



Translating Euripides' Bacchae: How Visual Methods of Production Effect Meaning Within Greek Theatre

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Introduction

A play is more than a script. A point of fact that is forgotten among many classicists, who have formed the habit of studying these works as literature and not as the works of theatre that they truly are.¹ While a script may hold the story, characters and dialogue of a play, there are multiple elements that separate the text from the final product of a performance. Studying these texts in this way does a disservice to the elements of production that are vital in creating meaning beyond the script, aspects of production such as costume, casting, staging and special effects all play a vital role in shaping meaning. In recent years the subject of Greek theatre production has begun to be explored in more detail, as we have come to understand that we can no longer study Greek Theatre in 'Conceptual Isolation'.² Scholars such as Wiles have begun to explore the techniques of Greek theatre and its impact on the interpretations of these plays. This has led to the recognition of what made theatre work during the classical period, with relation to uncovering the costumes and masks used by actors, the space in which the play was performed and the societal importance of theatre at the time.³ This study will be taking a more in-depth look in to some of the elements that make up Greek theatre, discussing their importance of production in affecting meaning within the play Euripides' *Bacchae*, and how this language of traditional Greek theatre production can be translated to a modern audience authentically so as to effectively recreate the messages intended by the playwright through the method of production.

Authenticity implies a genuineness and originality in the subjects' creation, in the context of theatre this tends to mean a tireless attention to detail to best replicate a

¹ Kathryn Bosher 2007

² Wiles 2000: 2

³ Wiles 2000: 2

shows original context. Historical theatre is especially prevalent in this area of ‘authenticity’, so what makes an historical play ‘authentic’? Shakespeare works as a simplified example to use when introducing theories on authenticity, due to its popularity and wealth of evidence. The name Shakespeare insights a now almost stereotypical image of men in tights and starched ruffles, it is deemed to be incredibly easy to give what is considered an ‘authentic’ rendition of how Shakespeare’s performances would have appeared in his time, we have the costumes, the scripts, even the stages are still available for use. The context of the original production can be replicated; therefore, we can say it is authentic. However, what cannot be replicated is the audience, more specifically the cultural language that they share which has evolved so that a modern-day audience member would no longer understand. As a result, the original meaning of these visuals cannot be understood, losing the authenticity of the plays meaning. In the context of Greek theatre, our understanding is much more limited, our evidence inadequate in creating an understanding of theatre in their context.⁴ If recreating the elements of production does not create authenticity, then perhaps it is better to translate the techniques in to a language that our modern audiences can understand. This is where David Wiles theories on *langue* and *parole* in Greek theatre are integral. If the system of theatrical signs created by elements of production are described as the ‘*langue*’ of Greek theatre, the ‘*parole*’ can be defined as the audience that observes the show.⁵ Not only does this define how production carries its own significance within a play, but also argues that the audience of today no longer understands this language. It can be argued then, as Wiles does, that we can only approach the original Greek experience by removing all that is culturally specific to the

⁴ Wiles 1994: 13-14

⁵ Wiles 1994: 14-15

Greek theatre.⁶ With the belief that true authenticity cannot be created through recreation, but instead these elements have to be translated to suit its audience in order to be considered authentic. It is this debate of how to approach adaptations of theatre that will be explored within this dissertation.

While there are many elements that make up theatre production, the elements being brought to focus in this study will be masks and costumes due to the availability of evidence and its importance in bringing meaning to the characters and their intentions on stage. Masks are an intrinsic part of Greek theatre and have a very different attitude surrounding their use in theatre today in comparison to the Greek theatrical context,⁷ making them an important element in the discussion of adaption and authenticity. Costumes as well signify various character traits such as class and personality, much like it can be used today.⁸ It could be said that the way in which costumes are used today is more akin to the use of masks for the Greeks, often resulting in modern adaptations utilising the costume to transpose meaning rather than masks. These aspects of production will be brought to focus within this study to not only understand their role in the wider context of Greek theatre, but more specifically in how it affects both the past and present productions of one particular play, the *Bacchae*.

Euripides' *Bacchae* was written in 405 BC and performed after Euripides' death.⁹ There is a large amount of evidence on the production methods of this play in comparison to others of the time, mainly due to its focus on the deity of theatre himself Dionysus. Additionally, the play itself is a popular choice among current theatre companies, making it somewhat easy to find references to modern productions, the decisions they

⁶ Wiles 2000: 8-9

⁷ Wiles 2000: 147

⁸ Wiles 2000: 156-157

⁹ Kovacs 2002:2

make for these visual elements of production and the audience response to these choices to transpose meaning. The play itself can be interpreted in numerous ways, but its strong themes on the relationship of power, gender and the dangers of blind faith are undeniable and heavily influenced by the appearances of the characters as they would be seen on stage. The relationship of Dionysus to the Greek audience and to the wider religious context of Greece also assists in creating a well-established cult ‘character’ that can be drawn on to give a better idea of Dionysus’ image in the context of theatre.¹⁰ This makes it an ideal subject to draw focus on for this study.

¹⁰ Chaston 2009: 180-182

The Production Techniques of Greece

When discussing the topic of Ancient Greek theatre production, the initial and concerning issue is of the lack of material evidence that can be used to create the physical image of Greek Theatre. Material evidence, or a lack thereof, is the first hurdle when tackling the subject of how production affected meaning as a lot of what is available is drawn from limited evidence, speculated and combined with other evidence available from theatre contexts, perhaps a later time frame, or a different culture.¹¹ Our main resource for identifying theatrical conventions lies in art pieces, such as terracotta masks, or the Pronomos vase, “The most complete and magnificent evidence for 5th century costumes.”¹² It depicts actors at the Dionysian festival in multitudes of costumes and carrying masks depicting iconic characters of myth. The study of masks in theatre relies almost solely on a catalogue of masks written by Pollux, which only gives simple descriptions of a small collection of masks.¹³ It is with this lacklustre evidence that we attempt to piece together the imagery of how Greek theatre would have appeared on the stage.

Masks

Masks were an essential component of Greek theatre production, according to Wiles, masks are ‘the defining convention of Greek Theatre.’¹⁴ Wiles’ statement appears to me to be correct, masks are ever-present in our collective image of Greek theatre, seen in the aforementioned Pronomos vase.¹⁵ The masks used in theatre were made of fabric, therefore we do not have any physical evidence of the masks themselves, however there are terracotta copies of these masks, and written evidence which, combined, gives us a

¹¹ Wiles 1994: 74-80

¹² Wiles 2010: 231

¹³ Wiles 1994: 74-80

¹⁴ Wiles 2000: 147

¹⁵ Wiles 2010: 231-234

clear visual of the masks used in theatre. Masks are immersed in the image of Greek theatre, and as a result have a resounding impact on the interpretation of the plays that they are used in, making them a necessary component of production to take in to account when analysing the effect of production on meaning of these texts.

