Ovid's Pentheus: An In-Depth Guide for Students and Teachers to a King's Anger and Fiery Oration

Benjamin Joffe

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OVID’S PENTHEUS:
AN IN-DEPTH GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
TO A KING’S ANGER AND
FIERY ORATION

EDITED,
WITH VOCABULARY AND COMMENTARY,
QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS,

BY

BENJAMIN J. JOFFE

A master’s thesis submitted to the Faculty in Classics at the Graduate Center in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2014
This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Classics in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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THE GRADUATE CENTER
AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

OVID’S PENTHEUS: AN IN-DEPTH GUIDE
FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO A KING’S ANGER AND FIERY ORATION

by

Benjamin J. Joffe

Advisor: Prof. Philip Thibodeau

Born out of my years of using traditional commentaries for Latin and Greek texts, both for myself as a student learning the language anew and then as a teacher sharing my experience with others – and still learning the language years later – this in-depth guide to Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus I have conceived as a reimagining of the genre, at once a vehicle designed to allow students to navigate their own ways through the literature and also a tool for building their analytical skills to apply liberally, earnestly, and enthusiastically to other Latin and Greek texts, and really to any piece of writing, art, or other form of expression.

Here in Vol. 1, my own exploration of the text brought me to notice a striking parallel between Pentheus’ speech to the Thebans that dominates the first seventy-odd lines of Ovid’s telling of the myth and the guidelines to oration in general put forth by the Rhetorica ad Herrenium, a text that predates the Metamorphoses by enough time for Ovid to have read it and to have been influenced by its handy approach. I share the details of that observation later in the book, so as to allow other readers to engage with the text on their own first.

Additionally, years of reading, rereading, writing about and discussing with others Ovid’s beleaguered main character have allowed me to form a relationship with the mythical Pentheus, and so in this volume and in the two to come, I invite my readers to empathize with him, to understand his anger, and to allow him the space to be upset at the arrival of Bacchus at Thebes. In this way, when we can join him in his experience, his lamentable fate truly can become a tragedy.
**NOTA BENE:**

The conceit of this master’s thesis is that of a classroom textbook rather than the traditional research paper, and as such, you may notice the following…

1. **THE TITLE** that appears above (as well as on the abstract page just before this) differs from the title that appears on the “cover” of the textbook, i.e. the one coming momentarily that contains a dramatic, full-color image of a painting of King Pentheus.

   The **reason for this** difference is that the two titles serve two different purposes: a master’s thesis is designed to be a single entity, without sequel, whereas in actuality the work is the first volume in a planned three-volume treatment of Ovid’s retelling of the myth.

2. **BECAUSE IT IS A TEXTBOOK**, it has its own logic and structure, and thus the sequencing, line spacing, and pagination – and to a degree, the citations – necessarily differ from the generally prescribed format (and has been approved as such by the department).

   In fact, the pagination begins with the aforementioned “cover” of the textbook coming momentarily, which means that the pages thus far are unnumbered.

   Moreover, because this thesis has been designed like a textbook and not in the traditional master’s thesis format, it contains pages later on that have been intentionally left unnumbered* and blank in order to allow readers a mental break between sections and avoid the fatigue of constant visual and verbal data.

   Finally, this document was quite intentionally written to be double-sided**, and has therefore been printed in this way – again, so as to provide the reader with the experience of a textbook, but specifically one that offers the pedagogical advantage of seeing the left and right pages side by side. (In fact, in certain sections, it is not only advantageous but essential for the reader’s experience.)

For further guidance as to this different structure, see the table of contents.

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* To be sure, these blank pages coming up do have page numbers, but like many published books, the page numbers are implied rather than printed.

   For example, in the upcoming front material (which includes the “cover,” table of contents and dedication, among other items), none of the Roman numeral page numbers appear, just as they would not in a comparable published textbook or novel.

** And as such, the page numbers alternate position between the left and right sides: the left-side pages have page numbers on the bottom left, and the right-side pages have page numbers on the bottom right.
SPERNIT ECHIONIDES
The Story of Pentheus as Found in Ovid's Metamorphoses
Vol. 1
Benjamin J. Joffe
OVID’S *METAMORPHOSES*

PENTHEUS
“Non habet infelix, quae matri bracchia tendat, 
trunca, sed ostendens dejectis vulnera membris, 
‘Adspice, mater,’ ait.”

As you look at the ancient Greek vase above, which actually displays the climactic scene in this tragic story, what sort of emotion do you see in the figures? Do you imagine this emotion you see above will fit the emotion conveyed in Ovid’s version?

**Pentheus Torn Apart by Agave and Ino, Maenads.** Attic red-figure lekanis, 8.6 x 25.4 cm, terracotta, artist unknown, ca. 450-425 BCE. 
Louvre Museum, Paris, France.
SPERNIT ECHIONIDES
The Story of Pentheus
as Found in
Ovid’s
Metamorphoses

An In-Depth Guide for Students and Teachers

Vol. 1: Classical Oration
and an Alternative Approach to a King’s Anger

Edited,
with vocabulary and commentary, questions and thoughts,
by BENJAMIN J. JOFFE
Study for Pentheus 3, oil on linen. (See also pg. xxxiii; and see the back cover, too, which contains a photograph of a Limited Edition print of the painting.)

By comparison, consider the more sedate illustration above, Maenads with the Head of Pentheus, Who Refused to Worship Dionysus, by Richard Majka, based on a bas-relief found in a first century CE basilica¹ in Rome that was only discovered in 1915. © 2009 Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC.

As you read through Ovid’s text, ask yourself, in what ways do both of these images represent the emotional core of this story?

All rights reserved. Reproduction by any means of any portion of either the cover image or this image above is prohibited without prior permission of the artist or original publisher, respectively. Or the rest of this book, too, for that matter, without permission of the editor, Mr. Joffe.

¹ For more on this archeological find, see “Underground Basilica of Porta Maggiore: Conservation” at the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica Web site, www.cca-roma.org.
**THE STORY OF PENTHEUS, VOL. 1**

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To Sarah,
who teaches me.
And
for Robin,
who did.
Preface
for Students & Teachers

About a decade ago, I became fascinated with a literary guide that I thought would at once speed up my snail-paced reading and also launch me into the rarified sphere of people who could get through a suggested book list a mile long and yet have the ability to speak cogently and with intimate familiarity with the contents of every volume contained therein. Entitled How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading, I purchased it thinking I had just been given the master key to handling graduate school, not to mention those Top 100 Books of All Time lists that were surfacing on the Internet in those days, long before the likes of BuzzFeed were tantalizing us all with “35 Dogs That Will Make Your Day Instantly Better,” and “25 Cereals from the 80’s You Will Never Eat Again.”

I was no longer at college, but I had recently left my first job as a researcher-turned-archivist in Washington, DC, in the hopes of learning ancient Greek and furthering my Latin beyond the elementary level in order to gain admission into a master’s or doctoral program in classics, thereby becoming an educator who could quote Homer, Vergil, Shakespeare, Voltaire, J.D. Salinger, and David Sedaris with the same ease with which I could quote John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Plagued by a mulish insistence on pouring over every word of a text in front of me, I had high hopes (to say the absolute least) that How to Read a Book would convert that mulishness into a dogged determination to cover ground, and lots of it. I was stalling in my progress to become a better reader, and I happen to like dogs far better than mules, anyway.

To my delight, and eventually to my great benefit, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, the authors of How to Read a Book, offered a whole host of reading tools, speed reading (or as they refer to it, “inspectional reading”) only a small part of them, and a lower-level one at that. Instead, Adler and Van Doren tiered the reading experience, with an overarching bent toward

---

1 So you know, the dogs did make my day better, but the nostalgia for Smurf-Berry Crunch and C-3PO’s brought me right back down.
depth rather than breadth. It was years before I really bought their argument – not until after I passed my culminating Latin literature exam in graduate school on the strength of knowing my basics of vocabulary and forms rather than possessing an encyclopedic intimacy with all of Roman prose and poetry – and it proved to be far more valuable to someone like me.

You see, prior to passing that exam, I had felt like a failure for not being able to soldier through large swaths of suggested reading, be it for pleasure from a list online, or far more oppressive, for the requirement of completing a bibliography that was, by definition, the minimum someone could do in order to become a scholar. Despite my hearing a thousand times from unconvincing classmates that it could be done – that they had, in fact, done it (usually in their spare time between teaching Intro Courses to undergraduates and attending the maximum number of classes themselves per semester) – I felt wholly inadequate in my surroundings until I realized that how I was reading proved more valuable than how much.

And that is about when I revisited How to Read a Book. Having just completed writing the Further Inquiry section of this commentary on Ovid’s Pentheus over the summer around the same time I took the exam, I thought Adler and Van Doren could provide insight to readers of my own book on how to make the most of this differently structured treatment of a Latin text. And once again, to my delight, they did not disappoint.

Consider the following passage\(^1\) from their section called “How to Use Commentaries and Abstracts” (pg. 174), written in 1972 as an update to the original 1940 edition, a pre-Internet period of time when a single commentary might be a student’s only textual aid without the wherewithal of a robust university library, a resource most likely only ventured come term paper time, hardly in an afternoon – or more likely, a late, late evening – before reading the homework section in class...

\( \text{A third category of extrinsic aids to reading includes commentaries and abstracts. The thing to emphasize here is that such works should be used wisely, which is to say sparingly. There are two reasons for this.} \)

\( \text{The first is that commentators are not always right in their comments on a book. Sometimes, of course, their works are enormously useful, but this is true less often} \)

\(^1\) The underlining here is my own.
than one could wish. The handbooks and manuals that are widely available in college
bookstores and in stores frequented by high school students are often particularly
misleading. These works purport to tell the student everything he has to know about
a book that has been assigned by one of his teachers, but they are sometimes woefully
wrong in their interpretations, and besides, as a practical matter, they irritate some
teachers and professors.

Indeed! Hear, hear! And huzzah! The tyranny of the top-down commentaries has lorded over
literary interpretations for decades, centuries, quashing the possibly plausible thoughts of
students (and teachers, by the way, too) with a dismissive “here” next to its translation of a
word it deems the only reasonable rendering,1 or couching its explanations of a phrase in a note
entirely in the indicative mood, devoid of qualifiers like “may” or “might,” as it hands down
instructions for understanding a line of text as if they were directives from the author or poet
himself. (For that matter, who is to say that only the author or poet knows what he means?)

They continue…

The second reason for using commentaries sparingly is that, even if they are
right, they may not be exhaustive. That is, you may be able to discover important
meanings in a book that the author of a commentary about it has not discovered.

Reading a commentary, particularly one that seems very self-assured, thus tends to
limit your understanding of a book, even if your understanding, as far as it goes, is
correct.

It is on this last point where my own commentary begins to take shape. As you will see later
on, particularly during that Further Inquiry section in Part Two, I have consciously chosen to
write in the first person, and sometimes in the second as I speak directly to you, precisely
because I don’t purport to have all the answers about Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus.
In fact, alongside my conversational style – formal, to be sure, but I am talking with you on
these pages – I often ask questions more than I answer them. My goal is to prompt you to think

1 Admittedly, in my earliest draft of this commentary, I followed this approach. For example, in the very first
paragraph, at line 515, I glossed “tenebrasque” as “tenebrae, -ärum fpl. darkness; (here) blindness,” whereas now,
not only have I excised the situational dictate, I have expanded the possibilities to include “lack of knowledge or
understanding.” More on that in the general Introduction, as well as the Latin text in Part One and the glossaries
in the back.
about the text as I grapple with it, too. My only real advantage is that I have already read this myth in the Latin, but a fresh perspective that builds off of an earlier one can sometimes be an even better set of cards to play with.

I wrote in the first person, then, because I want to make clear that what you are reading here is only the perspective of one person. And it isn’t the first person plural, either – that presumptuous royal “we” that pervades scholarship and tells readers that this is how “we” think about the text. It could not be more solitary because I do not claim to speak for you, for your teacher, or for the field of classics generally, much less for Ovid himself.

So go ahead and read the Latin, and if you need help with vocabulary, forms, and the occasional mythological background, I am here for you. Moreover, after you have read through the text, turn the pages toward the Essential Questions, which are designed to get you thinking about the Latin beyond – and in conjunction with – the technical, the superficial components of the language. And then, only after you have thought about those question sets, venturing answers or developing more questions of your own, if you are so inclined, take a look at what I have to say, too.

By the way, I am still working on those reading lists. Both of them.

Spring/Summer 2014
Benjamin Joffe
The Hewitt School
Yeshiva University
Introduction, or How to Start Reading Ovid’s Pentheus

If you’ll allow me, I’d like to challenge your notion of what a literary introduction should include.

When you bought your iPhone®, did you read the instructions¹ first? No? Then how did you know what to do with it? If you weren’t aware in advance that Apple, the company that makes the world’s most famous smartphone, was started in the 1970s, how did you feel comfortable using the product? Perhaps you are too young to know that the iPhone is actually a technological outgrowth of its earlier iPod®, and that that device revolutionized the way people listened to music? For that matter, did you know that the telephone, the predecessor to the cell phone aspect of the iPhone, has its own history going back to the nineteenth century, and arguably centuries earlier than that?

You may know those things now, and you may even have done your own research into those incredible back stories before or after you bought the device, or it may all be common knowledge to you, the source of which escapes you completely. The point is, it’s immaterial to your interacting, your relationship with Steve Jobs’ ubiquitous gift to the world.

And yet, time and time again editors have felt it necessary to repackaging a version of Ovid’s life story and the events in Roman political and literary history that surrounded him. When I first started teaching Ovid, I too felt the need to devote a class period to this back story; in fact, sometimes it took two or three class periods for us to even begin reading any of his Latin. Was it time well spent? I don’t know, but I do suspect that it wasn’t crucial to my students’ understanding of his poetry.

¹ As of this writing, the latest manual, available at Apple’s Web site, entitled “iPhone User Guide: For iOS 7.1 Software” is 161 pages long. And for the purposes of intellectual and scholarly honesty, I admit to you that I have not read it myself. I am, however, well, fairly comfortable using my phone.
So let’s instead focus our time here on what would be helpful for you to know before you immerse yourself in this in-depth guide of a very small piece of perhaps the most famous work in his literary canon – a sort of quick-start guide, if you will...

**His name** is commonly pronounced “Ah-vid” (like Abed Nadir, the brainy and encyclopedic super fan of all things television in NBC’s cult favorite, *Community*). Still, I remember the pit in my stomach when a friend who attended the University of Chicago once asked me if I was reading “Oh-vid” in my Latin classes. He was so well read, and he told me he had read him when he was in high school.

As it turns out, people pronounce it both ways, but I didn’t know that back then, and I would have had a pit-less stomach at that moment had someone told me that before I started talking about what I was learning.

**The Wikipedia**¹ page on Ovid is fantastic, but as you might suspect would be my opinion, not essential reading in advance of working your way through the *Metamorphoses*. Still, I do think it’s an incredibly worthwhile endeavor for you to write about the opening paragraph of this entry, so let’s stop and do that now.

Here is that paragraph, but before it, here are also two freewriting questions for you to think about. Take a minute to read them carefully, then read the passage thoughtfully (taking notes, if you’d like), and then in, say, 5-7 minutes, write down your answers in whatever format you think is most effective...

---

¹ As is the nature of Wikipedia, the page may have been altered by someone by the time you read this, and given that volatility (among other important pitfalls in using the site we all use all the time anyway), it is worth discussing the carelessness of my choice to reference it in the first place. If you are reading through this introduction with someone, go ahead and discuss it.
Okay, here¹ is the paragraph…

“Publius Ovidius Naso (20 March 43 BC – AD 17/18), known as Ovid (/ˈɒvɪd/)¹ in the English-speaking world, was a Roman poet best known for the Metamorphoses, a 15-book continuous mythological narrative written in the meter of epic, and for collections of love poetry in elegiac couplets, especially the Amores ("Love Affairs") and Ars Amatoria ("Art of Love"). His poetry was much imitated during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and greatly influenced Western art and literature. The Metamorphoses remains one of the most important sources of classical mythology.²”

Are you done with your 5-7 minutes? Was it hard to keep to that time allotment? For that matter, did you disregard it and write for longer? Maybe you were done in 3-4. However you went through the assignment, I hope you were able share your answers with others, and if you were in a classroom setting, that you were able to hear the answers of others, as well.

If not, find someone – anyone, really – to discuss this with. You may be reading Ovid entirely on your own, but it’s still valuable for you to have this conversation with someone else, even if that person is not a student of Latin.

Lastly, THE STORY OF PENTHEUS itself is only a small part of the much longer Metamorphoses, which, of course, means “changes,” the basic conceit of the epically large poem. Now, the promised metamorphosis does not happen until Vol. 2, but what we do get to see is a considerable level of anger on the part of our main character, the troubled young king of Thebes. It is my contention – as

¹ Wikipedia’s own footnotes from the above entry are also worth noticing and discussing. Here is a brief summary of them both...

¹ Tells you that the pronunciation comes from Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary (no edition number provided), and if you mouse over the “v” in /ˈɒvɪd/, it will tell you that it is pronounced like the “o” in “body,” i.e. like “Ah-vid.”

² Gives you the citation for how they know that Ovid is such an important source for us for classical mythology, which is Morford and Lenardon’s Classical Mythology, Oxford University Press, 1999. While we’re discussing it, do you think was necessary for the Wikipedia entry to reference that, or was that common knowledge?
you may already have gleaned from the name of this volume on the cover – that we can look at the anger expressed in his speech to the Thebans in a different way from the traditional, maybe even judgmental, distancing that scholars have tended to employ in their assessment of Pentheus over the years.

But that’s only my opinion, and more importantly, it’s not the point of this commentary. I have tucked all that away in Part Two, under the heading, “A Deeper Look, Iterum: Further Inquiry,” because I wrote this for you, to help you develop your own opinion about Pentheus. You may also feel the way I do about him, but give yourself time to explore that before you read that section – it will be that much richer an experience.

Like the freewriting exercise you just completed above, this book is your companion, your study partner, and like real live companions and study partners, you should hear it out, listen to it thoughtfully and with an open mind, but feel free to disagree with it whenever you need to.¹

Before I send you off into the book, let’s return once more to that topic of what an introduction should or should not include.

When I was twelve years old, while leafing through my mom’s old record collection (it was the late 1980s), I happened upon an album enticingly called Meet The Beatles and was thus drawn in to pop music’s most famous, most important, most, well, everything band. It had been released in early 1964 by Capitol Records, a repackaging of an already dizzyingly successful album called With the Beatles, and it was designed to familiarize American audiences with Britain’s by then beyond wildly popular group.

But it was a silly title, and everyone knew it. After all, as the liner notes facetiously explained on the back cover, quoting an American observer of their success across the Atlantic, “Only a hermit could be unaware of the Beatles, and he’d have to be beyond range of television, newspapers, radio, records, and rioting fans.” Naturally, if you were a teenager at that time (as

¹ For more on this dynamic between us, virtual study partners that we are, see the “Preface for Students and Teachers,” if you haven’t read it already.
my mom was when she bought the album), you didn’t read about The Beatles, you went directly to the primary source – that is, you listened to their music.

In fact, the executives at Capitol knew that, and that is why the back cover seems to have been written not for teenagers, but their out of touch parents, hopelessly beleaguered by the very same media all around them as that American observer, and yet somehow more in need of a primer than their children. As it says across the top, in big print...

Here’s the big beat sound of that fantastic, phenomenal foursome:
MEET THE BEATLES!”

Read about them? In The New York Times? Maybe my grandfather had, but back then I’m quite sure my mom’s subscription was still years away.

So if you want to be properly introduced to a writer of carmina known to the ages on a Beatles level of popularity, as recognizable in the Western world as the iPhone is today, skip these liner notes and go directly to the music.

My guess is that you may already have.¹

¹ Still hankering for a proper background on Ovid? His life story, the Metamorphoses, and his other literary works? Rome and the Empire at the time? I don’t blame you. To find a fuller treatment of these topics, see the list of other suggested readings in the Bibliography.
A Brief Discussion About Meter and Literary Terms in Ovid’s Pentheus

Admittedly, I give short shrift – and by that, I mean almost none\(^1\) at all – to the topic of meter in Ovid’s Latin. In fact, its cousin in the traditional bag of classroom approaches to Latin literature, the list of rhetorical devices and figures of speech that the poet employs in his text, I also use only sparingly.\(^2\) Please don’t let this deter you from drawing on your previous knowledge of either endeavor or seeking out an understanding of them elsewhere. In fact, I have included some of my favorite sources that discuss Latin meter and poetic terminology in the Bibliography, and if you’re interested, I highly encourage you to explore them.

Ultimately, it came down to the kitchen sink dilemma of self-editing: in my excitement over preparing this book, I have at one time or another wanted to include any and all tools for understanding Ovid, practically everything but the, well, kitchen sink. The thing is, as much as it’s tempting to make an in-depth guide a one-stop, all-inclusive, Swiss Army knife-patterned contrivance, some tools may actually distract you from the greater point of reading, particularly if you don’t use them as a means to an end.

In teaching Latin poetry, I have seen the study of meter become an exercise akin to counting the bricks on the side of a building, and the spotting of figures of speech a game of I Spy or Punch Buggy\(^3\) – neither does much for you as an end in itself, and if you’re not careful, they morph into an unintended obsession.

So if you do notice an intriguing aspect of Ovid’s dactylic hexameters, or a fantastic array of alliteration, admire it but then ask yourself or someone else why he did it that way. Don’t just

\(^1\) In fact, I make only one reference to Ovid’s use of meter in the entire book. See the side commentary on the word *spargere* in line 522.

\(^2\) There are a handful of observations and questions about *asyneton*, for example, scattered throughout.

\(^3\) For the rules of these two classic time passers, I recommend their respective Wikipedia entries, and if you’re embarking upon a long car ride without Web access or video of any kind, and you would like to know how people entertained themselves from origin to destination before the advent of either, try them out.
collect your findings in a glass-covered box for all to see, draw inferences from the patterns and see what you can learn about the poet and his poetry.

If you spy with your little eye enough blue Volkswagen Beetles on the road, or instances of homeoteleuton in Pentheus’ speech to the Thebans, your time spent obsessing may bear some serious analytical fruit.

But alas, I left those tools in a box at the old apartment next to the kitchen sink.

A Note on Underlining

You may already have noticed that I have filled my writing throughout this book with preemptive underlining as a way to highlight what I consider the important words in the sentences and paragraphs before you. I hope it doesn’t irk you. It’s a practice I have resurrected from my days as a student in college, when I poured over the details of my textbooks and other assigned readings.

But don’t think I’m doing the work for you. I do it so that you’ll have an additional layer to take in before and after you read more closely. So you’ll look ahead and get a sense before you start, or glance back and review without doing it all over again. And I do it so you can then underline what you think is the most important point to consider.

We can have a conversation, then, about what matters, with your points and mine neatly marked and yet differentiated from each other’s at the same time.

And so, what stands out to you?
Acknowledgements

This project has absolutely been a labor of love for me since its inception, but like any other aspect of education, it did not emerge in a vacuum. And so, I offer my sincere thanks to the following people (and one wonderful dog), sine quibus non…

To Prof. Louis Feldman, whose high standards for me as an undergraduate molded the sort of standards I have kept for myself and my students in my work as a classicist and a teacher since then.

To Elizabeth Stevens, who turned down my request to stop teaching Pentheus when I reached the opening to his speech to the Thebans during my first year teaching Latin IV. (My students and I were both languishing in its complexity.) Minutes after that conversation, I headed down to the grad school class I was taking in the afternoons at the time, and handed in my idea to write a commentary of my own. I still think that opening sentence is a beast, but if Elizabeth had allowed me to quit during those fledgling days, this commentary – and the deep joy it has given me over the years in developing it and teaching from its earlier iterations – wouldn’t exist.

To Prof. Jennifer Roberts, for insisting that the original version of this commentary only scratched the surface of what it should have done when I handed it in as a term paper four years ago. I have spent my time since then chasing what I thought she meant, and I hope what she sees meets her expectations.

To Prof. Dee Clayman, for encouraging me to turn my original idea for a commentary on Ovid’s Pentheus into a full-blown master’s thesis from the very beginning, and then encouraging me further with her enthusiasm for the project every time we met thereafter.

To Prof. Philip Thibodeau, my thesis advisor, who took the time to talk with me – and really listen – for long stretches, over several summers and at times during the school year, as I fleshed out the various sections I wanted to include in this. His suggestions, his feedback, and his attentiveness throughout raised the level of this project considerably.
Acknowledgements

To Prof. Ronnie Ancona, my second reader, whose own commentary on Catullus was an inspiration in many ways, and whose lectures at the American Classical League Institutes over the last few years, and to my own students during her visits to The Hewitt School, were even more inspiring in person. Prof. Ancona’s insistence on letting students make their own decisions about a text is what makes her writing so compelling, and her feedback such a privilege.

To Maureen Burgess, whose approach to teaching writing across the curriculum and whose introduction of writing workshops for teachers at The Hewitt School has, without hyperbole, revolutionized the way I teach Latin at all levels, and was one of the biggest inspirations for the Essential Questions section later on this book, not to mention the other writing prompts throughout.

And to Nicole Wallack and Carley Moore from Bard College’s Institute for Writing and Thinking, who conducted several of those writing workshops I attended at Hewitt and whose method of doing so provided me and my colleagues with a wealth of invaluable tools for teaching writing at all levels.

To Scott Gleason, a good friend (and a professional editor, to boot), who sat with me on dozens of occasions as he and I worked on our respective projects. His encouragement and his thoughts and advice on all aspects of this commentary made him a fantastic writing partner. He was, and continues to be, the tea to my coffee.

To Samantha, Elena, Zoë, Elizabeth, Amanda, Erika, Alex, Mary, Emily, Nicole, Clio, Casidy, Alexandria, Abigail, Siv, Sunny, Alexandra, Janae, Emily, Julia, Carolina, Jocelyn, Anna, Sarah, Maria, Ahmerie, Tyra, Becky, Alex, Aileen, Ellery, Stephanie, Harley, Zoë, Jessica, Julia, and Alexandra, my Latin IV students over the years I taught the myth of Pentheus, whose questions and thoughts led to class discussions that begat more questions and more thoughts, and who gave me the privilege of experiencing this literary Roman treasure the way it was meant to be experienced: communally, and with a room full of enthusiasts.

And to Chelsea, Lexi, Samantha, Romi, Morgan, Jadeen, Olivia, Brianna, Keanna, Sthefany, Patricia, Kaylee, Stephanie, Ruby, Jessie, and Morgan, my recent students in Latin III and Latin
II, who poured over dozens of iterations of Latin vocabulary lists I compiled for them, and whose feedback on how to make them better informed how I created the glossaries and index at the end of this commentary.

To Dov Honick, who used an intermediate draft of this commentary in his directed study with me at Yeshiva University, and whose keen insights on Ovid, Pentheus, and literature in general, continually provided me with new ways to look at old material. (I look forward to quoting him in a future class describing Ovid’s early depiction of Pentheus as belonging on the “Rich Kids of Instagram,” Tumblr blog, whose lack of respect for others made him *Echionides, unus ex omnibus, contemptor superum.*"

And to Aaron Koller, whose invitation to teach Latin at Yeshiva facilitated another opportunity to use this commentary as a teaching tool and improve it in the process.

Quite importantly, to the staffs & owners of Cafe Noi & Henry’s Restaurant, both of whom would probably be stunned to learn that I’ve actually been spending just as much time writing at the other location. Your graciousness in allowing me to occupy prime real estate at tables for hours on end is the reason I got through as much material as I did. Moreover, the smiles on your faces upon my arrival every day I came to sit and work fueled my creativity and enjoyment in the process as much as the coffee I drank like water at both of your welcoming establishments.

And this may seem like a stretch, yet it is anything but... to Windows Explorer and iTunes, on which I spent countless mornings, afternoons, and evenings over the years organizing music, photos, and videos, the result of which has allowed me to develop a passion for organizing anything on my laptop, including the Latin vocabulary of the glossaries and the lists of illustrations contained herein.

Speaking of art, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the gracious and friendly people who allowed me to use images of certain works throughout this book, and guide me to other fascinating pieces in the process, including the incredibly talented Louis Savage, whose *Study for Pentheus 3* graces the cover of this volume; Steven Armstrong and Daniel Priore from the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC; Andrew from "Ancient Art" on flickr; the insightful blogger (and artist)
Acknowledgements

Christopher Volpe; Sara Bogosian of the Whistler House Museum; Samantha Sizemore of the Kimbell Art Museum; and Prof. Anne Groton of St. Olaf College, author of the wonderfully accessible From Alpha to Omega: A Beginning Course in Classical Greek.

To Dad, Mom, Susan, Liza, Jeremy, Becky, Mike, Rita, Seth, Isaac, Hindy, and Yael, for asking me about this project of mine again and again over the years, but always allowing me the space to tell them that I'm still working on it. (Vols. 2 & 3 are on their way...)

To my wife, Sarah, who has had to endure all four years of our marriage in competition for my attention with a mythical Theban king whose name in Greek means "He Who Suffers." In Latin, patience and suffering share the same etymology, and that verb, *pati*, also means "to put up with," "to allow to take place," and "to be subjected to," all of which describe her experience in relation to this commentary, and yet, don't go far enough to encompass all that she has meant to it and has done to help me complete it. And so I will add *colloqui, audire, sustinere, consilium offerre*, and *amare*.

And lastly, to my recently turned two-year-old son, Leo, whose boundless affection has been my greatest fuel for finishing this thing, more than any other ancillary benefit that finishing it may provide. Hands down.

Oh, and to Cappi.
List of Abbreviations
Used in This Book

**Nota Bene:** You may see Roman numerals here and there that look like abbreviations at first but are, in fact, citations for Latin texts, section headings of some kind, or even simply page numbers.

Additionally, within the Bibliography (or other places where sources are cited), a number of abbreviations are first or middle initials of proper names, state names, or other, similar components of a title or publisher’s name. In these instances, the abbreviations, for the most part, will not appear here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;G</td>
<td>Allen &amp; Greenough’s New Latin Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABL. (or abl.)</td>
<td>ablative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC. (or acc.)</td>
<td>accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj.</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.k.a.</td>
<td>also known as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMORC</td>
<td>Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (i.e. The Rosicrucian Order)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aor.</td>
<td>aorist (a Greek simple past tense form)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Before the Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bis</td>
<td>twice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bk(s).</td>
<td>Book(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca.</td>
<td>circa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf.</td>
<td>confer (compare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch(s).</td>
<td>Chapter(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cl.</td>
<td>clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cm*</td>
<td>centimeters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co.</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comm.</td>
<td>commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cont.</td>
<td>continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Vocab.</td>
<td>Core Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>corr.</td>
<td>correlative(s)</td>
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<td>Creat.</td>
<td>Creator</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAT. (or dat.)</td>
<td>dative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dir(s).</td>
<td>Director(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>dir. spch.</td>
<td>direct speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed.</td>
<td>edition, editor</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td>exempli gratiā (for example)</td>
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<tr>
<td>end.</td>
<td>endnote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ep.</td>
<td>Episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et al.</td>
<td>et alī (and others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel.</td>
<td>feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ff.</td>
<td>foliō, foliī (and on, and the following pages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.</td>
<td>figurativē(ly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>fpl.</td>
<td>feminine plural</td>
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<tr>
<td>fn.</td>
<td>footnote</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEN. (or gen.)</td>
<td>genitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>i.e.</td>
<td>id est (that is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ibid.</td>
<td>ibīdem (in the same place)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inc.</td>
<td>Incorporated</td>
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<tr>
<td>indecl.</td>
<td>indeclinable</td>
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<tr>
<td>indic.</td>
<td>indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indir. com.</td>
<td>indirect command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in hoc loc.</td>
<td>in hoc locō (in this place, in our own text)</td>
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<tr>
<td>inf.</td>
<td>infinitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>intens.</td>
<td>intensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>intr.</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>lit.</td>
<td>literall(ly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLD</td>
<td>Lēgum Doctor (Doctor of Laws)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ltd.</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>masculine</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mpl.</td>
<td>masculine plural</td>
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<tr>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>no date (provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>neg.</td>
<td>negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>Notā Bene</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>nt.</td>
<td>neuter</td>
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<tr>
<td>ntpl.</td>
<td>neuter plural</td>
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<tr>
<td>oft.</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLD</td>
<td>Oxford Latin Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org.</td>
<td>Organization</td>
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**List of Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ovid. Vocab.</td>
<td>Ovidian Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partic.</td>
<td>participle, participial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pass.</td>
<td>passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>perf.</td>
<td>perfect</td>
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<td>pers.</td>
<td>person</td>
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<td>pg(s).</td>
<td>page(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>pl.</td>
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<td>prefix</td>
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<td>Professor</td>
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<td>purp.</td>
<td>purpose</td>
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<td>reflx.</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
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<tr>
<td>rev.</td>
<td>revised, revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.</td>
<td>Season</td>
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<tr>
<td>sg.</td>
<td>singular</td>
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<tr>
<td>sic</td>
<td>thus (written)</td>
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<td>subj.</td>
<td>subject</td>
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<td>subjunct.</td>
<td>subjunctive</td>
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<tr>
<td>subst.</td>
<td>substantive</td>
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<tr>
<td>suppl.</td>
<td>supplement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ter</td>
<td>three times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPAPA</td>
<td>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tr.</td>
<td>transitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>trans.</td>
<td>translated, translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usu.</td>
<td>usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vb.</td>
<td>verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol(s).</td>
<td>Volume(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w.</td>
<td>with</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Unlike many of the other abbreviations on this list, the form cm has the force of a symbol (like others in the world of the metric system) rather than simply a shortened form of the word, and thus is standardly written without a period.

In fact, cousins of this approach are the acronyms on this list, e.g. BCE or OLD, which, in a sense, have become like words themselves.

For more on this distinction, go to M-W.com and look up “cm,” “symbol,” “acronym,” “abbreviation,” and the link to a table at “metric system,” all available as of this writing. (And my thanks to my Hewitt colleague Nancy Gallin for prompting me to notice the distinction.)
Here, once again, is the cover image, but this time in full view. Take a minute – take a few minutes, actually – and really look at it. Study it. Note its details up close; step back and take it all in from afar. Jot down what you see.

*Study for Pentheus 3*, oil on linen, 100 x 70 cm.
Louis Savage, 2013. (LouisSavage.com)
PART ONE
Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus... Presented
Latin Text,
Vocabulary & Side Commentary

On these pages you will find three key pieces to help you in your reading...

1. **MANAGEABLE PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE** As a student, I used to get lost in the unforgiving layout of Latin and Greek texts, rendered by traditionalist scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into unending blocks whose king-sized paragraphs start and end miles apart. For a similar sense of this kind of literary exhaustion, take a look at Franz Kafka’s The Trial; the difference is, though, that Kafka’s novel is supposed to fatigue you – that’s the point. Ovid’s poetry, on the other hand, should move along handily, and so the structure here follows that of Michael Simpson’s fluid English translation (see Bibliography) with its bite-sized chunks for you in the Latin original. Divide et impera!

2. **TIERED VOCABULARY** The Latin gloss running underneath Ovid’s text can guide you for the words it includes as much as for those it does not: that is, if a word is footnoted, by virtue of its inclusion here you can consider it unusual enough not to expect yourself to have known it; conversely, if a word in the text does not have a footnote below, it is indeed a common Latin word. For example, *cladem* in line 515 has been given to you, but *verba* in the same line hasn’t. (Fear not, though, because you can find its definition in the back within “A Glossary of Core Latin Vocabulary,” along with a list of all of its occurrences in the text of this volume.) Additionally, you may see words in the text itself with an asterisk (*) as you read: these have been glossed already at an earlier point in the poem, and so they may seem familiar to you. For example, *tenebris* at line 525 was given to you already back at line 515, and so there is no second gloss. (Once again, fear not, though, because you can find these definitions in the back, too, but within “A Glossary of Ovidian Vocabulary,” along with, again, a list of all its occurrences.)

3. **PROMPTING SIDE COMMENTARY** Rather than authoritatively telling you what a line means, or what Latin form appears in the text, or even how to approach or analyze a given section overall, the commentary to the right of the text should guide you to an understanding you may already have access to. More like a study partner than a cheat sheet, the notes here should provide a context for you to gain a basic
understanding of the Latin, as well as questions that get you thinking about what might trouble you or even what you already feel comfortable with.

To that end, let the side commentary engage you in a dialogue as you work through Ovid’s text. I wrote it to enhance, not to interfere; to support your exploration, not to tell you what’s right or wrong. On both of those counts, that is why it appears after the Latin and not before: it follows crucially so that you have time and opportunity to make your own assessments first.

