

# The New Criterion

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## A dithyrambic

by Charles Tomlinson

*Horace, Odes iii, xxv*

Bacchus, where are you carrying me to  
So spirited, so full of you? —  
Driven to what woods, recesses,  
My new-born vision scarcely guesses.  
What echoing ravine will hear  
My words enrolling star-god Caesar  
In the heavenly senate? I shall sing  
Some vigorous, unattempted thing,  
Just like the Maenad who wakes up  
Having blindly reached the mountain-top,  
And wonders at the spread of space —  
Dark River Hebrus, snow-clad Thrace,  
The range that marks the Balkan frontier.  
At rockscapes, woodland I, too, stare,  
Grow dionysiac just like her.  
Lord of the Naiads and Bacchantes  
Who with bare hands uproot the trees,  
Nothing little, low or mortal  
Shall I sing now: I stand or fall  
Bacchus, beside the god who twines  
His temples with the verdant vines.

—*Charles Tomlinson*

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**Charles Tomlinson's** most recent volumes are *Selected Poems* (New Directions) and *Jubilation* (Oxford). He is editing a collection of his own prose for Carcanet.

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