The masks themselves had both practical and artistic implications which work in contextualising the plays we have and changing the interpretation of these stories. The mask's main purpose was to identify the actors on stage which they achieved in two ways. Firstly, in a very literal sense, by allowing the audience to recognise the actors and differentiate between them in the gargantuan amphitheatres of Greece.¹⁶ Due to the theatre and audience's large sizes, more akin to a concert than a modern theatre setting, physically recognising individual actors' faces and expressions would have been impossible without the masks, especially when taking in to account there only being three actors to cover multiple characters¹⁷. The masks were a convenient way for actors to convey their character change to an audience with little effort.¹⁸

Secondly, through choice characteristic features, masks also tell the audience who the character is. Different features of the mask would allude to different aspect of the character, such as gender, age and social status.¹⁹ Pollux's catalogue, a concise catalogue of objects, has a section listing and describing 40 theatrical masks, placed in to groups based on their telling features.²⁰ The masks meant for female characters would have pale skin, representing their virtue, making the redder skinned women or 'blushing' women easily identifiable as promiscuous.²¹ Male masks were redder in

¹⁶ Wiles 2000: 109

¹⁷ Arnott 1991: 62

¹⁸ Arnott 1991: 45

¹⁹ Wiles 2000: 148

²⁰ Wiles 1994: 74-77

²¹ Wiles 1994: 76-79. Wiles examines the differences of female masks, with the colouring signifying a more promiscuous character, hence the use for concubine masks.

complexion as a physical signifier of their male 'hot-bloodedness',²² with facial hair making the distinction between an older man, with a full face beard, and a young man, who remains clean-shaven.²³ The masks used by the Greeks did not just mask the face, but were more helmet-like in style, also working as the wig of the characters which carried their own messages to the audience.²⁴ These characteristics, although subtle, allowed the audience to identify the characters' archetype and their role within the play they were about to watch, a useful tool when performing in front of a large audience. The character identifiers on these masks mark themselves as an important aspect of the production of ancient Greek theatre as they carry their own language to their audience, communicating elements of character for the better understanding of the observer. It is also a key aspect of production to analyse when discussing the subject of studying the play as a whole and not just as a text, as the modern reader or audience lack the understanding of the intricacies of the Greek theatre mask, resulting in the possibility of misinterpreting the character through the absence of the mask.

While conveying subtle characteristics, the masks used for tragedy themselves were neutral in their expression.²⁵ This allowed the actor to be completely taken by the character of the mask, expressing their emotion through voice and movement, and not letting the mask restrict the character's emotion. The use of the mask heavily affected the way the actor portrayed their character and moved on the stage.²⁶ He must 'externalize his emotions and develop expressivity of his whole body'²⁷ using large full body movements, positioning the mask clearly to the audience at all times so that, if done

²² Wiles 1994: 152-153

²³ Wiles 1994: 153

²⁴ Wiles 1994: 78-80. In simple terms, the neater the hair, the more mature and virtuous they are, with virgins having neatly parted straight hair, and courtesans' long curls.

²⁵ Wiles 2000: 148

²⁶ Wiles 2000: 110

²⁷ Wiles 1994: 68-69

well, the mask appeared to embody these emotions despite its neutral design.²⁸ This is understandable as a very different style of acting to the more naturalistic methods used in current theatre. It is also suggested that the neutral masks were necessary in forcing the audience not to judge the characters being portrayed by their appearances but only by their actions,²⁹ helping the audience to cope with the tragic events on stage through the neutrality of the mask acting as a shield to the events on stage,³⁰ much like the way that violent elements of tragedy happen off stage.³¹ This begins to demonstrate how the masks in Greek theatre were more than just a prop or piece of costume, but an element of production that deeply affects the way Greek theatre was presented, having a heavy influence on the perception of the characters and their actions, resulting in different meanings in the plays not found purely within the texts that remain.

Costumes of Greece

Costumes in Greek theatre had the same purpose to the actor and audience as costumes have today; they establish character through clothing. The costumes of Greek theatre were fairly basic in comparison to what we are used to in modern terms, sets of formal robes that would be made to look different from each other to discern which character was which³². Costumes, and other textile based studies, are not rife with evidence, due to the easy decay of fabrics and in some ways due to its 'feminine' style of study that has been deemed not worth studying by a male centric academic environment.³³ While more academic women are beginning to delve in to the nature and importance of the Greek wardrobe as a whole, the subject of costumes itself still has its limitations in

²⁸ Marshall 1999: 189

²⁹ Wiles 1994: 68-69

³⁰ Wiles 1994: 68-69

³¹ Hall 2000: Loc 177

³² Arnott 1991:72

³³ Sallie Goetsch: 1995

scholarship, with Iris Brooke's 1962's *Costume in Greek Classical Drama* still remaining the core text on this subject despite its age.³⁴

What we know of Greek costumes is based on imagery, such as the Pronomos vase, which is flawed as a reliable piece of evidence due to the possibility of impressionistic details that alter from the original costume so as to give a more 'mythic' sense to the scenes of drama recreated.³⁵ However, it is our most complete piece of evidence for theatrical costumes.³⁶ The costumes used by the actors had to be easy to move around in for long periods of time without too much disruption to the garment, it is therefore believed that actors wore a form of peplos or tunic, as opposed to the heavy and shapeless chiton worn by the average Greek citizen.³⁷ These clothes worn on stage would have been attached to a neckband and cinched at the waist for extra security for movement.³⁸ The robes themselves would be made of extravagantly patterned fabrics with bright colours, in different styles as a way to both stand out on the stage and as a way to display wealth in the production.³⁹ With each character having different embellishments for the audience to clearly tell them apart.⁴⁰ With the use of only three actors who doubled up on roles, it is highly possible that an actor had a different patterned costume for each role they played, which would not have been difficult to quick change due to the costumes being made up of one large piece of square fabric.⁴¹ Upper class male characters in tragedy would have worn their peplos to the ankle, the same for women,⁴² while the more athletic chorus would have worn shorter clothes for

³⁴ Sallie Goetsch: 1995

³⁵ Brookes 1962: 2

³⁶ Wyles 2010: 231

³⁷ Brookes 1962: 64

³⁸ Brookes 1962: 64-65

³⁹ Wyles 2010: 249

⁴⁰ Brookes 1962: 66-67

⁴¹ Brookes 1962: 67

⁴² Wiles 2000: 157

ease of movement.⁴³ Besides this, other evidence of costumes is mostly speculative and based up of any descriptions given with the texts they are performing, one of the issues with this especially is the fluidity of the scripts and our inability to know what is original or has been added by members of later performances to fit the costumes they may already have.⁴⁴

⁴³ Wiles 2000: 157-158

⁴⁴ Wiles 2000: 170

The Bacchae in Greek Theatre

Euripides himself appears to have had a reputation for utilising his costumes in a unique and innovative way, not approved of by the members of the traditional theatrical community.⁴⁵ We see this in the way he was mocked in later works of Aristophanes such as *Acharnians* with Euripides rummaging through his stores of costumes to disguise Dicaeopolis as a beggar.⁴⁶ It may then be assumed, that Euripides would have utilised these costumes for his play *Bacchae*, which we begin to see in the dialogue through descriptions of fellow actors, however it must be remembered also that *Bacchae* was performed posthumously and as a result the production itself was not in the control of Euripides himself.⁴⁷ The majority of the evidence we have for the costumes used in the *Bacchae* comes from the script itself, the rest of what is known is speculative and based off of trends in the use of costume in other tragedies at the time. However, the choices assumed to be available still have a great effect on the meaning and characterisation within the *Bacchae*.

The Bacchae and Gender

Dionysus has many sides to his image within the wider Greek world, Chaston identifies multiple forms of Dionysus, that of the cultic form, seen amongst statues and iconography of the bearded and mature god familiar with those who followed his cult worship.⁴⁸ The Beast God, which identified a more animalistic and wild nature behind the god which inspired the behaviour of the women he enthralled, and finally the Effeminate Dionysus, who is found mostly in the form of Old Comedy represented with youthful face and yellow gown.⁴⁹ It is within *The Bacchae*, that all these forms appear

⁴⁵ Arnott 1991: 73

⁴⁶ Arist. *Acharnians*. 410-478

⁴⁷ Kovacs 2002: 2

⁴⁸ Chaston 2009: 180-183

⁴⁹ Chaston 2009: 182

to be present in some dimension, all represented by the tool of the mask. It is the Effeminate God, that appears to be represented with the most attention in Dionysus' mask. *The Bacchae* indicates Dionysus femininity through its descriptions of Dionysus' chosen mortal guise, voiced through Pentheus' description of him.

