elements (in defiance of the mythographic tradition), but to nevertheless include references to Dionysianism (despite his care in presenting Procne's vengeance as *quid pro quo* and very personal). Ovid's specific use of language and poetic devices are also explained (in many cases) by the model text.

Despite plot-level differences, the conflict remains essentially the same. The theme of each play concerns the implications of the abuse of power. Character pair-ups fluctuate as the textual reflection deepens. Each play begins with the exposition of a crime of impiety (by Pentheus, Tereus). The avenger (Dionysus, Procne) is determined to avenge wrongs of a sexual nature suffered by female kin. The avenger is aided by his alter-ego (Stranger, Philomela). A queen (Agave, Procne) is overcome by a passion not of her own making. It changes the way she perceives the world and she ends up killing her own child (Pentheus, Itys) with the help of her sister(s). Each aggressor has a double target (Agave/Pentheus, Tereus/Itys).

The humiliation of each victim is essential to the punishment. The victim of the vengeance plot suffers *sparagmos* at the hands of his mother who intends a cannibal feast. Gender codes become fluid as the male attributes of power are adopted by women, who de-masculinize their male enemy. Justice is attained by the sexualized disempowerment of the true target of each wronged avenger. In each case, the decapitated head of the murdered child is a stylized castration, and the similarly dramatic presentation of each head leads to the final discovery in each play, where the manipulator is clearly distinguished from the manipulated. After the revelation, Pentheus' mother regrets her errors; Itys' father bemoans his own fate without remorse. The surviving characters suffer permanent exile.

A discussion of one pair of corresponding scenes – The Maenadization – will serve to expose both the verbal resonances of the *Bacchae* evident in Ovid's text as well as his use of thematic inversion to make his own, unique point. In each scene, the aggressor effects a sham maenadization as part of the vengeful response to wrongs suffered, but Dionysus turns Pentheus into a maenad to destroy him, while Procne disguises Philomela as a maenad to save her. Rife with ironic Dionysian allusions misunderstood by many as literal, this scene marks the point of divergence of the two plays and effectively shifts the drama from the realm of the divine to that of the human. In the end, the irreparable destruction Procne (as opposed to the guiltless Dionysus) wreaks in her genuine quest for justice in a godless world cannot be mitigated in the name of a greater Truth.