So use it, agree with it, or make your case as to why it is way off the mark. But like an actual study partner, listen to it and know that it wants to hear from you as much as you from it.

(For more on the methodology of and thinking behind this commentary, see the Preface for Students and Teachers.)

You’ll also see artwork interspersed throughout this section, smaller than and of a different kind from that which appears in the rest of this book (except for the full page image of the dancing maenad to the right, provided here for comparison and context). I’ll let you decide for yourself how so – or if it is, in fact, different at all.

Finally, you may choose to jump to Parts Two and Three as you read, which provide opportunities for thinking more deeply about the text, for viewing it unencumbered by any aids whatsoever, and for looking at an example of its literary predecessors. Some people eat their side dishes only after they’ve finished their main, while others go back and forth throughout the meal; others still eat their main once they’ve taken in everything else first. I encourage you to read Ovid and only then approach the ancillary material, but no one is watching, so go crazy. Whatever you decide, read critically and yet with an open mind at the same time.

After all, it’s your book now, and the experience of it is yours to be had.
“Liber adest, festisque fremunt ululatibus agri:
turba ruit, mixtæque viris matresque nurusque
vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur.”

The image above contains exquisite detail that not only elucidates the Bacchic rites but also, perhaps, the anger of Pentheus over their presence in Thebes. What do you notice here that might exacerbate a king’s concern for his kingdom?

Marble Relief with a Dancing Maenad, 143 cm, Roman copy, ca. 27 BCE - CE 14,
of a Greek original, attributed to the Kallimachos, ca. 425-400 BCE.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.
I. Pentheus and Tiresias: The Prediction (3.511-527)

Cognita res meritam\(^1\) vati\(^2\) per Achaidas\(^3\) urbes
attulerat famam, nomenque erat auguris\(^4\) ingens.
Spernit\(^5\) Echionides\(^6\) tamen hunc, ex omnibus unus,
contemptor\(^7\) superum, Pentheus,\(^8\) praesagaque\(^9\) ridet
verba senis tenebrasque\(^10\) et cladem\(^11\) lucis aemptae\(^12\)
obicit.\(^13\)

Ille movens albentia\(^14\) tempora canis\(^15\)
“Quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis\(^16\) huius
orbis,”\(^17\) ait, “fieres, ne Bacchica\(^18\) sacra\(^19\) videres!”

---

1. mereō, -ēre, -uī, -itum tr. to earn, deserve.
2. vātēs, -is m./f. a prophet, seer.
3. Achāis, (gen.) Achāidos Greek (see side comm.).
4. augur, -uris m./f. augur, interpreter; prophet.
5. spernō, -ere, sprēvī, sprētum tr. to spurn, reject; disregard.
6. Echionidēs, -ae m. Echionides (see side comm.).
7. contemptor, -ōris m. despiser; scolder.
8. Pentheus, -ī m. Pentheus, King of Thebes (and see side comm.).
9. præsāgus, -a, -um portending, ominous.
10. tenebrae, -ārum pl. darkness; blindness; (fig.) lack of knowledge or understanding.
11. clādēs, -is f. calamity, disaster, ruin.
12. adimō, -ere, -ēmī, -emptum tr. to take away, deprive of.
13. obiciō, -ere, -iēcī, -iectum tr. to put forth, offer; ridicule.
14. albēns, (gen.) -ntis white, pale.
15. cānus, -a, -um white, grey; mpl. grey hairs (see side comm.).
16. lūmen, -inis m. light; sight, understanding; (of a pers.) a guide.
17. orbis, -a, -um deprived of, bereft of (+GEN. or ABL.).
18. Bacchicus, -a, -um of or relating to Bacchus, Bacchic.
19. sacrum, -ī nt. a holy thing or place; (pl.) rites, festival, worship.
Cognita res: “The story, when it became known.” This refers to the episode just before our own, specifically how the prophet Tiresias accurately predicted the death of Narcissus, a young man who wasted away after falling in love with his own reflection, leaving the flower that bears his name. In fact, at the opening of that myth, Tiresias is similarly remarked upon by Ovid for his widespread fama.

For more on Tiresias and the concatenation of myths in the Metamorphoses, see the exploration on these lines in “A Deeper Look, Iterum” in Part Two.

meritam... famam: an example of hyperbaton, i.e. a figure of speech in which words that naturally go together are separated from each other for emphasis or effect.

vati: i.e. Tiresias. What case is this?

Achaidas: a fem. Greek acc. pl. adj. Throughout the Metamorphoses, Ovid employs hundreds of Greek proper nouns and adjectives, which sometimes have endings familiar to Latin readers, and sometimes not.

ingens: not “huge” in the physical sense, but rather like the idiomatic use in English, stressing the enormity of his fame (OLD 4c).

Echionides: a patronymic, i.e. a name derived from that of one’s father, meaning “son of Echion.” Perhaps the most famous patronymic in Greek mythology belongs to Achilles, known in the Iliad as Peleides, or son of Peleus, although patronymics exist in many other languages too, including English (e.g. Williamson or Robertson). Echionides ... unus ... contemptor ... Pentheus: all nominatives, offering three titular introductions to the main character. Note the increasing power of the words, an effect common in this figure of speech called a tricolon.

superum: syncopated gen. pl. (= superorum), i.e. the gods.

Spernit ... ridet ... obicit: again, Ovid uses a set of three, or tricolon, this time to vividly describe Pentheus’ deplorable actions towards a sympathetic, blind senex who has otherwise commanded the respect and attention of the ancient Greek world. By this description, clearly, Pentheus is a character not to be liked.

tempora: in the physical sense, the word tempora refers to the sides of a forehead, i.e. the temples, which Tiresias begins moving as he responds to Pentheus’ ill treatment of him.

canis: i.e. canis, not to be confused with canis, meaning “dog,” which would make no sense here, grammatically or otherwise. What case is this, and why?

Quam ... esses, si ... fieres: note the mood and tense of the verbs – what kind of condition is this? orbus ... fieres: jarringly, the verb ait interrupts the protasis.

ne ... videres: result? purpose? other? Explain your answer.
Namque\(^1\) dies aderit, quam non procul\(^2\) auguror\(^3\) esse, 
quae novus hic veniat, proles\(^4\) Semeleia\(^5\), Liber\(^6\) 
quia nisi templorum fueris dignatus\(^7\) honore, 
mille lacera\(^8\) spargere\(^9\) locis et sanguine silvas 
foedabas\(^10\) matremque tuam matrisque sorores. 
Eveniet\(^11\) Neque enim dignabere\(^*\) numen honore, 
meque sub his tenebris\(^*\) nimium vidisse quereris.\(^*\)\(^12\) 

Talia dicentem proturbat\(^13\) Echion\(^14\) natus. 
Dicta fides sequitur, responsaque\(^15\) vatis\(^*\) aguntur.

---

\(^1\) namque for, for indeed; yes.  
\(^2\) procul far, far off.  
\(^3\) auguror, -āri, -ātus sum intr. to predict (w. inf.).  
\(^4\) prōlēs, -is f. offspring (see side comm.).  
\(^5\) Semelēius, -a, -um of Semele (see side comm.).  
\(^6\) Liber, -beri m. Liber, Italian god of fertility and wine (commonly associated w. Bacchus – see side comm.).  
\(^7\) dignor, -āri, -ātus sum tr. to consider worthy of (+ABL.).  
\(^8\) lacera, -era, -erum torn apart, mutilated.  
\(^9\) spargō, -ere, sparsi, sparsum tr. to scatter; spread the news of (see side comm.).  
\(^10\) foedō (1) tr. to stain, soil; contaminate, defile.  
\(^11\) ēveniō, -ire, -vēni, -ventum intr. to come out, happen.  
\(^12\) queror, -i, questus sum intr./tr. to lament, complain; regret.  
\(^13\) prōturbō (1) tr. to drive off in confusion; cause to depart hurriedly, shoo away.  
\(^14\) Echiōn, -onis m. Echion, father of Pentheus.  
\(^15\) respōnsum, -i nlt. an answer; a prophesy.
519. **quam:** notice how Ovid repeats the word from line 517, but with a different meaning here (HINT: antecedent = dies).

520. **qua ... veniat:** why is this verb subjunctive?

   **proles Semeleia:** note that the Latin noun for “offspring” is grammatically feminine (hence Semeleia, not Semeleus), but that it still refers to the male god.

   **Liber:** *i.e.* Bacchus (Gk. Dionysus), the god of wine and intoxication. Through Tiresias’ prophesy, Ovid introduces the antagonist of this story – but why with the less commonly used name Liber?

521. **quem:** connecting relative, thus better to translate as “him” (e.g. “unless you … him”).

522. **mille ... locis:** this phrase could work with either **lacer** or **spargere,** *i.e.* Pentheus will be mutilated in a thousand places on his body, or once he is torn apart, his remains will be scattered in a thousand places around the forests near Thebes. Additionally, the verb **spargere** provides a more metaphorical explanation, namely that the news of Pentheus’ demise will be spread all over, which Ovid then juxtaposes noticeably with Tiresias’ own *fama* in the opening lines.

   **spargere:** context and meter will tell you that this is actually not the infinitive, but the alternative second person singular form of the future passive indicative, *i.e.* spargère (=spargēris).

   For more on using the dactylic hexameter in the *Metamorphoses* in your analysis, see “A Brief Discussion About Meter and Literary Terms in Ovid’s Pentheus” in the Introduction.

   **sanguine:** what case is this, and why?

521 - 523: Tiresias’ warning to Pentheus serves also as a succinct trailer of his demise at the end of the story (708-729), which the prophet punctuates with the laconic “Eveniet!” in the next line.

524. **dignabere:** *cf.* spargere two lines up, and the future perfect **fueris dignatus** one line before that.

525. **me:** acc. subj. in indirect statement after quereris.

   **sub his tenebris:** note that impact of Ovid’s repeating this word at the end of Tiresias’ prophesy – at line 515, tenebrae is the object of Pentheus’ cruel ridicule, while here it represents the very strength of Tiresias that predicts Pentheus’ ignoble end.

526. **dicentem:** refers to Tiresias, the implied dir. obj. of proturbat, and gives the sense that Pentheus rudely interrupted him in the middle of speaking. **Echione natus:** why do you think Ovid calls Pentheus “the son of Echion” here? And why put the subject at the end of the line? (*cf.* Echionides above, 513).

527. **Dicta fides sequitur, responsaque vatis aguntur:** is this line redundant? Explain your answer.
II. Bacchus Arrives, Pentheus Complains (3.528-563)

**L**iber adest, festisquē⁴ frement⁵ ululatibus⁶ agri:
turba ruit,⁴ mixtaeque⁵ viris matresque nurusque⁶
vulgosque⁷ proceresque⁸ ignota⁹ ad sacra⁹ feruntur. 530

“**Quis furor,**¹⁰ anguisinae,¹¹ proles*¹¹ Mavortia,¹² vestras
attoniuit¹³ mentes?” Pentheus ait. “**Aerane**¹⁴ tantum
aere* repulsa¹⁵ valent et adunco¹⁶ tibia¹⁷ cornu¹⁸

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1 *feste, -a, -um* festive.
2 *fremō, -ere, -eī, -itum* *intr.* to roar; resound.
3 *ululātus, -ūs* m. a wailing, a howl, an ululation.
4 *ruō, -ere, -i, rutum* *intr.* to rush, hurry.
5 *mīscēō, -ere, -eī, mixtum* *tr.* to mix, join; stir up; entwine; unite sexually (*see side comm.*).
6 *nurus, -ūs* f. daughter-in-law.
7 *vulgos, -ī* *nt./m.* the common people.
8 *procerēs, -um* *mpl.* leading men, nobles.
9 *ignōtus, -a, -um* unknown, unfamiliar; strange.
10 *furus, -ōris* m. madness, delirium; frenzy; fury, rage.
11 *anguigena, ae* m. snake-born person (*a* *Theban epithet*).
12 *Mavortius, -a, -um* of or belonging to Mars.
13 *attoniō, -āre, -eī, -itum* *tr.* to drive crazy, stupefy; astonish.
14 *aes, aeris* *nt.* copper, bronze, brass; an instrument (made from such).
15 *repellō, -ere, -ppūli, -pulsum* *tr.* to push back, drive away; strike repeatedly.
16 *aduncus, -a, -um* hooked, curved.
17 *tība, -ae* f. reed-pipe, flute.
18 *cornū, -ūs* *nt.* horn.

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An actual ancient Greek cymbal, bronze, ca. 500-480 BCE.
National Archaeological Museum of Athens. (Photo by "Margo")
528. *Liber adest*: with this concise declaration, Ovid wastes no time in the narrative, offering the promised *fides*, *i.e.* the fulfillment of the prophecy, in the very next line. Moreover, he once again uses Bacchus’ alternate name, which adds an additional layer of meaning to the statement – what might that be? *Liber adest ... fremunt ... agri*: notice the placement of the two subjects in this line. Why might the poet have chosen to use this word order here? Does this arrangement add to the storytelling somehow?

529. *mixtae ... matresque nurusque*: the participle modifies both subjects and joins them together with *viris* in a way that seems to imply a range of mixing. Given the situation, in what ways might these groups be mixing?

530. *ignota ad sacra = ad sacra ignota.*

*feruntur*: note the passive voice, implying almost a lack of free will on the part of the participants. Moreover, in Latin – unlike in English – the verb *ferre* tends to be used with objects one can actually carry, whereas *duère* makes more sense for people and large animals. In other words, a Roman “brings” a small gift to a party, but “leads” a friend there instead. That said, what point is Ovid trying to make with this verb altogether?

531. *anguigenae, proles Mavortia*: both vocatives. (For the gender of *Mavortia*, cf. 520.) *anguigenae*: an allusion to the origin of Thebes that the poet, qua Pentheus, will elaborate at line 543.

532 - 534. *Aera... tibia... magicae fraudes*: all three of these are the subjects of the first half of this difficult sentence, and they share the verb *valent*. *Aera... aere repulsae*: (lit.) “bronze [things] struck repeatedly by bronze,” *i.e.* cymbals. *adunco tibia cornu*: “a flute with a curved horn.” In what way are these items, along with the *magicae fraudes* in the next line, meant to belittle the Bacchic rites? Read on...

Does this image match Pentheus’ description? Explain.

*Youth Playing the Aulos, or Tibia* (detail). Attic red-figure cup, by the so-called “Euaion Painter,” ca. 460-450 BCE. Louvre Museum, Paris, France.
et magicae\textsuperscript{1} fraudes,\textsuperscript{2} ut, quos non bellicos\textsuperscript{3} ensis,\textsuperscript{4}
non tuba\textsuperscript{5} terruerit, non strictis\textsuperscript{6} agmina\textsuperscript{7} telis,\textsuperscript{8}
femineae\textsuperscript{9} voces et mota insania\textsuperscript{10} vino
obscenique\textsuperscript{11} grexes\textsuperscript{12} et inania\textsuperscript{13} tympana\textsuperscript{14} vincant?

“Vosne, senes, mirer,\textsuperscript{15} qui longa per aequora\textsuperscript{16} vecti\textsuperscript{17}
hac Tyron,\textsuperscript{18} hac profugos\textsuperscript{19} posuistis sede\textsuperscript{20} Penates,\textsuperscript{21}
nunc sinitis\textsuperscript{22} sine Marte\textsuperscript{23} capi? Vosne, acrior aetas,
o iuvenes, propiorque\textsuperscript{24} meae, quos arma tenere,
non thrysos,\textsuperscript{25} galeaque\textsuperscript{26} tegi, non fronde\textsuperscript{27} debeat?\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item magicae -a, -um magical.
\item fraus, -audis f. deceit, fraud, trick.
\item bellicus, -a, -um warlike, military.
\item ensis, -is m. sword.
\item tuba, -ae f. trumpet (oft. used in battle).
\item stringō, -ere, strinxī, strictum tr. to draw together, fasten; draw, unsheathe.
\item agmen, -inis nt. procession, retinue; army (on the march), line (of troops).
\item tēlum, -i nt. weapon.
\item fēmineus, -a, -um of women, women’s, womanly.
\item insānia, -ae f. madness, mania; frenzy, fury.
\item obscēnus, -a, -um ill-omened; filthy, indecent, lewd.
\item grex, -egis m. flock; group (of people), crowd.
\item inānis, -e empty, hollow; purposeless.
\item tympanum, -i nt. (small) drum.
\item mǐrōr, -ārī, -ātus sum tr./intr. to wonder, be surprised (at); admire.
\item aequor, -is nt. a level surface, sea.
\item vehō, -ere, vexī, vectum tr. to convey, carry; (pass. in middle sense) to ride, drive; sail.
\item Tyros, -ī (acc. -on) f. Tyre (famous coastal city in Phoenicia).
\item profugus, -a, -um fleeing, fugitive; exiled.
\item sēdēs, -is f. seat; dwelling-place, settlement, site.
\item Penātēs, -iwm mpl. Penates, tutelary gods of the Roman household.
\item sinō, -ere, sīvī, situm tr. to leave, let be; let, allow, permit.
\item Mars, Martīs m. Mars (Roman god of war); warfare, fighting, battle.
\item propior, -ius nearer, closer; more recent.
\item thrysus, -ī m. Bacchic wand or staff (see side comm.).
\item galea, -ae f. helmet (of a soldier).
\item frōns, -ondis f. foliage, garland (of leaves).
\item decet, -ēre, -uit tr./intr. it suits, is fitting; is right, proper.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
534. **ut**: what kind of clause of this? (Hint: note *tantum* at 532.)

534 - 537. The second half of the sentence is even more complicated than the first. Essentially, Ovid begins the *ut* clause with the direct object – in this case, the long phrase *quos… telis* – then gets to the *four* subjects, and then finishes with the verb *vincant*.

So to recap, thus far, the main clause (532-534) reads, “Are [these three disgraceful things] so strong that…”

At this point, skip *quos… telis* for now, and go straight to the four subjects of the *ut* clause – they are a) *femineae voces*, b) *mota insania vino*, c) *obsceni… greges*, and d) *inania tympana*. (Note that *vino* = abl. of means with the participle *mota*.) Finally, return to *quos… telis* to finish the sentence, which now reads, “Are [these three disgraceful things] so strong that [these four cowardly things] may conquer…”

The phrase **quos… telis** is actually yet another list, this time a set of three things within a relative clause: a) *bellicus ensis*, b) *tuba*, and c) *strictis agmina telis*. (Note that *strictis… telis* = abl. of description, “of drawn weapons.”) This relative clause simply describes the implied direct object, albeit in a convoluted way: “[those] whom neither (a) nor (b) nor (c) have terrified.”

Thus, the basic outline of the sentence reads, “Are [these three disgraceful things] so strong that [these four cowardly things] may conquer [those brave people who are not afraid of three rather frightening things]?” In other words, Pentheus is asking these seemingly hardy people why they have succumbed to the frivolous temptations of Bacchus and his rites.

538. **mire**: deliberative subjunctive (“Should I admire… ?”).

539. **hac… Penates**: By reminding the elders that they had established a respectable community (in fact, Tyre was once ruled by Pentheus’ own great-grandfather, Agenor) as well as respectable gods (as gods of the household, the Penates were central in the Roman pantheon, something that would certainly have made an impression on Ovid’s readers), Pentheus is providing specific reasons for them to feel guilty for being lured by Bacchic worship.

Do you think he is making a convincing argument here? Or for that matter, an apt comparison?

540. **sine Marte**: Pentheus continues to deliberately frame this problem in military terms.

540 - 541. **acrior aetas… propiorque meae = [quibus] acrior aetas [est] propiorque meae [aetati]**. If we assume an implied relative pronoun in the dative, the case of *aetas* makes sense as the subject of a statement implying possession (“And you, young men, who have…”).

541 - 542. **quos… decebat**: “for whom it was right to…”

**galea… fronde**: both abls. of means with the passive infinitive *tegi*. 

Latin Text, Vocabulary & Commentary  
Page 13
“Este, precor,\textsuperscript{1} memoria,\textsuperscript{2} qua satis stirpem\textsuperscript{3} creati, illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit\textsuperscript{4} unus, sumite serpentibus!\textsuperscript{5} Pro fontibus\textsuperscript{6} ille lacuque\textsuperscript{7} interiit:\textsuperscript{8} ut vos pro fama vincite vestra! Ille dedit leto\textsuperscript{9} fortes: vos pellite molles\textsuperscript{10} et patrium retinete decus!\textsuperscript{11}

“Si fata\textsuperscript{12} vetabant\textsuperscript{13} stare diu Thebas,\textsuperscript{14} utinam\textsuperscript{15} tormenta\textsuperscript{16} virique moenia\textsuperscript{17} diruerent,\textsuperscript{18} ferrumque ignisque sonarent!\textsuperscript{19} Essemus miseri sine crimine, sorsque\textsuperscript{20} querenda\textsuperscript{21}, non celanda\textsuperscript{22} foret, lacrimeaque pudore\textsuperscript{23} carerent.

“At nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi,\textsuperscript{23} quem neque bella iuvant nec tela* nec usus equorum,

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\textsuperscript{1} precor, -āri, -ātus sum \textit{tr./intr.} to ask (for), pray, beg, implore; entreat, beseech.
\textsuperscript{2} memores, (gen.) -or is having in (one’s) memory, mindful of (+GEN.) (\textit{and see \textit{side comm.}}).
\textsuperscript{3} stirps, -pis \textit{f.} stem, base; family, ancestral race, stock.
\textsuperscript{4} perīo, -ere, -didi, -ditum \textit{tr.} to ruin, destroy; kill.
\textsuperscript{5} serpentus, serpentem \textit{m./f.} snake, serpent.
\textsuperscript{6} fons, -ntis \textit{m.} spring (of water); (\textit{lit.} or \textit{fig.}) source, origin, fount.
\textsuperscript{7} lacus, -ūs \textit{m.} lake, pond, pool.
\textsuperscript{8} intereō, -ire, -iī, -ium \textit{intr.} to die, perish, be killed; be lost, forgotten.
\textsuperscript{9} lētum, -ī \textit{nt.} death (\textit{usu. violent}), destruction.
\textsuperscript{10} mollis, -e soft, supple; gentle, tender; weak, cowardly, effeminate.
\textsuperscript{11} decus, -oris \textit{nt.} honor, glory, distinction; dignity, decorum.
\textsuperscript{12} fātum, -ī \textit{nt.} fate, destiny; (pl.) the future.
\textsuperscript{13} vetō, -āre, -ūi, -itum \textit{tr.} to forbid, prevent (from) (\textit{w. inf.}).
\textsuperscript{14} Thēbae, -ārum \textit{fpl.} Thebes (\textit{chief city of Boeotia, a district in central Greece – and the setting for this story}).
\textsuperscript{15} utinam if only! (\textit{used to reinforce wishes, w. subjunct.}).
\textsuperscript{16} tormentum, -ī \textit{nt. (oft. pl.)} war machinery; (\textit{fig.}) torture, torment, agony.
\textsuperscript{17} moenia, -um \textit{ntpl.} walls (of a city).
\textsuperscript{18} dirūō, -ere, -i, -rutum \textit{tr.} to demolish, wreck.
\textsuperscript{19} sonō, -āre, -ūi, -itum \textit{intr.} to make a noise, sound, resound.
\textsuperscript{20} sors, sortis \textit{f.} lot, share, portion; fortune, destiny, fate.
\textsuperscript{21} cēlō (1) \textit{tr.} to conceal, hide, keep secret.
\textsuperscript{22} pudor, -ōris \textit{m.} shame, dishonor, humiliation; modesty, shyness.
\textsuperscript{23} inermis, -e unarmed.
543. 

**Este:** plural imperative of *sum*.

*qua ... stirpe:* you might expect *stirpe* to be in the gen. and come *before* the relative clause (“be mindful of the stock from which…”); however, often in Latin literature, the antecedent appears *within* the relative clause and changes its case to match the relative pronoun (A&G 307b).

This may seem strange at first, but actually the construction appears often enough in English, too, e.g. “The man opened the door, at which time he…,” as opposed to, “The man opened the door, the time at which he…”

Alternatively, the clause can be read as an indirect question (“be mindful of from what stock…”), which would explain the verb in the subjunctive; however, if you do see this phrase as a relative clause, why, then, *is* the verb in the subjunctive? (Hint: Pentheus is trying to get at the character of the Thebans.)

*sitis:* second person plural subjunctive of *sum* with *creati*.

544. 

**illus ... serpentis:** Pentheus is referring to the etiological myth of Thebes’ founding by his grandfather, Cadmus, who – as Ovid explains earlier in Bk. 3 (line 28ff.) – after slaying a savage serpent (or dragon, as it is often translated from the Greek δράκων), sowed its teeth in the ground upon the advice of the goddess Minerva. From there, an army of armed men sprang up, who fought among themselves until only five were left, who became the ancestors of the Theban nobility; in fact, among those five was Echion, Pentheus’ father (126, cf. 513 above).

547. 

**molles:** Pentheus is further framing the Bacchic problem as having an emasculating effect on the Thebans – which, once again, would have struck a troublesome chord in the minds of Ovid’s Roman readers.

548 - 549. 

**Si fata vetabant stare diu Thebas:** Although this is a contrary-to-fact condition, Ovid uses the indicative here, perhaps to express vividly how awful such a prospect would be?

551 - 552. 

**Essemus ... foret ... carerent:** the imperfect subjunctives represent a second apodosis of the contrary-to-fact condition that began at 548.

**Essemus miseri [sed] sine crimine:** the adversative “but” completes the sentiment, *i.e.* if Thebes were under attack, and we responded with military force, it would be terrible, *but* we could be proud of our response. This lack of a connective is called *asyneton* and is quite common in both Latin poetry and prose.

**querenda ... celanda:** what participial forms are these? *foret = esset.*

553. 

**a puero ... inermi:** what declension and case is the adjective?

**Thebae capientur:** since the noun is plural in form, it requires a plural verb. Still, translate as singular.
sed madidus\(^1\) murra\(^2\) crinis\(^3\) mollesque\(^*\) coronae\(^4\) purpuraque\(^5\) et pictis\(^6\) intextum\(^7\) vestibus\(^8\) aurum. Quem quidem ego actutum\(^9\) (modo vos absistite\(^{10}\)) cogam adsumptumque\(^{11}\) patrem commentaque\(^{12}\) sacra\(^*\) fateri.\(^{13}\)

“An satis Acrisio\(^{14}\) est animi contemnere\(^{15}\) vanum\(^{16}\) numen et Argolicas\(^{17}\) venienti claudere portas, Penthea terrebit cum totis advena\(^{18}\) Thebis?

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1 madidus, -a, -um wet, drenched, soaked.
2 murra, -ae f. myrrh.
3 crinis, -is m. hair.
4 corōna, -ae f. wreath, garland; crown.
5 purpura, -ae f. purple dye; purple cloth.
6 pingō, -ere, pinxi, pictum tr. to paint, color.
7 intexō, -ere, -uī, -textum tr. to weave into, embroider on (+ABL.).
8 vestis, -is f. (sg. or pl.) clothes, clothing.
9 āctūtum immediately.
10 absistō, -ere, -stīti intr. to stand back; stop.
11 adsūmō, -ere, -sūmpsi, -sūmptum tr. to take for oneself, take possession of; adopt, borrow.
12 commentus, -a, -um fabricated, pretend, bogus, unauthentic.
13 fateor, -ēri, fassus sum tr. to confess (to), acknowledge.
14 Acrisius, -ii m. Acrisius, a king of Argos.
15 contemnō, -ere, -tēmpsi, -temptum tr. to treat with contempt, despise; disregard; reject.
16 vānus, -a, -um empty, insubstantial, devoid of (+GEN.); untrustworthy, mendacious, false; useless, vain, silly, fatuous.
17 Argolicus, -a, -um of Argos, Argive.
18 advena, -ae m./f. foreigner, visitor; newcomer, stranger, intruder.
555 - 556. crinis ... coronae ... purpureae ... aurum: the verb iuvant, from the first half of the relative clause, also governs this list of nouns. murra: what case is this, and why?

557. Quem: connecting relative (cf. 521).

modo vos absistite: with this parenthetical aside, we can see how Pentheus senses that his audience disagrees with his assessment of the threat to Thebes. What do you think? That is, has Pentheus convinced you of the danger to his city? Either way, the indirect statement that follows is perhaps the pièce de résistance of his entire argument (and yet, it, too, falls flat)...

558. adsumptum ... patrem: (lit.) “a borrowed father.” Pentheus is challenging the very notion of Bacchus’ divinity! The story goes – as Ovid tells us earlier in Bk. 3 (259ff.) – that Bacchus was the product of a secret relationship between Jupiter and Cadmus’ daughter, Semele – sister of Agave, Pentheus’ mother – thus making Pentheus and Bacchus first cousins!

Apparently, then, Pentheus is jealous of Bacchus’ pedigree, as Pentheus’ own father, Echion, possessed a lineage neither human nor divine; in fact, Echion, having been created from the teeth of the Ismenian serpent, possessed no lineage at all (see line 544, note).

Given this very personal accusation, however oblique, how do you think the Thebans in his audience would respond? Has Pentheus now endeared himself to them by revealing the imposture of his opponent, or has he further alienated himself from them by grabbing at straws, so to speak, in a feeble attempt to poke a hole in a generally accepted fana?

559. Acrisio: a mythical king of Argos, Acrisius famously tried to kill his daughter Danaë and her son Perseus, only to be killed years later by Perseus himself (Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibliotheca 2.4.1); although, as William Anderson points out in his own commentary, Pentheus here seems to be referring to an otherwise unknown story of Acrisius’ barring Bacchus from his own city.

animi: given its fairly ambiguous location in the line, the word animi could either be a partitive gen. with satis (“Can it be that Acrisius has enough courage…?”) or, perhaps more enticingly, a gen. of description with vanum (“Can it be that it’s okay for Acrisius to reject the numen [who is] devoid of courage…?”). Which of these two readings do you think is more likely? Is one more damning of Bacchus than the other?

contennere: recall that Ovid refers to Pentheus as a contemptor superum at line 514. On a deeper level, perhaps Pentheus wants to know why it is somehow acceptable for others to despise the gods, but not for him?

561. Another example of asyndeton (“...[and yet] the advena will terrify Pentheus...?" cf. 551).

cum totis ... Thebis: another ambiguous statement. Should this prepositional phrase be attached to the subject, i.e. the advena, or the direct object, i.e. Pentheus? In other words, in this rhetorical statement at the end of Pentheus’ speech, are the Thebans ganging up on their beleaguered king or are they, too, being terrified by Bacchus? And is their internal evidence in either direction?
Itē cītī”¹ – famulis² hoc imperat – “Itē ducemque attrahite³ huc vinctum!⁴ Iussis⁵ mora⁶ segnis⁷ abesto!”

III. They Capture a Devotee (3.564-581)

Hunc avus,⁸ hunc Athamas,⁹ hunc cetera turba suorum corripiunt¹⁰ dictis frustraque inhibere¹¹ laborant; acrior admonitu¹² est irritaturque¹³ retenta et crescit rabies,¹⁴ moderaminaque¹⁵ ipsa nocebant.

Sic ego torrentem,¹⁶ qua nil obstabat¹⁷ eunti, lenius¹⁸ et modico¹⁹ strepitu²⁰ decurrere²¹ vidi;

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¹ cītus, -a, -um quick.
² famulus, -i m. servant, attendant, slave.
³ attrahō, -ere, -trāxi, -tractum tr. to draw towards, drag by force; compel to come, attract.
⁴ vinciō, -ire, vinxī, vīncūtum tr. to fasten, bind; tie up, fetter.
⁵ iussum, -i nt. an order, command.
⁶ mora, -ae f. a delay, waste of time; obstacle.
⁷ segnis, -e slow, sluggish, torpid.
⁸ avus, -i m. grandfather.
⁹ Athamās, -antis m. Athamas, husband of Ino, Pentheus’ and Bacchus’ aunt (and see side comm.).
¹⁰ corripiō, -ere, -ui, -reptum tr. to seize, carry off, apprehend; rebuke, reproach, find fault with.
¹¹ inhibitō, -ēre, -uī, -itum tr. to restrain; curb, check.
¹² admonitus, -ūs m. a reminder; advice, recommendation; warning.
¹³ irritō = irritō (1) tr. to anger, provoke, stir up; annoy, irritate.
¹⁴ rabīes, (-ēī) f. savageness, ferocity; passion, frenzy, madness.
¹⁵ moderāmen, -inis nt. physical control (e.g. of a ship); control of affairs, government.
¹⁶ torrēns, -entis m. a rushing stream, torrent; current (of a river).
¹⁷ obstō, -āre, -itū, -stātum intr. to get in the way of, obstruct (+DAT.).
¹⁸ lēniter gently, mildly.
¹⁹ modicus, -a, -um moderate, slight.
²⁰ strepitus, -ūs m. noise, din.
²¹ dēcurrō, -ere, -(cu)currī, -cursum intr. to run down, flow down.
562 - 563. ducem ... vincum: why do you think Pentheus wants his attendants to capture Bacchus alive? Why not neutralize the threat entirely by having him killed?


![](image)

A Greek Silver Stater from Thebes, with a Boeotian shield (obverse) and a bearded Dionysus (reverse), ca. 405-395 BCE. (Courtesy of “Ancient Art,” flickr.com)

How might this image of Bacchus, in contrast to the more youthful depiction in line 553, fit this upcoming section about the capture of one of his devotees?

Moreover, what makes the inclusion of the shield on the coin so interesting vis-à-vis Pentheus’ speech?

564. Hunc ... hunc ... hunc: one direct object (i.e. Pentheus) repeated three times. Why? (Note also its juxtaposition to the three subjects of the verb corripiunt.)

avus: i.e. Cadmus, who is also Bacchus’ grandfather (see 558, note), and so who might naturally be sympathetic to both of his grandchildren.

Athamas: husband of Ino, Pentheus’ and Bacchus’ aunt. Cadmus had four daughters – Autonoë (who appears later in the story, at 720), Agave (Pentheus’ mother, who also appears later, at 713), Semele (Bacchus’ mother, mentioned above, at 520, and see 558, note), and Ino, who, as Ovid describes earlier in Bk. 3 (at 313), reared Bacchus when he was an infant in the wake of his mother’s death. (Ino also appears later on, at 722.) Thus, Athamas, too, would have felt sympathy for Bacchus and might have taken issue with Pentheus’ plan.

suorum: who else might be in this scene among the cetera turba suorum?

566 - 567. iniritaturque retenta et crescit rabies = et rabies retenta iniritatur crescitque.

567. moderaminaque: some editions of Ovid’s text have the word remoräminaque, “hindrances,” instead. Which do you think works makes more sense? (For more on this, see the Bibliography.)

568. sic ego torrentem … decurrere vidi: indirect statement.
at quacumque\(^1\) trابes\(^2\) obstructa\(\)que\(^3\) saxa tenebant, 570
spume\(u\)s\(^4\) et fervens\(^5\) et ab obice\(^6\) saevior\(^7\) ibat.

Ecce cruentati\(^8\) redeunt et, Bacchus ubi esset, 575
quaerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt;
“Hunc” dixere, “tamen comitem\(^9\) famulumque\(^*\) sacrorum\(^*\)
cepimus” et tradunt manibus post terga\(^10\) ligatis\(^11\)
sacra\(^*\) dei quondam\(^12\) Tyrrena\(^13\) gente secutum.

Adspicito\(^14\) hunc Pentheus oculis, quos ira tremendos\(^15\) 580
fecerat et, quamquam poenae vix tempora differt,\(^16\)
“O periture tuaque aliiis documenta\(^17\) dature
morte,” ait, “ede tuum nomen nomenque parentum
et patriam morisque novi cur sacra\(^*\) frequentes.”\(^18\)

\(^1\) quαcumque wherever.
\(^2\) trαbes, -bis f. tree trunk, log.
\(^3\) obstruō, -ere, -struxi, -structum tr., intr. to block, obstruct; erect as a barrier (and see side comm.).
\(^4\) spume\(u\)s, -a, -um foamy, frothy.
\(^5\) fervens, -entis intensely hot, boiling; seething, raging.
\(^6\) ōbex, -icis m./f. barrier, obstacle.
\(^7\) saevus, -a, -um harsh, savage, wild, violent, fierce.
\(^8\) cruentō (1) tr. to stain with blood.
\(^9\) comes, -itis m./f. companion, friend, partner; follower, worshipper, devotee.
\(^10\) tergum, -i nt. back; (pl.) the rear, tail (of an army) (see side comm.).
\(^11\) ligō (1) tr. to fasten, bind; tie up.
\(^12\) quondam formerly, at an earlier time.
\(^13\) Tyrhēnus, -a, -um Tuscan, Etruscan; (broadly) Italian (and see side comm.).
\(^14\) adspiciō, -ere, -spexī, -spectum tr. to notice, observe; look at, gaze upon, examine; turn towards, face.
\(^15\) tremendus, -a, -um causing dread, awe-inspiring, terrible.
\(^16\) differō, -ferre, distuli, dilātum tr. to carry away, disperse; postpone, put off, delay.
\(^17\) documentum, -i nt. example, warning; instruction, lesson.
\(^18\) frequentō (1) tr. to make crowded; visit repeatedly, frequent; celebrate, observe, attend.
568 - 571. obstabat ... obstructa ... obice: note the repetition of the prefix ob- (“on account of”) in words that underscore the cause of the raging of the water. Moreover, notice how each of these words comes at roughly the same place in their respective lines.