“Quite an attractive fellow you are...your hair is long and comes tumbling down all the way to your cheeks...and you deliberately keep your skin white.”⁵⁰

Dionysus' mask solidified his feminine image, through its paler skin more akin to the female mask, and his long curly hair, its length showing femininity while its curls alluded to his sexual promiscuity.⁵¹ Dionysus' method of vengeance within the play is expressed through his control of the women, he instils in them a manic energy inspired by their 'natural' energy which in itself is the catalyst of Pentheus' tragic demise⁵². The emphasis on Dionysus' feminine appearance brings closer attention to the themes of gender within the performance, highlighting his role in causing the actions of the Bacchantes in the play and how he encompasses the wild and irrational energy of the feminine, while contrasting Pentheus' 'traditional' relationship with the masculine gender.⁵³ It is Dionysus' comfort in his feminine style that draws anger from Pentheus and in turn it is what convinces him to allow Dionysus as the stranger to dress him also as a woman.⁵⁴ The feminine mask of Dionysus works as an element of production to bring emphasis to Dionysus' fluidity of gender, which without can heavily change the direction of the play. For example, if Dionysus instead appeared as a more masculine figure, redder skin and shorter hair, his efforts in convincing Pentheus to take up the

⁵⁰ Eur. Bac. 454-459

⁵¹ Wiles 1994: 178

⁵² Segal 1984: 194-196. His analysis of *Bacchae* connects the Maenads with the Athenian fear of women losing control, with femininity being connected with the 'irrational', hence their link with Dionysus.

⁵³ Foley 1980: 124

⁵⁴ Kalke 1985: 413

guise of a woman would appear false, and his relationship with the chorus of women appears as something not to be taken seriously. By adopting the feminine image, the character of Dionysus creates in it a feeling of threat. It is threatening to Pentheus to be in women's clothing, just as the female bacchantes become threatening to Pentheus as they rip him apart.⁵⁵ Without visual access to the feminine image of Dionysus, this dimension of threat found within the feminine is lost on someone relying on the text alone.

The Dionysus in the *Bacchae* is that of the effeminate Dionysus, shown predominately by his mask, and most likely supported by his choice of costume. Foley suggests that the actor would have been wearing a *krokôtos*, a yellow robe, much like the one Dionysus wears in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.⁵⁶ The *krokôtos* is usually worn by the young bride, and thus holds a heavy amount of symbolism as an overtly feminine piece of clothing.⁵⁷ This effeminate dress only emphasises the line Dionysus walks between the gender binary already established by his feminine mask. The mythic figure of Dionysus embodies both sexes through his birth story, being born of both woman, his mother Semele, and then born again by his father Zeus, thereby establishing him as a product of both sexes.⁵⁸ The *Bacchae* itself is heavily focused in the themes of gender, and the power and violence found in the feminine.⁵⁹ Dionysus himself creates desire and delusion in both the men and women around him, such as the chorus women and even Pentheus, as a result of his ambiguous gender.⁶⁰ The non-binary nature of Dionysus works to bring to question to the power he yields over the people within the text, while also possibly creating a discomfort in the audience who are unable to place him in a

⁵⁵ Chaston 2009: 208

⁵⁶ Foley 1980: 130

⁵⁷ Foley 1980: 208

⁵⁸ Wohl 2005: 138-139

⁵⁹ Segal 1984: 197-199

⁶⁰ Wohl 2005: 144-145

box. Dionysus' gender then creates a visual for the power that Dionysus wields over the other character onstage, while also creating a sense of lack of control and chaos, all communicated through his feminine image.⁶¹

The costumes display the ambiguity of gender most prominently when Pentheus chooses to take on the guise of a woman so as to infiltrate the bacchants of the town.⁶² Throughout the play, Pentheus has made scathing comments about the emasculate look of the stranger Dionysus,⁶³ and his disdain for the Maenads' behaviours, enforcing his rigid views on the role of masculinity and a contempt for the feminine.⁶⁴ Dionysus convinces him, heavily hinted with the assistance of divine magic, to take on the guise of the Maenads he hope to infiltrate.⁶⁵ At first Pentheus refuses to put on the garments, but is convinced to do so as to better infiltrate the women of Thebes and remain hidden, Pentheus rationalises his desire to wear women's clothes by claiming they are the more tactical choice, a small attempt to maintain a semblance of masculinity.⁶⁶ After Pentheus' transformation in to robes and wig, Pentheus becomes Dionysus' parallel. In wearing the dress of the bacchants, Pentheus embodies the ambiguity of gender that Dionysus already holds throughout the length of the performance, The audience sees double, of two effeminate men in long robes and long hair,⁶⁷ but while Dionysus is divine and comfortable with his effeminate image, Pentheus is a parody of him, awkwardly adjusting his dress and wig to show this.⁶⁸ Wohl explores this gender ambiguity as a way for Pentheus to claim his inner desires to allow himself to be

⁶¹ Wohl 2005: 145- 146

⁶² Eur. Bac. 821 - 845

⁶³ Eur. Bac. 451 – 459. Pentheus' criticism of Dionysus comes in the form of his critique of Dionysus' long hair, unsuitable for the masculine act of wrestling.

⁶⁴ Foley 1980: 112-113

⁶⁵ Eur. Bac. 850-860

⁶⁶ Wohl 2005: 146

⁶⁷ Foley 1980: 130

⁶⁸ Foley 2005: 115

attracted to Dionysus as a woman,⁶⁹ hinted at through Pentheus' phrasing of claiming Dionysus to be 'attractive through the eyes of a woman',⁷⁰ with the change of costume, it allows Pentheus to embrace femininity in the same way Dionysus does, becoming the women who desire Dionysus, while also becoming what he finds attractive in Dionysus himself.⁷¹ This is definitely an interesting view on how to express the gender dynamic within the play, and the costume change of Pentheus certainly lends itself in to bringing the gender dynamic of the two in to question, however Wohl's Oedipal take on the sexual dynamic this creates is a more modern interpretation,⁷² but one that may be replicated in later performances.

Dionysus The Mortal

The use of the neutral masks as a way to shield the actors and allow characters to be judged only by their actions is incredibly important when discussing Euripides' *Bacchae*. Dionysus himself adopts a disguise to exact his vengeance on the city of Thebes. His deception is a physical one, created by his adoption of the mortal mask as opposed to the Dionysian 'bearded god' mask a character of Dionysus could also use,⁷³ which he states clearly in the text:

“I will demonstrate to him [Pentheus] and to all of the Thebans that I am a god...I will meet them in battle at the head of an army of Maenads. That is why I have taken on mortal form and changed my appearance to that of a man.”⁷⁴

Dionysus reveals to the audience that he is adopting a mortal guise as a better way to prove his divine powers, he reveals his intent and identity through his words, but not

⁶⁹ Wohl 2005: 144-145

⁷⁰ Eur. Bac. 454-455

⁷¹ Wohl. 2005: 144-145

⁷² Wohl 2005: 143

⁷³ Chaston 2009: 181-182

⁷⁴ Eur.Bac.47-54

through his physical form, thus the mask brings emphasis to his deceptions within the play. This choice to adopt a physical mask of a mortal implies that the audience is also being deceived along with Pentheus and the people of Thebes, they are not seeing the truth with the rest of Thebes.⁷⁵ Dionysus' objective within *Bacchae* is to spread his worship and to prove the rumours of his mother false, and that he is a god to be respected.⁷⁶ The choice then to use a neutral mask would allow the audience to judge his actions as they would a mortal man and not the god that he is. The neutral mask then, is used as a tool to allow the audience to judge and perhaps even criticise the actions and intent of a god.⁷⁷ Cadmus brings voice to this view in the final scene, "Gods ought not to be like mortals in their tempers."⁷⁸ Dionysus places himself on the level of mortals as a way of justifying his actions, he was not acting as a god, but as a mortal, and adopted the mask of one to do so, incurring the judgement of mortals as a consequence.

