



# The Bacchantes: An Ancient Greek Tragedy (Top 100 Greek Tragedy)

*Euripides*

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## **The Bacchantes: An Ancient Greek Tragedy (Top 100 Greek Tragedy)** Euripides

The Complete and original. The Bacchantes - Euripides translated by Edward P. Coleridge. The Bacchae; also known as The Bacchantes is an ancient Greek tragedy, written by the Athenian playwright Euripides during his final years in Macedonia, at the court of Archelaus I of Macedon. It premiered posthumously at the Theatre of Dionysus in 405 BC as part of a tetralogy that also included Iphigeneia at Aulis and Alcmaeon in Corinth, and which Euripides' son or nephew probably directed. It won first prize in the City Dionysia festival competition. The tragedy is based on the Greek myth of King Pentheus of Thebes and his mother Agave, and their punishment by the god Dionysus (who is Pentheus' cousin). The punishment occurs because Pentheus is fighting against the gods and outlaws worship of Dionysus, and to show Pentheus and all of Thebes that Dionysus is indeed a god. The Dionysus in Euripides' tale is a young god, angry that his mortal family, the royal house of Cadmus, has denied him a place of honor as a deity. His mortal mother, Semele, was a mistress of Zeus; while pregnant she was killed, through trickery, by Hera, who was jealous of her husband's affair. When Semele died, her sisters said it was Zeus' will and accused her of lying; they also accused their father, Cadmus, of using Zeus as a coverup. Most of Semele's family refuse to believe Dionysus is the son of Zeus, and the young god is spurned in his home. He has traveled throughout Asia and other foreign lands, gathering a cult of female worshipers (Maenads or Bacchantes). At the play's start he has returned, disguised as a stranger, to take revenge on the house of Cadmus. He has also driven the women of Thebes, including his aunts, into an ecstatic frenzy, sending them dancing and hunting on Mount Kithaeron, much to the horror of their families. Complicating matters, his cousin, the young king Pentheus, has declared a ban on the worship of Dionysus throughout Thebes.

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