570. obstructa ... saxa: does not equal the English here, as in “obstructed rocks,” (which, of course, would make no sense, for the rocks themselves are doing the obstructing), but rather, “rocks erected as a barrier” for the rushing stream (OLD 1).

571. ab obice: unusual use of the preposition with an abl. of means/cause. As ab with a preposition usually indicates agency, perhaps Ovid is subtly personifying the barrier?

572 - 573. et ... vidisse negarunt: another example of indirect statement. Bacchus ubi esset: indirect question after quaerenti (“...to their master, [who was] asking where Bacchus was”). negarunt = negaverunt.

574. dixere = dixerunt.

575. manibus post terga ligatis: beyond the surface translation that describes the captive’s hands tied behind his back, perhaps Ovid is playing with the double meaning of manus and also means to say, “with a band of men fastened to the rear,” i.e. this follower of Bacchus comes with the danger of a militaristic reprisal – a foreshadowing of the barbarous attack on the body of Pentheus, and one that he himself wished for earlier back at line 549.

576. sacra: direct object of secutum, which is itself a direct object of tradunt.

Tyrrenha gente: as Anderson asserts, this points to the earlier history of the Etruscans as inhabitants of Lydia (in modern Turkey), as per Herodotus 1.94, not their eventual home on the Italian peninsula, which makes sense considering that the captive himself says that he is from Maeonia at line 583. But why does Ovid tell us this here? Perhaps to illustrate that he was originally an Etruscan – hence the word quondam – but now, as a secutor sacrorum, he has become peripatetic.

578. quamquam poenae vix tempora differt: Pentheus knows it would be a waste to simply kill this captive, but his anger is making it difficult for him not to.

579. periture ... dature: vocative, future active participles. Note the succinctness with which Ovid expresses what might otherwise be a much longer statement. tua ... morte: another example of hyperbaton (cf. 511).

581. morisque novi cur sacra frequentes = et cur sacra moris novi frequentes. And thus Ovid sets up a story-within-a-story that will take up the next 110 lines...
PART TWO
Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus… Examined
A Deeper Look: Essential Questions for Understanding Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus

As you read through these questions, remember that they are there both to guide you toward a better immediate understanding and also to point you toward what will help you later on in the story as you synthesize what you have learned from the entirety of the narrative.

To that end, keep in mind the following...

* Your best and arguably only important source for understanding Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus is the Latin text itself. This book offers a number of tools that provide you with a framework for your reading, but they are merely scaffolding to your efforts. They will help you, provoke you, and even incense you if you strongly disagree with what you see. But only Ovid’s Latin offers you evidence to support your point of view.

* Even so, later in this book, you will find additional texts in the form of excerpts from Euripides’ Greek play, The Bacchae, and because they, too, are primary sources, they will provide you with a point of comparison with which to further your understanding of Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus.

* Lastly, in your efforts to gain this deeper understanding, you may wish to seek out secondary sources, or modern scholarship, and so this book provides you with a bibliography for doing so toward the end. Still, just as you have done here, make sure to read carefully the opening that precedes that section, too!

I. Pentheus and Tiresias: The Prediction (3.511-527)

Cognita res... cladem lucis ademptae obicit (511-16)

Who is Tiresias? And more importantly, why does Pentheus treat him so poorly? Based only on this opening paragraph, what sort of person is Pentheus? More broadly, does Ovid provide his readers/audience with clues as to why Pentheus is the way he is/does what he does?
Ille movens… vidisse quereris (516-25)

What is the tone of Tiresias’ response to Pentheus’ ill treatment of him? To wit, is Tiresias’ prediction, in fact, a response at all? Or is he merely sharing with him what will happen if he continues to be the way he is/do what he does? In other words, how personally connected is Tiresias to this prediction?

Talia dicentem… responsaeque vatis aguntur (526-7)

What is the effect of Ovid calling Pentheus “Echione natus” here? What does this “Echione natus” do to Tiresias and why does Ovid feel that we need to know about it? Moreover, in line 527, how is the second half of the sentence any different from the first? (HINT: What are some differences between “dicta” and “responsa,” or between “sequitur” and “aguntur”?)

“Nam duo magnorum viridi coeuntia silva
corpora serpentum baculi violaverat ictu.”

In an earlier story in Bk. 3 of Ovid’s Metamorphoses (316-38), Tiresias is transformed into a woman after striking two snakes with a stick. (He is later changed back.)

Engraving, from Die Verwandlungen des Ovidii: in zweyhundert und sechs und zwanzig Kupfern,
by Johann Ulrich Krauss, ca. 1690.

(For another Metamorphoses engraving by Krauss, see pg. 111.)
II. Bacchus Arrives, Pentheus Complains (3.528-563)

**Liber adest... ad sacra feruntur (528-30)**

Who (or, more accurately, what) is the subject of “fremunt”? In fact, take a look at all the subjects in this short paragraph – Ovid is making very deliberate choices here as to who and what are the main focuses of the emerging Bacchanalia taking place near Thebes. What, then, do these choices tell you about what is going on?

**Quis furor... tympana vincant (531-7)**

This paragraph contains perhaps the most syntactically complicated sentence in the entire story, and it is the opening salvo in Pentheus’ lengthy speech to the Thebans about the presence of Bacchus. Why do you think Ovid/Pentheus chose to begin these important remarks in this way? (NB: Keep in mind that this is the choice of both the poet and his main character!)

**Vosne, senes... non fronde decebant (538-42)**

There are several contrasts in this paragraph. Aside from the most prominent one – i.e. that between the “senes” and the “iuvenes” – what others do you notice? More importantly, why does Ovid/Pentheus make these distinctions? That is, what do you think he hopes to accomplish by dividing people (and things) into separate categories?

**Este, precor... retinet deus (543-8)**

Notice, now, that Ovid/Pentheus brings these two groups back together, pointing markedly to their shared ancestry, the serpens from whom they all sprang (either literally or metaphorically). With what qualities does this creature provide them? And why reference the serpens rather than their human progenitor, Cadmus?
Si fata vetabant... pudore carerent (548-52)

What do you think Ovid/Pentheus means by the phrase, “Essemus miseris sine crimen”? As you ponder this, consider the following salient features of this paragraph: What sort of vocabulary does he use here? Why is the actual threat to Thebes worse than the one he longs for? And finally, what are the grammatical moods of the verbs, and why do they matter?

At nunc... sacra fateri (553-58)

In this paragraph, Ovid/Pentheus moves away from the Thebans as a whole and homes in on the locus of the threat itself. In his mind, what makes Bacchus so dangerous? Furthermore, what language does he use to frame this threat in more personal terms – that is, personal both to himself and to Bacchus?

“Vosne, senes, mirer...?”

Do you think the above depiction matches that put forth by Pentheus of the Thebans? What details echo Ovid’s text, and how?

Cadmus Building Thebes, etching, 24.3 x 29.4 cm, anonymous (artist known as the “Master of the Story of Cadmus”), active ca. 1542-47.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.
(not on display)
An satis... iussis moris segnis abesto (559-63)

Why do you think Ovid/Pentheus finishes his speech by comparing his experience of Bacchus’ visit to that of another king? In a similar vein, what does the ambiguity of the phrase “cum totis... Thebis” (see commentary) add to his rhetorical question? Lastly, why does he immediately call for his attendants to bring Bacchus to him – and why “vinctum”?

III. They Capture a Devotee (3.564-581)

Hunc avus... ipsa nocebant (564-7)

Here Ovid offers his readers/audience a crucial window into the psychological world of his troubled main character. What makes this paragraph so informative? That is, what have you learned about Pentheus’ role in his family? And does this in any way change your perception of why he is the way he is/does what he does?

Sic ego... saevior ibat (568-71)

Why do you think Ovid injects himself into the simile (“sic ego... vidi”)? Does it disrupt the narrative? Does it fit in seamlessly? And anyhow, since he describes Pentheus’ anger in the previous paragraph so vividly already, what does the imagery he puts forth add to our understanding? For that matter, does it add anything at all?

Ecce cruentati... gente secutum (572-6)

As usual, Ovid uses very specific language to describe the scene – this time, the return of the men who were sent to capture Bacchus. Why do you think they were “cruentati”? And who did they actually bring back? In fact, what two words do they use to describe him? Where have we seen one of these words before?
Adspicit hunc... sacra frequentes (577-81)

Why do you think Ovid takes the time to describe the *oculi* of Pentheus? Does it remind you of an earlier part of the story? (HINT: Think back to Tiresias and his prediction!) For that matter, where else had the poet used the word “*tempora*”? How do these two words relate to what Pentheus says to the captive at the end of this paragraph?

“For a continuation of these essential question sets on Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus, up through the climactic scene of his tragic death – the fruition of the prophesy of Tiresias – see the “*Preview of Vols. 2 & 3*” later on in this book.”
A Deeper Look, *Iterum*: Further Inquiry for Understanding Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus

Originally conceived as content that would be exclusive to a teacher’s edition of this text, I decided to include this section – that is, my own observations and thoughts (but be prepared for even more questions, too!) – in order to allow students to see how I personally have come to view Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus after several years of discussing it with them.

My thinking is that the Internet is a place both fertile and furtive, so rather than shield you from something I would readily share in front of a classroom full of interested Latin enthusiasts, why not save you the hassle of surreptitiously finding this on your own and instead offer it to you as part of the package?

Still, it comes with *caveats*…

* This is literature, which means that inherently there are multiple points of view. Your own observations and thoughts will serve you far better than simply dutifully accepting my guidance. In fact, by the time you read them, I will likely have changed my own mind about a few things.

* Before you dive in here, make sure you take time to read Ovid’s Latin carefully. Process it. Write notes about it. Ponder the question sets in the previous section. Then do some more writing of your own. Once you have thoroughly engaged with the text, feel free to read below. And even then, keep a healthy dose of skepticism about you!

* There is so much joy to be had in the close examination of literature and that much more in the sharing of ideas about it, so make sure you discuss with others what you have read in Ovid, and what you agree or disagree with here. I guarantee that by doing so, and by listening to the observations and thoughts of others, you will learn even more!

Oh, and one last thing. At the end of this lengthier section, you will find *Endnotes* that serve as both bibliographic repositories and also *even further inquiries* into some of the topics and texts I discuss here. If you have the time and are enjoying a particular discussion, you may enjoy those, too.

Okay, ready? Read on…
Cognita res… cladem lucis ademptae obicit (511-16)

Who is Tiresias? And more importantly, why does Pentheus treat him so poorly? Based only on this opening paragraph, what sort of person is Pentheus? More broadly, does Ovid provide his readers/audience with clues as to why Pentheus is the way he is/does what he does?

Ovid’s first sentence provides a rich picture of the prophet Tiresias’ standing in the ancient Greek world following his successful prediction of Narcissus’ death (see commentary) in the previous story. Look back at the adjectives he employs…

Cognita res meritam vati per Achaidas urbes
attulerat famam, nomenque erat auguris ingens.

Indeed, his achievement was “cognita,” his fame “meritam,” and his name “ingens.” Moreover, Tiresias became famous, as the Latin says, with word having spread “per Achaidas urbes” – which for that time may as well have been the world over – all because, frankly, he got it right.

So when we think about who Tiresias is, based on the language in front of us, he is someone people liked, a lot, and perhaps just as relevant, he is someone Ovid respects. And yet, Pentheus is this thorn in the side of an otherwise positive moment, a man who seems to bring his own issues to the discussion, for whom Ovid has three particular descriptions…

Spernit Echionides tamen hunc ex omnibus unus,
contemptor superum Pentheus…

Firstly, he is the son of someone named Echion (whose background Ovid will allude to obliquely later on), and so somehow this relationship is important to our understanding; next, and this is compelling, he is the only person around who has a problem with Tiresias, setting his action – and really, his opinion – glaringly apart from a general consensus about the goodness of the seer; and lastly, he hates the gods, which, in the world of Greek mythology, has got to be one of the most distasteful opinions a mortal can have – distasteful, and as we’ll see, perilous, as this is a key ingredient of his potent mix of tragic flaws that will lead to his demise.

As you read on, keep an open mind, though, about Pentheus. He may be cruel here to Tiresias, ridiculing his physical disability, no doubt an offputting first impression if there
ever was one in literature, but we actually don’t know why he acts the way he does, which means we have to leave that question unanswered for now. Ovid seems to want to paint a highly negative picture of him to start with, but those three descriptions are, in fact, clues to a deeper understanding of Pentheus that the poet is imploring us to consider: What is the nature of Pentheus’ relationship with his father, Echion? And would that relationship have something to do with his singular, cruel treatment of a popular, even beloved, old man? And finally, why does it matter here that he hates the gods?

Ille movens... vidisse quereris (516-25)

What is the tone of Tiresias’ response to Pentheus’ ill treatment of him? To wit, is Tiresias’ prediction, in fact, a response at all? Or is he merely sharing with him what will happen if he continues to be the way he is/do what he does? In other words, how personally connected is Tiresias to this prediction?

On the one hand, Tiresias uses very specific language that directly addresses the taunting that he receives from Pentheus. In fact, he opens and closes with references to his lack of vision, and in a noticeably miffed tone at that...

“Quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis huius orbus,” ait, “fiere, ne Bacchica sacra videres!”
...
Eveniet! Neque enim dignabere numen honore, meque sub his tenebris nimium vidisse quereris.”

Loosely put, Tiresias tells Pentheus that Pentheus’ having the gift of sight is actually no gift at all considering what he is fated to see, and that once Pentheus does see (and experience) this awful thing, he will realize that Tiresias is the one between them who has real vision, albeit one that does not reside in the physical realm of light.

In that sense, then, Tiresias is almost defensive in his very personal response, almost knee-jerk for such a well-respected elder of the ancient world.

But I say “almost” on both counts because Ovid as the storyteller sets up Tiresias’ response/prediction in a specific, perhaps even striking way...

Ille movens albentia tempora canis...
SPERNIT ECHIONIDES
Ovid’s Pentheus

The image here is that of a venerable and thoughtful senex, someone who is about to go into deep thought in order to share something profound. (To give you a sense of this image, take two fingers on each hand and slowly move your own temples.) In a way, this brief description belies the snark that accompanies his prediction and lends it a gravitas it might not otherwise have. As a result, does it somehow soften Tiresias’ defensiveness and make for a more measured delivery of bad news?

Incidentally, Ovid’s poetry is filled with words he recycles from earlier passages, sometimes from the same story and sometimes from different works altogether, which makes reading it in the original Latin and comparing these instances an everpresent treat. Consider two intriguing examples, both related to this line…

Per reditus corpusque tuum, mea numina, iuro
perque pares animi coniugique faces
perque quod ut videam canis albere capillis,
quad tecum possis ipse referre, caput…

(Stabiae 13.159-62)

Quem nisi templorum fuersi dignatus honore…

(in hoc loc. 521)

In the first example, Ovid is writing a love letter as Laodamia, the young wife of Protesilaus, a hero of the Trojan War who died in battle. In her remarks to her beloved husband, she wishes for his return so that she could be with him in his old age. How might this passage inform our understanding of Tiresias’ status here? That is, how does Ovid view old age in this love letter, and is it the same in our paragraph in the Metamorphoses?

The second example of repeated language shows up in Tiresias’ prediction right here, six lines later, but presents a different analytical challenge because the word is related, though not directly: namely, the word for the side of your forehead, or “temple,” is etymologically connected to the Latin word templum, a structure that Tiresias insists Pentheus will not build in Bacchus’ honor. (For more on this connection, look up the English word “temple” in the Online Etymology Dictionary, www.etymonline.com.) Why do you think Ovid conspicuously places these two words together? In other words, what sort of connection does he want his readers/audience to make about Tiresias’ thought process and Pentheus’ troubling future?
Talia dicentem… responsaeque vatis aguntur (526-7)

What is the effect of Ovid calling Pentheus “Echione natus” here? What does this “Echione natus” do to Tiresias and why does Ovid feel that we need to know about it? Moreover, in line 527, how is the second half of the sentence any different from the first? (HINT: What are some differences between “dicta” and “responsa,” or between “sequitur” and “aguntur”?)

As you consider an answer to this question set, recall that this father-son relationship is how Ovid first introduces Pentheus, so his revisiting it now draws further attention to its significance.

In this line, our main character, rather than responding to this dire prediction with verbal sparring (a lengthy speech by Pentheus is coming shortly), drives him off, “proturbat,” a curious word that stems from the more common turba, a noun that refers to a crowd but indicates confusion, uproar, disturbance. This compound verb form is often used in a military context – that is, something an army or political leader might do to an enemy – and as we will see, this fits Pentheus’ mindset quite well. Moreover, as Ovid will allude to later on, Echion is a soldier, and that is not just something he does, but his very essence, his reason for having been created in the first place.

The following sentence carries even more meaning, as the words Ovid chooses are loaded with a variety of uses. For example, “fides,” as the gloss below the text tells you, can mean “trust” or “faith,” as well as “fulfillment” of a prediction. So what is the poet getting at when he tells us, in effect, that all of these things followed the words of the prophet? Perhaps Tiresias’ only critic will soon enough come to believe in the accuracy of his predictions, on the one hand, and whether Pentheus does or not, Ovid is assuring us, on the other hand, that they will, in fact, come true, confirming Tiresias’ bold statement, “Eveniet,” two lines above.

Lastly, Ovid asserts his opinion that Tiresias’ remarks were, indeed, also “responsa” to Pentheus’ mean treatment, and that they, too, came true. In other words, Ovid has divided Tiresias’ remarks into two distinct entities – the matter-of-fact, measured prediction (the “dicta”) and the defensive, knee-jerk reaction to being taunted for his lack of vision (the “responsa”) – and they both matter for our understanding of the tragedy that befalls his taunter.

At this point, we are done with the character of Tiresias, having served as the bridge between the stories of Narcissus and Pentheus. And though he no longer appears in the narrative, keep in mind the difference between these two aspects of his contribution, the dicta and the responsa. Pentheus is a highly provocative character, but resist the urge to simply react each time you come across one of his provocations. This tension between a measured assessment of who he is and the arms-in-the-air, expected response to a seemingly
horrible person is built into Ovid’s treatment of the myth. After all, if Pentheus does not
garner some degree of sympathy from you, is it really tragic for him to die the way we
already know he will?

“...meque sub his tenebris nimium vidisse quereris.”

Tiresias appears in a number of stories in Greek mythology, including this above scene from Bk. 11 of the Odyssey, where he is consulted by
Odysseus about Odysseus’ voyage home. Does this depiction of Tiresias mesh with your own idea of him based on Ovid’s text?

_Tiresias Appears to Ulysses During the Sacrifice_, watercolor painting, 91.4 x 62.8 cm,
by Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1741-1825.
Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria.
A lot about the subjects in this paragraph stand out. For one, they bookend the first two lines, which certainly calls attention to them, and they also take up the lion’s share of space in the last clause, the longest of the four here…

Liber adest, festisque fremunt ululatibus agri:
turba ruit, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur.

Moreover, they tell the story of these sacred rites in an unusual way, simply by being different from what you might expect. Let’s take a closer look…

Liber: This, of course, is Bacchus, but Ovid’s appellative choice stresses the freedom and lack of moral restraint that has also arrived in the area of Thebes. Additionally, the word also means “child” (you may be familiar with the more common plural form, liberi), which, as we will soon see, is one of the aspects of this threat to his city that irks Pentheus most (553).

agri: It isn’t the people who are howling here (although we will eventually hear one of them howl, too), it’s the fields, personified almost as a response to Bacchus’ presence. How does this personification add to your understanding of the scene?

turba: Actually, for a wild party in the woods, there isn’t anything unexpected about this noun, which conveys disorder and general rowdiness, but its constituents do tell a particular tale. Read on.

matresque nurusque: A curious combination, right? After all, wouldn’t you expect Ovid to say mothers and daughters, not daughters-in-law? Well, consider – as you often will throughout the text – the relationship at play. Firstly, mothers and daughters-in-law don’t always agree with each other, so Ovid is describing a range of women, likely with differing interests, but who are attending the same event. Also, and this more subtle, if these women have daughters-in-law, that indicates that they are old enough to have sons of marriageable age, whereas if Ovid had said
daughters, we wouldn’t know that this youthful god is attracting even a large number of older women to such debauched activities.

vulgusque procresque: In the second of the two sets of contrasts, Ovid is telling us that attendance at these rites was not the province of one class exclusively, but rather that they subsumed both extremes of the social structure of Thebes, and presumably every class in between.

With this dominance and diversity of subjects, what is Ovid getting at about the Bacchic rites? Better yet, are there any groups of people who are not featured prominently – that is, who are not the subjects – here? (HINT: What case is “viris,” and why is that important?)

Quis furor... tympana vincant (531-7)

This paragraph contains perhaps the most syntactically complicated sentence in the entire story, and it is the opening salvo in Pentheus’ lengthy speech to the Thebans about the presence of Bacchus. Why do you think Ovid/Pentheus chose to begin these important remarks in this way? (NB: Keep in mind that this is the choice of both the poet and his main character!)

The NOTA BENE here is key because it reminds you that the historical Ovid and the fictional Pentheus necessarily have separate motivations. The former, as a writer, has a readership/listening audience he likely wants to impress with his linguistic prowess, while the latter, as a king, a roomful of his subjects to convince of their having been swept up in something terrible.

Either way, though, both the speechwriter and his orator want to get their message across to a group of people, and it is uncanny how well this entire quotation fits the traditional Roman concept of how a speech should be structured. Consider this rough outline of a proper oration, as laid out in Bk. 1 of the Rhetorica ad Herennium, a document of uncertain origin (to us, anyway, not necessarily the ancients) that was popular before and during Ovid’s time, and for centuries beyond...

Inventio in sex partes orationis consumitur: in exordium, narrationem, divisionem, confirmationem, confutationem, conclusionem.

Exordium est principium orationis, per quod animus auditoris constituitur ad audiendum. (III.4)
The exordium, or introduction, according to this text, is when the audience decides if it’s going to pay attention, and given the inflammatory content in the opening paragraph in this speech to the Thebans, this idea was not lost on either the writer or the speaker. Moreover, the “causa” – that is, the reason, the purpose, or even simply the subject matter – behind Pentheus’ speech fits one of the types that the Rhetorica describes a proper oration contains down to a T…

Causa posita, quo commodius exordiri possimus genus causae est considerandum. Genera causarum sunt quattuor: honestum, turpe, dubium, humile…
Turpe genus intellegitur cum aut honesta res oppugnatur aut defenditur turpis. (III.5)

As you read through the above description, ask yourself, how does the opening to Pentheus’ speech address both “honesta res oppugnatur” and “defenditur turpis”? (HINT: Not sure what the Latin adjective turpis means? What about turpitude, its English derivative most commonly used in a discussion of questionably morality?)

Lastly, the Rhetorica goes into two specific methods for dealing with a “turpe genus,” both of which suit the syntactically complicated sentence in Ovid’s text…

Ab adversariorum persona benvolentia captabitur si eos in odium, in invidiam, in contemptionem adducemus. (V.8)

Deinceps de insinuatione aperiendum est… cum turpe causam habemus, hoc est, cum ipsa res animum auditoris a nobis alienat. (VI.9)

In the first method, the Rhetorica advocates a discussion of the “persona adversariorum” that will lead the audience toward odium, invidia (ill will or spite), and/or contemptio. Do you think the complicated sentence in our paragraph does this for the Thebans? (Or, at the very least, do you think this is Pentheus’ aim?)

And in the second method, the Rhetorica suggests using insinuatio, which the OLD defines rather usefully for us as “beginning a speech in which the favour of the judges is obtained by indirect means.” Do you think our sentence here employs this? Moreover, does this accomplish the goals of both Ovid the speechwriter and Pentheus the speaker?
Vosne, senes... non fronde debat (538-42)

There are several contrasts in this paragraph. Aside from the most prominent one – i.e. that between the “senes” and the “iuvenses” – what others do you notice? More importantly, why does Ovid/Pentheus make these distinctions? That is, what do you think he hopes to accomplish by dividing people (and things) into separate categories?

Actually, looking at these contrasts through the lens the Rhetorica (see just above) really helps us to understand their usefulness here. Consider the first two types of narratio, which the OLD defines as “that part of a speech which sets out the facts of a case” (in non-rhetorical contexts, it is simply a story)…

Narrationum tria sunt genera:

Unum est cum exponimus rem gestam et unum quidque
trahimus ad utilitatem nostram vincendi causa…

Alterum genus est narrationis, quod intercurrit nonnumquam
aut fidei aut criminationis aut transitionis aut alicuius
apparationis causa. (VIII.12)

In the first type, the speaker explains a res gesta (actually, it’s usually in the plural), a term referring to someone’s previous actions or achievements – the most famous example in Latin literature is the Emperor Augustus’ Res gestae divi Augusti, a funerary document etched in stone that was reproduced throughout the empire in which he gives a first-person account of what he accomplished during his lifetime in service to Rome and its people – the purpose of delineating which, according to the Rhetorica, being to win advantage for yourself.

Look back now at what Pentheus says to and about the senes and the contrast between what they had done for their own communities and what they are allowing to happen now. Does this fit the construct of this type of narratio? And does referencing it work to Pentheus’ advantage? How?

In the second type, the purpose of a narratio is fourfold…

fides: To win the trust of your audience.
criminatio: To incriminate someone (likely your adversarius).
transicio: To take you to the next point in your speech.
apparatio alicuius: To prepare the audience for something coming up later.

To test the applicability here of the last two points you must read on in the speech, but look back now at what Pentheus says to and about the iuvenses. That he is looking to
incriminate Bacchus with the contrast to how the young men of Thebes should be carrying themselves is obvious, but why does he further describe their age as “acrior… propiorque meae” as compared to the elders? Might gaining their trust have something to do with it?

Well, put it this way: if you doubt that members of a younger generation feel more comfortable listening to people their own age, think about today’s ubiquitous celebrity endorsements, youth-oriented political organizations like Rock the Vote, and the cultural staying power of 1960s political activist Jack Weinberg’s famous admonitory coining, “Don’t trust anyone over 30.”vi

Este, precor… retinet decus (543-8)

Notice, now, that Ovid/Pentheus brings these two groups back together, pointing markedly to their shared ancestry, the serpens from whom they all sprang (either literally or metaphorically). With what qualities does this creature provide them? And why reference the serpens rather than their human progenitor, Cadmus?

This entire paragraph is an expansion of the word he used in his opening line (531) to describe one particular trait that their unusual ancestor held: namely, the willingness to kill or be killed in defense of his home…

…illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit unus, sumite serpentis! Pro fontibus ille lacuque interiit; at vos pro fama vincite vestra!
Ille dedit leto fortes…

In fact, because Cadmus let a part of the serpens live on – that is, live on to create the Thebans themselves – imploring them to remember him would have sent exactly the wrong message in his speech: that is, that the Thebans should be open to establishing a new tradition of Bacchic rites, to plant something of their own and let it live on. Indeed, nothing could be farther from what Pentheus wants!

Also, returning to proper oratorical structure (see the discussion on lines 531-7 above), we are now at the divisio, the first part of which the Rhetorica explains as follows…
Primum, perorata narratione, debemus aperire quid nobis
conveniat cum adversariis, si ea quae utilia sunt nobis
convenient, quid in controversia relictum est… (X.17)

NB: The verb conveniō here is being used impersonally, i.e. “…we ought to
explain what agreement there is for us and our adversaries, if there are
things agreeable for us that are useful [for us], [and] what is left for
debate…” (This relatively common usage in Latin tends to flummox
English speakers.)

In other words, the divisio is a time for the speaker to identify what everyone in the room
holds to be true, and then build upon that sentiment to his own advantage. That said, does
the origin story of the Thebans – and more importantly, what Pentheus does with it – fit
this to-do list? How?

In the second half of the divisio, the Rhetorica instructs the speaker to enumerate
his agenda for the audience as follows…

Enumeratione utemur cum dicemus numero quot de rebus
dicturi sumus. Eam plus quam trium partium numero esse non
opertet. (ibid.)

Essentially, according to these instructions, the speaker now needs to lay out the plan going
forward, but not exceed three items (as is later explained, if you list more than that, you
run the risk of not only being off in your count but also appearing disingenuous).

Knowing this, look back now at Ovid/Pentheus’ paragraph as he delineates the
lessons his Thebans ought to take from the serpens…

Pro fontibus ille lacuque
interii, at vos pro fama vincite vestra!
Ille dedit leto fortes, vos pellite molles
et patrium retinetae decus!

Lastly, the Rhetorica explains that expositio, or an explanation, must go hand in hand
with this number, and that this explanation must be “breviter et absolute” (ibid.). In
your own estimation, does Pentheus lay out a clear (yet flexible) plan here, is it based on a
premise they can all agree on, and is this list concise and complete?
Si fata vetabant… pudore carerent (548-52)

What do you think Ovid/Pentheus means by the phrase, “Essemus miseris sine criminibus”? As you ponder this, consider the following salient features of this paragraph: What sort of vocabulary does he use here? Why is the actual threat to Thebes worse than the one he longs for? And finally, what are the grammatical moods of the verbs, and why do they matter?

Let’s take the last question first, but let’s take it from the first line of the paragraph in the Latin. That verb vetabant, as the facing commentary points out, is in the indicative, serving in the protasis of a mixed condition because diruerent and sonarent, in the apodosis, are both subjunctive. The lights on our radars should be going off now because mixed conditions, by definition, break convention, so Ovid must be telling us something interesting.

In fact, he is, and all we need to do is follow his lead…

Si fata vetabant

stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!

That indicative verb tells us that Pentheus here is fed up with what he actually sees, but then with the subjunctives, he begins to imagine an alternate, better reality – well, better in his mind, anyway. So what is irking him now? And what does he propose would be a more attractive alternative?

Now look closely at the vocabulary. He wants the threat to be “viri,” which stands in contrast to Ovid’s description of the rites just before the speech, where the subjects were “matres nurusque,” who were “mixtae… viris.” Why would it be better if men were taking the lead in damaging Thebes as opposed to women? Is it better for Pentheus? Better for the Thebans? Better in the minds of Ovid’s Roman readers/audience?

And what about the objects of war – why would “tormenta” be preferable to the objects that Pentheus mentioned earlier, the thyrsi or frons from line 542, or even something more elemental to the current experience, the vinum from line 536?

Lastly, how is the ambience in his threat fantasy – that is, the sounds of “ferrumque ignisque” – an improvement over the festi ululatus of line 528 or the various instruments in the opening paragraph of his speech – the “Aera... aere repulsa,” the “adunco tibia cornu,” or the “inania tympana”? And why do you think the surrounding noise is such an important factor to Pentheus?

Implicit in your answers to all of the above questions is the phrase with which this current inquiry started, as well as the elaboration that follows…
By the logic of this statement, being overtaken by what actually overtook the Thebans listening to Pentheus is a crimen, despite any immediate joy it may bring, and for which they themselves, not their attackers (that is, the women spearheading these rites) are responsible. Moreover, this mollitia – remember, Pentheus called the threat "molles" in the previous paragraph – is something to be hidden away, and for which they should feel shame.

But why tell them this, and why now? In fact, our continued employment of the Rhetorica (see the previous three sections) helps us here, too…

Nunc ad confirmationem et confutationem transeamus. Tota spes vincendi ratioque persuadendi posita est in confirmatione et in confutatione. (X.18)

This paragraph and the next of Ovid/Pentheus’ speech follow the dictates of confirmatio and confutatio, where his “whole hope of winning” and “method of persuading” lie. This makes sense because the OLD explains confirmatio as “that part of the speech which contains the proof of a case.” (We will discuss confutatio in the next section.)

As you might expect, the Rhetorica goes into great detail to describe the various ways of constructing both of these these parts of a proper speech. Here is one that our speechwriter/speech giver seems to have found useful…

Ex ratiocinatione controversia constat cum res sine propria leges venit in iudicium, quae tamen ab aliis legibus similitudine quadam aucupatur. (XIII.23)

Since orations in the Roman world were essentially the stuff of courtroom debate, every avenue for confirmatio dealt with in these pages involves how to handle laws and the opposing counsel. In this one, the Rhetorica suggests using ratiocinatio in a situation where there is no directly applicable law (“sine propria lege”), requiring the speaker to draw from analogous situations where there are such laws (“ab aliis legibus similitudine quadam”).

So ratiocinatio, then, is a process of reasoning. In fact, in Bk. 4, the Rhetorica goes even deeper into what exactly is involved…
Ratiocinatio est per quam ipsi a nobis rationem poscimus
quare quidque dicamus, et crebro nosmet a nobis petimus unius
cuiusque propositionis explanationem. (XVI.23)

As we go through the process of drawing from analogous situations, we must be thorough in our reasoning, as “we demand the reason why” (“rationem poscimus quare”) and “we ourselves repeatedly seek from ourselves an explanation” (“crebro nosmet a nobis petimus... explanationem”) for every part of our argument.

With such attention to detail required, you can see why confirmatio, or your proof, is so important to winning over your audience, right?

So let’s return now to our paragraph in Ovid/Pentheus’ speech and read through it again as a proof – a proof that employs ratiocinatio to drive home the core ideas of the divisio in the paragraph just before it: that the fama of the Thebans is at stake (“pro fama vincite vestra!”), that mollitia is destroying their core (“pellite molles!”), and that their decus is being questioned as a result (“patrium retinet de cus!”)...

Si fata vetabant
stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!
Essemus miseris sine crimine, sorsque querenda,
non celanda foris, lacrimaeque pudore cararent.

As you reread, what did you notice this time around? Does Ovid/Pentheus draw from a similar situation? Does he offer reasons for the demands he placed on the Thebans just before? Does he repeat his points in order to drive them home?

At nunc... sacra fateri (553-8)

In this paragraph, Ovid/Pentheus moves away from the Thebans as a whole and homes in on the locus of the threat itself. In his mind, what makes Bacchus so dangerous? Furthermore, what language does he use to frame this threat in more personal terms – that is, personal both to himself and to Bacchus?

Once again, let’s begin with the first couple of lines of the paragraph, which in this case create a logical transition from confirmatio to confutatio, or “the act of proving false” as the OLD defines it, as per the oratorical structure outlined by the Rhetorica (see the previous four sections)…
At nunc a puero Thebae capiuntur inermi,  
quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum…

Because Thebes was the focus of his ratiocination (indeed, the word, the process, exists in English, too – again, see the previous section), the passive construction works well here because it manages to emphasize both the subject of the action and its agent in equal measure as it turns our attention to the source of the problems that Pentheus has been identifying and developing thus far: unlike his threat fantasy, the actual destruction has not been spearheaded by a group of viri but by a puer, who importantly lacks all traditional forms of menace – no “bella,” no “tela” and no “usus equorum” – the enemy, in fact, is altogether inermis.

In the confutatio, however, the speaker needs to do more than simply shift the focus onto his opponent; as the Rhetorica explains rather succinctly, he must essentially tear him down to size…

Confutatio est contrariorum locorum dissolutio. (III.4)

The word “dissolutio,” the noun form of the verb dissolvo, carries with it a host of aggressive images, requiring the adherent of this oratorical method, in the words of the OLD, “to dismantle,” “to unravel,” “to deprive of strength,” and most notably, “to demolish” the loci of his opponent. Moreover, that objective genitive “locorum” (so called because it acts as the receiver of the action of the word it follows) can be, among other definitions in the OLD, both a “position in society” or “status” and also a “point of view.” As such, look back at those first two lines in our paragraph above – does Pentheus locum Bacchi dissolvit in one or more of the senses of these words?

Let’s take this line of thinking one step further. In the same way Ovid/Pentheus in the confirmatio followed the three-pronged outline he laid out in the divisio – that is, his agenda went fama, mollitia, decus (again, see the previous section) – watch how he continues to do so here in the confutatio: for one, how does cutting down Bacchus’ status by calling him a puer inermis also implore the Thbans to mind their fama, or in Pentheus’ words, to conquer “pro fama”?