While the neutral mask was the chosen vessel for tragedy and the universal signifier of the human face, it is argued that Dionysus, while appearing as a mortal, used instead a smiling mask.⁷⁹ If true, this could heavily change the way in which Dionysus and his actions were meant to be interpreted. The use of a smiling mask was usually restricted for the use of comedy, making its use in a tragedy unusual, however Euripides was known for his innovative utilisation of production, perhaps then making this choice less unusual.⁸⁰ Foley suggests that the smiling mask was a convention used in tragedy as a way to represent deities, though there is little evidence to suggest this, as no other gods in theatre have been described as smiling.⁸¹ If we follow this thought process, it would

⁷⁵ Foley 1980: 110

⁷⁶ Eur. Bac. 25-54

⁷⁷ Ingram 1969: 7

⁷⁸ Eur. Bac. 1348

⁷⁹ Chaston 2009:182

⁸⁰ Foley 1980: 107-108

⁸¹ Foley 1980: 127

suggest that Dionysus' mortal disguise is a false one that the audience recognise immediately, the audience see the god, while the characters on stage see the mortal.⁸² The mask here represents both the god and the mortal while also becoming a visual aid for the dramatic irony essential to the plot.⁸³ This knowledge to the audience that the stranger is Dionysus, which they see through the use of the smiling mask, creates a sense of trust from the spectator, the mask makes them his allies to his actions throughout the play.⁸⁴ This partnership created between god and audience is another of Dionysus' illusions. He creates within the audience a feeling of trust and sympathy, which only works to heighten the betrayal felt at the end when the audience recognises their complacent position in the cruel actions taken on Pentheus, one of their own, recognised in his wearing of the true neutral mask; the symbol of his humanity.⁸⁵

While veiling himself from the characters onstage in both choices, Dionysus in neutral mask opens him up to the judgement of the audience who though being told he is a god, appears as a true mortal in the tragic conventions, allowing the audience to see his actions as cruel from the beginning. The smiling mask on the other hand, welcomes the audience to his side where they revel besides him in his actions before realising too late what they have emotionally taken part in. These choices in production then hold a different meaning for the play relative to the audience's relationship with the character of Dionysus, but what truth is there in these claims? The use of neutral masks in tragedy is universally accepted based on the evidence that remains,⁸⁶ and as previously stated, there was no established convention of gods wearing smiling masks when appearing as characters in Greek theatre.⁸⁷ The only evidence taken that Dionysus in the *Bacchae* is

⁸² Foley 1980: 127

⁸³ Foley 1980: 128

⁸⁴ Chaston 2009: 191-192

⁸⁵ Chaston 2009: 198-200

⁸⁶ Wiles 2000: 148-149

⁸⁷ Foley: 1980: 127. In fact, no other deities are ever described as smiling in their respective plays.

wearing this ‘special’ mask is through the plays dialogue and the vocal descriptions of him smiling or laughing within the text.⁸⁸ Chaston especially focuses on the phrase ‘προσώπω γελώντι’ or ‘laughing face’ due to the Greek ‘προσώπω’ (*Prosópo*) meaning both face and mask, which begins to imply not just a descriptor for the character of Dionysus’ disposition but for the literal mask itself.⁸⁹ This evidence appears weak, especially when taking in to consideration the effects of acting in the mask, as mentioned, the form of acting that went together with the use of masks allowed expression through the mask itself.⁹⁰ Combined with the fact that, at each point where the character of Dionysus is described as laughing (γελάσαι), it is a moment when Dionysus is not present to the audience, making the necessity for the mask to reflect the description a moot point.⁹¹ It cannot be said for certain which mask was worn by the actor, and while the notion of a smiling mask is interesting, there is no definitive proof that that was the original production choice made.⁹² The implications of the neutral or smiling mask have a direct and contrasting impact on the audience’s relationship with Dionysus and his actions, and only just begin to show the importance of the visual production choices made could directly affect the meaning of this play.

Dionysus The Bull

As previously mentioned, there were several iterations of Dionysus within the Greek period, and many of them appear within *The Bacchae*, including that of Dionysus the Beast.⁹³ Dionysus as the beast is a key aspect of *The Bacchae* as it connects heavily with the wildness of the Bacchantes in the texts, and the true threat of Dionysus which he

⁸⁸ Chaston 2009: 189.

⁸⁹ Chaston 2009: 189

⁹⁰ Wiles 1994: 68-69

⁹¹ Billings 2017 20-21 Billings recently has attempted to dispel the idea of the smiling mask claiming the idea a falsity in scholarship that has stuck due to the ‘specialness’ the smiling mask creates for the *Bacchae*

⁹² Billings 2017: 19.

⁹³ Chaston 2009: 180-182

is disguising throughout the course of the play.⁹⁴ There are hints in the dialogue that Dionysus is not all that he seems, and is in fact a beast god hidden from those who don't believe.⁹⁵ The chorus believe and so they know of his beast face and communicate this in their song, describing him as 'the god with the horns of a bull.'⁹⁶ When Dionysus escapes Pentheus, he claims it was because he tricked Pentheus in to tying up a bull believing that it was him.⁹⁷ These heavy links to the beast hidden behind the mask work in reinforcing the idea that the mortal mask used by Dionysus is a mask in its most organic sense, withholding the truth, not just to the audience, but also to the other characters on stage.⁹⁸ It is heavily implied that Pentheus sees Dionysus' true form in his final scene before his death, looking upon Dionysus and stating:

“You seem to be going before me as a bull, and horns seem to have sprouted upon your head! Were you an animal before?”⁹⁹

What the modern reader of this text can tell, is that Pentheus now sees Dionysus' true form, but what we do not know is what mask Dionysus is wearing in this scene, whether Dionysus ever removes his mortal disguise, revealing his true form of the beast. Dionysus is incredibly important to the dynamic within the play. Even go as far to state that the choice of the mask used in this scene, and whether or not Dionysus' form is ever revealed, has an enormous effect on the meaning and interpretation of the show as a whole, creating a vital example of how the element of production affects the play's interpretation.

⁹⁴ Kalke 1985: 421

⁹⁵ Eur. Bac. 500 – 504. Dionysus claims that Pentheus cannot see the face of Dionysus due to being 'Godless'

⁹⁶ Eur. Bac. 100

⁹⁷ Eur. Bac. 615-618

⁹⁸ Foley 1980: 127-128. The audience recognises Dionysus as a god from his prologue, yet the mask remains for the characters who see him as mere mortal

⁹⁹ Eur. Bac. 919-921

The first way in which the interpretation of the mask can go, is that Dionysus reveals his true self with the use of the bull's mask in Pentheus' final scene. As previously stated, it is revealed through his character's dialogue that Pentheus saw Dionysus as a bull:

“And you seem to be going before me as a bull, and horns seem to have sprouted upon your head! Were you an animal before now?”¹⁰⁰

Dionysus responds to this by telling Pentheus that he now ‘sees as he ought to see.’¹⁰¹ Implying that he has removed the figurative mask at least, and possibly the literal mask with it. Dionysus appears to have left the scene previous, to allow the chorus to perform a dance, allowing the actor to have time to replace his mask ‘offstage’ with that of the bull mask, though it was not common to have a change.¹⁰² If indeed this is how the scene was set, it reveals to the audience the truth alongside Pentheus, placing them in the same position as each other,¹⁰³ the audience are reminded of Dionysus' position of an animalistic god, not just the mortal or ‘smiling’ Dionysus.¹⁰⁴ Pentheus is not seen as a figure of madness, but one of sympathy, recognised by his mortal mask, allowing the audience to see themselves in Pentheus and that they will undergo the same fate.¹⁰⁵ This empathy from the audience in their linked revelation creates a meaning of remorse. Dionysus no longer has his shield of the mortal face, and Pentheus can see before him the power of Dionysus just before it ruins him, and he has no way of preventing it. It reminds the audience that Dionysus is a god, and that perhaps his treatment of Pentheus is petty and should be below him.¹⁰⁶ Without the bull mask however, this empathy is not

¹⁰⁰ Eur. Bac. 919-922

¹⁰¹ Eur. Bac. 924

¹⁰² Foley 1980: 131

¹⁰³ Ingram 1969: 10-11

¹⁰⁴ Chaston 2009: 222-223

¹⁰⁵ Chaston 2009: 190-191

¹⁰⁶ Foley 121-122

created for Pentheus, and thus the scene remains as one of Dionysus' many tricks to which the audience finds no true foothold of judgement.

