As the Bacchae of Euripides approaches its climax, the Chorus sings a brief triumphal stanza (1153–64). The leader of the Chorus, noticing the approach of Agave with the head of her son Pentheus, introduces the new character, saying to the Chorus (1165–67), ὄλλ', εἰσφόρῳ γὰρ ἐς δόμους ὄρμωμένην/Πενθέους Ἀγαίνην μητέρ' ἐν διαστράφοις/δόσοις, δέχεσθε κόμων εὐίοι θεοῦ. It is with the last four words that this note is concerned. All editors and translators to whose work I have had access, and who discuss the word κόμως, take it as referring to Agave; some believe it includes others as well 1).

Let us first consider the idea that κόμως refers to a group of revelers consisting of Agave and other Theban women 2). This interpretation, which apparently stems from a justifiable reluctance to take κόμως as referring to a single individual, directly contradicts the explicit statement of Bac. 1143 Λητοῦ οὖν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ... as Winnington-Ingram says (135), “she has left her own band...” 3). Dodds (222) has Agave enter alone, and later perform a pas seul. Indeed, the entrance of what could only seem to be a new, rival chorus, would, I suggest, detract from the force of Agave’s entrance. This note will proceed on the assumption that Agave enters alone.

This granted, the comment of Beckwith ad. loco well expresses the interpretation of δέχεσθε κόμων which the identification of the κόμως with Agave forces upon us: he glosses κόμως as revel, and remarks, “said in irony of Agave’s exultant entrance with the sign of the god’s triumph”. Similarly Winnington-Ingram (25): “...to the return of Agave the Bacchanals gave the hideous semblance of such a [Bacchic] celebration...”.

I should like here to raise objections to equating κόμως with Agave. First, as Dodds well says in another connection (102 on Bac. 263), “Chorus-leaders do not indulge in irony”. Though irony there undoubtedly is in the whole Chorus’ characterization (1163) of Agave’s act as a καλὸς ἄγων, this irony travesties the doings of one who for the Maenads is a foreigner; but for the lone, rolling-

1) The following works will be referred to by author’s name only: I. T. Beckwith, ed., Euripides: Bacchante (Boston 1888); E. R. Dodds, ed., Euripides: Bacchae (2nd ed.; Oxford 1960); R. P. Winnington-Ingram, Euripides and Dionysus (Cambridge 1948).

eyed creature, stained with no traditional ἁμαρτόμενος, but dripping instead with the blood of her own child (1163f.), for such a one to be called the revel of the Euian god would seem to be lacking in reverence for the divinity who is exalted in the triumphal stanza which precedes, besides being a confusion of the victim with the victor.

Furthermore, the element -κώμος is to be repeated in just a few lines: what does it mean there? The Chorus says to Agave (1172), ὑρό, καὶ σε δέχομαι σύγχωμον: “I see, and shall receive you as my partner in a κώμος, as a fellow-reveler”. It is hard to believe that the element -κώμος here can refer in all seriousness to the worshipful actions of the Asiatic Maenads, if just a moment ago the word κώμος was used ironically for “a hideous semblance of a ... [Bacchic] celebration”.

If κώμος is not Agave, who or what is it? It is, I suggest, the band of real Maenads who have just been chanting Bacchus’ victory. As in δέχομαι σύγχωμον, the proposal is to welcome Agave into this reveling band. This idea can be derived from the Greek in one of two alternative ways.

1. A slight emendation would make the passage read Ἀγαύη... / ... δέχομαι ες κώμον ἐπών θεοῦ, “receive Agave (ἀπὸ κώμος as object both of εἰςορῶ and of δέχομαι) into the reveling band of the Euian god”. The corruption from δέχομαι ες to δέχομαι would then be a case of haplography, presupposing an original confusion of the final sigma with epsilon 1).

2. The second alternative is more conservative palaeographically, but bolder grammatically. It would leave the text as it is, but interpret it on the pattern of Bac. 1381, ἀγαυή, ὅ πομποι, με κασαγνήτας, “bring me ... to my sisters”; so Ἀγαύη... / ... δέχομαι κώμον, “receive Agave into the band of revelers”. It will be argued that the construction of an accusative of direct object, plus another, without a preposition, expressing goal of motion, is common enough with verbs of coming and going, but is unexampled elsewhere with δέχομαι. This is true; δέχομαι is elsewhere used with the accusative of goal of motion only with the preposition ες expressed (e.g. Bac. 312). But I should like to instance another verb, which is even less a verb of going or coming than is δέχομαι. This is the verb ἥκω, ‘establish’, ‘place’, ‘set’, which is static rather than kinetic in its meaning. Yet ἥκω is used with ες and accusative: Soph. OC 713 σῷ γάρ νῦν εἰς τὰδ’ ἐίσας σὺχρημ’ (cf. Hom. II. 24, 553). We find Euripides using ἥκω exactly as I propose we take δέχομαι here: Ion 1314 τοὺς ἀθάνατους βωμον... ἥκειν, “to set the unjust upon an altar (for

1) I owe this suggestion to a personal communication from the Editor, Professor W. J. Verdenius.