With this understanding of a confutatio, we can see how he revisited part two (and soon after, part three) of his agenda…

…sed madidus murra crinis mollesque coronae  
purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum.
What definition of *locus* does Pentheus look to unravel or demolish here? Even more clearly, remember how he told the Thebans to drive off “molles” in the *divisio* (line 547)? Here, he uses that exact same word in the exact same form, actually giving them the noun he does not provide back then! In effect, he is now giving a full description of their effeminate threat at the precise point in the speech where it is proper to do so!

Finally, note how here in the *confutatio* he also returns to the *patrium decus* (line 548) with which he closed the ascending tricolon of the *divisio*…

**Quem quidem ego actutum (modo vos absistite) cogam adsumptumque patrem commentaque sacra fateri.**

I say “ascending” because the third prong of that tricolon indeed ratchets up the intensity of those commands to the Thebans to a highly personal level. He has already belittled Bacchus’ age and appearance, and now he intimates that his first cousin has been lying to the world about Zeus being his father (“*adsumptum patrem,*” see commentary), which makes worshipping Bacchus an empty, even dangerous experience (“*commenta… sacra*”) should the *πατὴρ ἄνδρον τε θεῶν τε,* or “Father of men and gods,” find out. In fact, by urging Bacchus to acknowledge this ignominious (if true) lie, he has expanded the imperative to the Thebans to include his cousin, calling for everyone – Pentheus here perhaps including himself – to keep hold of their *patrium decus.*

With this succinct phrasing, Ovid/Pentheus aims to refute his opponent, according to the guidelines of the *Rhetorica,* and thus reaches the climax of his speech, now hinting at an apparently long-awaited tête-à-tête with his cousin, wherein he could deal with the emotional issues he seems to be carrying inside him – foremost among them an inferiority complex about his own father. Sadly, these very issues seem to be preventing him, just as Tiresias had predicted, from honoring Bacchus like the rest of Thebes, which we can already see will lead directly to his tragic death.

**An satis… iussis mora segnis abesto** (559-63)

Why do you think Ovid/Pentheus finishes his speech by comparing his experience of Bacchus’ visit to that of another king? In a similar vein, what does the ambiguity of the phrase “*cum totis… Thebis*” (see commentary) add to his rhetorical question? Lastly, why does he immediately call for his attendants to bring Bacchus to him – and why “vinctum”?
Just like we have done for every other paragraph in this speech (see above), let’s see what the Rhetorica advises for conclusions, this time from Bk. 2…

**Conclusiones, quae apud Graecos epilogi nominantur,**
**tripertitae sunt. Nam constant ex enumeratione,**
**amplificatione, et commiseratione. (XXX.47)**

We have actually already seen one of these components, the enumeratio, back when Ovid/Pentheus was delineating his key points in the divisio (see the section on lines 543-8 above), and because each of the sections of his speech are only roughly five lines apiece, perhaps it isn’t surprising that he doesn’t explicitly provide one. Still, is it possible that those key points – the *fama* of the Thebans, the *mollitia* inherent in the threat, and the *decus* at stake – are implicitly stated here?

An satis Acrisio est animi contemnere vanum
numen et Argolicas venienti claudere portas,
Penthea terrebit cum totis advena Thebis?

NB: There is nothing underlined in the Latin here, which means you have carte blanche to find these three points anywhere in the sentence.

The second component, amplificatio, or “enlarging upon” as the OLD defines it, calls for an intriguing and useful task. As the Rhetorica explains…

**Amplificatio est res quae per locum communem instigationis**
**auditorum causa sumitur. Locis communes ex decem praecipitis**
**commodissime sumentur adaugendi criminis causa. (ibid.)**

As a method of riling up his audience (“…instigationis auditorum causa”), the speaker should make use of “loci communes,” or commonplaces, of which the Rhetorica provides ten that are particularly useful for, well, *amplifying* a crimen. To give you a better sense of what these are, and why they are useful at this point, here are a handful that Ovid may have had in mind when he wrote his *conclusio*…

**Primus locus sumitur ab auctoritate, cum commemoramus**
**quantae curae ea res fuerit dis immortalibus aut maioribus**
**nostris, regibus, civitatibus, nationibus, hominibus**
**sapientissimis, senatui.**
Secundus locus est cum consideramus illae res de quibus

cretionum ad quos pertinent; utrum ad omnes, quod

atrociissimum est... an ad pares, hoc est, in isdem paribus

animi, corporis, fortunam positos; an ad inferiores, qui his

omnibus rebus antecelluntur...

Decimus locus est per quem omnia quae in negotio gerundo

acta sunt quaeque rem consequi solent exputamus acriter et

criminose et diligenter, ut agi res et geri negotium videatur

rerum consequentium enumeratione. (XXX.48-9)

In the “primus locus,” the speaker recalls how his situation is also of concern to

anyone or anything with auctoritas, that is, to sources of authority, including the gods

but also reges and civitates, or, as in Ovid/Pentheus’ closing paragraph, Acrisius, the

king of Argos, and the city of Thebes itself. In fact, as he has done throughout the speech,

Ovid/Pentheus refers to Thebae the city rather than Thebani as a group of individuals,

thus couching his remarks to a single unit, governed by him.

In the “secundus locus,” he considers those affected by the situation, which may be

everyone – what the Rhetorica calls “atrociissimum” – or only certain groups, including

those listed above, the “pares,” or those people in a position of equal status to the speaker,

or “inferiores,” those beneath him. Here, too, Acrisius and the Thebans represent the

former and the latter, and we may be bolstered in this way of thinking because Pentheus

uses the phrase “cum totis... Thebis,” the implication being that everyone in Thebes is dealing with the problem of Bacchus’ presence.

Finally, in the “decimus locus,” the speaker is obliged to thoroughly examine not

only the situation itself but also what usually happens in such a situation (“quae... rem

consequi solent”), and by enumerating such circumstances, it may seem as though the

situation is actually happening at that very moment (“ut agi res... videatur...

enumeratione”). In this light, how Acrisius dealt with Bacchus’ unwanted arrival by

barring him from Argos is highly relevant here, both as a model of the proper response to

crimes and also as a way of framing the visit as a common problem in this

mythological world, and thus immediately pressing for Pentheus and the Thebans.

As such, employing loci communes in the conclusio allows the speaker to leave his

audience with a sense of just how relatable the issue is and how far-reaching its

consequences really are.

There was one more component in the conclusiones of the Rhetorica,

commiseratio, and it relates to the ambiguity of the phrase “cum totis... Thebis.” As I

note in the side commentary, it is unclear whether Pentheus means to attach this to himself

or the advena. In other words, are the Thebans in this rhetorical question also going to be
terrified by Bacchus along with Pentheus (“Penthe… cum totis… Thebis”), or will they be doing the terrifying of Pentheus along with Baccchus (“cum totis adversa Thebis”)?

The difference might have to do with how closely Ovid/Pentheus adheres to this third component. Consider…

_Misericordia commovebitur auditoribus si variam
fortunarum commutationem dicemus… si quid nostris
parentibus, liberris, ceteris necessariis casurum sit propter
nostras calamitates aperiemus…
Commiserationem brevem esse oportet, nihil enim lacrima
citius arescit._ (XXXI.50)

As the _Rhetorica_ asserts, _commiseratio_ is about arousing “misericordia,” or pity, in your audience and letting them know that the situation (“nostras calamitates”) will adversely affect everyone – parents, children, friends – including yourself. In other words, that everyone will be _miser_ together, hence the term.

And importantly, this must be _brief_ because you will not hold them in this emotional state for long – as the _Rhetorica_ says, “nihil enim lacrima citius arescit,” a fantastically pithy line that also works really well in English, meaning, “nothing dries more quickly than a tear.” What do you think he meant by that here? That is, why would he tack that on to his statement about framing the _commiseratio_?

Over a century ago, a scholar named George Dwight Kellogg explored this and similar statements in classical literature, and he compared it to something Cicero says in one of his own treatises on oratory, _De partitionibus oratoriae_, in which he has a lively discussion with his young son Marcus (incidentally, also about _enumeratio_ and _amplificatio_) and he describes a similar need to speak briefly about misery, but here about the misery of _someone else_…

_Nihil tam miserabile quam ex beato miser. et hoc totum est
quod moveat, si… exprimatur breviter, cito enim exarescit
lacrima praesertim in alienis malis._ (XVII.57)

As Kellogg points out, this statement about quick-drying tears carries a different message from that in the _Rhetorica_…

_There is a cynical touch in ‘quick dries the tear that’s shed for another’s ills’, whereas ‘nothing dries more quickly than a tear’ could be used for comfort in a _consolatio._ (pg. 309)
NB: As always in this book, the underlining and boldfacing of words are my own, not Kellogg’s.

So after all that, let’s bring it back to the last paragraph in Ovid/Pentheus’ speech. Given what you now know about the need for commiseratio in a conclusio – that is, the need to share the pitiable circumstances with your audience, according to the Rhetorica – which reading of “cum totis… Thebis” do you think Pentheus intended? Are the Thebans miserable alongside him because of an unwanted guest, or are they ganging up on him with Bacchus the advena?

To me, the beauty of reading this speech in the original Latin is that you can see it either way and accept that Ovid/Pentheus wants you to do so, too.

On the one hand, he knows that he needs to elicit pity, and in following the Rhetorica closely he will portray the situation as lamentable for both him and the Thebans together (“Penthea… cum totis… Thebis”); but he is brief because, as Kellogg points out, he wants to provide them with consolatio – that is, he recognizes that people’s emotional capacity for the sadness of the invasion won’t last so he doesn’t dwell on it any longer than necessary.

On the other hand, he is also aware enough to recognize that convincing the Thebans not to worship Bacchus is an uphill battle, that in fact they are already doing so, which makes the match-up mano a mano, Pentheus against Bacchus, but with all the lemming-like Thebans against him (“cum totis advena Thebis”). In this reading, Pentheus is still looking for pity, and he may still be insisting that they are all going to be affected adversely by the calamitates, as evidenced by everything else he said up until this point in the speech, but he is brief because, as Kellogg also pointed out, he knows that audiences are ultimately colder when it comes to the misfortunes of others, that, as Cicero said, their tears dry quickly when it’s not their problem.

Given the immediacy of the Bacchic problem as Pentheus frames it throughout his speech, it is less surprising that he launches directly into a command to his attendants to go after his profligate cousin than it is for them to bring him back “vinctum,” rather than simply dead. It could be a narrative device, in the same unsatisfying vein that many Hollywood movies – à la the villains in a James Bond film or his farcical tribute Dr. Evil in the Austin Powers trilogy – but perhaps there is something more to it.

Could Pentheus be hesitating to have Bacchus killed on the spot precisely because he is his cousin? Maybe he senses the obviously palpable dissent among the Thebans and the very possible backlash against him it might cause if he does? Or maybe, in the back of his mind, he knows that killing him will not necessarily also do away with the Bacchic rites themselves, the real problem for Thebes, and so he is thinking that if he captures him
instead, he might also be able to leverage the situation so as to win back the souls of the Thebans. What do you think?

Whatever the reason, it is worth checking in once again and asking yourself how you feel about Pentheus as a person. You have learned a great deal about him through this lengthy speech, and even more by examining his motivations vis-à-vis the *Rhetorica*’s well-laid out structure for it. Quite simply, is he still a bad guy, end of conversation? Or are you beginning to have some sense now as to why he might be so angry? How do you feel about Bacchus?

Stay tuned, because Ovid will continue to give you more grist for the mill as you try to piece together his (possibly) increasingly complex psyche.

“*Ille dedit leto fortes...*”

As you consider why Pentheus chose to implore the Thebans to recall the *serpens* rather than Cadmus who overpowered it, notice here that the artist chose to include those brave men it had put to death at exactly the moment when the young warrior was killing it.

*Cadmus Slays the Dragon*, oil on canvas, 189 x 248 cm, *by Hendrick Goltzius, 1558-1617. Museet på Koldinghus, Kolding, Denmark.*

*(For another work by Goltzius, an engraving, see pg. 110.)*
III. They Capture a Devotee (3.564-581)

**Hunc avus... ipsa nocebant** (564-7)

Here Ovid offers his readers/audience a crucial window into the psychological world of his troubled main character. What makes this paragraph so informative? That is, what have you learned about Pentheus’ role in his family? And does this in any way change your perception of why he is the way he is/does what he does?

We have actually been inching towards this revelatory paragraph the entire time. At first, we experienced his cruelty as he taunted the blind Tiresias; next, we sat through his lengthy oration, learning about the strong distaste he has for his cousin, Bacchus; now, we see Pentheus in context, surrounded by a family that seems more intent on calming him down than really listening to what he has to say.

Take a minute and reread the paragraph, and this time consider three things: First, who specifically does Ovid mention is there? Second, what specifically do they do in response to his impassioned speech? And third, what is the tone of their response?

**Hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum corripiunt dictis frustraque inhibere laborant; acrior admonitu est irritaturque retenta et crescit rabies, moderaminaque ipsa nocebant.**

Now, imagine that you yourself are frustrated about something, perhaps something that everyone else around you feels differently about. Maybe this thing even makes everyone else happy while it makes you miserable. If you have ever been in a situation like this, has anyone ever told you to “just calm down” or “take it easy” or “relax”? And in that moment, did their telling you to how to respond make the feeling any less painful? Probably not, right?

Well, Pentheus is going through that very situation, surrounded by family members, each of whom represents a different source of pain for him. To start, the avus, his grandfather, is Cadmus, not only the founder of Thebes, killer of the serpens and the one who chose to bring its qualities into his city’s descendants (see the side commentary on line 544), but also someone who Pentheus likely thought would be extremely proud of his resolve to defend his kingdom. And yet, Cadmus does not.

Next, Athamas, his uncle, is someone Pentheus probably assumed would take Bacchus’ side – after all, Athamas helped raise Bacchus in the absence of Bacchus’ actual mother and father (see the commentary here on line 564 and above at 558). But think back to that scenario I asked you to imagine earlier. When you are feeling alone among a group
of people, seeing someone you know will be sympathetic toward the source of your problem only makes the feeling worse, especially when that person is standing alongside, in agreement with, someone you thought would be in your camp. That is Uncle Athamas, next to Grandpa Cadmus.

Finally, making everything all the worse is that this room is filled with people that, as Ovid says, are “suorum,” a common Latin expression for family members, or simply companions. The point is that these are people that in a sense belong to Pentheus, hence the possessive pronoun, and yet they are all in alliance against him. He may be king, but at this moment, he has no one who understands what he is going through. And what does he want, really? Above all, he wants to preserve the stability of his kingdom. He wants to protect everyone in that room, in this city, from a threat. But not a single person there sees it that way.

Before we look at their actions, consider something else: Who is not in that room? Or rather, who does Ovid not mention here? Actually, he is pretty important. Recall in the opening paragraph, line 513, that our first introduction to Pentheus is by the patronymic Echionides (see the commentary there) – we see his grandfather here, we see his uncle, but if the room is filled with family members there to counsel him, where is his father Echion? Pentheus is craving approval here and not getting it from anyone, and perhaps the person he would want it from most is either keeping silent or absent entirely.

In any event, we know that pater is on Pentheus’ mind because he just used forms of the word twice in earnest: once in the divisio of his speech in the third of those three commands (see the section above on lines 543-8), when he says to the Thebans, “patrium retinete decus,” and again in his highly personal jab at Bacchus in the confutatio (see the section on lines 553-8) when he questions what he calls his cousin’s “adsumptum patrem.” In fact, beyond serving three times as an anchoring appellation for his son (in addition to line 513, there is “Echione natus” in line 526 and Echionides again later on in line 701), Echion never appears in Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus, which in a way makes his omission here even stronger. Why doesn’t Echion show up in this paragraph (or anywhere else)? And what impact do you think this is having on our beleaguered main character?

But let’s return to the next of our three considerations here. These family members who are present go at Pentheus rather intensely. Instead of recognizing that amidst all the bluster their grandson, their nephew, their king (!), may at least have a modicum of valid concerns, they “corripiunt dictis,” a metaphorical seizing with words, hence its meaning here of rebuking him for what he said. Imagine that. You are worked up about something so you lay it all out there to your family and friends, and without any positive acknowledgment, they tell you off. How would you react? Moreover, “frustra… inhibere laborant,” another highly physical verb, only this time, they don’t just argue with him,
they try to stop him. No wonder he gets even more upset, and no wonder, then, that their efforts are in vain.

Finally, Ovid tells us explicitly, in the last line, the tone with which they responded, which was ultimately the cause of his, well, losing it. Unsurprisingly, “moderamina... ipsa nocebant,” it was their controlling, their restraint, itself that harmed him most. That not a single one of them validated his feelings of anger made that anger even worse. What’s more, Ovid’s language actually personalizes their response to him by matching the direct object “hunc” to each of the three subjects. Essentially, this is how Pentheus heard them all, one rejection after another, leaving no doubt in his mind, or ours, that he was once again, to borrow Ovid’s earlier phrasing, also from line 513, “ex omnibus unus.”

Sic ego... saevior ibat (568-71)

Why do you think Ovid injects himself into the simile (“sic ego... vidi”)? Does it disrupt the narrative? Does it fit in seamlessly? And anyhow, since he describes Pentheus’ anger in the previous paragraph so vividly already, what does the imagery he puts forth add to our understanding? For that matter, does it add anything at all?

There are any number of reasons why an author might choose to use the first person, and since this, like the rest of the Metamorphoses, is a fabula, you might say it is genre-appropriate to hear from the narrator every now and then. Picture someone telling you a fairy tale – for me, this literary device brings me back to my own childhood, when teachers, camp counselors, and parents and grandparents would tell me a story. More universally, I am also reminded of the 1987 movie The Princess Bride, when Peter Falk, as the visiting grandfather, reads an old book to a young Fred Savage who is at home lying in bed sick (but well enough to keep us from worrying about him and instead allow us to focus on the story he is hearing).

If you have seen that movie, or if you can remember back to when someone told you a fabula of some kind, what effect did it have when you heard an “I” statement from the storyteller, or when you were simply reminded that he or she was real while the story itself was not? It may take you out of the narrative for a moment, the way a commercial on television allows you to breathe or get something to eat, but it might also give you a chance to pause and process an intense moment, like when Fred Savage balks at Westley and Buttercup kissing (“Oh, no, no, please...”) or when he thinks his grandfather is reading the story wrong, only to be relieved when he realizes it was all a dream (“See, didn’t I tell you she’d never marry that rotten Humperdinck?” “Yes, you’re very smart. Shut up,” a wry Falk responds). In a sense, it relieves the tension of a dramatic moment, but without
jarring you with, say, a sunny advertisement or some other discordant and unrelated remark. (This is perhaps why so many of us hate commercials in the first place.)

It does something more, though. By giving us an image to lock our minds on, Ovid continues the idea of metaphorical physicality he started with the verbs of the previous paragraph (“corripiunt” and “inhibere laborant,” as we discussed in the previous section, but also the rich verbs that he uses for concepts, as in “crescit rabies,” and also as we discussed, “moderamina… nocebant”) and allows us to see Pentheus’ anger as it foams, as well as the dicta and the moderamina – here represented by the “trabes” and the “saxa” – that hold it back. Above all, the motion of this simile pulls it all together: after all, the word torrens is really a present active participle, which has almost a visceral quality to it. The anger is deep, and as we can now see, it is going to propel him to move past its obstacles.

Finally, Ovid’s interstitial commentary in the first person bookends one section of the narrative and moves us right along to the next important part without getting us bogged down by the chaff of telling us that the meeting ended, the attendants left, and everyone waited for their return. Just like in The Princess Bride, when Westley and Buttercup appear in the dreaded fire swamp immediately after the kiss as per Fred Savage’s interruption, so too here Ovid will pick up the narrative after some time has passed as per his own.

**Ecce cruentati… gente secutum** (572-6)

As usual, Ovid uses very specific language to describe the scene – this time, the return of the men who were sent to capture Bacchus. Why do you think they were “cruentati”? And who did they actually bring back? In fact, what two words do they use to describe him? Where have we seen one of these words before?

Coming off the heels of Ovid’s break in the narrative, we return to the action to find that the attendants have themselves returned, but with telltale remnants of a story left untold: they are “cruentati,” which can mean that they are stained with the blood of others or wounded with their own – the poet does not say. Whatever the situation, though, we missed something, and something dramatic. While we were off picturing Pentheus’ anger as a rushing stream, the famuli were busy getting their hands dirty at his bidding. And now we don’t know what.

This blood indicates a struggle of some kind, but why does Ovid want his audience to know this? Better yet, why does Pentheus need to know this?
Perhaps this serves the men more than the king; after all, he sent them to bring back Bacchus in chains, and instead they produce a follower. If there was no indication of a struggle, they might give Pentheus the impression that they did not try hard enough to carry out his order – or worse, that they considered themselves powerful (and arrogant) enough to disagree with them. By coming back “cruentati,” the famuli show that they are devoted servants of their king, albeit unsuccessful at their task.

In fact, Ovid gives us an oblique indication in his description of the scene that the blood that stains them may not be from a struggle at all, but rather of their own doing, an intentional ruse to support their claim that Pentheus’ ultimate prize was unattainable. Consider...

Ecce cruentati redeunt et, Bacchus ubi esset, quaerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt...

They said outright that they could not find Bacchus! Moreover, when their dominus saw that they had brought back someone else, he asked where he was and this was their response! If they genuinely could not find him that would be one thing, but considering how universally the Thebans were opposed to Pentheus’ plan, it is not out of the realm of possibility – and perhaps even likely – that they are audaciously lying in order to protect the god whose rites they are devoted to themselves. In that case, what better way to subtly support this fabrication than to imply that a bloody struggle had taken place in the name of the honorable defense of Thebes?

Along these same lines, they called that follower they brought back “comitem famulumque sacrorum,” the former a designation that comes from the words cum and eo, essentially meaning one who “goes with” someone else (often a superior, but the word just as commonly refers to members of the same class), while the latter a very traditional term for one who serves another (hence the Latin familia, the unit that contained all the household slaves). So what of these words? That is, are they striking in any way? Unusual? What are these attendants trying to convey here?

Well, for one, these attendants are of course themselves famuli, which means that they brought in an equal, or you might say a comes of their own! In a way, then, you might say that they are not only (surreptitiously) defying the orders of their king but waging a tacit protest by presenting him with a comrade in their cause – one who we will soon learn is uniquely qualified to educate Pentheus on the power of Bacchus, as well as enlighten him on a matter even closer to home.
Adspicit hunc... sacra frequentes (577-81)

Why do you think Ovid takes the time to describe the *oculi* of Pentheus? Does it remind you of an earlier part of the story? (HINT: Think back to Tiresias and his prediction!) For that matter, where else had the poet used the word “*tempora*”? How do these two words relate to what Pentheus says to the *captive* at the end of this paragraph?

> Have you ever heard the saying about eyes being the window to your soul? I wonder if it came to your mind when you read the line in Ovid, or when you read this question above. It’s been around for centuries, and writers from Dante to Shakespeare have toyed with it, probably because if you have ever discerned how a person is feeling by looking into their eyes, you know how this rings true.

Well, Cicero also writes about this idea, and he did so just a couple of years before Ovid was born, making it eminently possible that it was on his mind, too. Here is what Cicero writes in the *Tusculanae disputationes*, a philosophical work about dealing with the pain of depression, death, and a range of other difficult emotional situations...

> nos enim ne nunc quidem oculis cernimus ea quae videmus; neque est enim ullus sensus in corpore, sed... viae quasi quaedam sunt ad oculos, ad aures, ad nares a sede animi perforatae... ut facile intelligi possit animum et videre et audire, non eas partes quae quasi fenestrae sint animi... (I.46)

Because the *famuli* brought back a substitute for the real thing, Pentheus is really struggling here, and his eyes are betraying the depth of the anger he feels. But Ovid tells us that these eyes are feeling more than anger. Reread that part of the sentence...

> Adspicit hunc Pentheus oculis, quos ira tremendos fecerat et, quamquam poenae vix tempora differt...

As the OLD explains, the adjective *tremendus* means “such as to cause dread,” and I suppose this look of his probably did. However, the word is really a gerundive of the verb *tremo*, which means to tremble, often with fear, and given that they brought back the wrong guy – that is, that his first attempt at dealing with the threat to Thebes had gone awry – Pentheus was thrown for a loop. Nay, Pentheus was *himself* frightened out of his mind. But why?

Let’s go back now to our original question set. In the opening paragraph to our story, Ovid told us that Pentheus brazenly ridiculed Tiresias’ lack of sight. Now, often when it comes to Greek tragedies, we assume that our main character arrogantly thinks he
can somehow outsmart the prophesy he receives from a seer early in the story – think of Oedipus (himself a later king of Thebes, by the way) and how, despite his efforts, he ends up killing his father and marrying his mother. But Pentheus isn’t arrogant, or rather, his outward arrogance cannot mask what is really inside him, in his animus. Underneath all that bluster, that external firebrand, lies a man who is all too aware of the inevitability of his fate. And when he sees that he could not secure Bacchus in chains simply with an order, he is made more keenly aware of that ominous fact.

That is why Ovid uses the word, in its plural form just as before, tempora. Just as Tiresias began to lay out his prediction, he was moving his temples on the side of his head, his tempora, indicating the serious nature of what he was about to say. Now, Ovid gives us a line that can be read in two very powerful ways. Here it is again…

Adspicit hunc Pentheus oculis, quos ira tremendos fecerat et, quamquam poenae vix tempora differt…

On the surface, Pentheus had to exert effort here not to kill this captive on the spot so that he could hear his story and gain information from him, but we could also read this as an indication of our tragic main character’s awareness of the futility of escape. That is, Pentheus here scarcely delays the tempora of punishment – his punishment! – those forbidding temples serving as a visual reminder of the consequence of his ridiculing a blind old man.

With all this weighing heavily upon him, Pentheus turns to the captive and asks him very specific questions. So specific, in fact, that you may have wondered, why these? Why does he need to know all this about him? Now that we have a sense of his mindset, thanks to those revealing eyes, let’s look at those questions one more time…

“O periture tuaque aliis documenta dature morte,” ait, “ede tuum nomen nomenque parentum et patriam morisque novi cur sacra frequentes.”

In effect, this frightened Pentheus, this dumbfounded Pentheus, needs to know as much as he can about this unexpected threat. He thought he could quash the threat to his life by ordering his men to just go and get him, but instead he got someone else, and in an effort to regroup and figure out the significance – you might say the portent – of this captive, he is not ignoring anything, but rather pushing to learn from everything he sees. The reality is, the documenta will be for Pentheus himself, not just alii.

After about seventy lines of text, Ovid will switch gears from a heavy focus on Pentheus to a lengthy story-within-a-story from and about the captive and his relationship
with Bacchus. As you read on, even though Pentheus himself will not appear again until line 692, keep in mind that as the captive tells his story, Pentheus is in the audience alongside us; in fact, he is really the only intended audience for this captive, and that is how we should read what he has to say.

So when you read through the next 110 lines, keep asking yourself, “What does Pentheus think about this? How does Pentheus feel about this?”

“This ego torrentem, qua nil obstabat eunti,
lenius et modico strepitu decurrere vidi.”

This is a depiction of the poet, and a fictionalized one at that, by an Italian Renaissance painter. Does it help your understanding of the line of Latin here to have an image of him in front of you? Or is it inconsequential?

Ovid (detail), fresco, by Luca Signorelli, 1499-1503.
Chapel of San Brizio, Orvieto Cathedral,
Umbria, Italy.
ENDNOTES to Further Inquiry

i The story behind these last two lines in Ovid’s *Heroides* (161-2) is perhaps just as interesting as the lines themselves: Grant Showerman, in the Loeb Classical Library edition, 1914, calls them “spurious,” and leaves them out; Arthur Palmer, in his 1898 edition, includes them, but in brackets, a decision he explains in his *apparatus criticus* as follows…

   Hi versus furca expellendi sunt. Ovidius *ut pro utinam* non ponit: *sed hoc parvum est praee sequentis versus absolute*. *Sane si Protesilaus sine capite rediret, miserabilis eius aspectus foret: sed non tam miserabilis quam mirabilis.*

   Essentially, Palmer’s contention is that these lines do not belong because Ovid would not have written them – in Palmer’s estimation, *ut* is not a word Ovid would have used for an optative subjunctive, and what’s more, as he puts it, it would be absurd to imagine Protesilaus returning “without a head,” a sight that he says cleverly would be both miserable and amazing. (If you have not done so already, go ahead and read through his Latin. It really is clever.)

   Still, in our discussion here, vis-à-vis Ovid’s use of a similar phrase in describing Tiresias, I am relying on the *OLD*’s listing line 161 as an illustration of the verb *albeo* in classical usage, which is imprimatur enough for me of its authenticity. Besides, despite Palmer’s colorful reservation, Laodamia does not have to counterfactually assert that her beloved can come back home without a head on his body in order to express her desire that he return with it intact, white, and full of grey hairs. This is love elegy, not a scientific manual.

   As of this writing, both Showerman and Palmer are available for free at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org). The *OLD*, sadly, is not (or anywhere else on the Web, for that matter, gratis or otherwise… yet).

ii The Latin text of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* comes from the Loeb Classical Library edition, edited and translated by Harry Caplan (although, as always in this book, the underlining is my own), 1954, with excellent introductory notes, including a section he calls “Analysis,” in which he takes apart the otherwise complex pieces of this extremely detailed work in an orderly and highly readable way. As of this writing, the book is available for free at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org).

iii Incidentally, if you are familiar with any of Cicero’s speeches (who, by the way, was for centuries thought to have written the *Rhetorica* and who actually did write a similar guide for rhetoricians known as the *De inventione*), can you think of instances where he employs the method of *insinuatio*? What about, for example, the exordium to the *Pro Caelio*? How is that similar to Ovid/Pentheus’ sentence here?

iv The third type of *narratio* listed in the *Rhetorica* is also well worth considering – and equally applicable to Ovid/Pentheus’ speech – but much lengthier (VIII.12-IX.16) than the first two. Ironically, in it, he speaks for pages about the advantageousness of brevity.
Admittedly, with blog titles like “Voting Should Be Awesome” (RockTheVote.Tumblr.com, Aug. 11, 2014), I personally may be closer to the older demographic on this score.

For more on this phrase and the far less famous person who authored it, see “Don’t Trust Anyone Over 30, Unless It’s Jack Weinberg,” a tribute in The Berkeley Daily Planet, April 6, 2000, on the occasion of his 60th birthday (accessible as of this writing). And for an amusing pop culture iteration, watch Homer Simpson shout it to a crowd of festival-goers in an ill-fated attempt to stay current (The Simpsons, Season 7, Episode 24, “Homerpalooza,” originally aired May 19, 1996).

This famous description of Zeus comes from Hesiod’s Theogony (542) and elsewhere.

If you have the time, Kellogg’s entire article is well worth reading (it’s short), both for its substance and its style of writing. In fact, the beauty of Latin and Greek scholarship is that writing this old can be just as useful as something written last month, sometimes more so. After all, Ovid wrote the Metamorphoses roughly two thousand years ago, which makes a scholar like Kellogg more of a peer to you than the Roman poet.

In any event, the real plus of the article’s being so old is that, like the Loeb volumes I reference above (and numerous other pieces of classical scholarship still being read today), it is out of copyright and thus available for free online! So head for, say, www.archive.org, and look for “Study of a Proverb Attributed to the Rhetor Apollonius” from The American Journal of Philology, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1907), pgs. 301-10. It was available there as of this writing.

As Kellogg notes in the opening to his article (pg. 301), Cicero uses a phrase almost identical to that in the Rhetorica during his own discussion about commiseratio in the first book of another treatise he wrote about oratory, De inventione...

Commotis autem animis, diutius in conquestione morari non oportebit; quem ad modum enim dixit rhetor Apollonius, lacrima nihil citius arescit. (109)

You may be noticing that I, too, am using the first person, and consciously so. What effect does this have on the writing here, an analysis of literature rather than the literature itself? Is it jarring? Are you more comfortable with the traditional scholarly approach of a writer using the impersonal “one” as a pronoun instead? For more on why I made this choice, see my “Preface for Students and Teachers.”

According to the OLD entry, the word bears a similarity to the Oscan and Paelignian famel, both Italian tribes whose traditions the Romans were acquainted with. Its usage in Latin is attested as far back as Ennius (Annales 313, as famul), one of the earliest writers of Latin literature in the third century BCE.

When Dante, accompanied by the Roman poet Virgil in the underworld, speaks with Statius, also a Roman poet, in Canto 21 of The Purgatorio of The Divine Comedy, he says the following about something powerful the latter had just said to him...
Volser Virgilio a me queste parole
con viso che, tacendo, disse “Tacì”;
ma non può tutto la virtù che vuole;
ché riso e pianto son tanto seguaci
a la passion di che ciascun si spicca,
che men seguen voler ne’ piú veraci.

lo pur sorrisi come l’uom ch’ammicca;
per che l’ombra si tacque, e riguardommi
ne li occhi ove ’l sembiante piú si fica.
e “Se tanto labore in bene assommi,”
disse, “perché la tua faccia testeso
un lampeggiar di riso dimostrommi?”

These words made Virgil turn around to me;
His face, though silent, bade me hold my peace.
But man’s will is sometimes powerless –
For tears and laughter follow all the sooner
Those feelings from which both of them arise,
According as one’s truthfulness prevails.
I smiled, as one who signals with his eyelids;
At this the shade was silent, and stared hard
Into my eyes – where best the feelings show.
“As you may hope to finish your great task,”
Said he, why did your face, a while before,
Display the flashing of a smile to me?”

What do you think Dante meant about the origin of tears and laughter? Moreover, why do you think Statius asked Dante about his smile after looking into his eyes?

By the way, the Italian text above comes from a Web site called WorldOfDante.org, available as of this writing, while the English verse comes from Lawrence Grant White’s 1948 translation, accompanied by moving and thought-provoking illustrations by Gustave Doré (New York: Pantheon Books).

As for Shakespeare, the concept of eyes (or eyelids) as windows comes up in a number of places, most vividly for our discussion at the end of Love’s Labour’s Lost, when a love-struck Lord Berowne, one of the attendants to King Ferdinand, agrees to wait a year and a day for Rosaline, the object of his affection (along with the king himself and the two other attendants, all of whom have agreed to do the same for their own love interests). Here is what he says to her…

Studies my lady? Mistress, look on me;
Behold the window of my heart, mine eye,
What humble suit attends thy answer there:
Impose some service on me for thy love. (Act V, Scene 2, Line 848)

Why does Berowne direct Rosaline’s attention to his eyes? At this point, you probably get the idea.

And for a look at the entire play, as well as everything else by William Shakespeare, go to MIT’s longstanding Web site, Shakespeare.mit.edu.

xiii According to J. E. King’s introduction to his 1927 Loeb Classical Library edition (revised in 1945), Cicero wrote the Tusculanae disputationes in 45 BCE, two years before Ovid was born. Also, the Latin text here comes from that edition, minus two commas before relative clauses that I chose to excise.

Unfortunately, this was not available at www.archive.org at the time of this writing, as it is not now in the public domain.
Latin Text, Unadorned

There are several benefits to looking at the Latin text of Ovid – or any text in any language, for that matter – without any ancillary material on the page beyond simply using it to study for the test. For one, if side commentary really is there to help you like a partner in your studies (and I firmly believe it is: see the opening to Part One, as well as my remarks in the Preface), then there is just as much to be gained by engaging with the text one on one, reader to poet. And perhaps even more.

And yet, lack of adornment only covers one aspect of your engagement with literature: essentially, layout matters, and it matters a lot. Or at least it did for me during the numerous iterations of the layout I went through as I prepared this commentary for my students, and then again as I revised it over time. To see what I mean, consider the following exercise…

Find a piece of artwork in your current field of vision. Maybe you’re sitting in a coffee shop, or your bedroom, or a school library, or a bustling public park with statues, or even, well, your Latin classroom. Start doing some freewriting about what you see: two or three examples of details that stand out to you. Describe them. Ponder them. Wonder about them in any way your mind takes you.

Now leave the room for a minute. Come back when you’re ready, but this time, take another look at that work of art from another angle. A different distance. A completely different vantage point, in fact. Start writing again. Two or three more examples of details, or the same ones. What’s changed? (HINT: It wasn’t the artwork.)

In the following pages, you’ll have the opportunity to see Ovid’s Pentheus from three different perspectives, through three different filters: with paragraphs, without them, and then without punctuation or lowercase letters altogether. In that last one, the Us become Vs, and yet it still doesn’t look like the page that Ovid actually wrote, or like the scroll that his Roman readers read from either. (Let alone how most Roman audiences likely heard it recited to them, lacking the wherewithal to read it for themselves in the first place.) But most importantly, like that piece of artwork, the text itself hasn’t changed, but rather your visual experience of it.