Some translations of the text interpret their own stage directions, and several interpret the final appearance of Dionysus as the scene where his face is revealed, along with the revelation by the people of Thebes as to the horror that has befallen them. This interpretation has an interesting effect on the meaning of the play when taking in to account the possible links to Euripides' view on Athens' relationship with religion. Euripides may have written the *Bacchae* as a criticism of cult worship in contemporary Athens, and the reveal at the end of the play would have reflected this.¹⁰⁷ Dionysus' first discussion with Pentheus includes this telling line: "Since you are a Godless man, You do not see him."¹⁰⁸ Perhaps it is because the audience are also godless that they do not see Dionysus for what he is in this production, Cruel and petty. It is in his last scene where the audience and those on stage all see Dionysus for what he is, the beast, no longer with a mask to hide his actions, he is judged against his godly position by Cadmus and the spectator.

Power and The Cult

Perhaps a more traditional take on the costume change of Pentheus is in how it becomes a physical symbol for Pentheus' transferal of power over to Dionysus and the Bacchic cult.¹⁰⁹ Pentheus is not only wearing the costume of a Grecian woman, but is wearing the garb of the bacchantes. This works in visually showing the audience that Pentheus is now in a submissive relationship with the god through the dress of his worshippers, now being at the mercy and control of Dionysus, much like his followers. As Chaston writes

¹⁰⁷ Chaston 2009: 233

¹⁰⁸ Eur. Bac. 502

¹⁰⁹ Chaston 2009: 220

that the costume change expresses “a man assuming the power of a god and simultaneously becoming the object of the god’s power.”¹¹⁰ This symbolism can be taken further to show not just Dionysus’ gain of power over Pentheus, but as a form of preparation for the sacrifice that Pentheus is about to become,¹¹¹ with the dressing of Pentheus alluding to the adornments of a sacrificial victim.¹¹²

Cadmus and Teiresias use their costume as a way to display their willingness to join the cult of Dionysus from the beginning, the reason why Dionysus returns to Thebes to begin with.¹¹³ In the prologue, Dionysus tells the audience that the reason for his return is to establish his worship in his home of Thebes, which he accomplishes soon after his entrance, the women have ran out of Thebes filled with Bacchic wonder, and the men left in the town accept Dionysus as a god,¹¹⁴ which is revealed to us in Cadmus and Teiresias’ scene together through their dialogue and costume. They are both dressed as Bacchants to show their worship, “I have come in readiness, wearing the livery of the god.”¹¹⁵ It is through Cadmus and Teiresias’ costumes that we see the willingness of Thebes to adopt Dionysus as a god, shown physically in their adornment of the Bacchic wardrobe of fawnskin and ivy garlands.¹¹⁶ This is then juxtaposed by Pentheus’ anti-religious behaviours, and his likely wearing of a much more formal piece of attire. Pentheus stands on stage amongst the two elder Dionysian worshippers and the Maenad chorus, the audience sees him as the only nonbeliever through his costume that allows him to stand out as the one religious digresser, the only character not ordained with the clothes of Dionysus. This is significant to the meaning of the play, as it is Pentheus’

¹¹⁰ Chaston 2009: 220

¹¹¹ Chaston 2009: 214

¹¹² Chaston 2009: 192

¹¹³ Schechner 1961: 124

¹¹⁴ Schechner 1961: 125-125

¹¹⁵ Eur. Bac. 180-182

¹¹⁶ Eur. Bac. 175-177

ignorance and disdain to follow like the other Thebans that leads to his downfall.¹¹⁷

Through costume we can see the alienation Pentheus creates for himself visually, strengthening his character choice, and the religious themes of the play.

While there is little on the specifics of the costume of the chorus in Greek Theatre, what we do know is that they would have worn similar outfits that allow freedom of movement, and would identify them as a group. In the context of the *Bacchae*, the chorus are made up of followers of Dionysus from Asia, known as the Maenads.¹¹⁸ The chorus would have most likely have appeared with female masks to establish them as women.¹¹⁹ What we can assume from how the chorus would look visually is that they would all appear as women wearing something recognisable as ‘Bacchaic dress’ likely in the form of robes and carrying the phallic *thyrsos* used in cult worship of Dionysus.¹²⁰ Although limited, this small amount of knowledge still has a vast effect on the play and communicating meaning to the audience. The costumes of the chorus would firstly help the audience recognise their role within the story, as being followers of Dionysus, secondly it would bring an emphasis on the themes of cult worship and the ideas of ‘mob mentality’ that Euripides was so opposed to.¹²¹ One of the believed meanings of the *Bacchae* was that it was Euripides’ criticism of Athens’ relationship with cult worship that caused Athenians to perform wicked actions at the bequest of their Gods, causing them to lose sight of their morals.¹²² The chorus draw focus on this aspect of the *Bacchae* as their similar costumes and masks would make them indistinguishable from one another, creating one disillusioned mind to symbolise the

¹¹⁷ Schecner 1961:127-129

¹¹⁸ Chaston 2009: 198-199

¹¹⁹ Ingram 1969: 31-32

¹²⁰ Ingram 1969: 31-32

¹²¹ Ingram 1969: 10-11

¹²² Ingram 1969: 11-12

one-mindedness created by the dynamic of cult worship, especially in the context of Dionysus.

The moment of tragedy in the *Bacchae* is found in the emergence of the character Agave. Convinced that she has slain a lion with her bare hands, the tragedy comes when she finally sees her prize for what it is; the head of her son, Pentheus.¹²³ To create the effect of the severed head of Pentheus, they would have simply used the mask of the actor now firmly attached to a *Thyros* or 'Bacchic wand' carried by the Maenads.¹²⁴ This use of the mask in this case is incredibly helpful to the audience who would instantly recognise the mask as the face of Pentheus, it would not be a model that could look 'fake' or unrecognisable, as it is the actual head being worn by the actor of Pentheus. Though reading this scene in *The Bacchae* is moving, as reading as Agave boasts of the prize of her hunt, unaware of the truth of what she has done,¹²⁵ it is certain that seeing the juxtaposition of Agave speaking about the lion head, while seeing her hold the head of her son would create a more guttural reaction from the audience. To experience the horror as Agave asks Cadmus to nail the head of his grandson on the castle wall. The visuals of the mask here is essential in truly conveying the tragedy of what has been done, as much like how Dionysus' mortal masks allows the audience to be disillusioned by the god, here the mask reveals the truth to them.

