

Recognising Pentheus

Anthony Stevens

AGAVE: Who would summon him here into my sight, that he may see me...?
[*Bacchae* 1257-8]

KADMOS: First cast your eye to this clear sky above. [1264]

out of the pallor of blue
washed immensity
antithesis of monuments
Clarification.
Dawn
without rose, apricot, cinnamon.
Without East.
But gathering
blue now of flame and
sheer impossibility of storm – I feel
fingernails
growing.
Charged. Response.
To tear
abstraction –

KADMOS: That tremor within, you feel it still? [1268]

billboards mud dead dogs –

in between
the city and...
I forget –

the road out is also
the road in but
Out makes more...
somehow sense
transition more...
a need)
Yet
in-ward
the City
machine-cut / arpeggio / self-swallowing
is entirely expected

necessary
utterly known in advance
especially
the prayer-mockery
but
OUT journey into
organism; if not that, gipsy improvisation;
the road pitted
hot
electric wires confuse the low-slung birdless sky
with washing
huge abandoned limbs of naked
veiled models
all cat laze
whose gaze hooks
(the veil their own
flat surface)
sweating fish in furious rusted cars
and the road
imitates a wet moon waxing
inside a cocoon

Yes.
Out –
Where?

KADMOS: Into what household did you go, following your wedding? [1273]

to be born not dropped
house-held aboard the table set

to be passed on on a platter

born to be
becalmed
shipped
his to his

Into? Dark
(out of the pallor of blue)
Wine sky falls

Ah, the rending! till suturing
his socks

no
my eyes
into
blindwifeliness

splutter of
candle in my
many flows

KADMOS: In that house, what child was born for your husband? [1275]

The contentment of the container.
Unlock me.
Earth inside and out.
Vacancies.

In tongue of gesture
one
palm up hand out
I receive,
two
I offer –
the silk a brief horizon between
two cataracts
hair cradle contract
-ing

Ah, the rending! till
weaving
or
flataback
or out huntstriding NoYes the
swell tide
belling
But that was –
The mountain inside my belly!
I hold

KADMOS: Whose face do you hold in your arms? [1277]

What not a-house?
Drear my throne.
O but
the mountain with us woke

ablaze with us
rock chime with milk
a-dance with herd
joy scream of sap
tumbled roaring light –
till that huntstriding.
Hush.
Daughtery me now,
my poppet breasts new out,
mere me
and so I fill your father void

But breath leaps
into throat
bewildered bird

KADMOS: Look straight at it. Brief is the burden of seeing. [1279]

Take my face off!

Take my face off!

It echoes!

KADMOS: Look closely and take it in more distinctly. [1281]

what tore
the tear
the curtain
opens with/on?
backstage
the Pre
unlived
Glares?
NowHere?
Who?
I household thiswhat?
eyes without blaze
still can/do gaze?
Back?
mirror-mirror?
I into his
unconsciousnestling
pulled?

O in mist past
my butcherstride
holding hands
I- mountain
the up-blood
star-raced
but Wake here?
To looked at
this haught?
Narrow! Narrow!

Eye singular!
though Two!
He me

Neverling I'd kiss
unlooked at
back but

his

Impossibility
sees

KADMOS: It doesn't seem to you a lion, does it? [1283]

No. But
of Pentheus I
harrowed
Hold His Head –