In essence, then, does your own understanding of literature change depending on how you receive it? Turn the page and find out…
DIVISA IN CAPITA

With Paragraphs

Cognita res meritam vati per Achaidas urbes
attulerat famam, nomenque erat auguris ingens.
Spernit Echionides tamen hunc, ex omnibus unus,
contemptor superum, Pentheus, praesagaque ridet
verba senis tenebrasque et cladem lucis ademptae
obicit.

Ille movens albentia tempora canis
“Quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis huius
orbis,” ait, “fieres, ne Bacchica sacra videres!
Namque dies aderit, quam non procul auguror esse,
qua novus huc veniat, proles Semeleia, Liber;
quem nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore,
ille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas
foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.
Eveniet! Neque enim dignabere numen honore,
meque sub his tenebris niumium vidisse quereris.”

Talia dicentem proturbat Echione natus.
Dicta fides sequitur, responsaque vatis aguntur.

Liber adest, festisque fremunt ululatibus agri:
turba ruit, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque
vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur.

“Quis furator, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras
attonuit mentes?” Pentheus ait. “Aerane tantum
aere repulsa valent et adunco tibia cornu
et magicae fraudes, ut, quos non bellicos ensis,
non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis,
feminae voces et mota insania vino
obscenique greges et inania tympana vincant?
“Vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti
hac Tyrōn, hac profugos posuistis sede Penates,
nunc sinitis sine Marte capi? Vosne, acror aetas,
o iuvenes, propriorque meae, quos arma tenere,
non thrysos, galeaque tegi, non fronde debeat?

“Este, precor, memores, qua sitis stirpe creati,
illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit unus,
sumite serpentis! Pro fontibus ille lacuque
interiiit: at vos pro fama vincite vestra!
Ille dedit leto fortes: vos pellite molles
et patrium retinet decus!

“Si fata vetabant
stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!
Essemus miseris sine crimine, sorsque querenda,
non celanda foret, lacrimaeque pudore carerent.

“At nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi,
quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum,
sed madidus murra crinis mollesque coronae
purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum.
Quem quidem ego actutum (modo vos absistite) cogam
adsumptumque patrem commentaque sacra fateri.

“An satis Acrisio est animi contendere vanum
numen et Argolicas venienti claudere portas,
Penthea terrebīt cum totis advena Thebis?
Ite citi” – famulis hoc imperat – “Ite ducemque
atrahite huc vincum! Iussis mora segnis abesto!”

Hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum
corripiunt dictis frustraque inhibere laborant;
achor admonitu est inritaturque retenta
et crescit rabies, moderaminaque ipsa nocebant.
Sic ego torrentem, qua nil obstabat eunti, lenius et modico strepitu decurrere vidi; at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa tenebant, spumeus et fervens et ab obice saevior ibat.

Ecce cruentati redeunt et, Bacchus ubi esset, quaerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt; “Hunc” dixere, “tamen comitem famulumque sacrorum cepimus” et tradunt manibus post terga ligatis sacra dei quondam Tyrrhena gente secutum.

Can you make your way through the above excerpt of this 16th century rendition of Ovid’s version of Pentheus? How does the typography affect your ability to understand the literature? If you were editing this translation, what would you do differently?

(Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image)
NON DIVISA IN CAPITA

Without Paragraphs

Cognita res meritam vati per Achaidas urbes
attulerat famam, nomenque erat auguris ingens.
Spernit Echionides tamen hunc, ex omnibus unus,
contemptor superum, Pentheus, praesagaque ridet
verba senis tenebrasque et cladem lucis adeptae
obicit. Ille movens albentia tempora canis
“Quam felix esses, si tu quoque luminis huius
orbus,” ait, “fieres, ne Bacchica sacra videres!
Namque dies aderit, quam non procul auguror esse,
qua novus huc veniat, proles Semeleia, Liber;
quam nisi templorum fueris dignatus honore,
mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas
foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorores.
Eveniet! Neque enim dignabere numen honore,
meque sub his tenebris nimium vidisse quereris.”
Talia dicentem proturbat Echione natus.
Dicta fides sequitur, responsaque vatis aguntur.
Liber adest, festisque fremunt ululatibus agri:
turba ruit, mixtaeque viris matresque nurusque
vulgusque proceresque ignota ad sacra feruntur.
“Quis furo, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras
attonuit mentes?” Pentheus ait. “Aerane tantum
aere repulsa valent et adunco tibia cornu
et magicae fraudes, ut, quos non bellicos ensis,
non tuba terruerit, non strictis agmina telis,
femineae voces et mota insania vino
obscenique greges et inania tympana vinciunt?
Vosne, senes, mirer, qui longa per aequora vecti
hac Tyron, hac profugos posuistis sede Penates,
nunc sinitis sine Marte capi? Vosne, acrior aetas,
o iuvenes, propiorque meae, quos arma tenere,
non thyrsos, galeaque tegi, non fronde decebat?
Este, precor, memores, qua sitis stirpe creati,
illiusque animos, qui multos perdidit unus,
sumite serpentis! Pro fontibus ille lacuque
interiit: at vos pro fama vincite vestra!
Ille dedit leto fortes: vos pellite molles
et patrium retinet decus! Si fata vetabant
stare diu Thebas, utinam tormenta virique
moenia diruerent, ferrumque ignisque sonarent!
Essemus miseris sine crimine, sorsque querenda,
non celanda foret, lacrimaeque pudore carerent.

At nunc a puero Thebae capientur inermi,
quem neque bella iuuent nec tela nec usus equorum,
oped purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum.
Quem quidem ego actutum (modo vos absistite) cogam
adsumptumque patrem commentaque sacra fateri.

An satis Acrisio est animi contemnere vanum
numen et Argolicas venienti claudere portas,
Penthea terrebit cum totis advena Thebis?
Ite cii – famulis hoc imperat – “Ite decemque
attrahit e huc vinctum! Iussis mora segnis abesto!”
Hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum
corripiunt dictis frustraque inhibere laborant;
acrior admonitu est irritaturque retenta
et crescit rabies, moderaminaque ipsa nocebant.

Sic ego torrentem, qua nil obstatab eunti,
leinius et modo strepitu decurrere vidi;
at quacumque trabes obstructaque saxa tenebant,
spumeus et fervens et ab obice saevior ibat.

Ecce cruentati redeunt et, Bacchus ubi esset,
quarerenti domino Bacchum vidisse negarunt;
“Hunc” dixere, “tamen comitem famulumque sacrorum
cepimus” et tradunt manibus post terga ligatis
sacra dei quondam Tyrrhena gente secutum.

Adspicit hunc Pentheus oculis, quos ira tremendos
fecerat et, quamquam poenae vix tempora differt,
“O periture tuaque aliiis documenta dature
morte,” ait, “ede tuum nomen nomenque parentum
et patriam morisque novi cur sacra frequentes.”
OMNINO INORNATA

*Without Punctuation (or Lowercase)*

Cognita res meritam vati per achaidas vrbes
att velerat famam nomenqve erat avgvris ingens
spertit echionides tamen hvnc ex omnibvs vnvs
conemptor svpervm penthevs praesagaqve ridet
verba senis tenerasqve et cladem lvcis aemptae
obicit ille movens albentia temporara canis
qvam felix esse si tv qvoqve lvminis hvivs
orbvvs ait fieres ne bacchica sacra videres
namqve dies aderit qvam non procvl avgvror esse
qva novvs hvc veniat proles semeleia liber
qvem nisi templorvm fveris dignatvs honore
mille lacer spargere locis et sangvine silvas
foedabis matremqve tvam matrisqve sorores
eveniet neqve enim dignabere vnmv honore
meqve svb his teneris nimivm visisse qvereris

talia dicentem protvrbat echione natvs
dicta fides seqvivr responsaqve vatis agvntvr
liber adest festisqve fremvnt vlvlatibvs agri
tvrba rvit mixtaeqve viris matrisqve nvrvsqve
vvlqvsqve proceresqve ignota ad sacra fervntvr
qvis fvror angvgenae proles mavortia vestras
attovit menteqve penthevs ait aerane tantvm
aere repvlsa valent et advnco tibia cornv
et magicae fraqves vt qvos non bellicvs ensis
non tvba terrverit non strictis agmina telis
femineae voces et mota insania vino
obsceniqve greges et inania tympana vincant
vosne senes mirer qvi longa per aeqvora vecti
hac tyron hac profqvos posvristis sede penates
nvnv sinitis sine marve capi vosne acrior aetas
o ivvnes propiorqve meae qvos arma tenere
non thyrsos galeaqve tegi non fronde decebat
este precor memores qva sitis stirpe creati
illovsqve animos qvi mvltos perdidit vnvs
SVMITE SERPENTIS PRO FONTIBVS ILLE LACVQVE
INTERIIT AT VOS PRO FAMA VINCITE VESTRA
ILLE DEDIT LETO FORTES VOS PELLITE MOLLES
ET PATRIVM RETINETE DECVS SI FATA VETABANT
STARE DIV THEBAS VTINAM TORMENTA VIRIQVE
MOENIA DIRVERENT FERRVMQVE IGNISQVE SONARENT
ESSEMVSVS MISERI SINE CRIMINE SORSQVE QVERENDA
NON CELANDA FORET LACRIMAEQVE PVDORE CARERENT
AT NVNC A PVERO THEBAE CAPIENTVR INERMI
QVEM NEQVE BELLA IVVANT NEC TELA NEC VSVS E Eqvorvm
SED MADIDVS MVRRRA CRINIS MOLLESQVE CORONAE
PVRPRAQVE ET PICTIS INTEXTVM VESTIBVS A VRVM
QVEM QVIDEM EGO ACTVTVM MODO VOS ABSISTITE COGAM
ADSVMPTVMQVE PATREM COMMENTAQVE SACRA FATERI
AN SATIS ACRISO EST ANIMI CONTEMNRE VANVM
NVMEN ET ARGOLICAS VENIENTI CLAVDERE PORTAS
PENTHEA TERREBIV CVM TOTIS ADVENA THEBIS
ITE CITI FAMILIS HOC IMPERAT ITE DVCEMQVE
ATTRAHITE HVC VINCTVM IVSSIS MORA SEGNS ABESTO
HVNC AVVS HVNC ATHAMAS HVNC CETERA TVRBA SVORVM
CORRIPIVNT DICTIS FRVSTRAQVE INHIBERE LABORANT
ACRIO R ADMONITV EST INRITATVRQVE RETENTA
ET CRESCIT RABIES MODERAMINAQVE IPSA NOCEBANT
SIC EGO TORRENTEM QVA NIL OBSTABAT EVNTI
LENIVS ET MODICO STREPITV DECVRERE VIDI
AT QVACVMQVE TRABES OBSTRVCTAQVE SAXA TENEBANT
SPVMEVS ET FERVENS ET AB OBICE SAEVIO R IBAT
ECCE CRVENTATI REDVNT ET BACVHS VBI ESSET
QVAAERENTI DOMINO BACVHVMS VIDISSE NEGARVNT
HVNC DIXERE TAMEN COMITEM FAMVLMQVE SACROVRVM
CEPIMVS ET TRADVNT MANIBVS POST TERGA LIGATIS
SACRA DEI QVONDAM TYRHHENA GENTE SECVTVM
ADSPICIT HVNC PENTHEVS OCVLIS QVOS IRA TREMENDOS
FECERAT ET QVAMQVAM POENAE VIX TEMPORA DIFFERT
O PERIVRE TVAQVE ALIS DOCVMENTA DATVRE
MORTE AIT EDE TVVM NOMEN NOMENQVE PARENTVM
ET PATRIAM MORISQVE NOVI CVR SACRA FREQUENTES
PART THREE
Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus… Compared
Excerpt from
Euripides’ Bacchae... Dionysus

Often the most useful tool for learning about ourselves is viewing other people like us who are doing roughly the same thing, and assessing how they do it. How they do it differently, and how, in some ways, they don’t do it differently at all.

So, too, the entire field of comparative literature. In order to really understand what Ovid is doing in his treatment of the myth of Pentheus, we should look at how someone else did it, too. And fortunately for us, the famous Greek playwright Euripides gives us that opportunity.

Written roughly four hundred years prior, Euripides’ play “The Bacchae,” includes a number of elements that Ovid’s poem does not: for example, a chorus of worshippers who – like choruses in other Greek tragedies – give us a running commentary on stage of the events as they unfold; also, a tragic look at Pentheus’ mother Agave (and her father Cadmus) once she realizes, to her horror, what she has done; and perhaps most interestingly for us, an opening monologue to the audience by Dionysus (that is, Bacchus) himself, providing that crucial voice missing almost entirely from Ovid’s version.

Here, then, is that opening monologue – in the original Greek.

Do you read ancient Greek? Fantastic. Turn the page and dive in. If not, read on because I prepared this next section with you in mind…

* Much of the time these days, students of Latin reach Ovid before they learn any Greek – truth be told, most Latin students never end up reading any Greek at all. Knowing this, I decided to include a translation for you to use alongside Euripides’ original; in fact, I put three different translations on the same page alongside the Greek so you could compare them.

* But by their very nature, translations are really just commentaries in disguise, and poor substitutes, really, for someone reading Ovid in the original. If you want to know – truly know – the Roman authors you read, and the world they inhabited, the larger context of their writing, their thinking, on the level of your ability, you should read the Greek, too.

To help you do this, recognizing that you don’t at this moment have the time to learn the language first, I have also included several keys, if you will, to help you unlock the seemingly unopenable door. Keep reading…
1. **A Guide to the Greek Alphabet.** You may not believe it, but this is actually the least essential key I can give you. I include it here only so that if you’re asked to read something aloud, you have a resource for figuring out how to do that quickly. It actually doesn’t do much for you as far as divining meaning.

   Be patient with yourself, though: after all, learning how to pronounce a language takes time and a lot of practice. Instead of making it your goal to read all of Dionysus’ monologue, take it **one word at a time**, and focus on those with footnotes first. (See the chart on the facing page.)

2. **Notes on Vocabulary.** In conjunction with the three translations to the right, I have glossed certain Greek words that are useful for understanding Euripides’ take on the story, along with cross-references to the various ways that the translators handle them. And within each of those footnotes, there are questions for you to consider about the versatility of the language of the original. (Take a look now at the first few notes, and you’ll get the idea.)

3. **Essential questions.** Like those on Ovid’s text in Part Two of this book, I have given you question sets for you to think more broadly about the Greek monologue, one section at a time.

   In fact, like the Latin text, I have divided it into meaningful chunks roughly along the lines of the translations that face it, with titles for those chunks on each page.

   Let these be springboards for your thinking about Ovid in comparison with Euripides. Talk about them with classmates. Do some freewriting of your own. Unlike the Essential Questions on Ovid’s text, I don’t provide my own thoughts here afterwards, so this is truly your own territory. With the prompting for guidance.

* I’ll admit, ultimately my hope here is that this will not only give you the tools to compare the work of Ovid to that of his literary forebear, but also that, should you enjoy the experience, you might be excited enough by the prospect of mining the ancient world’s treasures further that you – who knows? – sign up for Elementary Greek next…
### The Alphabet of Classical Greek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek letter</th>
<th>English equivalent</th>
<th>Name of letter</th>
<th>Pronounced like the italicized letter(s) in the English word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A α</td>
<td>A a</td>
<td>alpha</td>
<td>ah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B β</td>
<td>B b</td>
<td>beta</td>
<td>better</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Γ γ          | G g                | gamma          | n [or gamble; before γ, κ, μ, ξ, χ = nasalized]
| Δ δ          | D d                | delta          | delete                                                      |
| E ε          | E e                | epsilon        | etch                                                        |
| Z ζ          | Z z                | zeta           | wisdom [or gadzooks]                                        |
| Η η          | Η η                | eta            | error [or ace]                                              |
| Θ θ          | Θ θ                | theta          | sweetheart [or author]                                     |
| Ι ι          | I i                | iota           | pizza [or i = pit; i = pizza]                               |
| Κ κ          | K k or K c         | kappa          | candy                                                       |
| Λ λ          | L λ                | lambda         | lantern                                                     |
| Μ μ          | M μ                | mu             | music                                                       |
| Ν ν          | N n                | nu             | nuclear                                                     |
| Ξ ξ          | X x                | xi             | taxi                                                        |
| Ξ ξ          | X x                | xi             | taxi                                                        |
| Ο ο          | O o                | omicron        | off                                                         |
| Π π          | P p                | pi             | pillow                                                       |
| Ρ ρ          | R r or (at start of a word) Rh rh | rho | rolled r [or rocky]                                        |
| ΢ σ, ζ      | S s                | sigma          | signal [before β, δ, μ = z]                                 |
| Τ τ          | T t                | tau            | tardy                                                       |
| Υ υ          | Y u or U u         | upsilon        | French u [or u = foot; ū = boot]                            |
| Φ φ          | Ph ph              | phi            | uphill [or telephone]                                      |
| Χ χ          | Kh kh or Ch ch     | chi            | backhand [or candy or German ch]                           |
| Ψ ψ          | Ps ps              | psi            | tipsy                                                       |
| Ω ω          | Ω ο                | omega          | aw [or oh]                                                  |

After epsilon used to come digamma, ρ (sounding like w), until it fell out of use.

Sigma has the form ζ only when it is the last letter in a word; otherwise it appears as σ. Some scholars, especially those who work with fragmentary manuscripts, prefer to use σ, a “lunate” sigma; it has the same shape regardless of where in a word it occurs. Its capitalized form is C.

(Reprinted with permission from Lesson 1 of Anne Groton’s fabulously useful and user-friendly From Alpha to Omega, 4th Edition, 2013.)
If Ovid had included a monologue from Bacchus/Dionysus in his own version of this myth, how might he have presented the young god’s voice? Would it look essentially like what Euripides has done above? Would it be different somehow?

More to the point, why do you think Ovid chose to leave out* this main character’s obviously important perspective? And how does this glaring omission frame Ovid’s retelling of the story?

*NOTA BENE: Except for a few very brief lines of dialogue within the captive’s back story, we simply don’t hear from Bacchus at all. Wouldn’t it have been compelling, dramatic, even thrilling, to watch him engage with Pentheus?

---

1 λοχευθεία (from λοχεύω, “to bring forth, bear, give birth to”) = aor. pass. partic. describing Semele, Dionysus’ mother, “brought to labor.” How do the three translators handle this word? And what is the difference between their approaches? Moreover, do the different approaches affect your perception of Dionysus and his birth?

2 πυρός (gen. of πῦρ, cf. Eng. “pyre”) = “fire.” Note Esposito’s translation as a “blast.” Does that change Zeus’ involvement, or the story of Dionysus’ birth more broadly?

3 ὦβριν (acc. of ὦβρις, cf. Eng. “hubris”) = “wanton violence, outrage.” The three translators make wildly different choices here. Why do you think that is? (For that matter, are they actually wildly different? Explain.)

4 ἀβατον (acc. of ἀβατος) = “untrodden, inaccessible; holy (i.e. not to be trodden).” Again, three different translations. Is your perception of this location – or of Cadmus himself – different depending on the English used here? How so?

5 ἐγώ = Lat. ego. As in Roman literature, Greek writers generally only used subject pronouns for emphasis. Why, then, do you think Euripides uses it here? And how do the three translators represent this? Do the differences between their approaches change the voice of Dionysus? Why… or why not?
T.A. Buckley Translation (Henry George Bohn, 1850)

[1] I, the son of Zeus, have come to this land of the Thebans—[2-3] Dionysus, whom once Semele, Kadmos’ daughter, bore, delivered1 by a lightning-bearing flame. [4] And having taken a mortal form instead of a god’s, [5] I am here at the fountains of Dirke and the water of Ismenus. [6] And I see the tomb of my thunder-stricken mother [7] here near the palace, and the remains of her house, [8] smouldering with the still living flame of Zeus’ fire; [9] the everlasting insult3 of Hera against my mother. [10-12] I praise Kadmos, who has made this place hallowed, the shrine of his daughter; and I5 have covered it all around with the cluster-bearing leaf of the vine.

Stephen Esposito Translation (Focus, 1998)

[Enter Dionysus, stage left, disguised as an exotic young holy man from Asia; he carries a thyrsus, wears a smiling mask, fawnskin cloak and ivy wreath.]

I have come to this land of Thebes as the son of Zeus. 1
Dionysus is my name. Semele, the daughter of Cadmus,
gave me birth after being forced into labour by fiery lightning.
Exchanging my divinity for human form I have arrived
at Dirce’s streams and the waters of Ismenus.
I see the tomb of my thunder-struck mother here
near the palace and the fallen ruins of her house
smouldering with the still living flames of Zeus’ blast,2
a memorial of Hera’s undying hybris3 against my mother.
I praise Cadmus who keeps this ground untrodden,4
a shrine for his daughter. But it was I5 who covered her sanctuary
all around with the grape-vine’s clustering foliage.

David Franklin Translation (Cambridge, 2000)

(1-3) I, Dionysus, son of Zeus, have come to the land of Thebes! Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, gave birth to me on the day she was sent into labour1 by the fire of lightning. (4-5) I have put aside my divine form, and in the body of a man I have come here, to the stream of Dirce and the waters of Ismenus. (6-7) Here, by the palace, I see the tomb of my mother where she was struck by that lightning, and the ruins of her house, (8) still smoking with the living flame of the fire3 of Zeus – (9) the undying crime3 of Hera against my mother. (10-12) Cadmus, however, I praise, for he has declared this place sacred4 as his daughter’s shrine. I myself5 have covered it over with the green clusters of a vine.
Do you think it would have been helpful for Ovid to include all this background information about the breadth of the Bacchic rites? How might it have changed your perception of the effect – or threat, as it were – they had on the Thebans? Better yet, might it have affected Pentheus’ own perception of the threat to know how far reaching their influence already was? How so?

Ultimately, how would it have changed Ovid’s version of the story had he included it?

*Nota Bene: Like the paragraph above, in the rest of the poem, Ovid does not mention other regions where the rites took place.

---

1 **χορεύσας** (from the vb. **χορεύω**, “to dance,” cf. Eng. “chorus”) = aor. act. partic. in a causal sense, “having roused [others] to dance.” Is there a difference in the role Dionysus plays based on how the three translators – particularly Franklin – handle this word? Explain.

2 **τελετάς** (acc. pl. of **τελετή**) = “rites,” specifically, the initiation rites in mystery cults, or the festivals that contain them. Does it change the nature of the practice if they are translated as “mysteries,” as Buckley does? How so?

3 **ἐμφανής** (related to the vb. **ἐμφαίνω**, “to exhibit, display”) = “visible to the eye.” The three translators make very specific choices here, arguably resulting in wholly different interpretations of Dionysus’ intent – how so? Is being “seen” as something the same as being “revealed”?

4 **δαίμων** (cf. Eng. “demon,” but *without the sense of evil*) is akin to the Lat. **nūmen**, while **θεός** (cf. Eng. “theology”) is more like the Lat. **deus**. (See “A Glossary of Core Latin Vocabulary” at the back of this volume for definitions of both words). Why, then, do you think Euripides/Dionysus chose this word here over its synonym?

5 **βροτοῖς** (dat. pl. of **βροτός**) = “a mortal man.” Three translators, three different translations. Is one more global than the others? Can you argue, for example, that Buckley’s choice of “men” limits the word, and thus the overall statement, to specific people rather than everyone in the world? Explain.
Excerpt from Euripides' *Bacchae*
In the text above, the fundamental crime against Dionysus/Bacchus seems not to have been committed by Pentheus, but his aunts, and as such, they too are being punished. If the Bacchic rites, then, are a punishment for its participants — indeed, all of its participants, how does that change the family* dynamic of our main characters? More specifically, how should that change the feelings of the other members of the family, such as Cadmus or Athamas, vis-à-vis the rift between Pentheus and his cousin?

*Nota Bene: For comparison, revisit Ovid’s text at lines 564-567. Also, note that the Greek text of this section continues on the next page.

1 ἀνωλολύξα (from the vb. ἀνολολύζω, “to cry aloud”) = aor. ind. in a causal sense, “to rouse to cries aloud.” Esposito’s translation is particularly embellished here. What elements does he add to the text? And is he justified in doing so? Why or why not?

2 Euripides actually doesn’t specify in the Greek whom Dionysus covers in fawn skin or into whose hands he places the thyrsus, leaving the three translators to offer three different suggestions of his recipients!

Consider the following (nearly) word-for-word translation…

And Thebes, first of this Greek land,
I roused to cry aloud, having fastened fawn skin upon flesh,
and having given a thyrsus into hands, an ivy missile.

Given the context, which of the three English translations makes the most sense to you? Are any of them off the mark completely? Explain.

3 βέλος = a generic term for anything thrown with the intent to harm. Why might Euripides himself have described the thyrsus as such? What do you think he is trying to say about Dionysus? Or more importantly, if he gave this to others (as Esposito and Franklin believe he does, according their translations), what does this say about the nature of his rites?

4 Διόνυσον ... Διός = “…that I, Dionysus, they said, was not begotten of Zeus!” Note the effective use of his own name here as he makes this point – the name Dionysus, though its origin is uncertain, is certainly connected to the name Zeus, as the first three letters of the first and last words of this line make clear!
Excerpt from Euripides’ *Bacchae*
III. Oratio Dionysi: The Rites as Punishment (cont.)

...τοιγάρ νιν αὐτάς ἐκ δόμων ὠστρησ' ἐγὼ μανιαίας, ὅρος δ' οἴκουσι παράκοποι φρενῶν: σκευήνι' τ' ἔχειν ἤναγκασ' ὄργων ἐμῶν, καὶ πᾶν τὸ θῆλυ σπέρμα Καδμείων, ὧσι γυναῖκες ἤσαν, ἐξέμηνα δωμάτων; ὁμοὶ δὲ Κάδμου παισὶν ἀναμεμειγμέναι χλωρίας υπ' ἔλαταις ἀναφόθῃς ἤντα πέτραις. δεὶ γὰρ πόλιν τὴν ἐκμαθεῖν, κεὶ μὴ θέλει, ἀτέλεσθον οὐσαν; τῶν ἐμῶν βακχευμάτων, Σεμέλης τε μητρός ἀπολογήσασθαι μ' ὑπὲρ φανέντα θυντοῖς δαίμον’ ὄν τίκτει Δι.  

How do you think the artist views the emotional exchange here between the characters? Moreover, how is Zeus/Jupiter different here from the depiction in the woodcut at line 558 in Ovid’s text?

Jupiter and Semele, etching by Thomas Cook, 1782. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia.

1 σκευήν (acc. of σκευή) = “attire.” Look back at the first lines of this section (24-25), in which Euripides’ Greek text left open who was being outfitted with the fawn skin and thyrsus.

If, like Esposito and Franklin, you claim up there that Dionysus was referring to others, why would he repeat that idea here? Wouldn’t Buckley, who suggests that the young god gave himself these things, make the most sense? How, then, do you make sense of the other two?

2 οὖσαν (from the linking vb. εἰμι, “to be,” cf. Lat. sum) = participial form describing the city. Notice how Buckley and Esposito translate this as an indirect statement, i.e. essentially “the city needs to learn that it is not initiated into my Bacchic rites.” By considerable contrast, Franklin sees this participle as the reason why they are being punished in the first place, i.e. they are being driven mad “for [read: because of] not celebrating my rites.” (See also * on the facing page.)

Funny question, but what do Buckley and Esposito mean when they say that the Thebans need to learn that they are not initiated as Bacchants? Is their punishment somehow different according to their reading?
Excerpt from Euripides' *Bacchae*

T.A. Buckley Translation (Henry George Bohn, 1850)

[32] ...Therefore I have goaded them from the house [33] in frenzy, and they dwell in the mountains, out of their wits; [34] and I have compelled them to wear the outfit1 of my mysteries. [35] And all the female offspring of Thebes, as many as [36] are women, I have driven maddened from the house, [37] and they, mingled with the daughters of Kadmos, [38] sit on roofless rocks beneath green pines. [39] For this city must learn, even if it is unwilling, [40] that it is2 not initiated into my Bacchic rites, [41] and that I plead the case of my mother, Semele, [42] in appearing manifest to mortals as a divinity whom she bore to Zeus.

Stephen Esposito Translation (Focus, 1998)

...To punish that slander I myself stung those same sisters, hounding them from their homes with fits of frenzy so that now, knocked out of their senses, they make their homes on Mt. Cithaeron. I forced them to wear the vestments1 of my mysteries and the entire female seed of Cadmeians, all who were women, I drove from their homes in madness. Mingled together with Cadmus' daughters, the women of Thebes sit beneath green firs on roofless rocks. For this city must learn well, even if it doesn't want to learn, that it is2 still uninitiated in my bacchic rites. I must vindicate my mother Semele by revealing myself to mortals as the god whom she bore to Zeus.

David Franklin Translation (Cambridge, 2000)

(32) ...This is why I have stung them (33) into a frenzy, making them leave their homes to live on the mountain, out of their minds. (34) I have compelled them to wear the clothes1 of my wild rites, (35) and I have driven all the women of Cadmus' city – but only (36) the women – in madness from their homes. (37) They have now joined the daughters of Cadmus, (38) sitting on bare rock under the green pine trees. (39) This city must learn its lesson well, even against its will, (40) for not celebrating* my rites; (41) and I must vindicate my mother Semele, (42) by appearing to mankind as the god she bore to Zeus.

* To be sure, Franklin's translation is idiomatic and does not include a direct translation of the word ὀὔτως.
Having now reached the end of his opening monologue, what do you make of Dionysus? In particular, do you think he lacks self-confidence? After all, he has repeatedly claimed that others don’t believe he is a god, and he has created an elaborate framework for others to worship him – is it purely punishment, or does he have a serious problem seeing himself as divine?

Additionally, based on Euripides/Dionysus’ passage above, is Pentheus’ crime against him different from that of his aunts? How so? And compared to Ovid’s portrayal, do you see Pentheus any differently?

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1 κατ’ = κατά. Greek prepositions, unlike their Latin counterparts, often offer a wide variety of meanings, and this word is no exception. Notice how Esposito and Franklin take it mean that in addition to fighting the gods, Pentheus is also fighting κατ’ ἐμέ, essentially “against me.” However, Buckley uses a different – and also quite common – translation, essentially “according to me,” or as he says, “as far as I am concerned.”

In Buckley’s reading, is Dionysus taking himself out of the equation? In other words, is his Dionysus calling out Pentheus for fighting gods generally? Or does he, too, see the young god’s locus of concern as a one-to-one problem with Pentheus?

2 δεικνύς (from the vb. δείκνυμι, “to bring to light, display”) = pres. partic. describing himself, “revealing.” All three translators use this verb, but Franklin also used “revealed” for the adj. ἐμφανής at line 22. Is he intentionally equating the two, saying that Dionysus means exactly the same thing here, or is his choice, well, uninspired?

That is, did he miss the opportunity to convey a subtlety that Euripides himself does in the original?

3 στρατηλατῶν (from the vb. στρατηλάτεω, “to lead an army into the field”) = pres. partic. describing himself, “being a commander to…” In considering the possibility of an armed threat from Pentheus and the Thebans, Euripides/Dionysus has undoubtedly taken these otherwise orgiastic rites and transformed them into a militaristic endeavor.

How do the three translators treat this word – well, the entire line? Does one paint a more vivid picture than the others? Does Dionysus come off differently in the different renderings?
T.A. Buckley Translation (Henry George Bohn, 1850)

[43-44] Now Kadmos has given his honor and power to Pentheus, his daughter's son, [45-46] who fights against the gods as far as I am concerned and drives me away from sacrifices, and in his prayers makes no mention of me, [47-49] for which I will show him and all the Thebans that I was born a god. And when I have set matters here right, I will move on to another land, [50] revealing myself. But if ever the city of Thebes [51-52] should in anger seek to drive the Bacchae down from the mountains with arms, I, the general of the Maenads, will join battle with them. [53] On which account I have changed my form to a mortal one [54] and altered my shape into the nature of a man.

Stephen Esposito Translation (Focus, 1998)

Cadmus, then, has passed the power and privileges of his monarchy to the son of his daughter Agave. But that one, Pentheus, fights against the gods by fighting against me. He thrusts me away from his libations and mentions me nowhere in his prayers. For this reason I shall show him and all Thebans that I am a god. After setting matters here in order I will move on to another land, revealing myself there too. But if the city of Thebans, with wrath and weapons, seeks to drive the Bacchae down from the mountain I will wage war on the city, marshalling my army of maenads. For this reason I have changed my appearance to a mortal one and transformed my shape into the nature of a man.

David Franklin Translation (Cambridge, 2000)

(43-44) Cadmus has passed on his throne and power to his daughter’s son, Pentheus, (45-46) who now fights with gods – and me! – leaving me out of his sacrifices, and making no mention of me in his prayers. (47-49) For this reason I will prove to him and to all the Thebans that I am a god. When I have put things right here, I will move on to another land, (50-52) and reveal myself there also. But if in anger the city of Thebes attempts to take the bacchants from the mountain with military force, I shall fight them, commanding my maenads. (53-54) So it is that I have put aside my true form, and taken on the likeness of a mortal man.
A Preview of Vols. 2 & 3...
Preview of Vols. 2 & 3
Latin Text, Unadorned

Over the next six and a half pages, you will find Ovid’s Pentheus text *divisa in capita*, or with paragraphs, following the same structure as that of this volume here (which, by comparison, takes up roughly three pages unadorned – see the comparable layout at the end of Part Two, minus the section headings). While you will have to wait for the next two volumes for glossed vocabulary and a side commentary, there is still much you can gain from glancing at what’s here.

Consider the following questions…

* How much real estate does Acoetes’ (that is, the captive brought back by the attendants of Pentheus) story-within-a-story take up, by percentage, of the entire Pentheus narrative? Moreover, why do you think that is worthy of our attention as readers? (Or is it?)

* Is there familiar language from the first third of the poem that appears again here? What are some examples of this? (Two or three will do.) For that matter, what other language-related features stand out to you?

  Recognizing that unread Latin is almost always intimidating (even to your teachers, trust me), what about the rest of the poem makes it seem… attainable somehow? (List two or three examples of this, too.)

  **Nota Bene:** This is purely an exercise in glass-half-full thinking. Approach the rest of this poem with the confidence that you gained from reading the first part, and it will be that much easier. (Was the first part really tough? Guess what? If you got through that, this part coming up has the same structure and style, and you made it easier because you persevered.)

* If you had to give each of the coming paragraphs you see a title, short of scouring the Web for an immediate translation (or heading for Michael Simpson’s, as I suggest in the bibliography), what method would you use for approaching the task?

  That is, how would you read the Latin without time for a fully realized understanding and still make sense of what you see? Go ahead, try it for the first couple of paragraphs, or pick two or three from later on.

Keep in mind, it isn’t what you come up with for any of these questions that matters. It’s your own developing methodology that counts.
IV. Acoetes Tells His Story – 
Stage One: Encountering Bacchus (3.582-629)


“Mox ego, ne scopulis haererem semper in isdem, addidici regimen dextra moderante carinae flectere et Oleniae sidus pluviale Capellae Taygetenque Hydasque oculis Arctonque notavi ventorumque domos et portus puppibus aptos.

“Force petens Delon Chiae telluris ad oras adplicor et dextris adducor litora remis doque leves saltus udaeque inmittor harenae. Nox ubi consumpta est (Aurora rubescere primo coeperat), exsurgo laticesque inferre recentes admoneo monstroque viam, quae ducat ad undas. Ipse quid aura mihi tumulo promittat ab alto prospicio comitesque voco repetoque carinam.
“‘Adsumus en!’ inquit sociorum primus Opheltes, utque putat, praedam deserto nactus in agro virginæ puerum ducit per litora forma. Ille mero somnoque gravis titubare videtur vixque sequi; specto cultum faciemque gradumque: nil iber, quod credi posset mortale, videbam. Et sensi et dixi sociis: ‘Quod numen in isto corpore sit, dubito, sed corpore numen in isto est! Quisquis es, o faveas nostrisque laboribus adsis. His quoque des veniam.’

“‘Pro nobis mitte precari,’ Dictys ait, quo non alius conscendere summas oior antemnas prenoque rudente relabi; hoc Libys, hoc flavus, prorae tutela, Melanthus, hoc probat Alcimedon et, qui requiemque modumque voce dабat remis, animorum hortator, Æopeus, hoc omnes alii: praedae tam caeca cupidō est.