¹²³ Eur. Bac. 1202-1284

¹²⁴ Chaston 2009:183

¹²⁵ Eur. Bac. 1233-1243

Translating Theatre

With theatre being a visual medium, the way that production affects meaning is best seen through the choices that modern productions make when adapting these shows. Modern performances have to make the decision of what aspects of Greek theatre they wish to keep, or how they feel will be the best way to translate the meaning of the text through production techniques. Within this dissertation the aspects of Greek production have been dissected to discover the role they played in supporting the meanings and themes of the play, in their affect on gender, the role of the cult and Dionysus' characterisation and influence within the plot. While we can begin to analyse how the contemporary production techniques worked in influencing meaning with their corresponding audience, this does not necessarily mean that utilising this knowledge in the context of modern theatre is worth it. The context and audience for the productions have changed, making it necessary for the language of theatre to change with it. Just as one would have to translate the language of the text from Greek to English for a British audience, the production methods arguably must also be translated for the modern theatre audience, or else the meaning may be lost. Two productions of the *Bacchae* shall now be analysed by its production methods, on its choices to stay true to the traditional Greek style, or to embrace a more modern style to translate the meaning in a format better understood by their audience, and which method is deemed more 'authentic'.

Peter Hall: The Traditionalist

Hall adapted numerous Greek tragedies throughout his career, including *The Bacchae*, maintaining the mask elements of these productions each time. Much like Aristotle, it was Hall's belief that the use of masks were an intrinsic part of the Greek tragedy not for reasons of historical accuracy, but because the masks prevented the content on stage

from becoming too ‘heavy’ or manic.¹²⁶ The Greek tragedies are full of heightened human emotions, but the masks created a physical feeling of control for the actor that, according to Hall, increased the emotional response from the audience much stronger than if the actor was mask-less, “The screaming, naked, human face would repel. The face of the mask with the scream behind it – does not.”¹²⁷ It is with this theory that Hall utilises the mask within his 2002 production of *The Bacchae*. The masks that Hall used were traditional in style being made of light material, simple and pale and most importantly were designed with a neutral expression to allow actors to adopt the mask as a part of their psyche,¹²⁸ helping them to understand multiple characters with ease despite the use of doubling up characters, just as how it is believed the Greeks had done in the past. Costumes were consistent with the style of mask, in that they were simple and easy to move in, though perhaps not as bulky as the traditional *peplos*, Hall himself decided against the Greek style of clothing to prevent the production from feeling ‘antiquey’¹²⁹ but still helped to create meaning within the characters, especially for the chorus. However, the masks can be said to be at the forefront of this production.

One of the choices to be made in the *Bacchae* when concerning masks is the choice of what masks to use for Dionysus due to the multiple choices and their effect on the meaning created in the production.¹³⁰ In the case of Hall’s production, two masks were utilised, firstly as The Stranger, a neutral effeminate mask [Image 1] was used, to then be replaced in the final scene with a large Bulls head [Image 2].¹³¹ The purpose of the neutral mask in the context of Greek theatre was to allow the audience to judge them for their actions, and not who they are, while also working as the universal ‘human face’ of

¹²⁶ Hall 2000: Loc 95

¹²⁷ Hall 2000: Loc 177-185

¹²⁸ Croall 2002: 13

¹²⁹ Croall 2002: 5

¹³⁰ See section ‘Dionysus the Mortal’

¹³¹ Croall 2002: 29-30

the tragic genre so as to allow the audience to identify with the characters easier.¹³²

Hall's theory was different, believing that masks instead worked as a tool to shield the audience from the darker tones of tragedy, thus emitting a stronger emotional response from the audience.¹³³ Greg Hicks who performed the character of Dionysus had previously worked with masks in Greek tragedy before, and found them to be the only way to perform Greek Tragedy, "I can't imagine doing a Greek play without one... It helps me go beyond my limitations as an actor."¹³⁴ Here then it can be seen that those who act with the mask believe it embellishes their performances instead of restricting the. However, this is a different attitude towards the mask than we believe the Greeks to have had. The mask for them worked as an identifier, not as Hicks and Hall describe as emphasisers. While the emotional yield of the audience can only be judged subjectively, the idea of the mask as the identifier of the human face is a part of theatre language lost to us today. Many believe masks to be alienating and results in a reduce ability to empathise with the characters being depicted as it creates a barrier of separation¹³⁵ this would mean that the mask may not be a suitable tool to build empathy between character and audience, without this, *The Bacchae* loses the ability to have the audience emphasise with Pentheus or feel misled by Dionysus. The interpretation of masks in theatre is dependent to personal taste, some may feel like Hall in that the emotions are heightened by the masks, while others more attuned to the naturalistic style of the face would feel separate from the plot, either way, the language of Greek theatre has not been translated effectively in this use of mask, due to its now ambiguous role in the landscape of theatre, unlike its position in the Greek tradition.

¹³² Wiles 2000: 148-149

¹³³ Croall 2002: 8-9

¹³⁴ Croall 2002: 14

¹³⁵ Wiles 2000: 149

The masks in this production do however create a form of symbolism through its use of masks in the doubling of roles and the death of Pentheus.¹³⁶ William Houston who played both Pentheus and Agave in this production, create an emotive link between mother and son, killer and victim. The mask allowed Houston [Image 3] to recognise the sharing of masks as a way to allow Pentheus and Agave to follow the same journey.¹³⁷ Pentheus leaves the stage and returns, holding his own severed head, reborn as his mother, Agave. The symmetry of this scene was dubbed as being quite striking to the audience, with Spencer dubbing it ‘the productions best arguments for masks.’¹³⁸ and is not something that can be replicated without the use of masks. Therefore, the use of masks is highly effective when involving character death, it limits the complications of not being able to recognise the head and its role in the show, which the audience can see most effectively through Hall’s choice of mask. Additionally, the act of using masks allows one actor to play both characters effectively, expressing the duality of Pentheus and Agave as the two victims of Dionysus, both succumbing to his powers and losing themselves in the process.

The chorus used in Hall’s production of *Bacchae* was composed of fifteen men and women in different states of revealing dress, the costumes were influenced by the traditional fashions of middle eastern Asia, comprising of a sari like piece of fabric that wrapped around the actors’ bodies. [Image 1] All actors are displaying large amounts of skin, chests uncovered for some, which creates an animalistic and untameable chorus of Maenads, or as Billington notes ‘a unified androgynous force’.¹³⁹ Each chorus member has been given their own masks, with long unkempt hair and feminine shaped masks.

¹³⁶ Croall 2000: 6

¹³⁷ Croall 2000; 20

¹³⁸ Spencer 2002

¹³⁹ Billington 2002

Hall's direction for the chorus is to have them act as one unit, assigning one person speak each line, while all actors move as if they had said it themselves.¹⁴⁰ Combined with the uniformed unruliness of the choice of costume and mask, this creates a sense of oneness among the chorus which draws focus to their one-minded following of religion, replicating the original use of masks and the underlying theme expressed by Euripides for the criticism of cult following.¹⁴¹

The reviews for Hall's production of *Bacchae* commend him on his creating a balance between the elements on his stage, "Movement, music, lighting, design all work together in perfect harmony."¹⁴² It is even stated that the production was 'the work of a master.'¹⁴³ However it is also repeatedly mentioned that the masks were not the ideal choice, with critics disagreeing with Hall's theory that the mask allows a deeper emotional response, instead claiming the opposite was true and that the masks took away the quality of humanity from the performance.¹⁴⁴ While the tradition and symbolism created by the mask is appreciated, altogether the mask is deemed as a limitation to Hall's production with Spencer's final comment being "It's an impressive production. Without masks, it could have been a great one."¹⁴⁵ From these reviews we can come to an understanding that in the case of authenticity in adaption, the mask is a clear choice as a way to replicate the traditions of Greek performance, however it does very little to convey the greater meanings of the play to the audience, who's understanding of the theatrical language is limited if known at all. In this case, Hall's adaption does not authentically recreate the feeling of the *Bacchae* through masks.

