As the fifth century ended, Macedonians at Pella watched the première of Euripides' masterpiece, the *Bacchae*, which was linked politely to its place of first performance by its third chorus's concluding lines. Metrically, they stand apart from the pulsating beat (“ionic a minore”) of the preceding verses as the chorus slows down into expansive praises of “father Loudias,” Pella's beneficial local river, and its “land fair for horses,” into which Dionysus will bring his whirling maenads after crossing the river Axios too. In his great commentary Dodds misplaced the river Loudias as “beneath the walls of Aegae,” whereas it flowed by Pella, and doubted that “the play was designed primarily for a Macedonian audience: the allusions to contemporary theories and controversies . . . are surely meant for Athenian ears.”

In fact, those allusions are excellent evidence for what a Pella audience could follow, just before their king Archelaus offered a safe haven in Macedonia to the imprisoned Socrates. τὸ σοφὸν and its scope, Tiresias' punning aetiology of Dionysus' origins, the rule of νόμος and φύσις were not beyond the Macedonian court’s mental grasp. “Contemporary theories” were not confined to Athens in the Greek world of the late fifth century BC.

What would Macedonian spectators have made of the story? They had local cults of Agrios Dionysos and Dionysos Pseudanor (for his femininity, see Euripides, *Bacchae* 353); the recently found epigrams of Posidippus show that Pella, too, knew maenads and virgin girl-“servants of Dionysos” who worshipped in the mountains; they had aetiological stories of

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1 Eur., *Bacch. 565–75*, with E. R. Dodds, *Euripides Bacchae*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1960) p. 147 and on 409–11, at p. 126 (citing Archelaus’ festival of the Muses at Dion as a possible venue: cf. Introduction, xxxix), Intro. xl (doubting it: also on 266–71, at p. 103) and the magnificent Intro. xlvii–xlviii on Macedon’s possible impact on the poet, nonetheless; S. Scullion, “Euripides and Macedon Or The Silence of the Frogs,” *CQ* 53 (2003) 389–400, at 394 cannot explain Ludias’ presence here. In discussion, A. Kottaridi reminds me that the Loudias is also visible from Aigai’s palace-hill and that Hdt’s 7.123 describes the Loudias as meeting the Haliacmon and flowing on as one and the same river. She thus suggests that the reference may in fact fit Aigai, not Pella, and Dodds was right for the wrong reason. If so a first night at Aigai is a possibility.
Dionysiac females, cross-dressing and fighting as warriors; Olympias was perhaps not the first in Macedon to worship Dionysus with snakes.\(^2\) The play’s myth was set at Thebes but it had a lively resonance for the “first night” at Pella, although its Dionysus was not presented as a god of bliss beyond the grave, as Macedon’s Dionysus sometimes was.\(^3\) In a brilliant article George Devereux has shown that Euripides’ scene of Agave coming out of her madness is an accurate description of psychological illness and the “psychotherapeutic process,” anticipating Freud. Its “clinical plausibility” implied to him that there “existed—at least in Macedonia, and probably in Greece proper—a genuine psychotherapy, whose practitioners may well have been shamans and/or pioneers of a kind the hidebound tend to call ‘quacks’.” He also concluded that “it was probably in Macedonia that Euripides observed the administration of genuine psychotherapy (i.e. that which promotes insight and recall) to maenads.”\(^4\)

During the first forty years of the fourth century, young members of the Bacchae’s audience lived to see a different σπαραγμ/omicronoxiaς, not of Dionysus’ opponents but of their own kingdom. In the 390s, king follows king in the ancients’ king-lists, stretching modern scholars’ ingenuity to the limits. The longest survivor, Amyntas III, was then expelled or seriously challenged at least twice in his reign. Royal murders recurred in the early to mid-360s and a “black legend” grew up against the future king Philip’s own mother. Underneath these royal crises, was there a steadily growing strength in the kingdom, as some modern scholars now propose, or was the rise of Philip, then Alexander an unexpected tale of two great kings, emerging from continuing confusion in the land so “fair for horses”?

Orestes to Alexander II

Sources for the years from 399 to 360 BC remain patchy and fragmentary, but the fundamental work in establishing a narrative has been done by Beloch, Geyer, and above all Hammond and Griffith in 1979: most of the latter’s genealogies and narratives were simply followed by Borza in his

\(^2\) M. B. Hatzopoulos, La Macédoine: Géographie historique, langue, cultes et croyances, institutions (Paris, 2006), pp. 57–61; Poseidipp. 44 (ed. C. Austin, G. Bastianin, M. Pan [2002]); Polyaen., Strateg. 4.1; Plut., Alex. 2.7–9.