“‘Non tamen hanc sacro violari pondere pinum perpetiar,’ dixi; ‘pars hic mihi maxima iuris!’ inque aditu obsisto. Furit audacissimus omni de numero Lycabas, qui Tusca pulsus ab urbe exilium dira poenam pro caede luebat. Is mihi, dum resto, iuvenali guttura pugno rupit et excussum misisset in aequora, si non haesissent quamvis amens in fune retentus. Inpia turba probat factum.
V. Acoetes Tells His Story –
Stage Two: The Crew’s Deception (3.629-657)

“Tum denique Bacchus
(Bacchus enim fuerat), veluti clamore solutus
sit sopor aque mero redeant in pectora sensus,
‘Quid facitis? Quis clamor?’ ait. ‘Qua, dicite, nautae,
huc ope perveni? Quo me deferre paratis?’

“‘Pone metum,’ Proreus, ‘et quos contingere portus
ede velis,’ dixit: ‘terra sistere petita.’

“‘Naxon,’ ait Liber, ‘cursus advertite vestros!
IIla mihi domus est, vobis erit hospita tellus.’
Per mare fallaces perque omnia numina iurant
sic fore meque iubent pictae dare vela carinae.

“Dextera Naxos erat: dextra mihi lintea danti
‘Quid facis, o demens? Quis te furor,’ inquit, ‘Acoete?’
Pro se quisque timet: ‘Laevam pete!’ maxima nutu
pars mihi significat, pars, quid velit, aure susurrat.

“Obstipui, ‘Capiat’que ‘aliquis moderamina,’ dixi,
meque ministerio scelerisque artisque removi.
Increpor a cunctis, totumque inmurmurat agmen;
e quibus Aethalion, ‘Te scilicet omnis in uno
nostra salus posita est,’ ait et subit ipse meumque
explet opus Naxoque petit diversa relicta.

“Tum deus inludens, tamquam modo denique fraudem
senserit, e puppi pontum prospectat adunca
et flenti similis, ‘Non haec mihi litora, nautae,
promisistis,’ ait. ‘Non haec mihi terra rogata est.
Quo merui poenam facto? Quae gloria vestra est,
si puerum iuvenes, si multi fallitis unum?’
“Iamdudum flebam: lacrimas manus inpia nostras ridet et impellit properantibus aequora remis.”

VI. Acoetes Tells His Story –
Stage Three: The Metamorphoses (3.658-691)

“Per tibi nunc ipsum (nec enim praesentior illo est deus) adiuro, tam me tibi vera referre quam veri maiora fide: stetit aequore puppis haud aliter, quam si siccum navale teneret. 660

“Illi admirantes remorum in verbere perstant velaque deducunt geminaque ope currere temptant. Inpediunt hederae remos nexuque recurvo serpent et gravidis distinguunt vela corymbis. Ipse racemiferis frontem circumdatus uvis pampineis agitat velatam frondibus hastam; quem circa tigres simulacraque inania lyncum pictarumque iacent fera corpora pantherarum. 665

“Exsiluere viri, sive hoc insania fecit sive timor, primusque Medon nigrescere coepit corpore et expresso spinae curvamine fecti. Incipit huic Lycabas: ‘In quae miracula,’ dixit, ‘verteres?’ et lati rictus et panda loquenti naris erat squamamque cutis durata trahebat. 670

At Libys obstantes dum vult obvertere remos, in spatium resilire manus brevem vidit et illasiam non esse manus, iam pinnas posse vocari.
“Alter ad intortos cupiens dare bracchia funes
bracchia non habuit truncoque repandus in undas
corpore desiluit: falcata novissima cauda est,
qualia dimidia sinuaut cornua lunae.

“Undique dant saltus multaque adspargine rotant
emerguntque iterum redeuntque sub aequor rursus
inque chori ludunt speciem lascivaque iactant
corpora et acceptum patulis mare naribus efflant.
De modo viginti (tot enim ratis illa ferebat)
restabam solus.

“Pavidum gelidumque trementi
corpore vixque meum firmat deus ‘Excute,’ dicens,
‘corde metum Diamque tene.’ Delatus in illam
accessi sacris Baccheaque sacra frequento.”

VII. Pentheus Meets His Doom (3.692-733)

“Praebuimus longis,” Pentheus, “ambagibus aures,”
inquit, “ut ira mora vires absumere posset.
Praecipitem, famuli, rapite hunc cruciataque diris
corpora tormentis Stygiae demittite nocti!”

Protinus abstractus solidis Tyrrhenus Acoetes
clauditur in tectis; et dum crudelia iussae
instrumenta necis ferrumque ignesque parantur,
sponte sua patuisse fores lapsasque lacertis
sponte sua fama est nullo solvente catenas.

Perstat Echionides nec iam iubet ire, sed ipse
vadit, ubi electus facienda ad sacra Cithaeron
cantibus et clara bacchantum voce sonabat.
Ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro
signa dedit tubicen, pugnaeque adsumit amorem,
Penthea sic ictus longis ululatibus aether
movit, et audito clamore recanduit ira.

Monte fere medio est cingentibus ultima silvis,
purus ab arboribus, spectabilis undique campus.
Hic oculis illum cernenem sacra profanes
prima videt, prima est insano concita cursu,
prima suum misso violavit Penthea thyrso
Ille aper, in nostris errat qui maximus agris,
ille mihi feriendus aper.”

Ruit omnis in unum
turba furens: cunctae coeunt trepidumque sequuntur
iam trepidum, iam verba minus violenta loquentem,
iam se damnantem, iam se peccasse fatentem.
Saucius ille tamen, “Fer opem, matertera,” dixit,
“Autonoe! Moveant animos Actaeonis umbrae!”

Illa, quis Actaeon, nescit dextramque precantis
abstulit, Inoo lacerata est altera raptu.
Non habet infelix, quae matri brachia tendat,
trunca sed ostendens deiectis vulnera membris,
“Adspice, mater,” ait.
Visis ululavit Agave
collaque iactavit movitque per aera crinem
avulsumque caput digitis conplexa cruentis
crimonem clamat, “Io comites, opus hoc victoria nostra est!”

Non citius frondes autumni frigore tactas
iamque male haerentes alta rapit arbore ventus,
quam sunt membra viri manibus direpta nefandis.
Talibus exemplis monitae nova sacra frequentant
turaque dant sanctasque colunt Ismenides aras.
Preview of Vols. 2 & 3

A Deeper Look: Essential Questions for Understanding the Rest of Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus

Since you haven’t yet had the chance to read Ovid’s Latin thoroughly for the rest of the myth, I almost hesitated to include these. But like the structure of ancient tragedy itself, perhaps having a sense of what’s to come before you read fully will enhance your experience, not detract from it.

So go ahead, keeping in mind the following…

* Just like the Essential Questions on the text of this volume, you can use these as a way to structure your approach to Ovid (more on this at the opening to Part Two), and perhaps more so here without the help of running vocabulary and side commentary. If you’d rather not have your approach thus structured, skip it. That’s also a great choice!

* There is artwork running through these pages, too, and they can be valuable tools for understanding what lies ahead. In particular, note the development in the depictions of Bacchus from work to work, the metamorphosis of the crew on Acoetes’ ship, and the climactic end to Pentheus, as well as the questions that accompany them.

* As always, I encourage you to think critically about what you read here. These are tools, but they are not primary source materials – that matters!

IV. Acoetes Tells His Story, Stage One: Encountering Bacchus (3.582-629)

Ille metu vacuus… appellare paternum (582-91)

This is perhaps one of the story’s most emotional paragraphs thus far. What in Ovid/Acoetes’ language gives it this quality? Also, what life lessons did Acoetes learn from his father, and why do you think he is sharing them with Pentheus at this moment? And perhaps most importantly, what lessons can Pentheus learn from Acoetes’ experience vis-à-vis his own father?
Mox ego... puppibus aptos (592-6)

Based on what you know about his life in this paragraph (as well as the one before), would you call Acoetes a self-made man? In a related sense, why do you think Ovid/Acoetes lists all those stars by name? Do you imagine it made him more or less likeable to Roman readers? And why should that matter here? What do you think Pentheus thinks about it?

Forte petens... repetoque carinam (597-604)

This paragraph is replete with first person verbs. Take a minute and see if you notice any patterns that emerge. For example, why do you think there is a cluster of passive verbs ("adploric... adducor... inmittor") in the first sentence? And what about the remaining first person verbs? How does all this affect Ovid/Acoetes' story here?

Adsumus en... des veniam (605-14)

Three highly intriguing components to this paragraph: 1) the crew finds a puer (whom we can assume is Bacchus); 2) Ovid/Acoetes gives us a window into how at least one of the crew members is thinking of this find; 3) Acoetes himself has a particularly strong reaction of his own. What key insights have you gained about each of these three characters?

Pro nobis... caeca cupidus est (614-20)

Once again, Ovid/Acoetes gives specific names to flesh out his story, only this time they are crew members instead of stars. What do you learn about each person, and why might this extra information be useful for your (or Pentheus') understanding of the tension on this ship at this moment? Lastly, what jumps out at you in the phrase, "praedae tam caeca cupidus est"?
Non tamen... probat factum (621-9)

In a dramatic fashion, the schism aboard the ship comes to a head. What does Ovid/Acoetes’ outburst, “pars hic mihi maxima iuris!” say about his current state of mind? And why is it significant that Lycabas “guttura pugno / rupit” at that moment? Moreover, why do we need to know about his sordid background – or, for that matter, that “Inpia turba probat factum”?

“ Ille mero somnoque gravis titubare videtur
vixque sequi; specto cultum faciemque gradumque.”

In this very famous Italian Baroque painting, Bacchus is depicted as a drunk adolescent, with his eyes half-closed and with his delicate hand holding a formidable glass of red wine. Is this Ovid’s Bacchus?

Bacchus, oil on canvas, 95 x 85 cm, by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, ca. 1595.
Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy.
V. Acoetes Tells His Story, Stage Two: The Crew’s Deception (3.629-657)

Tum denique… deferre paratis (629-33)

Why do you think Ovid/Acoetes uses “veluti” with two subjunctive verbs rather than a factual indicative statement? Relatedly, why do you think he waited until now to acknowledge that the puer was, in fact, Bacchus? Finally, describe the tone with which you imagine Bacchus asks his questions at the end of the paragraph.

Pone metum… terra sistere petita (634-5)

Does Ovid/Acoetes/Proreus (remember, Acoetes is quoting this crew member in his story, and Ovid is putting it into his poetry) choose his words carefully? Explain.

Naxon… vela carinae (636-9)

The phrase, “Illa mihi domus est, vobis erit hospita tellus,” is loaded. What do you think Ovid/Acoetes/Bacchus meant by it? Consequently, why do you think the “fallaces” crew members swear “per… omnia numina”? And what is striking by the phrase “meque iubent” in the last line?

Dextera Naxos… aure susurrat (640-3)

Notice the contrast between “Dextera Naxos erat” (followed by “dextra mihi lintea danti”) and “Laevam pete!” later on. Beyond the literal directions, what deeper message does the Latin convey? And why do you think the crew reacted as vehemently as they did? (Remember, their words have been filtered through Acoetes!)
Obstipui... Naxoque petit diversa relicta (644-9)

Why do you think Acoetes gave up rather than steering toward Naxos, as Bacchus had requested?  (HINT: Look at the actual text of his declaration.)  And what do you think Aethalion meant by his strange retort, “Te scilicet omnis in uno / nostra salus posita est”?  What do you think Acoetes expected to happen at this point?

Tum deus... fallatis unus (650-5)

Why is “inludens” perhaps the most important word in this paragraph?  In that same vein, how has Bacchus changed from the time he first awoke from his stupor?  Returning to an earlier theme, do you imagine that the young god was a sympathetic character to Roman readers?  Is he to you?  And how do you think Pentheus is taking in this story at this point?

Iamdudum flebam... aequora remis (656-7)

Why do you think Acoetes was, in his words, “Iamdudum flebam”?  Also, why do you think Ovid/Acoetes referred to the crew as a “manus inpia” here, as opposed to the description in line 629, when they were an “Inpia turba”?  What has changed in the crew?

VI. Acoetes Tells His Story, Stage Three: The Metamorphoses (3.658-691)

Per tibi nunc ipsum... navale teneret (658-61)

With the phrase, “nec enim praesentior illo / est deus,” Ovid/Acoetes’ story takes a different turn.  Firstly, what exactly is he referring to with the word “praesentior”?  (NB: It can be a number of things!)  Also, how has the tone of his storytelling changed?  And finally, why is it so frightening that the ship stood there, “quam si siccum navale teneret”?  


Illi admirantes... corpora pantherarum (662-9)

Take particular note of the rich description in this paragraph, all of which only paint the picture of the setup for the metamorphoses, not the metamorphoses themselves. Why would Ovid/Acoetes take this much time, space, and effort to do so? Also, why do you think he includes these particular items: ivy, a spear, and three different kinds of wild cats?

“Ipse racemiferis frontem circumdatus uvis
pampineis agitat velatam frondibus hastam...”

How does this depiction of Bacchus, an early Baroque engraving produced in the Netherlands, differ from Caravaggio’s Italian Baroque painting (see just above)? And why might this work be more of an apt representation of this newer, changed Bacchus?

Bacchus, engraving, 25 x 18.2 cm, by Hendrick Goltzius, 1558-1617.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York (not on display).
(For another work by Goltzius, an oil painting, see pg. 54.)
Exsiluere viri… pinnas posse vocari (670-8)

Here begins 19 lines (three paragraphs!) of vivid description of the metamorphoses. Firstly, Ovid/Acoetes notes that the men jumped overboard, “sive hoc insania fecit / sive timor.” Why both? And what is the difference between the two? Next comes three individualized treatments of three separate crew members. How do these treatments differ?

Alter ad intortos… cornua lunae (679-82)

Significantly, Ovid/Acoetes does not provide the name of this particular crew member. Why not? Think back to Tiresias’ prediction: How might this metamorphosis, as opposed to the others just described, foreshadow Pentheus’ own demise? As such, how does this reframe Acoetes’ entire narrative? In other words, does it justify Ovid’s decision to include it?

"Exsiluere viri, sive hoc insania fecit
sive timor..."

In what ways does this depiction of the metamorphoses aboard Acoetes’ ship match Ovid’s description? In what ways does it differ?


(For another Metamorphoses engraving by Krauss, see pg. 26.)
Undique dant... restabam solus (683-8)

In this final paragraph of the metamorphoses, Ovid/Acoetes uses seven different verbs to describe the new reality for these crew members. What strikes you about each one of these verbs? What is the overall tone of this lengthy sentence? Does it match the tone with which this section of Acoetes’ narrative began (lines 658-61)?

Pavidum gelidumque... sacra frequento (688-91)

Rather ingeniously, Ovid/Acoetes manages to recall a number of details from earlier in the narrative with the language he uses in this short paragraph that concludes this story-within-a-story. What are some examples of this, and why do you think he does this here? And yet, Bacchus changes the name he uses to refer to his home, from Naxos to Dia. Why?

“Qui ut viderunt, timentes in mare se praecipitaverunt;
quos et in mari in aliud monstrum transfiguravit.” (Fabulae Hygini, see Bibliography)

This mosaic incorporates elements of the myth not found in Ovid’s text, including surrounding ships, a satyr, and two female followers of Bacchus. In what ways, however, does it fit Ovid’s version of the story?

Dionysos Punishing the Pirates (detail), third century CE.
The National Bardo Museum, Tunisia.
VII. Pentheus Meets His Doom (3.692-733)

Praebuimus longis... demittite nocti (692-5)

Is the phrase, “ut ira mora vires absumere posset,” a purpose or result clause? (NB: Keep in mind that sentences with result clauses do not always contain a signal word like tam, adeo, or ita.) And depending on the kind of clause it is, how does this change Pentheus’ statement to Acoetes? Moreover, how does it change his command to the famuli?

Protinus abstractus... nullo solvente catenas (696-700)

What is the effect of Ovid’s decision to frame Acoetes’ miraculous release from prison with the qualifying phrase, “fama est”? That is, how does it fit in with his storytelling to this point? Is it radically different? Basically the same? Does it make this particular episode stand out in any way from the other miraculous details we have encountered?

Perstat Echionides... voce sonabat (701-3)

Based on what you have read thus far, why do you think Pentheus would be so foolish as to not realize that by going to the sacred rites himself, he is, in effect, allowing the prediction to come true? Moreover, are there any clues in Ovid’s language here that point toward the poet’s veiled critique of his main character?

Ut fremit... recanduit ita (704-7)

With his second of two similes thus far in the story – both about the anger/rage of Pentheus! – Ovid practically begs you to compare this to the torrens at line 568. So go for it, and in doing so, also consider the following questions: Has Pentheus’ anger/rage changed since then? Why is an “acer equus” more appropriate to the situation he is in now? And has he grown at all?
Monte fere medio… feriendus aper (708-15)

Why do you think Ovid chooses to delay the subjects of the first two sentences of this paragraph? That is, what impact does it have on his telling of this highly dramatic part of the story? And similarly, why do you think the poet chooses to repeat the subject of the final sentence?

Ruit omnis… Actaeonis umbrae (715-20)

As you read the beginning of the “fides,” or fulfillment, of Tiresias’ prediction, how are your feelings toward Pentheus changing? (For that matter, are they?) Going back, once again, to an earlier theme, how has Pentheus himself changed in this instance? Has he grown in a meaningful way, or is he simply emoting in the terror of the moment?

“...prima suum missa violavit Penthea thyso...”

Do you think the above image of Pentheus being beaten by his mother and her sisters captures the drama, the terror, or the madness in Ovid’s Latin text? How so? (Or why not?)

Engraving, from La métamorphose d’Ovide figurée, by Bernard Salomon, 1564.

(For another Metamorphoses woodcut by Salomon, see pg. 16.)
Illa, quis Actaeon... “Adspice, mater,” ait (721-5)

As the scene becomes a full-fledged tragedy, think back again to the prediction, as well as Pentheus’ words and actions throughout the story. Is this awful punishment of losing his arms fitting the crime? In other words, is this poetic justice for Pentheus? Lastly, why do you think Ovid brings into focus Pentheus’ sudden inability, “quae matri brachia tendat”?

Visis ululavit... nostra est (725-8)

What do you think is the most painful part of this horribly tragic end? Also, in the same way Ovid recalled earlier details with repeated language at the end of Acoetes’ narrative in lines 688-91, practically this entire passage has been cobbled together from recycled words. What are some of the more striking examples to you? And why do you think he did this again?

“...mille lacer spargere locis et sanguine silvas
foedabis matremque tuam matrisque sorenes.” (522-3)

This colorful fresco was found in Pompeii as part of a larger collection of scenes from mythology. Despite some differences from Ovid’s version of the story, does this painting still capture the essence of the horror?

From the northern wall of the triclinium of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, likely after the earthquake of 62 CE.
Archaeological Area of Pompeii, Italy.
Non citius… colunt Ismenides aras (729-33)

With this third simile, is Ovid the poet, the storyteller, moralizing about the event? Moreover, how does it connect with the continued presence of these sacred rites in Thebes that Ovid describes in the final lines? To put it another way, based on the Latin text in this paragraph, how do you think Pentheus was remembered in Thebes after his death?

As we close out our set of questions on the text, let’s return now to the art of ancient Greece. How does the depiction above compare* to those you have seen throughout the book? What emotions does it convey? What does it lack?

Red-Figure Cup Showing the Death of Pentheus (exterior) and a Maenad (interior, not shown), 12.7 x 29.2 cm, terracotta, by Douris (vase painter), ca. 480 BCE.
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

* Compare, especially, the other red-figure bowl with a visual interpretation of the myth in the front material of this volume.
Preview of Vols. 2 & 3

A Deeper Look, Iterum: Further Inquiry for Understanding Some of the Rest of Ovid’s Version of the Story of Pentheus

If you have already read through the corresponding section to this on the current volume, my remarks here will serve as both a coda for the discussion of Pentheus’ anger and a bridge to the next level of Ovid’s exploration of this story’s (often overlooked) emotional core: namely, the affects of what a father leaves his son. While his tragic end comes at the hands of his deliriously entranced mother, his struggle has more to do with his cousin Bacchus, whose paternal pedigree threatens the rule of, respect for, and confidence within the struggling King Pentheus.

More on that in the forthcoming volumes. For now, I have included the beginnings of a deeper look at the character of Acoetes, the captive in chains at the end of our Latin text here, who now begins a lengthy response to Pentheus’ questions by sharing with him the roots of his success, which he believes made him a capable leader at sea.

Both speaker and listener are important, even if the dialogue is one-sided.

“Acoetes’ father was a fisherman, unnamed in the text, whose impact seems to have been felt by his son in both of those capacities. Why do you think Ovid/Acoetes includes a mini-narrative about him here? Or at all?

Three Fish, Apulian red-figure dish, 3.8 x 19.8 cm, Group of Karlsruhe 66/140, ca. 350-325 BCE. Louvre Museum, Paris, France.
IV. Acoetes Tells His Story, Part One: Encountering Bacchus (3.582-629)

**Ille metu vacuus... appellare paternum** (582-91)

This is perhaps one of the story’s most emotional paragraphs thus far. What in Ovid/Acoetes’ language gives it this quality? Also, what life lessons did Acoetes learn from his father, and why do you think he is sharing them with Pentheus at this moment? And perhaps most importantly, what lessons can Pentheus learn from Acoetes’ experience vis-à-vis his own father?

Before we look closely at Acoetes’ responses, we need to look back at Pentheus’ questions, which read a lot like a college application form: three pieces of basic information, followed by a longer essay question...

1. Your name? (“tuum nomen?”)
2. Your parents’ names? (“nomen parentum?”)
3. Your home country? (“patriam?”)
4. Why do you frequent the sacred rites of a new custom? (“moris...novi cur sacra frequentes?”)

The thing is, Acoetes answers them in a fairly unusual way. Or does he? Let’s take another look...

**Ille metu vacuus, “nomen mihi,” dixit, “Acoetes, patria Maeonia est, humili de plebe parentes.**

For one, he goes out of order, tackling the first and third questions, seemingly because they are the easiest for him to answer. But he doesn’t actually answer the second question, opting to put down his parents rather than providing their names. And after these two lines, he talks about his father, in quite a meaningful way, really, but he says nothing about his mother when the question was about his parentes, in the plural, not just his pater. So what’s going on here?

Also, given the hotheadness of our main character at this point in the story, it’s almost surprising that Pentheus doesn’t interrupt him here and now and demand that Acoetes be more attentive to the questions as posed. But I say “almost” because, as we discussed (see the last Further Inquiry section on Vol. 1), the king might actually be pretty frightened by the appearance of this captive, and so he is listening carefully to what he has to say, no matter how he says it.
Moreover, Ovid tells us that Acoetes says it in a way that demands attention, because despite the very real possibility of his imminent death—after all, Pentheus made that very clear in the previous paragraph—he is “metu vacuus,” which may explain why he is answering these questions on his own terms. That is, he may feel he has nothing left to lose. But maybe this further compounds the problem? In other words, why isn’t he pleading for his life? Why isn’t he doing everything he is asked to do in the way he is asked to do it on the off chance that the king might spare him?

Perhaps what gives Acoetes such serenity is the content of the longer fourth answer, which we are only beginning to read. Have you ever started explaining something to someone—something you know, something you understand, really well—but the person listening to you is getting frustrated by the length of your remarks because they think you didn’t answer their question? Not only does Acoetes not have that problem, he has the luxury of an audience of one, who is listening with rapt attention, hanging on to every word because he, Acoetes, holds the cards in this situation, not Pentheus. Without Acoetes’ information, Pentheus is at a loss. And for whatever reason—his upper hand, his connection to Bacchus, his solid upbringing—Acoetes is navigating this unusual situation on his terms, steering it like the ship he will soon tell us all about.

Now let’s talk about that upbringing, which from parents of humble means seems to have done more good for him than the regal parallel in Pentheus’ home. By his description, which does not address any of the questions on the list of those he was asked, his father taught him some very valuable lessons. Take another look…

Non mihi quae duri colerent pater arva iuvenci
lanigerosve greges, non ulla armenta reliquit;
pauper et ipse fuit linoque solebat et hamis
decipere et calamo salientes ducere pisces.

Firstly, he didn’t leave Acoetes any sort of moneymaking structure. No family business to step into when he grows up, and that includes all things agricultural—no “arva,” which he describes with a full relative clause, no “greges,” which he describes with a compact adjective, and no “armenta,” to which he only adds a generalizing “ulla,” the implication being that we all know how useful they are.

Contrast this tricolon of workingman necessities with the trappings of royalty with which we might imagine King Pentheus was raised—better yet, let’s look at the items we know he had in his past. Acoetes did not have “arva,” but Pentheus, and all of Theban aristocracy, had the fields in which Cadmus sowed those teeth of the serpens that ultimately produced the entire city. Advantage number one. This humble captive also had no “greges,” a Latin word that can mean literal flocks of sheep or metaphorical crowds of followers, a boon certainly accorded to an heir to the Theban throne (even if they are not
behind him now). Advantage number two. And lastly, when you first came across the word “armen
ta,” did you think of weapons rather than cattle? Ovid’s Roman readers likely did, too, picturing the vast armamentoria, or armories, that the militarily minded king surely had for his armies. Acoetes’ family lacked the scaffolding for multigenerational success, while that of Pentheus had it in spades. Advantage number three.

What Acoetes did have, however, was a father who used a basic piscatory toolkit – linum, hami, and calamus – to develop a skill, and with it he raised a son who recognized its inherent value…

Ars illi sua census erat; cum traderet artem,
‘Accipe quas habeo, studii successor et heres,’
dixit, ‘opes,’ moriensque mihi nihil ille reliquit
praeter aquas; unum hoc possum appellare paternum.

While assuring Pentheus that he did not grow up with financial advantages, Acoetes tells
him in the loftiest of terms that he inherited something far more valuable: a skill set that he
might parlay into his own lucrative career, akin to “census,” a term usually used to denote
land-based wealth in Roman society of the higher classes. And when his provident father
died, he rightly described his bequest and its receiver as if they came from a moneyed
patrician, not the “pauper” that he himself was, addressing his son as “successor et
heres,” but who succeeded his studium – his enthusiasm, his zeal – and who inherited his
opes, a Latin word rich with meaning, in the plural denoting financial wealth and
resources and also power, ability, and influence over others, something Acoetes is already
beginning to wield over this shaken king. He reminds him a second time that he received
nothing, this time adding “praeter aquas,” which belong to anyone who can properly take
advantage of them. And this, ultimately, is a legacy far more potent than what Pentheus
received from his father, which Ovid/Acoetes subtly reminds us of with the emotionally
charged closing phrase that ends with the word “paternum.”

So why now? At this opening salvo of his lengthy speech? Perhaps because knowing
that this scrappy captive started his life with the right tools to succeed will help us, Ovid’s
audience, see the contrast between Acoetes’ eventual happy ending and Pentheus’ tragic
demise, and help Pentheus, Acoetes’ solitary audience, see that the support he did not get
from his own father Echion (see the above discussion on lines 564-7) is not detrimental to
his success, if instead of lamenting his absence he sees the presence of his own paternal
toolkit – that is, his own opes.

Will he? In a way, he will, but it will be too late when he does. Read on…
Pedagogical Reflections…
Pedagogical Reflections
On Teaching and Being Taught by
Ovid’s Pentheus

I am not fluent in Latin. I feel quite comfortable in English, but that’s really only the result of the happy accident of having been born in the United States. I did become even more comfortable in my native language as a result of, in connection with, thanks to, my Latin. And between the two, oddly enough, I teach the one I don’t know nearly as well, from the beginner level up through the advanced stages, so there must be a term for my familiarity with this foreign, this old, this generally non-spoken supply of words,¹ forms, and relational rules – something less than fluency but more than, well, nothing.

The thing is, you and I are in roughly the same place. If you are ready to read Ovid, if you can differentiate indicatives from infinitives, ablative absolutes from cum clauses, principal parts of a verb from the genitive singular and gender of a noun, you and I have something in common. You might say we even speak the same language; but it isn’t Latin. It’s the study of. It’s the phraseology of a discipline, but it isn’t a tongue. It isn’t a tool we could take with us back to ancient Rome and use to connect with anyone. Not Ovid, not Cicero, not even a grammaticus teaching Roman students. Not even those students.

At least we have each other.

Is it proficiency? If we sit together at this Advanced Level, and if we can, together, make our way through Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus, are we proficient in Latin? Maybe. But do you ever squirm when friends of yours – when friends of your parents or parents of your

¹ This description of language, and the others that follow in the next few paragraphs, I have adapted from Merriam-Webster’s own definitions across its platforms, including both the dictionary and thesaurus databases at M-W.com, and its more straightforward explanations at LearnersDictionary.com.

For more on the bounty available from them, as well as the benefits for learners of Latin of sticking within its network, see the Bibliography at the end of this volume.
friends, or other skeptical people – ask you, remark, almost incredulously, “You know Latin?” I do, and I get paid to do this.

So what do we know? What skills do we actually have? If we aren’t fluent in Latin and we aren’t likely to get there, why do we do it? In effect, what does reading Ovid’s Pentheus in the original do for us?

When we were in our Latin textbook phase, we could tell others, and ourselves, that we were in it for the English derivatives. In fact, for a while I had planned on including an etymology section based on the Ovidian glossary here; but it never materialized, and that may well have been a casualty of time restrictions – or perhaps I didn’t push forward with it because something told me it didn’t belong, that it somehow went in a direction this in-depth guide was not supposed to go.

Maybe the side benefit of building up our thesauri in the secondary language, albeit our own native tongue, is beyond the purview of deeply studying the primary because when we read Ovid – when we read any Latin literature thoughtfully and with great intentionality – our goal is not to foster fluency. At least not as an end in itself. Maybe our goal is something more immediate, and yet more forward thinking into our futures at the same time.

That, I think, is the richness and the purpose of delving, and therein lies the utilitas of reading Latin at this advanced level – and it is, it really is, an advanced level.

But before we consider why that is, why cutting our teeth applying our knowledge of vocabulary and forms to put forth cogent analyses of the writings of an author we’d have real trouble communicating with in the very tongue we’re analyzing – why all that – is actually advanced, let’s look into that word… utilitas.

Indeed, there is utilitas, or usefulness, in applying the skills of reading Latin to an original Roman text. For one, since we are not fluent, it is challenging, slow-going. When we read something we don’t immediately understand, we necessarily become more thoughtful about the details in front of us. If you’d like to test this idea, look at a translation of the roughly seventy lines of Latin this volume covers, read it from beginning to end. Of course, it won’t
take you nearly as long, and odds are you won’t struggle in the same way at all in getting through it. That struggle, that resulting thoughtfulness, that breeds a familiarity with the work of the poet, and that connects you to him in a way that a native speaker actually cannot be connected.

And thus the second useful reason for reading Ovid – and ancient literature generally, specifically beyond the textbook level: to form relationships, and often with the most unlikely of people. I recall the third year I taught Ovid’s Pentheus in my Latin IV class, the first of the advanced levels offered at Hewitt. It was the first year I really embraced the idea of beginning classes with freewriting questions, and since it was springtime – the last two months of school, actually – my students were already well familiar with the process.

Going into this go-around with Pentheus, I had a fairly static opinion of him. He was pretty unlikeable to me, a complaining cad whose only redeeming value, as I could see it, was that the text written about him afforded me the opportunity to write my first commentary. (It was a very early version of this that we were using.) Well, as we read and wrote and discussed Ovid’s poetry, a different picture of Pentheus emerged – gradually, to be sure, but one that elicited our sympathy for what he was going through. By the time we read lines 564-565, just after he finishes his lengthy speech to the Thebans and Ovid the narrator intones, “Hunc avus, hunc Athamas, hunc cetera turba suorum / corripiunt dictis frustraque inhibere laborant,” we were all feeling so deeply for this main character that it was clear to me that my old conception of him had changed.

As a matter of fact, we were no longer just sympathizing for him, we were empathizing with him. This king that had been maligned for centuries almost as a rote exercise of students, teachers, and scholars, we were understanding that feeling of being the only one in the room who feels a certain way while the rest of the group – nay, the entire city, and specifically his family – were trying to restrain him. That’s an utterly human experience, and our struggle with the Latin, coupled with our back and forth, our serious delving, brought us to it.

There is also a broader extension of this forming of relationships out of the struggle of reading that I have found useful, and it goes to the heart of the tension between Latin and the people who spoke it. The Romans were awful people. That’s an unfair and sweeping statement to
make, but time and time again, their history begs you to put aside any pluralism or sense of
goodness in diversity you may have and just gasp at their inhumanity. And yet, there is a
highly palpable sense of cognitive dissonance involved in relating to a Roman. I know I feel it
when I read Catullus and share in his struggles over the rise and fall of his relationship with
Lesbia; when I marvel at the beauty of a Latin sentence in a speech by Cicero; when I smile over
the witty observations that Martial makes in his epigrams; and even when I think about how
Scipio Africanus wept openly after razing Carthage to the ground because he envisioned the
same thing happening one day to Rome.

The reality is, it’s important to relate to ideas and people that you wouldn’t naturally relate to,
and reading Latin in the original affords you that opportunity in spades. To human beings
from long ago you cannot meet in person, a people who makes it hard to connect with, but with
whom, if we read their literature, it is often hard not to. That is a useful experience, a useful
moment for the now, and a useful skill upon which to build for years to come.

As I write this, I cannot help but think of the cognitive dissonance I am experiencing at my own
present moment. You see, today is Tisha b’Av, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, a day of
fasting that commemorates the destruction of the two Temples of Jerusalem in ancient times,
the second of which was destroyed by none other than the Romans themselves in 70 CE. The
same Romans whose language and literature I teach for a living. That isn’t a story from
mythology. That happened. It is as real as the English derivatives that their language gave us
and as relevant as the beleaguered city they destroyed still is today.

Nonetheless, I relate.
Let’s return now to the teeth cutting we do as we read literature. The idiom refers to the new teeth that a baby receives as they emerge through his gums, and we use it to describe any new experience someone may have. So how can that be advanced? Additionally, I told you that you and I are in roughly the same place with regard to our Latin, but I have been reading Latin literature for years. How can I still be cutting my teeth? Finally, if we aren’t heading to ancient Rome to use our supposedly now advanced Latin to connect with Romans, as students of advanced French, Spanish, and other modern languages can today with their respective native speakers – if we may never be fluent – why do we do it?

Well, because through our slow-going struggle we are connecting with ancient Romans, and that struggle continues no matter how long you’ve been doing it. Because we get better at it over time, and that is building our skills, be it developing our minds through figuring out forms in context or learning how to be okay with relating to people that don’t seem likeable. The fictional Pentheus and the actual Romans present as tough to love, but learning how to helps us grow as people, in the now as we grapple with them in the text, and well into the rest of our lives as grapple with others like them all around us.
Glossaries, Concordances & an Index...
A Glossary of Core Latin Vocabulary

As per the notes at the opening to the Latin text itself, the following is a list of Latin words common enough to warrant their exclusion from a running vocabulary in situ. To merit a spot here, then, they must have met the following criteria:

* An appearance in the top five hundred of the two thousand words that comprise Jerry Toner’s Latin Key Words. (See the Bibliography for more information about this gem of a study tool.)

* If a word just misses that cut-off (say, for instance, it’s ranked #532), but it appears in the Vocabulary Checklists of the Cambridge Latin Course (the CLC), a reading-based approach to learning the language, or the end-of-chapter VOCABULA of Wheelock’s Latin, by contrast, or more traditional form-based approach – and thus a useful counterweight for judging its ubiquity – I considered it core, too.

* If a word somehow eludes Toner’s Top 500 and both of those textbooks, and yet I felt a pang of incredulity over its omission, I made the executive decision to add it, too. (Editor’s choice, I suppose, but it had to be a serious pang.)

As for the translations themselves, these are culled primarily from the longer entries of the Oxford Latin Dictionary (the OLD), and supplemented by suggestions in Collins Latin Dictionary, the CLC, and Wheelock, with occasional confirmatory glances at Oxford’s other lexical tome, Lewis and Short’s famous but unremarkably titled A Latin Dictionary.

In order to put you – not me – in the driver’s seat, I have cast a sometimes fairly wide net for you. As such, each word on the following pages contains a mixture of its most common meanings generally and likely possibilities based on the context within Ovid’s text. Necessarily, then, you’ll have to make your own choice as to what works best. (My advice? Pick two or three.)

Finally, this glossary – along with the Glossary of Ovidian Vocabulary and the Index of Proper Names that follow – also acts as a complete concordance of every word in the text, which will allow you to make more of your own inferences about Ovid’s language choices. (For example, he uses the word novus at lines 520 and 581. Why? What point is he trying to make? Or better yet, how does that connect the two nouns it describes?)