¹⁴⁰ Croall 2002: 15

¹⁴¹ Sponberg 2003: 145

¹⁴² Billington 2002

¹⁴³ Spencer 2002

¹⁴⁴ Billington, 2002

¹⁴⁵ Spencer 2002

John Tiffany: The Translator

With masks not being an established part of the current theatrical language, it is perhaps more efficient to remove the masks from the performance, and instead use the face, combined with costume to convey messages of character to the spectator. This is the point of stance taken by John Tiffany in his 2008 production of the *Bacchae* performed by The National theatre of Scotland. In this production nothing remains from the traditional production style, but instead the essence of the play is translated through new methods of production better known to its modern audience.¹⁴⁶ Tiffany's *Bacchae* appears to focus more on the themes of sexuality and gender within this production, with the costumes worn by each member of cast signifying this choice of theme.

Tiffany's *Bacchae* chose a more outlandish style, bringing emphasis to Dionysus' magnetic personality, and queer style,¹⁴⁷ Cummings' portrayal of Dionysus appears similar to that of a modern rock icon, with the Bacchae as his devoted fans.¹⁴⁸

Appearing on stage in a golden Kilt and vest, Dionysus' ambiguity of gender is clearly represented in a way the audience can understand, the kilt being seen as both a masculine piece of attire in the Scottish landscape, while also looking to some as feminine due to its similarity of a the feminine skirt. [Image 4 and 6] The gold material connotes glamour, while the lack of coverage alludes to Dionysus' promiscuity and sexual deviance.¹⁴⁹ It can also be argued that the makeup worn by Dionysus can be utilised in a similar way to the Grecian mask, and Cummings does so through a full face of white makeup, framed by his shoulder length curls, a possible reference to the traditional Dionysus described within the text. The use of full face makeup acts as a

¹⁴⁶ Meineck 2007: 163-264

¹⁴⁷ Isherwood 2008

¹⁴⁸ Billington 2007

¹⁴⁹ Meineck 2007: 165-166

sign of Dionysus' performative side and femininity.¹⁵⁰ In this way, Dionysus' costume is instantly recognised as one of outlandish spectacle which both act to establish his role of 'Icon' reinterpreted in Tiffany's adaption to resemble Dionysus to the more media famed icon than that of the religious kind,¹⁵¹ another way of visually adapting the story to better suit the ideals of the audience who would be more accustomed to the craze fan culture as opposed to Dionysiac worship. The roles of gender and power are especially shown in the contrast of Pentheus' appearance to Dionysus. Cal MacAninch as Pentheus wears a dark suit, a classic and distinctive symbol of power and masculinity. It conveys to the audience Pentheus' in control and straight edged personality, "an officious chief executive unable to countenance even an ounce of insubordination".¹⁵² He counters Dionysus' unruliest ways, with the stark contrast of gold and black giving a visual and stunning image of the two contrasting characters [Image 4]

Pentheus' own personality is juxtaposed again however, after he transforms in to drag, a fine emerald coloured gown [Image 5].¹⁵³ While Cummings' Dionysus straddles the lines between the gender binary, Pentheus is shown as overtly feminine in this moment. However the result does not work in replicating the intense moment of sacrificial allusions found in the original text. Instead this use of costume appears camp and humorous, out of place amongst the tragic storyline it is meant to be a part of.¹⁵⁴ This appears to be the case throughout the play, with the costumes creating a comedic and sexual atmosphere, the show seems to pass by the deeper meaning of the text of the themes of danger and power.¹⁵⁵ Meineck describes Cummings' Dionysus as "truly

¹⁵⁰ Isherwood 2008

¹⁵¹ Billington 2007

¹⁵² Isherwood 2008

¹⁵³ Billington 2007

¹⁵⁴ Meineck 2007: 166

¹⁵⁵ Billington 2007

winning...but never a deadly and destructive god.”¹⁵⁶ It is perhaps here that we can see that the costumes chosen for this production have worked in translating the themes pertaining to gender, but with very little nuance that may have been brought with the masks.

¹⁵⁶ Meineck 2007: 167

Conclusion

While the evidence of production is limited, it still has its place in Greek theatre, just as production is important to theatre today and in any age. Just because there is a lack of evidence does not mean we should be forced only to study the remaining play texts only as works of literature, as it only works in simplifying these works of theatre.¹⁵⁷ As Hall states, “Great drama is much less than itself if it is divorced from its stage.”¹⁵⁸ We must then reunite the drama to its stage, the script to its production working from what we know of Greek theatre and culture to piece together a vague image of the actors as they would appear on stage, through their masks and costume we can better understand how these production elements reflected and brought emphasis to the meanings and themes within the text, allowing us to truly understand these pieces of drama.

The *Bacchae* especially contains strong themes of gender and power that still remain relevant to this day, one of the reasons the play is regularly adapted for the stage.¹⁵⁹ These themes resonate through the elements of Greek production, in the humanity of the mask and the relationship the audience maintained with the masked figures. The costumes revealed both characters relationship to gender, and their relationship with power and the cult of Dionysus. By knowing these techniques, we can use them to create adaptations of the play to replicate how they may have looked within their context to better our understanding. However, though these techniques can now begin to be understood by scholars, it cannot begin to replicate the relationship the Greeks had with their theatre. Meaning that purely replicating the original production format of the *Bacchae* does little in communicating their meaning to the spectator. Greek theatre cannot be adapted to be both authentic in method and meaning.

¹⁵⁷ Hall 2000: Loc 57

¹⁵⁸ Hall 2000: Loc 76

¹⁵⁹ Meineck 2009: 81-82

The meaning that is found in the text of the *Bacchae* is emphasised in production but can only be understood to the audience that understands that theatrical language.

Therefore it makes sense to believe that this language can be translated through more modern and understood aspects of modern production so as to transpose that meaning.

By removing the play from its traditional context and placing it in a context the audience is familiar with, we can attempt to do justice in experiencing these plays as the visual medium they were designed to be in a way that is understandable, just as Greek texts are translated to English, production can be translated also.

Even then, our lack of evidence and understanding of original production techniques means we are doomed to fail to ever recreate these plays in the way they were intended to be, just as we see in the productions of Hall and Tiffany, and so we fail to ever truly understand how these pieces of drama were intended to be viewed. But this is only a reflection of the nature of theatre, it being a product of its historical and social context¹⁶⁰

Wiles expresses this best, “Theatre poses acute problems for the historians at the best of times, because it is always finished and lost before anyone can put in to words what it was.”¹⁶¹ All meaning then can only be speculated and reinterpreted in ways that are subjective to the individual, making theatre a product not just of history, but of people.

The aspects of production used, both in Greek theatre and modern western theatre, work in assisting our views of these plays, allowing the reader or spectator to interpret the play in a new way and help us recognise the complexities of theatre as a living experience, preventing them from being studied in a reductive way.

¹⁶⁰ Wiles 1994: 68-69

¹⁶¹ Wiles 2000: 2

Images



Image 1 (above):
The Chorus and
Dionysus, 2002

Image 2 (left):
Dionysus in the
Bulls mask, 2002

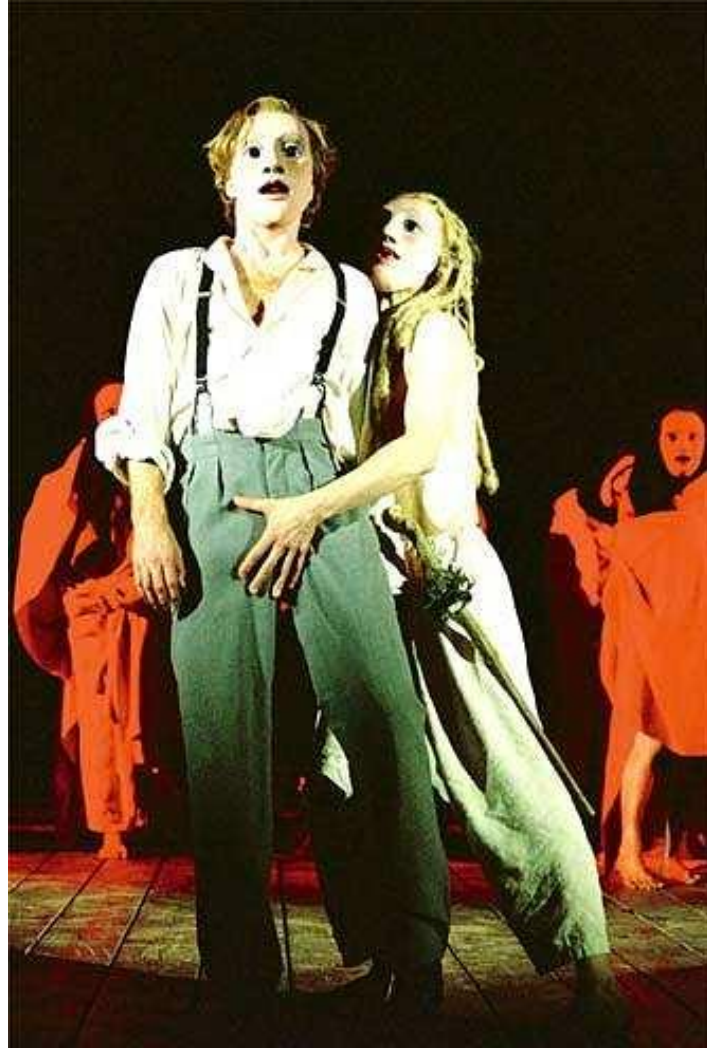


Image 3 (above): Dionysus and
Pentheus, 2002



Image 4 (left); Dionysus and Pentheus, 2008

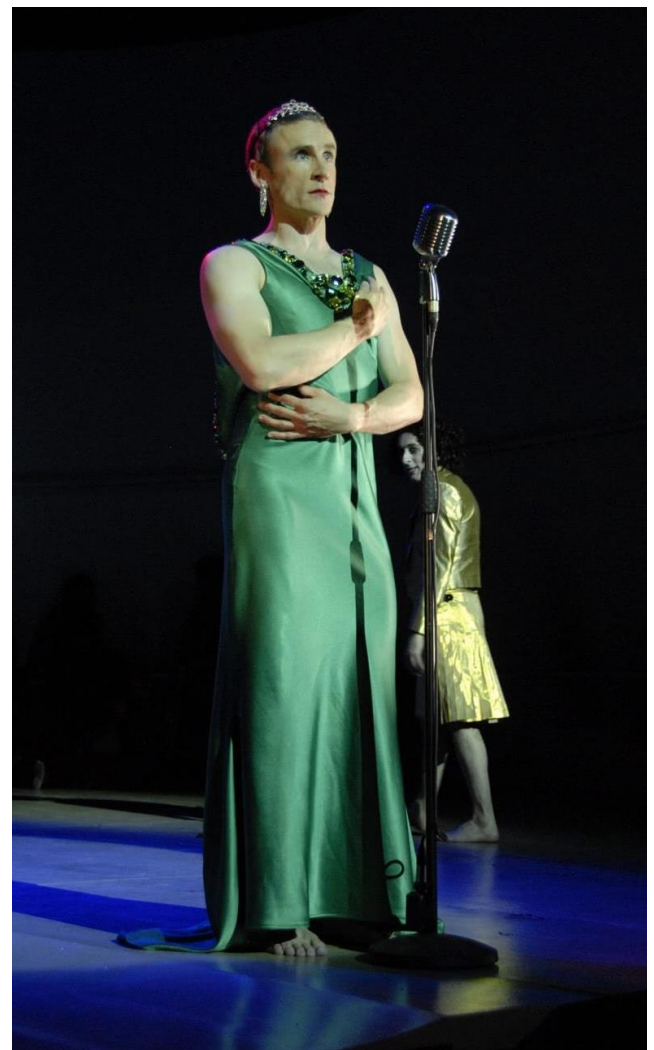


Image 5 (right): Pentheus, 2008

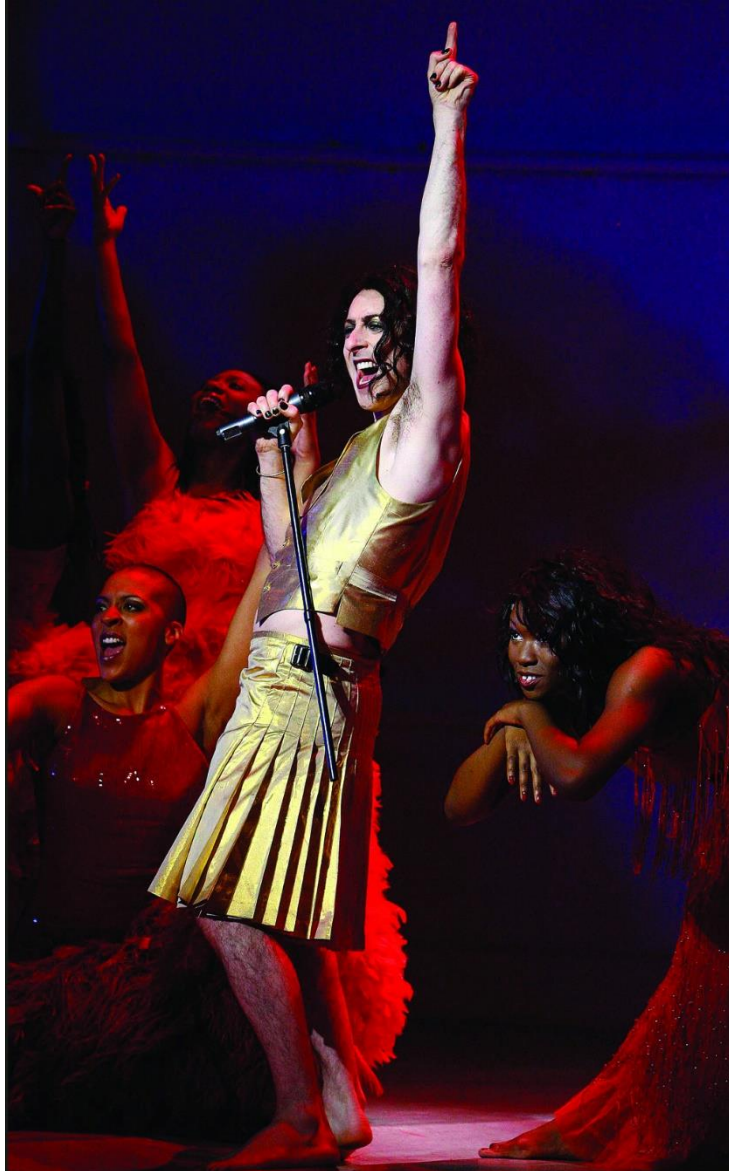


Image 6 (above): Dionysus and
the chorus, 2008

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Image 1 – NOTES ON THE BACCHAE. 'Greg Hicks and The Chorus'. May 2002.

<http://www.angelfire.com/zine2/DionysianUnderground/bacchae.htm> [09/05/1018]

Image 2 - NOTES ON THE BACCHAE. 'Greg Hicks' May 2002.

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Image 3 - NOTES ON THE BACCHAE. 'William Houston, Greg Hicks and Chorus.'

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Image 4 – Getty Images. 'Actors Cal MacAninch and Alan Cumming perform at the 2008 Lincoln Center Festival's National Theatre of Scotland's 'The Bacchae' photo call at Lincoln Center on July 2, 2008 in New York City.' July 2008.

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Image 5 – Shining Lighting. 'The Bacchae Portfolio'. January 2018. Shining.Lighting.

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Image 6 - National Theatre of Scotland. 'The Bacchae'. 2008. Tumblr. <http://national-theatre-scotland.tumblr.com/post/104406062045/the-baachae-2008> [09/05/1018]