Enjoy.
à or ab (+ABL.) from, away from; because of, as a result of; by, at the hands of. (553, 571; cf. absum; cf. absistō in Ovid. Vocab.)

absum, -esse, āfūi intr. to be absent; be out, be away, be distant. (563; cf. ab & sum, adsum)

crerō, -erre, attuli, adlātum tr. to bring to. (512; cf. ad & ferō)

adsum, -esse, -fūi intr. to be here; (of time) to have come. (519, 528; cf. ad & sum, absum)

aetās, -ātis f. age, period of life; life, lifespan, generation. (540)

ager, -grī m. land, field. (528)

agō, -ere, ēgī, āctum tr. to put in motion, carry out, do; act. (527; cf. cōgō)

āit tr. (u. dir. spch.) said. (518, 532, 580)

alius, -a, -ud other, another. (579)

an or, or perhaps, can it really be that...? (559)

animus, -ī m. mind, soul, spirit; instinct, desire, feelings; (pl.) anger, pride; (sg. or pl.) courage, character. (544, 559)

arma, -ōrum npl. arms, weapons. (541)

at but, but in fact, yes but, and yet ... still; now, thereupon (a stronger adversative than sed). (546, 553, 570)

aurum, -ī nt. gold. (556)

bellum, -ī nt. war, battle. (554)

capiō, -ere, cēpī, captum tr. to take, capture; win over, corrupt; afflict. (540, 553, 575)

cārēō, -ere, -uī, -itum intr. to lack, be without; be deprived of (of), separated (from); be free, exempt from (of) (+ABL.). (552)

cèterus, -a, -um the rest of; (pl.) the rest, the others. (564)

claudō, -ere, clausī, clasum tr. to close, shut. (560)

cognōscō, -ere, -nōvī, -nitum tr. to get to know; (thus, in perf.) know. (511)

cōgō, -ere, coēgī, coāctum tr. to drive or bring together, assemble; compel, force. (557; cf. agō)

créō (1) tr. to beget, sire, give birth to; (pass.) be born, spring from; create, bring about. (543; cf. crescō)

crescō, -ere, crēvī, crētum intr. to increase, swell, grow. (567; cf. créō)

crīmen, -inis nt. charge, accusation, reproach; fault, guilt; crime. (551)

cum (or co-, cō-, con-, cor-) (+ABL.) with, i.e. along with, together with; with, i.e. by means of; (as a pref., may add intens. force) (561; cf. cognōscō, cōgō; cf. quācumque in Ovid. Vocab.)

cūr why. (581)

dē (+ABL.) down from, from; concerning, about. (see dēcurrō in Ovid. Vocab.)

dēus, deī m. a god. (576)

dicō, -ere, dixī, dictum tr./intr. to say, speak, tell;

dictum, -ī nt. a word; a promise, one’s word; a derisive statement. (526, 527, 565, 574)

diēs, diēī m./f. day. (519)

dis- (or di-, dif-) (signifies separation; sometimes indicates the negative of) (see differō, dirūō in Ovid. Vocab.; cf. in-2)

diū for a long time, long. (549)

dō, dare, dedī, datum tr. to give, hand over, send. (547, 579)

dominus, -ī m. master. (573)

dux, ducis m. leader, guide; commander, general. (562)

eccē look! (lo and) behold! (572)

edō, -ere, -dīdī, -ditum tr. to put forth, emit, produce; utter, declare, disclose, tell. (580; cf. exē)

ego I. (525, 557, 568)

enim for, in fact. (524)
eō, ire, ī (or īvi), itum intr. to go. (562bis, 568, 571; cf. redeō, pereō; cf. intereō in Ovid. Vocab.)
equus, -i m. horse. (554)
et and; (corr.) both … and. (515, 522, 533, 534, 536, 537, 548, 556, 560, 567, 569, 571bis, 572, 575, 578, 581; cf. -que)
ex or ē (+ABL.) out of, from. (513; cf. ēdō; cf. evenīō in Ovid. Vocab.)
faciō, -ere, fēcī, factum tr. to make, cause to become; do, perform, carry out. (578)
fāma, -ae f. news, rumor; tradition, story; reputation, fame. (512, 546)
fēlix, (gen.) fēlicis lucky; happy. (517)
ferō, ferre, tuli, lātum tr. to bring, carry; (feel.) bear, endure; (things) carry off, sweep away; (pass.) proceed, rush; (news) bring, relate, report. (530; cf. adferō; cf. differō in Ovid. Vocab.)
ferrum, -ī n. iron; sword. (550)
fidēs, -ei f. trust, faith, loyalty; fulfillment (of a promise or prediction). (527)
fīō, fīeri, factus sum intr. to become, be made, be done; occur, happen. (518; cf. faciō)
fortīs, -e strong; brave, heroic; honorable, decent, worthy. (547)
frūstrā in vain, ineffectively, to no avail. (565)
gēns, gentis f. race, nation, people, tribe; clan, family; descent, birth. (576)
hic, haec, hoc this. (513, 517, 525, 539bis, 562, 564ter, 574, 577)
honor, honorīs m. honor, distinction. (521, 524)
hūc hither, (to) here, to this place. (520, 563)
ignis, -is m. fire; passion. (550)
ille, illa, illud that. (516, 544, 545, 547)
imperō (1) intr./ir. to give orders (to), order, command (+DAT.). (562; cf. in)
in (or im-, ir-) (+ACC.) into, onto, toward; against, at; (+ABL.) in, on, at; (as a pref., may add intens. force) (see imperō, ingēns; see inritō, intexō in Ovid. Vocab.)
in-2 (or -i-, iān-) (expresses the negative of) (see ignōtus, inānis, inermis, inhibēō, insānīa in Ovid. Vocab.)
ingēns, (gen.) -entis huge. (512)
inter (+ACC.) between, among. (see intereō in Ovid. Vocab.)
ipse, ipsa, ipsum (intens.) himself, herself, itself; the actual, the very. (567)
īra, -ae f. anger. (577; cf. inritō in Ovid. Vocab.)
iuvenis, (-e) young; m./f. young person. (541)
iuvō, -āre, īuvi, īuēsum tr. to help, assist; please. (554)
laborō (1) tr. to work, toil; suffer. (565)
lacrīma, -ae f. tear; (pl.) weeping, lament. (552)
locus, -i m. place. (522)
longus, -a, -um long; far, remote, distant; boundless. (538)
lūx, lūcis f. light; sight, clarity. (515)
manus, -ūs f. hand; an armed force, band (of men), troop. (575)
māter, mātris f. mother. (523bis, 529)
mē (see ego).
mēns, mentis f. mind; will, self-possession, composure. (532)
meus, -a, -um my, mine. (541)
mille (indecl.) a thousand. (522)
miser, -era, -erum wretched, miserable, pitiful. (551)
modo just, only. (557)
mors, mortis f. death. (580)
mūs, mūris m. practice, custom, habit, tradition, manner; (pl.) morals, conduct, character. (581)
moveō, -ēre, mōvī, mōtum tr. to move. (516, 536)
multus, -a, -um much; (pl.) many. (544)
nāscor, -i, nātus sum intr. to be born; come into existence, arise; nātus, -ī m. son. (526)
-ne (introduces a question). (532, 538, 540)
nē (neg. of ut in purp. cls. and indir. com., but not result). (518)
negō (1) tr. to say that … not, deny. (573)
neque or nec and not, nor; not; (corr.) neither … nor. (524, 554ter; cf. -que)
nīl = nihil nothing. (568)
nimium too much. (525)
nisi if…not, unless; except. (521)
noceō, -ère, -uī, -itum intr. to hurt, harm; damage, detract from (+DAT.). (567)
nōmen, -inis nt. name. (512, 580bis)
nōn not. (519, 534, 535bis, 542bis, 552)
novus, -a, -um new, young; strange. (520, 581)
nūmen, -inis nt. divine power; divinity; a god. (524, 560)
nunc now. (540, 553)
o! O! oh! (541, 579)
o (or ób-) (+ACC.) towards; in front of, in the way of; because of, on account of. (see óbex, obiciō, obscēnus, obstō, obstrō in Ovid. Vocab.)
occulus, ā m. eye. (577)
ominis, -ae every, all. (513)
pater, -tris m. father. (558; cf. patria, patrius)
patria, -ae f. (one’s) native land, country; place of origin, hometown. (581; cf. pater, patrius)
patrius, -a, -um belonging to (one’s) father or country, paternal; inherited from (one’s) father or country, ancestral. (548; cf. pater, patria)
pellō, -ère, pepuli, pulsum tr. to push, strike, beat; drive off, banish, fend off. (547; cf. repellō in Ovid. Vocab.)
per (+ACC.) through, throughout; (as a preľ) thoroughly. (511, 538; cf. pereō; cf. perdō in Ovid. Vocab.)
pereō, -ire, -iī (or -īvī), -itum intr. to disappear, be lost; perish, die. (579; cf. per & ēō)
poena, -ae f. penalty, punishment; satisfaction for an injury, revenge. (578)
pōnō, -ere, posuí, positum tr. to put, place; set up, establish, found. (539)
porta, -ae f. gate. (560)
post (+ACC.) behind, after. (575)
prō (or pro-) (+ABL.) in front of, before; on behalf of, for; in place of, instead of; in return for, for the sake of. (545, 546; cf. profugus, prōturbō in Ovid. Vocab.)
puer, puerī m. boy. (553)
quā (in a situation) where. (568; cf. quī)
quaeō, -ere, -iī, -itum tr. to seek, search for, look for; ask about, inquire into, investigate. (573)
quam how! (517; cf. quī)
quaquam although. (578; cf. quī)
-que and (connects two or more closely related items). (512, 514, 515, 523bis, 525, 527, 528, 529ter, 530bis, 537, 541, 542, 544, 545, 549, 550bis, 551, 552, 555, 556, 558bis, 562, 565, 566, 570, 574, 579, 580, 581; cf. et; cf. neque, quoque; cf. namque, quācumque in Ovid. Vocab.)
qui, quae, quod who, which, that. (519, 520, 521, 534, 538, 541, 543, 544, 554, 557, 577; cf. quā, quam, quamquam; cf. quācumque, quondam in Ovid. Vocab.)
quidem certainly, indeed, in fact; even. (557)
quis, quid who? what? (531)
quoque also. too. (517; cf. -que)
re- (or red-) back. (see redeō, retineō; see repellō, respōnsum in Ovid. Vocab.)
redeō, -ire, -iī (or -īvī), -itum intr. to go back, return. (572; cf. re- & ēō)
rēs, reī f. thing, matter; story. (511)
retineō, -ère, -uī, -tentum tr. to hold back, detain, restrain; keep, retain; maintain. (548, 566; cf. re- & teneō)
rideō, -ère, risī, risum intr./tr. to laugh, laugh at. (514)
sanguis, -inis m. blood. (522)
satis enough, sufficient; (subst.) sufficient security. (559)
saxum, -ī nt. rock. (570)
sed but. (555)
senex, (gen.) senis old; m./f. old person. (515, 538)
sequor, -i, secūtus sum tr. to follow. (527, 576)
sī if. (517, 548)
sic thus, so, in this way; in the same way, similarly. (568)
silva, -ae f. forest, woods. (522)
sine (+ABL.) without (the aid or accompaniment of). (540, 551)
soror, -ōris f. sister. (523)
stō, stāre, stetī, statum intr. to stand; to keep standing, continue to exist. (549)
sub (+ABL. or ACC.) under. (525)
sum, esse, fui intr. to be, exist. (512, 517, 519, 521, 543bis, 551, 552, 559, 566, 572; cf. absum, adsum)
sūmō, -ere, sūmpsī, sūmpsum tr. to take up, put on, take hold of; take and use; adopt, embrace. (545; cf. ad sūmō in Ovid. Vocab.)
superus, -a, -um upper, above; mpl. the gods above. (514)
suus, -a, -um (reflex.) his, her, its, their (own); (as subst.) his subjects; his soldiers, companions, followers; his relatives, those dear to him. (564)
tālis, -e such. (526)
tamen however, nevertheless, still. (513, 574)
tantum only; (result) to such a degree, so. (532)
tegō, -ēre, tēxī, tēctum tr. to cover, conceal; protect. (542)
templum, -ī nt. temple. (521)
tempus, -oris nt. time, occasion, moment; temple (i.e. the side of the forehead). (516, 578)
teneō, -ēre, -uī, tentum tr. hold, keep, possess; understand. (541, 570; cf. retineō)
terreō, -ēre, -uī, -itum tr. to frighten, terrify. (535, 561)
tōtus, -a, -um whole, the whole of, all of; complete, entire. (561)
trādō, -ere, -didī, -ditum tr. to hand over, transfer, deliver; hand down, bequeath. (575; cf. trāns)
trāns (+ACC.) across. (see trādō)
tū you (sg.). (517)
turba, -ae f. disorder, confusion; crowd, mob; a crowd of followers. (529, 564; cf. prōturbō in Ovid. Vocab.)
tuus, -a, -um your, yours (sg.). (523, 579, 580)
ubi (or ubi) where, when. (572)
ūnus, -a, -um one, only, alone. (513, 544)
urbs, urbĭs f. city. (511)
ūsus, -ūs m. use, enjoyment; skill; value, usefulness, benefit. (554)
ut (w. subjunct.) (purp.) that, in order that, to; (result) that; (indir. com.) that, to; (w. indic.) as, just as, when. (534)
valeō, -ere, -uī, -itum intr. to be strong, powerful; be well, healthy; be effective. (533)
veniō, -ire, vēnī, ventum intr. to come, approach. (520, 560; cf. eveniō, advena in Ovid. Vocab.)
verbum, -ī nt. word. (515)
vester, -stra, -strum your, yours (pl.). (531, 546)
vīdeo, -ère, vidī, visum tr. to see. (518, 525, 569, 573)
vincō, -ere, vīcī, victum tr./intr. to conquer, defeat; win. (537, 546)
vīnum, -ī nt. wine. (536)
vīr, vīri m. man; husband. (529, 549)
vix with difficulty, reluctantly; hardly, scarcely, barely. (578)
vōs you (pl.). (538, 540, 546, 547, 557)
vōx, vōcis f. voice. (536)
A Glossary of Ovidian Vocabulary

What follows is the natural bookend – the leftovers, so to speak – to the Glossary of Core Vocabulary in the preceding pages. If a word that Ovid uses in our text of this volume does not meet any of the criteria listed (see the opening remarks to that glossary), it consequently appears glossed on the page itself, directly underneath the Latin for your ready access; and if Ovid had used the word in a previous line, I have placed an asterisk (*) above it, indicating your own familiarity with it, but not necessarily a mastery of it. This glossary has all of those words for you, and as such, it is your source for any vocabulary that may have less usefulness outside of Ovid’s Pentheus.

Hence, these are the (almost facetiously titled) “Ovidian” words.

But more than that, like the other glossary, this list here comes with its own complete concordance of every instance of its usage – and whenever relevant, it cross-references related words in the other glossary, too – allowing you, once again, to make your own inferences about Ovid’s language choices and intentions. (The other glossary does the same cross-referencing in the other direction.)

Two more notes before you dive in…

* I have followed the same methodology for compiling the translations themselves that I did with the Glossary of Core Latin Vocabulary (again, see the opening remarks there).

* There is one more list: for proper names in the Latin text, see the Index that follows this.

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absistō, -ere, -stiti intr. to stand back; stop. (557; cf. ā/ab in Core Vocab.)

āctūtum immediately. (557)
adimō, -ere, -ēmī, -emptum tr. to take away, deprive of. (515; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)
admonitus, -ūs m. a reminder; advice, recommendation; warning. (566; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)

adspiciō, -ere, -spexi, -spectum tr. to notice, observe; look at, gaze upon, examine; turn towards, face. (577; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)

adsumō, -ere, -sumpsī, -sumptum tr. to take for oneself, take possession of; adopt, borrow. (558, cf. ad & sūmō in Core Vocab.)
aduncus, -a, -um hooked, curved. (533; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)
advena, -ae m./f. foreigner, visitor; newcomer, stranger, intruder. (561; cf. ad & veniō in Core Vocab.)
aequor, -is nt. a level surface, sea. (538)
aes, aeres nt. copper, bronze, brass; an instrument (made from such). (532, 533)
agmen, -inis nt. procession, retinue; army (on the march), line (of troops). (535)
albēns, (gen.) -ntis white, pale. (516)
anguigēna, -ae m. snake-born person (a Theban epithet). (531)
ationāhō, -ere, -trāxi, -tractum tr. to draw
towards, drag by force; compel to come, attract. (563; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)
attonō, -āre, -uī, -itum tr. to drive crazy, stupefy; astonish. (532; cf. ad in Core Vocab.)
augur, -uris m./f. augur, interpreter; prophet. (512, cf. augur)
augurōr, -āri, -ātus sum intr. to predict (w. inf.). (519, cf. augur)
avus, -i m. grandfather. (564)
bellicus, -a, -um warlike, military. (534)
cānus, -a, -um white, grey; mpl. grey hairs. (516)
celō (1) tr. to conceal, hide, keep secret. (552)
citus, -a, -um quick. (562)
clādēs, -is f. calamity, disaster, ruin. (515)
comes, -itis m./f. companion, friend, partner; follower, worshipper, devotee. (574)
commentus, -a, -um fabricated, pretend, bogus, unauthentic. (558; cf. cum in Core Vocab.)
contemnō, -ere, -temps, -temptum tr. to treat
with contempt, despise; disregard; reject. (559, cf. contemptor; cf. cum in Core Vocab.)
contemptor, -ōris m. despiser; scorners. (514, cf. contemnō; cf. cum in Core Vocab.)
cornū, -ūs nt. horn. (533)
corōnā, -ae f. wreath, garland; crown. (555)
corrupiō, -ere, -uī, -ruptum tr. to seize, carry off, apprehend; rebuke, reproach, find fault with. (565; cf. cum in Core Vocab.)
crīnis, -is m. hair. (555)
cruentō (1) tr. to stain with blood. (572)
decet, -ère, -uit tr./intr. it suits, is fitting; is right, proper. (542)
decurrō, -ere, -cuīcurre, -cursum intr. to run
down, flow down. (569; cf. dē in Core Vocab.)
decus, -oris nt. honor, glory, distinction; dignity, decorum. (548)
differō, -ferre, distulū, dilātum tr. to carry away, disperse; postpone, put off, delay. (578; cf. dis- & ferō in Core Vocab.)
dignor, -ārī, -ātus sum tr. to consider worthy of (+ABL.). (521, 524)
diruō, -ere, -ī, -rūtum tr. to demolish, wreck. (550; cf. dis- in Core Vocab.)
documentum, -i nt. example, warning; instruction, lesson. (579)
ensis, -is m. sword. (534)
éveniō, -ēre, -vēnī, -ventum intr. to come out, happen. (524; cf. exē & veniō in Core Vocab.)
famulus, -i m. servant, attendant, slave. (562, 574)
fateor, -ērī, fassus sum tr. to confess (to), acknowledge. (558)
fātum, -i nt. fate, destiny; (pl.) the future. (548)
femīneus, -a, -um of women, women’s, womanly. (536)
fervēns, -entis intensely hot, boiling; seething, raging. (571)
fēstus, -a, -um festive. (528)
foedō (1) tr. to stain, soil; contaminate, defile. (523)
fōns, -ntis m. spring (of water); (lit. or fig.) source, origin, fount. (545)
frēus, -audis f. deceit, fraud, trick. (534)
fremō, -ere, -uī, -itum intr. to roar; resound. (528)
frequentō (1) tr. to make crowded; visit repeatedly, frequent; celebrate, observe, attend. (581)
frōns, -ondis f. foliage, garland (of leaves). (542)
furō, -ōris m. madness, delirium; frenzy; fury, rage. (531)
galea, -ae f. helmet (of a soldier). (542)
grex, -egis m. flock; group (of people), crowd. (537)
ignōtus, -a, -um unknown, unfamiliar; strange. (530; cf. in-2 in Core Vocab.)
inānis, -e empty, hollow; purposeless. (537; cf. in-2 in Core Vocab.)
inermis, -e unarmed. (553; cf. in-2 in Core Vocab.)
inhibeō, -ēre, -uī, -itum tr. to restrain; curb, check. (565; cf. in-2 in Core Vocab.)
A Glossary of Ovidian Vocabulary

**inritō** = irritō (1) tr. to anger, provoke, stir up; annoy, irritate. (566; cf. in & ira in Core Vocab.)

**insánia, -ae f.** madness, mania; frenzy, fury. (536; cf. in- in Core Vocab.)

**intereō, -ire, -iī, -itum intr.** to die, perish, be killed; be lost, forgotten. (546; cf. inter & eō in Core Vocab.)

**intexō, -ere, -uī, -textum tr.** to weave into, embroider on (+ABL.). (556; cf. in- in Core Vocab.)

**iussum, -i nt.** an order, command. (563)

**lacer, -era, -erum** torn apart, mutilated. (522)

**lacus, -ūs m.** lake, pond, pool. (545)

**lēniter** gently, mildly. (569)

**lētum, -i nt.** death (usu. violent), destruction. (547)

**ligō (1) tr.** to fasten, bind; tie up. (575)

**lūmen, -inis m.** light; sight, understanding; (of a pers.) a guide. (517)

**madidus, -a, -um** wet, drenched, soaked. (555)

**magicus, -a, -um** magical. (534)

**memor (gen.) -oris** having in (one’s) memory, mindful (of) (+GEN.). (543)

**mēreō, -ère, -uī, -itum tr.** to earn, deserve. (511)

**mīnor, -āri, -ātus sum tr./intr.** to wonder, be surprised (at); admire. (538)

**misceō, -ère, -uī, mixtum tr.** to mix, join; stir up; entwine, unite sexually. (529)

**moderāmen, -inis nt.** physical control (e.g. of a ship); control of affairs, government. (567)

**modicus, -a, -um** moderate, slight. (569)

**moenia, -um npl.** walls (of a city). (550)

**mollis, -e** soft, supple; gentle, tender; weak, cowardly, effeminate. (547, 555)

**mora, -ae f.** a delay, waste of time; obstacle. (563)

**murra, -ae f.** myrrh. (555)

**namque** for, for indeed; yes. (519; cf. -que in Core Vocab.)

**nurus, -ūs f.** daughter-in-law. (529)

**ōbex, -icis m./f.** barrier, obstacle. (571; cf. ob in Core Vocab.)

**obiciō, -ere, -iēcī, -iectum tr.** to put forth, offer; ridicule. (516; cf. ob in Core Vocab.)

**obscēnus, -a, -um** ill-omened; filthy, indecent, lewd. (537; cf. ob in Core Vocab.)

**obstō, -āre, -ātī, -stātum intr.** to get in the way of, obstruct (+DAT.). (568; cf. ob in Core Vocab.)

**obstruō, -ere, -struxī, -structum tr./intr.** to block, obstruct; erect as a barrier. (570; cf. ob in Core Vocab.)

**orbis, -a, -um** deprived of, bereft of (+GEN. or ABL.). (518)

**parēns, -entis m./f.** parent; (pl.) forefathers, ancestors. (580)

**perdō, -ere, -dī, -ditum tr.** to ruin, destroy; kill. (544; cf. per in Core Vocab.)

**pingō, -ere, pinxi, pictum tr.** to paint, color. (556)

**prae (+ABL.)** in front of, before; in view of. (see praesāgus)

**praesāgus, -a, -um** portending, ominous. (514; cf. prae)

**precōr, -āri, -ātus sum tr./intr.** to ask (for), pray, beg, implore; entreat, beseech. (543)

**procerēs, -um mpl.** leading men, nobles. (530)

**procūl** far, far off. (519)

**profugus, -a, -um** fleeing, fugitive; exiled. (539; cf. prō in Core Vocab.)

**prōlēs, -is f.** offspring. (520, 531)

**propior, -iūs** nearer, closer; more recent. (541)

**prōturbō (1) tr.** to drive off in confusion; cause to depart hurriedly, shoo away. (528, cf. prō & turbā in Core Vocab.)

**pudor, -ōris m.** shame, dishonor, humiliation; modesty, shyness. (552)

**purpura, -ae f.** purple dye; purple cloth. (556)

**quācumque** wherever, in any situation where (570, cf. qui & cum & -que in Core Vocab.)

**querō, -i, questus sum intr./tr.** to lament, complain; regret. (525, 551)

**quondam** formerly, at an earlier time. (576; cf. qui in Core Vocab.)

**rabīēs, (-ēī) f.** savageness, ferocity; passion, frenzy, madness. (567)
### Glossary of Ovidian Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>pellō</em></td>
<td>push back, drive away; strike repeatedly. (533, cf. _re- &amp; <em>pellō</em> in Core Vocab.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>respōnsum</em></td>
<td>an answer; a prophesy. (527; cf. <em>re- in Core Vocab.</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ruō</em></td>
<td>rush, hurry. (529; cf. <em>dīruō</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sacrum</em></td>
<td>a holy thing or place; rites, festival, worship. (518, 558, 574, 576, 581)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>saevus</em></td>
<td>harsh, savage, wild, violent, fierce. (571)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>segnis</em></td>
<td>slow, sluggish, torpid. (563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>serpēns</em></td>
<td>snake, serpent. (545)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sinō</em></td>
<td>to leave, let be; let, allow, permit. (540)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sors</em></td>
<td>lot, share, portion; fortune, destiny, fate. (551)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>spargō</em></td>
<td>to scatter; spread the news of. (522)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>spernō</em></td>
<td>spurn, reject; disregard. (513)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>spumeus</em></td>
<td>foamy, frothy. (571)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>stirps</em></td>
<td>stem, base; family, ancestral race, stock. (543)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>streptitus</em></td>
<td>noise, din. (569)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>stringō</em></td>
<td>to draw together, fasten; draw, unsheathe. (535)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tēlum</em></td>
<td>weapon. (535, 554)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tenebrae</em></td>
<td>darkness; blindness; (fig.) lack of knowledge or understanding. (515, 525)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tergum</em></td>
<td>back; (pl.) the rear, tail (of an army). (575)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thrysus</em></td>
<td>Bacchic wand or staff. (542)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tibia</em></td>
<td>reed-pipe, flute. (533)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tormentum</em></td>
<td>war machinery; (fig.) torture, torment, agony. (549)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>torrēns</em></td>
<td>a rushing stream, torrent; current (of a river). (568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>trabs</em></td>
<td>tree trunk, log. (570)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tremendus</em></td>
<td>causing dread, awe-inspiring, terrible. (577)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tuba</em></td>
<td>trumpet (oft. used in battle). (535)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tympanum</em></td>
<td>(small) drum. (537)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ululātus</em></td>
<td>a wailing, a howl, an ululation. (528)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>utinam</em></td>
<td>if only! (used to reinforce wishes, w. subjunct.). (549)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vānus</em></td>
<td>empty, insubstantial, devoid of (+GEN.); untrustworthy, mendacious, false; useless, vain, silly, fatuous. (559)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vātēs</em></td>
<td>a prophet, seer. (511, 527)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vehō</em></td>
<td>to convey, carry; (pass. in middle sense) to ride, drive; sail. (538)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vestis</em></td>
<td>clothes, clothing. (556)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vetō</em></td>
<td>to forbid, prevent (from) (w. inf.). (548)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vinciō</em></td>
<td>to fasten, bind; tie up, fetter. (563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vulgus</em></td>
<td>the common people. (530)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index of Proper Names

What lies below is really an index-glossary hybrid, serving at once as a list of all the gods, people, places and creatures that Ovid includes in the section of his narrative we have here and also as a resource for understanding the forms of these proper names as the Latin words that they are.

For example, knowing that Achāidās is a Greek acc. pl. but Athamās is a Greek nom. makes quite a difference in how you read and understand the sentences where those words appear, and because they are proper names, many – in fact, most – dictionaries don’t include them, let alone their forms in the oblique cases. (Thankfully, the OLD does, which serves as the source for this section.)

Lastly, this list also includes those gods, people, places and creatures that are not mentioned by name in the text but referred to indirectly, and I have indicated that by not putting them in boldface type. (And naturally, then, they do not have gen. forms, gender, etc. either.) They list where you can find these references in the text by cross-referencing to the two main glossaries, or in some cases, to another proper name listed here.

Achāis, (gen.) Achāidos (f. acc. pl. Achāidās)
Greek. (511)
Acrisius, -iī m. Acrisius, a king of Argos. (559)
Agave, daughter of Cadmus & mother of Pentheus. (see māter in Core Vocab.)
Agave, sisters of (Semele, Ino, Autonoë). (see soror in Core Vocab.)
Argolicus, -a, -um of Argos, Argive. (560)
Athamās, -antis m. Athamas, husband of Ino, Pentheus’ and Bacchus’ aunt. (564)
Autonoë, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Agave, aunt of Pentheus and Bacchus. (see soror in Core Vocab.)
Bacchicus, -a, -um of or relating to Bacchus, Bacchic. (518; cf. Bacchus, Liber)
Bacchus, -i m. Bacchus, usual Latin name for Dionysus, god of wine and ecstasy. (572,573; cf. Bacchicus, Liber, and see puer in Core Vocab.)

Cadmus, founder of Thebes, grandfather of Pentheus and Bacchus, father of Agave, Semele, et al. (see avus in Ovid. Vocab.; cf. Ismenian serpent)
dragon, Ismenian. (see Ismenian Serpent)
Echēōn, -onis m. Echion, father of Pentheus. (526; cf. Echionidēs)
Echionidēs, -ae m. Echionides, i.e. Pentheus, son of Echion. (513; cf. Echēōn, Pentheus)
Ino, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Agave, wife of Athamas, aunt of Pentheus and Bacchus. (see soror in Core Vocab.)
Ismenian serpent (or dragon), protector of the River Ismenos, killed by Cadmus. (see serpēns in Ovid. Vocab.; cf. Cadmus)
Jupiter, supreme god of the Romans. (see Zeus)
Liber, -berī m. Liber, Italian god of fertility and wine (commonly associated w. Bacchus). (520, 528; cf. Bacchus, Bacchicus)
Mars, Martis m. Mars, Roman god of war; warfare, fighting, battle. (540; cf. Māvortius)
Māvortius, -a, -um of or belonging to Mars. (531; cf. Mars)
Penātēs, -ium mpl. Penates, tutelary gods of the Roman household. (539)
Pentheus, -ī (acc. Penthea) m. Pentheus, King of Thebes. (514, 532, 561, 577; cf. Echionidēs)
Semele, daughter of Cadmus, sister of Agave, and mother of Bacchus. (see Semelēius here, soror in Core Vocab.)
Semelēius, -a, -um of Semele. (520)
serpent, Ismenian. (see Iṣmenian serpent)

Thēbae, -ārum fpl. Thebes, chief city of Boeotia, a district in central Greece (and the setting for this story). (549, 553, 561)
Thebes, citizens of. (see anguigena in Ovid. Vocab.; cf. Thēbae)
Tiresias, blind seer. (see vātēs in Ovid. Vocab.)
Tyros, -ī (acc. -on) f. Tyre (famous coastal city in Phoenicia). (539)
Tyrrhēnus, -a, -um Tuscan, Etruscan; (broadly) Italian. (576)
Zeus, king of the gods, and father of Bacchus/Dionysus. (see “adsumptum… patrem,” 558)

Had the Latin sentence above appeared in Ovid’s text (it does not), how many entries would it have merited in this Index of Proper Names?
Also, do you think the verb discerpō (“to tear apart”) matches the image?

“The Death of Pentheus,” etching, 10.5 x 11.9 cm, from the series “The Metamorphoses of Ovid,” pl. 30, by Antonio Tempesta, 1606.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California.
Sources and Recommendations…
Annotated Bibliography

In fulfilment of my mission to be your study partner throughout your experience with Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus, I have decided to stay with you as you endeavor to see for yourself both my sources and my recommendations for further reading.

To that end, I am going to tell you about these works before I send you off to read them: I won’t summarize their content as a replacement for your seeking them out, but I will explain why I chose them, or why you might want to explore them, or why others have already, sometimes in droves.

If it is on these pages, I want to entice you to find it. With the possible exception of one or two items on the list of cultural references entitled, “Ephemera and Other Time Passers.” But I will let you decide which of those I mean.

There is quite a lot here, and I have designed it to allow you to approach it slowly and thoughtfully, or at a much faster clip, if that suits your needs. Here are its essential features…

* The various source categories have been grouped together into meaningful chunks, with a brief table of contents outlining this on the next page for you to see how.

* The bibliographic information itself is in gray boxes.

* After the gray boxes, my annotations appear in narrower paragraphs.

In a hurry? Surf from box to box.

Short on funds, and lacking access to a plentiful library? You’re still in luck because as of this writing, sources with the following colors and designations are available for free (!) at these highly enjoyable and useful collections online…

(PERS) The Perseus Digital Library (www.perseus.tufts.edu)

(ARCH) The Internet Archive (www.archive.org)

(GOOGLE) Google Books (www.books.google.com)

(ELSEW) Elsewhere online (sites listed individually)

Love your digital device? Here’s one more feature…

(APP) Available as a smartphone or tablet app **(but not necessarily free)
And here is that outlining table of contents. Enjoy your research!

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

- Latin Editions of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (pg. 155)
- Greek Edition of Euripides’ *Bacchae* (pg. 155)
- Translations of Ovid (pg. 156)
- Translations of Euripides (pg. 156)
- Other Commentaries on Ovid (pg. 157)
- Early/Illustrated Editions (pg. 157)
- Edition of the Rhetorica ad Herennium (pg. 158)
- Ancillary Classical Sources (pg. 159)

**DICTIONARIES & GRAMMARS**

- Latin Dictionaries (pg. 160)
- Latin Grammars (pg. 163)
- Greek Dictionary & Grammar (pg. 163)
- English Dictionaries (pg. 164)

**ANCILLARY MATERIAL**

- Methodology (pg. 164)
- Secondary Articles (pg. 165)
- Cultural References (pg. 165)

**OTHER SUGGESTED READINGS...**

- ...On Ovid and His Work (pg. 167)

*NB:* That is, as of this writing. Also, some of the sources with the *<sup>APP</sup>* designation may not be available on all smartphone or tablet platforms. Check your particular app store for updated information on availability.
PRIMARY SOURCES

LATIN EDITIONS OF OVID'S METAMORPHOSES


Magnus, Hugo. Metamorphoses. Gotha, Germany: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1892. (PRIS)


For this volume, I consulted all of the above editions, who agree on the Latin text almost entirely – that is, except for the fourth word in line 567. Magnus, Miller, and Tarrant have remoraminaque, “hindrances,” while Anderson has moderaminaque, “control.”

Bucking the trend, I went with Anderson for two reasons: firstly, Ovid uses moderamina later on at line 644, in another context entirely, which makes his possible usage here ripe for comparison and analysis; and secondly, the OLD actually does not have an entry2 for remoramen at all, and in fact lists line 567 as an example of moderamen meaning “control of affairs, government.”

Finally, though I follow Anderson’s text here and in Vols. 2 & 3, I differ in several places with regard to capitalization and punctuation, as well as paragraph structure. (See Michael Simpson under Translations.)

GREEK EDITION OF EURIPIDES’ BACCHAE


As you can see, there are actually two places to see this text online (and likely more), as it has been in the public domain for some time now. To see it as most students do today, head to Perseus and you will be able to click on any word for guidance on its meaning and form; on the other hand, if it’s the original format you’d like to see, Archive.org allows you to virtually turn pages as you would a physical copy.

To supplement this for Greek and non-Greek readers alike, I used Liddell & Scott and From Alpha to Omega. (See Greek Dictionary & Textbook below.)

1 Actually, an earlier edition of this Loeb volume is freely available at Archive.org, too, as of this writing, with the exact same Introduction, a fuller – and in some ways more useful – Bibliography, and essentially the same translation by Miller. Here is its bibliographic information...


2 The translation “hindrances” comes from Lewis & Short and Collins.
Translators of Ovid


Miller, Frank Justus. Loeb Classical Library. (See LATIN EDITIONS above.)


Though I make a point of not quoting any published translations of Ovid in this book, the above three have influenced my layout decision making here significantly:

Golding, for its claustrophobic spacing (representative of the period for printers in the sixteenth century) as a comparison to the ones I provide in “Latin Text, Unadorned”; Miller, and really Loeb in general, for its Latin/Greek on the left and English on the right approach as a template for how I created the pages dedicated to Euripides’ Bacchae; and Simpson, for the paragraph structure of his prose rendering, which I believe does wonders for the readability of the Latin poetry of the original.

I should mention, though, with regard to the translations themselves, that Arthur Golding’s rhyming couplets are an absolute delight to read aloud, and I highly encourage you to take the time to do so, repeatedly, with others or on your own; and also that Simpson’s fluid and accessible style allowed me to read all fifteen books of the Metamorphoses quickly and with a ready understanding.

Admittedly, I have only skimmed Miller’s Loeb translation, mostly because its dated English usually prompted me to consult rather than consume. And yet, I still really liked what I saw, including his brief Introduction and even briefer “Short Bibliography,” both of which provide great launching pads for thinking about Ovid and researching him further.

Translations of Euripides


There are a number of translations available for Euripides’ play, but I chose Esposito’s and Franklin’s because they not only offer a balance between prose and poetry, both in modern English and both written expressly for staging — and thus for hearing aloud — they are also both representative examples of their respective series designed for acquainting students with the classical world, whether or not they know how to read Greek.

And best of all, they both in their own way stay faithful to the Greek original while also making deliberate and thoughtful choices as to when to depart from the literal meaning.

All of which make them great options to analyze in juxtaposition with Perseus’ nineteenth-century translation in Buckley, which has actually stood up well for over a century and a half since.
Benjamin J. Joffe

SPERNIT ECHIONIDES

Ovid’s Pentheus

For more on using these three translations all together to get at the original meaning of the Greek, see the introductory notes to Part Three.

OTHER COMMENTARIES ON OVID


Simpson, Michael. (See TRANSLATIONS OF OVID above.)

When I started composing this guide to reading Ovid’s Pentheus, I consulted Anderson’s and Simpson’s commentaries regularly, and I even reference the former in a couple of places in my own side commentary. Over time, though, I put away published works to focus on my own experience with the text.

I list them here, though, because they are still excellent sources for you to consider: Anderson provides a breadth of citations for comparison throughout classical literature in his notes and a thorough if traditional introduction, with Ovid’s life and background, a discussion of the reception of the Metamorphoses through the ages, a history of the manuscript tradition, and a lengthy section of his observations on Ovid’s meter. By contrast, Simpson’s endnotes read more like miniature essays, and they are filled with references to secondary literature, giving you a broader sense of how some of the scholarship out there sees the myths.

As for Godwin, rather coincidentally, his commentary came out as I was nearing the end of my own, and so I did not yet have a chance to see it beyond a cursory glance at the preview available on Bloomsbury’s Web site. Still, I include it because it remarkably covers the exact same story in the Metamorphoses, which makes it ripe for comparison in its treatment.

EARLY/ILLUSTRATED EDITIONS

NB: Page numbers below refer to the images located in this book, not within the editions themselves.

Golding, Arthur. (Par.) (See TRANSLATIONS OF OVID above.) (pg. 71)


Salomon, Bernard. La métamorphose d’Ovide figurée. Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1564. (Google) (pg. 16 & 114)


For more on the images that appear here from these centuries-old publications, see the various “Lists of Illustrations” in the next section, as well as the captions under each one.
This text provided me with the happiest of accidents.

When I sat down to write in the summer of 2013, my goal was modestly to record my thoughts on the questions about Ovid’s Pentheus that came up in my Latin IV class the previous spring for an update to my commentary; after I composed the list of Essential Questions in Part Two, I set out to answer, to explore them based on previous discussions, and I recalled Stephen Ciraolo’s breakdown of the structure of Cicero’s Pro Caelio in the Introduction to his commentary as I reread Pentheus’ lengthy speech to the Thebans.

At first, all I wanted was a classical source for the traditional components of Roman oratio with which to frame my handful of observations about the text: soon enough, a cohesive statement emerged about Ovid’s choices in composing this speech, which then led me to tie the Rhetorica inextricably to it in the “A Deeper Look, Iterum: Further Inquiry” section of Part Two. By the end of the summer, I could assert with confidence my new and unexpected contention that the advice of the earlier document evidently had informed – consciously or otherwise – the structure of the latter.

In other words, I had arguably and felicitously stumbled upon Ovid’s template for this keystone element of his characterization of Pentheus as an angry and troubled young king. And thus my thesis for Vol. 1 of this treatment of the text was born.

And yet, there is so much more to explore and enjoy in the Rhetorica, and especially so in this accessible Loeb Library edition with its incredibly helpful Introduction and Analysis sections in the front material and engaging translation throughout.

So head to Archive.org and use it to prompt and create your own happy accidents.

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1 Here is the latest bibliographic information for his commentary, as of this writing. You’ll find that breakdown under a section within the Introduction entitled “Structure of the Pro Caelio”…

Ancillary Classical Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td><em>Res gestae divi Augusti</em> (pg. 42)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cicero</td>
<td><em>De inventione</em> 109 (end. iii &amp; ix, pgs. 63 &amp; 64)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Pro Caelio</em> I.1-2 (i.e. Exordium) (end. iii, pg. 63)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tusculanae disputationes</em> I.46 (pg. 60)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ennius</td>
<td><em>Annales</em> 313 (end. x, pg. 64)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herodotus</td>
<td><em>The Histories</em> 1.94 (pg. 21)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hesiod</td>
<td><em>Theogony</em> 542 (pg. 49 and end. vi, pg. 64)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ovid</td>
<td><em>Heroides</em> 13.159-62 (pg. 36 and end. i, pg. 63)</td>
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<td>Pseudo-Apollodorus¹</td>
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<td><em>Bibliotheca</em> 2.4.1 (pg. 17)</td>
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Loeb Classical Library Editions

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<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hubbell</td>
<td><em>Cicero II: On Invention; Best Kind of Orator; Topics</em></td>
<td>w. trans. Series Ed. Jeffrey Henderson. (1949)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td><em>Cicero XVIII: Tusculan Disputations</em></td>
<td>w. trans. 2nd Ed. rev. Series Ed. Jeffrey Henderson. (1945)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most</td>
<td><em>Hesiod: Theogony; Works and Days; Testimonia</em></td>
<td>w. trans. Series Ed. Jeffrey Henderson. (1945)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oxford Classical Texts Edition²

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Edition Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

¹ Shortly after the Loeb edition came out, work was done to discredit the idea that this was the more famous Apollodorus of Athens, and so this Apollodorus has since been given the “Pseudo-” appellation as an attachment. Here is the bibliographic information for the article that first brought this to light...


² Because I make a point in the endnote on pg. 63 based on the *apparatus criticus* in this Oxford edition, I have included it here, too.
One of the great joys of studying Greek and Roman literature is the ability to read its authors through the filter of the Loeb Classical Library. To much of the Western world, green and red represent the colors of Christmas, but to a student of classics, green is to Greek as red is to Latin; for these are the pigments that catalog for the really scholarly types – and fill in for the rest of us – who wrote what.

This is how I first learned as an undergraduate that if I wanted to read the fantastically satirical essay known as “The Beard Hater”\(^1\) by Julian the Apostate – a Roman emperor – in the original, I needed to learn Greek first; and later, in graduate school, this is how I could judge empirically that my academic interests were more Roman than Hellenic: I simply had more of the red of Cicero, Livy, Ovid and Tacitus on my foldable bookshelves at home than the green of Homer and Plato.

Time will tell how that joy will translate into the digital age of Loeb, now that the entire collection of five hundred plus volumes is available in a searchable and meticulously crafted archive of its own, but since for the foreseeable future, that archive will come with a subscription cost, I have included here the Archive.org\(^2\) designation for those volumes that are also freely available (being no longer under copyright). As you can see above, it’s half the list!

Likely, much if not all of the above is available online elsewhere, too, but I provide this list for you here because it is an experience – and again, a joyful one at that – to leaf through and to see for yourself the iconic layout of the original on the left and the English on the right, what Virginia Woolf once described\(^3\) as the Library’s “gift of freedom” for the non-native speakers of Greek and Latin.

You see, even scholars sometimes enjoy the right side of the page.

### DICTIONARIES & GRAMMARS

**LATIN DICTIONARIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**When it comes to dictionaries online – and digital content, broadly – cost and copyright play a funny trick on the consumer. On the one hand, there is tremendously useful and creative innovation**

\(^1\) If you are as intrigued by that title as I was, here is the bibliographic information for the Loeb edition, also available on Archive.org as of this writing...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^2\) She wrote this in a 1917 issue of The Times Literary Supplement, which you can see quoted more fully in the “History of the Loeb Classical Library” at the Harvard University Press Web site, HUP.Harvard.edu.
happening in so many places; but then again, sometimes it’s the older, less user-friendly content being innovated.

Thankfully for all of us, there are times when digital creativity can resuscitate a product otherwise outmoded: case in point, www.philolog.us (developed by a grad school colleague of mine, Jeremy March), which takes the venerable but dusty Lewis & Short Latin dictionary and color-codes it to allow the reader to see definitions, authors, citations, quotations, and more emerge as the separate entities that they are – thus giving new life and invaluable texture to a nineteenth-century relic. In fact, for a small fee it comes as an iPhone app, too.

Also behind that pay wall at the Apple Store, as of this writing, is the app version of Collin’s Latin Dictionary, a veritable gem in the realm of pocket references, whose imprint, the aptly named Collins GEM series, was apparently jetisoned here in the United States by its publisher in favor of the digital version. Now, you may wonder why a pocket-sized resource has any value to you at all when your handheld device can offer you the whole of Latin vocabulary. Good question, right? Well, when you are looking up a word, much of the time you need the city bodega rather than the suburban grocery store, or else you’ll have too much information at your fingertips. If you have ever comparison-shopped online for a backpack over a two-week period, you can appreciate this more focused vocabulary option.

And then there is the offline (as of this writing) and expensive Oxford Latin Dictionary, whose worth absolutely warrants its three-digit price tag. Well before the Internet revived the popularity of Lewis & Short, Oxford University Press spent decades improving upon its content by developing this monument to the Roman tongue fascicle by fascicle, until the single-volume edition ensured its success in the early eighties. In fact, their follow-up second edition released in 2012 in some respects still hasn’t supplanted it in my mind because, oddly, it comes in two physical books rather than one; and, well, in an age when within-reach convenience means all of the words of an entire language in your pants pocket, shuffling between two tomes for a phrase like “Spernit Echionides” was a hassle too great for me to take on as I re-researched every word in Ovid’s text.

Lastly, for some reason, as of this writing, O’leander Press has not yet turned Jerry Toner’s Latin Key Words into a smartphone app for studying – an unfortunate omission because, ironically, it was computer analysis of the body of Latin literature available to us that allowed the words on this list to emerge as the top two thousand in use. As a result, it sits underutilized in book form for most students; but perhaps that is a boon for your own personal vocab storehouse, because making old-timey paper flashcards tends to have enormous long-term benefits for your retention – at least in my own experience as a student, as well as a teacher watching others.

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1 This is, indeed, why I chose to use it as my primary resource for vocabulary here. The scholarship is current (even in this first edition) and the English resembles more of today’s vernacular than Lewis & Short. For a Latinist, there really is a reason to spend the money and endure the physical page-turning.

To be honest, part of me hopes they won’t make it available online anytime soon. I would miss the incidental discoveries that come with casual skimming. That’s when you find the best words.

2 Still, I did double-check dozens and dozens of words in this newer edition, and so here is its bibliographic information...

To give you a sense of the incredible gift of usability that Philologus provides its users, compare the above layout – from the original version of Lewis & Short’s dictionary – for most of the entry for \( \text{dō} \), \( \text{dare} \), \( \text{dedi} \), and \( \text{datum} \) to that on the Web site. (Archive.org)
LATIN GRAMMARS


There is an asterisk (*) after the symbols for free availability online (PERS) (APP) because Allen & Greenough’s enduring work on Latin grammar has only mostly endured over the years: in the edition I have referenced above, Anne Mahoney re-wrote the section on Latin meter, as per the scholarship that was produced in the years subsequent to its original 1888 publication (and its 1903 revised edition, too). That update of hers is available in print, but it is not in the public domain.

And yet, the rest of the book is almost entirely untouched in her edition, save for the digitization of the print and the resulting new layout, which makes for a very pleasant experience to use. If you can find the blue hardcover edition from 2001, grab it. It’s a treat. And read through that new section on meter, which will come in handy for Ovid and any other classical Latin poet.

If you do prefer electronic offerings, the edition on Perseus is free, and for a small fee, an app called SPQR has it, along with a treasure trove of other classical resources. I should warn you, though: in my experience, it is actually easier to find what you are looking for within this reference work in book form than the limited searchability of either of those digital platforms. Until someone with savvy, creativity, and interest re-develops it from the ground up again – but this time, specifically for a digital device – Anne Mahoney’s update is your best option.¹

The other two grammars listed above are, of course, introductory textbooks, and if you are using this commentary to read Ovid, you have already been through that stage in your learning. For more on my choice to use both of those different approaches as sources, see the introductory remarks to “A Glossary of Core Latin Vocabulary.”

GREEK DICTIONARY & GRAMMAR


The Liddell & Scott Greek dictionary is fascinating as a parallel to Lewis & Short’s Latin: it predates the latter, having been first published in 1843, and yet, unlike its Latin cousin, it has not been supplanted by a new treatment (see LATIN DICTIONARIES above), remaining still Oxford’s premier

¹ And like my note about perusing the OLD in its current book form (see LATIN DICTIONARIES above), even a re-developed digital version won’t offer you the joy of exploring the structure of Latin by letting your eyes wander on the page. But maybe I simply lack the creativity of envisioning that possibility on a digital device; then again, apparently so does everyone else right now…
reference for ancient Greek, and now in its 9th edition, with a significant supplement to boot. Like Lewis & Short, however, it is available in the public domain online and as an app – and Philolog.us does the same remarkable color-coding for it in both (again, see LATIN DICTIONARIES) – but like Anne Mahoney’s update to Allen & Greenough (see LATIN GRAMMARS above), that supplement is still under copyright and thus only available in print. Nevertheless, in this case, the user-friendliness of Philolog.us will make you perfectly happy in the digital sphere.

And if you enjoyed the chart for the ancient Greek alphabet from Part Three of this volume, you may really enjoy the rest of Anne Groton’s From Alpha to Omega as an introductory Greek textbook, especially if you found Wheelock’s Latin useful. In fact, with its graduated approach to vocabulary and principal parts of verbs, fans of the Cambridge Latin Course may find reason to like it, too.

**ENGLISH DICTIONARIES**

Harper, Douglas.  

Merriam-Webster, Inc.  


It’s a funny thing to list English dictionaries as sources in a bibliography, but for students of Latin, even at the advanced level – where English derivatives are no longer the stuff of regular classroom inquiry¹ – looking up the meanings of words is as de rigueur as a wearing a toga to an end-of-year Latin classroom party, and far more beneficial, too.

We learn as we read and as we write, and this book prompts you to do both thoughtfully. So go ahead now and look up “de rigueur” in all three of the above resources. I did before I used it in the sentence, along with hundreds of other words in this book.

There are many, many (too many, in fact) places online to look up English words, but like you may have been told in English class or a writer’s workshop years ago, I will show you rather than tell you why I firmly believe these three are world class. They all speak for themselves.

**ANCILLARY MATERIAL**

**METHODOLOGY**


¹ For more on this topic, see the “Pedagogical Reflections” on pg. 127.
To get a sense of why Adler and Van Doren’s classic instruction manual served as a seminal inspiration for my approach to reading and teaching Ovid, as well as my approach to writing this book, please turn to the “Preface for Students and Teachers” toward the front.

Similarly, but in a category all its own, Vilardi and Chang’s work, while I did not cite it directly, serves as a primer to Bard College’s Institute for Writing and Thinking, which has opened me to the pure and utter joy of teaching Latin through writing. (For more on my satellite experience with IWT, see the Acknowledgements.)

SECONDARY ARTICLES

NB: Again, the page numbers labeled “pg. _” refer to the locations in this book, not within the articles.

Kellogg, George Dwight. “Study of a Proverb Attributed to the Rhetor Apollonius.” The American Journal of Philology 28:3 (1907), 301-10. (pg. 52; end. viii, pg. 64)

It is not accidental that the list of secondary articles is as brief as it is. In fact, of the first three, only Kellogg’s piece is elemental to a discussion here; the next two pertain to an illustration; and the final entry is, as you may already have seen, a prompt for freewriting rather than a substantive source in itself.

Why do you think there aren’t more scholarly essays in this book? Should there be?

CULTURAL REFERENCES

NB: And again, all page numbers below refer to the locations in this book, not within any of the sources themselves.

Literature


1 As per the footnotes on the page in the Introduction, here is the bibliographic information for the Wikipedia entry’s own footnotes cited (again, page numbers refer to the location in this book, not within the sources)...

Among the cultural references in this volume, there is high…

Music

…there is the high end of pop…

Film

…the pure pop culture…

Television

…the meta-pop-referential corner of pop culture…

Politics & Society
Rock the Vote (Org.). “Voting Should Be Awesome.” RockTheVote.Tumblr.com, Aug. 11, 2014. (pg. 43; end. v, pg. 64)
(See also *The Simpsons*, above.)

…the part where pop culture gets political…

Ephemera & Other Time Passers
(p. xi)
(p. xi)

…and finally, low culture. But follow the page numbers back to the locations within the book.
After all, even ephemera are useful for understanding Ovid.

OTHER SUGGESTED READINGS...

…ON OVID AND HIS WORK

Short Overviews
Conte, Gian Biagio. Latin Literature: A History. Trans. by Joseph B. Solodow. Rev. by Don Fowler and

On Meter
Boyd, Barbara Weiden. Vergil’s Aeneid: Selected Readings from Books 1, 2, 4, and 6. Mundelein, IL:

Full-Length Treatments
Middlebrook, Diane. Young Ovid: An Unfinished Posthumous Biography. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press,
2015.

The first three items on this list offer another reason1 why I chose not to write a traditional
introduction to Ovid: among them, you really do have a wealth of material to give yourself a foothold
on the life of the poet, the range of his work, Rome at the time, and dactylic hexameter.
Conte is quite thorough in his entry on the poet in all of those respects but the last, and in fact the
basis for the introductory lecture I used to give in my own Advanced Latin classes (back when I gave
introductory lectures); Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo put Ovid in further context of the Augustan Age,
and I encourage you to let your eyes wander before and after the section on the poet in Ch. 21, and then
through the rest of Part Four and beyond. It’s an expensive textbook, but well worth the investment,
especially if you are interested in Roman civilization broadly.

1 For my paltry excuses for avoiding one, see my own “Introduction, or How to Start Reading Ovid’s Pentheus” at the front of this
book, and “A Brief Discussion About Meter and Literary Terms in Ovid’s Pentheus” that follows.
As for Boyd’s treatment of Vergil, it may seem out of place here, but since Ovid wrote the Metamorphoses in the same epic meter as the Aeneid, you would be well served to read “Appendix A: Vergil’s Meter: The Dactylic Hexameter,” as well as “Appendix B: Glossary of Rhetorical Terms, Figures of Speech, and Metrical Devices Mentioned in the Notes,” which also logically pairs well with your studies.

And finally, if you’re interested in reading an entire book devoted to background, Holzberg’s relatively recent entry into the field is available, and compelling; and Middlebrook’s book is forthcoming, as of this writing, and has an intriguing back story in its own right.

I’ll let you research that on your own.
Lists of Illustrations

Finally, we take a look back at the artwork and other illustrations connected to your study of Ovid’s Pentheus contained in this volume, both to catalog the collection and to itemize its sources – but perhaps also to dig still deeper.

As you saw in a number of places on the pages of this book, identifying patterns can be one of the most powerful tools in your kit for analyzing literature. Particularly, in the last section of Part Two, you were able to unpack patterns and make new connections in your analysis by seeing the poetry laid out, unadorned, in three different arrangements: the idea there was to allow you to see something familiar in a different way, thereby opening up new avenues of understanding.

Let’s do that one more time.

On the following pages, you will see a list of the thirty-one illustrations herein, arranged first in the order of their appearance. This is really more for reference\(^1\) than anything else. But then, you will see the familiar order reorganized by subject matter, artistic medium, and chronology, followed after each of these by a set of questions about the art, which have been designed to bring you back to Ovid’s text as you note its interplay with potters, painters, draftsmen, and even publishers from a bird’s eye view.

And like the Bibliography, the works here have been coded with colors and designations, this time to indicate the online collections\(^2\) from which they came…

(Wiki) Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org)
(Met) The Metropolitan Museum of Art (www.metmuseum.org)
(Google) Google Books (www.books.google.com)
(Elsew) Elsewhere online (see captions\(^3\) at each page for details)

Most of all, enjoy.

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\(^1\) Also, see the EARLY/ILLUSTRATED EDITIONS list within the Bibliography for more information on certain etchings, engravings, and book page images.

\(^2\) The art and other images from these three collections are in the public domain; from MetMuseum.org, this means they are designated as available by the symbol for Open Access for Scholarly Content, or [OASC].

\(^3\) The following works with this designation are also in the public domain: “Bacchus Clip Art” and “Ancient Greek Women, Clip Art” (pgs. 8 & 173, from Ciker.com), “Early Edition of the Rhetorica” (opening) (pg. 158, Archive.org), and “Lewis & Short’s A Latin Dictionary, DÔ to DÔ” (excerpt) (pg. 162, ibid.). See the Acknowledgements at the front of this book for the permissions granted for the remaining images.
ORDINATAE SPECIE IN LIBRO

By Order of Appearance

FRONT MATERIAL

“Study for Pentheus 3” (cover & pg. xxxiii) (ELSEW)
“Maenads with the Head of Pentheus, Who Refused to Worship Dionysus” (pg. iv) (ELSEW)
“Pentheus Torn Apart by Agave and Ino, Maenads” (pg. ii) (WikiP)

PART ONE: OVID’S VERSION OF THE STORY OF PENTHEUS… PRESENTED

“Marble Relief with a Dancing Maenad” (pg. 5) (MET)
“Bacchus, Clip Art” (pg. 8) (ELSEW)
“Bronze Cymbal, Ancient Greece” (pg. 10) (WikiP)
“Youth Playing the Aulos, or Tibia” (detail) (pg. 11) (WikiP)
“Semele, Jupiter, & the Infant Bacchus” (pg. 16) (Google)
“A Greek Silver Stater from Thebes, with a Boeotian shield and a bearded Dionysus” (pg. 19) (ELSEW)

PART TWO: OVID’S VERSION OF THE STORY OF PENTHEUS… EXAMINED

“Tiresias Is Transformed into a Woman, after striking two snakes with a stick” (pg. 26) (WikiP)
“Cadmus Building Thebes” (pg. 28) (MET)
“Rushing Stream” (detail) (pg. 30) (ELSEW)

“Tiresias Appears to Ulysses During the Sacrifice” (pg. 38) (WikiP)
“Cadmus Slayes the Dragon” (pg. 54) (WikiP)
“Ovid, by Luca Signorelli” (detail) (pg. 62) (WikiP)

“Ovid, Nuremberg Chronicles” (pg. 70) (WikiP)
“Arthur Golding’s The.xv.Booke of P. Ouidaus Naso, enyttyed Metamorphosis (sic)” (excerpt) (pg. 71) (WikiP)

PART THREE: OVID’S VERSION OF THE STORY OF PENTHEUS… COMPARED

“The Alphabet of Classical Greek” (pg. 81) (ELSEW)
“Jupiter and Semele” (pg. 88) (WikiP)
PREVIEW OF VOLS. 2 & 3
“Bacchus, by Caravaggio” (pg. 107) (WiKiP)
“Bacchus, by Hendrick Goltzius” (pg. 110) (MET)
“Metamorphoses Aboard Acetes’ Ship” (pg. 111) (WiKiP)
“Dionysos Punishing the Pirates” (detail) (pg. 112) (WiKiP)
“Pentheus Slain by Bacchantes” (pg. 114) (GOoGLE)
“Pentheus Being Torn Apart, wall painting at the House of the Vettii” (pg. 115) (WiKiP)
“Red-Figure Cup Showing the Death of Pentheus and a Maenad” (pg. 116) (ELSEW)
“Three Fish” (pg. 119) (WiKiP)

INDEX OF PROPER NAMES
“The Death of Pentheus” (pg. 148) (WiKiP)

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
“Early Edition of the Rhetorica, w. Cicero’s De inventione” (opening) (pg. 158) (ELSEW)
“Lewis & Short’s A Latin Dictionary, 1879 edition, i.e. Do to Do” (excerpt) (pg. 162) (ELSEW)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
“Ancient Greek Women, Clip Art” (pg. 173, i.e. directly below) (ELSEW)

Does the image above match your conception of the “matresque nurusque”
Ovid describes at line 529? Explain.
(Clker.com)

1 The original title was actually Harper’s Latin Dictionary, A New Latin Dictionary Founded on the Translation of Freund’s Latin-German Lexicon, Edited by E. A. Andrew’s, LL.D. (Archive.org)
ORDINATAE ARGUMENTO

By Subject Matter

BACCHIC WORSHIP

“Marble Relief with a Dancing Maenad” (pg. 5) (MET)
“Ancient Greek Women, Clip Art” (pg. 173) (ELSEW)

THE CLIMACTIC SCENE

“Pentheus Torn Apart by Agave and Ino, Maenads” (pg. ii) (Wiki)
“Maenads with the Head of Pentheus, Who Refused to Worship Dionysus” (pg. iv) (ElseW)
“Pentheus Slain by Bacchantes” (pg. 114) (Google)
“Pentheus Being Torn Apart, wall painting at the House of the Vetti” (pg. 115) (Wiki)
“Red-Figure Cup Showing the Death of Pentheus and a Maenad” (pg. 116) (ElseW)
“The Death of Pentheus” (pg. 148) (Wiki)

ELSEWHERE IN THE METAMORPHOSES

“Semele, Jupiter, & the Infant Bacchus” (pg. 16) (Google)
“Tiresias Is Transformed into a Woman, after striking two snakes with a stick” (pg. 26) (Wiki)
“Cadmus Building Thebes” (pg. 28) (MET)
“Tiresias Appears to Ulysses During the Sacrifice” (pg. 38) (Wiki)
“Cadmus Slays the Dragon” (pg. 54) (Wiki)
“Jupiter and Semele” (pg. 88) (Wiki)
“Metamorphoses Aboard Acoetes' Ship” (pg. 111) (Wiki)
“Dionysos Punishing the Pirates” (detail) (pg. 112) (Wiki)

PORTRAITS

“Study for Pentheus 3” (cover & pg. xxxiii) (ElseW)
“Bacchus, Clip Art” (pg. 8) (ElseW)
“A Greek Silver Stater from Thebes, with a Boeotian shield and a bearded Dionysus” (pg. 19) (ElseW)
“Ovid, by Luca Signorelli” (detail) (pg. 62) (Wiki)
“Ovid, Nuremberg Chronicles” (pg. 70) (Wiki)
“Bacchus, by Caravaggio” (pg. 107) (Wiki)
“Bacchus, by Hendrick Goltzius” (pg. 110) (MET)
NATURE & DAILY OBJECTS

“Bronze Cymbal, Ancient Greece” (pg. 10) [WikiP]
“Youth Playing the Aulos, or Tibia” (detail) (pg. 11) [WikiP]
“Rushing Stream” (detail) (pg. 30) [ELSEW]
“Three Fish” (pg. 119) [WikiP]

LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP

“Arthur Golding’s The.xv.Booke of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis (sic)” (excerpt) (pg. 71) [WikiP]
“The Alphabet of Classical Greek” (pg. 81) [ELSEW]
“Early Edition of the Rhetorica, w. Cicero’s De inventione” (opening) (pg. 158) [ELSEW]
“Lewis & Short’s A Latin Dictionary, 1879 edition,” DÔ to DÔ” (excerpt) (pg. 162) [ELSEW]

Questions You Might Consider

Among the images of THE CLIMACTIC SCENE, do some have more pathos than others? Based on the Latin text, which of these do you imagine Ovid himself would connect with most?

How do the various depictions of Bacchus/Dionysus compare to one another? How does he change from one image to the next? And what other literary figures or characters might you compare? (HINT: Look in categories other than PORTRAITS!)

Is the printed word worthy of being called art? Does it affect how you read Ovid? How you understand him? With what other category above might you compare it?

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1 See fn., pg. 171.
ORDINATAE MATERIĀ

By Artistic Medium

ANCIENT GREEK POTTERY

“Pentheus Torn Apart by Agave and Ino, Maenads” (pg. ii) (WikiP)
“Youth Playing the Aulos, or Tibia” (detail) (pg. 11) (WikiP)
“Red-Figure Cup Showing the Death of Pentheus and a Maenad” (pg. 116) (ESD)
“Three Fish” (pg. 119) (WikiP)

MOSAICS

“Dionysos Punishing the Pirates” (detail) (pg. 112) (WikiP)

MARBLE SCULPTURE

“Marble Relief with a Dancing Maenad” (pg. 5) (MET)

BRONZE OBJECTS

“Bronze Cymbal, Ancient Greece” (pg. 10) (WikiP)

ANCIENT COINS

“A Greek Silver Stater from Thebes, with a Boeotian shield and a bearded Dionysus” (pg. 19) (ESD)

FRESCOES

“Ovid, by Luca Signorelli” (detail) (pg. 62) (WikiP)
“Pentheus Being Torn Apart, wall painting at the House of the Vettii” (pg. 115) (WikiP)

Questions You Might Consider

Do you see a difference between the way the story of Pentheus (and the related stories) has been portrayed between the various artistic media? Does a particular medium really do it more justice? Do you think there is a medium that does not bring it out as well as the others?

By and large (but not entirely so), the ancient artistic media are on the left here and the relatively modern artistic media are on the right. Are the ancient media more conducive to telling the story? Is it vice versa? Explain.
List of Illustrations

Benjamin J. Joffe

Spernit Echionides
Ovid's *Pentheus*

Drawing, Etching, Engraving

"Maenads with the Head of Pentheus, Who Refused to Worship Dionysus" (pg. iv) [ELSEW]
"Bacchus, Clip Art" (pg. 8) [ELSEW]
"Semele, Jupiter, & the Infant Bacchus" (pg. 16) [GOOGLE]
"Tiresias Is Transformed into a Woman, after striking two snakes with a stick" (pg. 26) [WikiP]
"Cadmus Building Thebes" (pg. 28) [MET]
"Ovid, Nuremberg Chronicles" (pg. 70) [WikiP]
"Jupiter and Semele" (pg. 88) [WikiP]
"Bacchus, by Hendrick Goltzius" (pg. 110) [MET]
"Metamorphoses Aboard Acoetes' Ship" (pg. 111) [WikiP]
"Pentheus Slain by Bacchantes" (pg. 114) [GOOGLE]
"The Death of Pentheus" (pg. 148) [WikiP]
"Ancient Greek Women, Clip Art" (pg. 173) [ELSEW]

Oil Paintings

"Study for Pentheus 3" (cover & pg. xxxiii) [ELSEW]
"Rushing Stream" (detail) (pg. 30) [ELSEW]
"Cadmus Slays the Dragon" (pg. 54) [WikiP]
"Bacchus, by Caravaggio" (pg. 107) [WikiP]

Watercolor

"Tiresias Appears to Ulysses During the Sacrifice" (pg. 38) [WikiP]

Classic Printing Press

"Arthur Golding's The.xv.Booke of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis (sic)" (excerpt) (pg. 71) [WikiP]

"The Alphabet of Classical Greek" (pg. 81) [ELSEW]

Modern Book Publishing

"Early Edition of the Rhetorica, w. Cicero’s De inventione" (opening) (pg. 158) [ELSEW]
"Lewis & Short’s A Latin Dictionary, 1879 edition, 1 DÔ to DÔ” (excerpt) (pg. 162) [ELSEW]

1 See fn., pg. 171.
ORDINATAE TEMPORE

By Chronology

CLASSICAL GREECE

[ca. 500-480 BCE] “Bronze Cymbal, Ancient Greece” (pg. 10) (Wiki)
[ca. 480 BCE] “Red-Figure Cup Showing the Death of Pentheus and a Maenad” (pg. 116) (Elsév)
[ca. 460-450 BCE] “Youth Playing the Aulos, or Tibia” (detail) (pg. 11) (Wiki)
[ca. 450-425 BCE] “Pentheus Torn Apart by Agave and Ino, Maenads” (pg. ii) (Wiki)
[ca. 405-395 BCE] “A Greek Silver Stater from Thebes, with a Boeotian shield and a bearded Dionysus” (pg. 19) (Elsév)
[ca. 350-325 BCE] “Three Fish” (pg. 119) (Wiki)

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

[ca. 27 BCE - 14 CE] “Marble Relief with a Dancing Maenad” (pg. 5) (Met)
[ca. 62-79 CE] “Pentheus Being Torn Apart, wall painting at the House of the Vettii” (pg. 115) (Wiki)
[ca. 200-300 CE] “Dionysos Punishing the Pirates” (detail) (pg. 112) (Wiki)

THE RENAISSANCE

[1493] “Ovid, Nuremberg Chronicles” (pg. 70) (Wiki)
[1499-1503] “Ovid, by Luca Signorelli” (detail) (pg. 62) (Wiki)
[ca. 1542-1547] “Cadmus Building Thebes” (pg. 28) (Met)
[1558-1617] “Bacchus, by Hendrick Goltzius” (pg. 110) (Met)
“Cadmus Slays the Dragon” (pg. 54) (Wiki)
[1564] “Semele, Jupiter, & the Infant Bacchus” (pg. 16) (Google)
“Pentheus Slain by Bacchantes” (pg. 114) (Google)

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1 But actually a copy of a Greek original, ca. 425-400 BCE. (See caption, pg. 5.)
2 This refers to the artist’s lifetime, not the date of the work itself. Additionally, the oil painting, “Cadmus Slays the Dragon,” is also by Goltzius. (See captions at both pages.)
3 These engravings are from the same illustrated edition by Bernard Salomon. (See captions at both pages, and the Bibliography, pg. 157.)
EARLY MODERN PERIOD

[1595] “Bacchus, by Caravaggio” (pg. 107) (WikiP)
[1606] “The Death of Pentheus” (pg. 148) (WikiP)
[ca. 1690] “Tiresias Is Transformed into a Woman, after striking two snakes with a stick” (pg. 26) (WikiP)
“Metamorphoses Aboard Acoetes’ Ship” (pg. 111) (WikiP)

THE MODERN WORLD

[1741-1825] “Tiresias Appears to Ulysses During the Sacrifice” (pg. 38) (WikiP)
[1782] “Jupiter and Semele” (pg. 88) (WikiP)
[1879] “Lewis & Short’s A Latin Dictionary, original edition, DÔ to DÔ” (excerpt) (pg. 162) (ElseW)
[1943] “Rushing Stream” (detail) (pg. 30) (ElseW)

TODAY’S WORLD

[2008] “Bacchus, Clip Art” (pg. 8) (ElseW)
[2009] “Ancient Greek Women, Clip Art” (pg. 173) (ElseW)
[2009] “Maenads with the Head of Pentheus, Who Refused to Worship Dionysus” (pg. iv) (ElseW)
[2013] “The Alphabet of Classical Greek” (pg. 81) (ElseW)
[2013] “Study for Pentheus 3” (cover & pg. xxxii) (ElseW)

Questions You Might Consider

Is it possible to see a broader cultural sense of how the story of Pentheus (and related stories, or mythology in general) was viewed in a given time period based on the works of art listed above? For example, is there a commonality to the interpretations of the classical Greek works of art listed above? To those of the Roman Empire? Other periods?

The groupings by artistic medium also happen to fall roughly along chronological lines. So what does the arrangement in this list provide for you vis-à-vis your understanding of Ovid’s text over the years? List two or three examples.

What might change in the artistic depictions of Ovid’s Pentheus in years to come? What would you like to see next? How would you represent the story artistically?

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1 These engravings are from the same illustrated edition by Johann Krauss. (See captions at both pages, and the Bibliography, pg. 157.)
2 This refers to the artist’s lifetime, not the date of the work itself.
3 See fn., pg. 171.
4 This refers to the date it was uploaded to the site, not necessarily the date created.
5 But based on a based on a first century CE bas-relief. (See caption, pg. iv.)
Born out of my years of using traditional commentaries for Latin and Greek texts, both for myself as a student learning the language anew and then as a teacher sharing my experience with others – and still learning the language years later – this in-depth guide to Ovid’s version of the story of Pentheus I have conceived as a reimagining of the genre, at once a vehicle designed to allow students to navigate their own ways through the literature and also a tool for building their analytical skills to apply liberally, earnestly, and enthusiastically to other Latin and Greek texts, and really to any piece of writing, art, or other form of expression.

Here in Vol. 1, my own exploration of the text brought me to notice a striking parallel between Pentheus’ speech to the Thebans that dominates the first seventy-odd lines of Ovid’s telling of the myth and the guidelines to oration in general put forth by the Rhetorica ad Herrenium, a text that predates the Metamorphoses by enough time for Ovid to have read it and to have been influenced by its handy approach. I share the details of that observation later in the book, so as to allow other readers to engage with the text on their own first.

Additionally, years of reading, rereading, writing about and discussing with others Ovid’s beleaguered main character have allowed me to form a relationship with the mythical Pentheus, and so in this volume and in the two to come, I invite my readers to empathize with him, to understand his anger, and to allow him the space to be upset at the arrival of Bacchus at Thebes. In this way, when we can join him in his experience, his lamentable fate truly can become a tragedy.