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«Dionysian religion: A study of the Worship of Dionysus in Ancient Greece and Rome»

by

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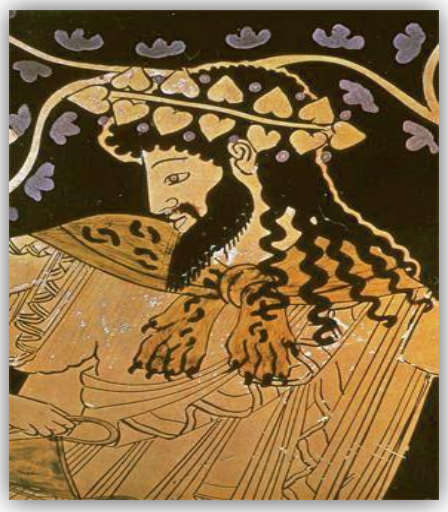
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Cover photo: Detail from "Hephaestus' return with Dionysus and the Satyrs", Cleophrades painter, calyx crater, 500 B. C., Cambridge Harvard University Art Museums.

To my family,

Mary

Sandra

Joanna

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1. Introduction

As implied by the thesis's title, this thesis is based upon the introduction of a very ambiguous and enigmatic god, Dionysus. In the first part of the thesis I will present the god's entrance into ancient Greece and in the second his entry into Italy. For my study I will use two literary works, one which will represent the ancient Greek perspective of the Dionysian religion and rituals and a second one which will in turn portray the god's mystic rituals in Italy.

The first section of the thesis comes from the genre of drama, a tragedy called the *Bacchae*[1], which was written by one of the three greatest tragedians of ancient Greece, Euripides. The second one, which derives from the genre of historiography, is called *Ab Urbe Condita*[2], and is written by Italy's most famous historiographer, Titus Livy. Both works introduce to the audience, in their own special way, the entrance of the god Dionysus into ancient Greece and Italy.

In the first part of the thesis, I will deliberate on the Greek tragedy, the *Bacchae*, with my main objective being to introduce to the readers the Dionysian religion from the poet's perspective, meaning that through Euripides point of view I will delineate how he comprehended the god's religion and cult rituals, as well as how the god's worshippers, enemies, and the Athenian audience, perceived and experienced Dionysus' cult and its mystic rituals.

Specifically, I will summarize the *Bacchae's* plot and try to give an interpretation of the story outline. Then I will mention Dionysus as an epiphany god, as presented in the *prologue*, the *parodos* and the *exodos*. Later on there is going to be an examination of the maenadism presented in the play and the practices, which are mentioned in the play, the ritual of the oreivasia, the

[1] The dating of the *Bacchae* is unknown. However it appeared before the Athenian audience after the poet's death, in 405 B. C., granting him the win.

[2] Titus Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 39.8-19: the Bacchanalian affair, 186 B. C.

sparagmos and the omophagia, and there is going to be a chapter about Pentheus, referring to his savage death and his significance in the play's plot. Finally, in the last two chapters I will present Dionysus' cult in Athens and refer to Dionysus from Euripides' point of view.

In the second part of the thesis, where I will be deliberating on Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, I will focus on the suppression of the Bacchanalian affair in 186 B.C. and try to maintain the same objectives, as described above for the *Bacchae*. In particular, I will refer to Livy's' narration for the suppression of the Bacchanalia in Rome and Italy. Then I will examine the Bacchanalia as a rite which threatened the state's political sphere, and finally I will examine the historical reliability of Livy's narration about the Bacchic rites, and also mention his perspective on the Bacchanalian affair.

Also, throughout the thesis I have abbreviated ancient sources according to LSJ.

2. The *Bacchae's* plot and an interpretation of the story outline

The *Bacchae* is about the return of god Dionysus to his birthplace, the Greek city of Thebes. The reason why Dionysus leaves from Asia Minor and comes back to Thebes is because he wants to clear his mother's name, Semele, and to punish the city state which refused its citizens from worshipping him as a god. In the play's prologue the god himself appears and tells the story of his mother Semele, who was one of Thebes princesses, daughter of king Cadmus. Semele had an affair with the father of the gods, Zeus, and became pregnant. Zeus's wife, the mighty Hera, discovered out about her husband's action and a revenge she tricked Semele into asking Zeus to appear in his divine form. Zeus did so and emerged from the sky as a bolt of lightning, burning Semele. However, Zeus managed to take Dionysus from his mother's womb and stitch him into his thigh. After the princess's death, her family maligning her name and rejecting the existence of the young god Dionysus claiming that Semele was struck by lightning, because she had laid with Zeus, and that her child, a product of an illicit human affair, had died with her.

The play begins many years later when Dionysus, disguised as a stranger, returns to Thebes accompanied by his followers, a band of Lydian women, in order to punish his mother's family and the Theban's refusal to offer him sacrifices. During Dionysus' absence, king Cadmus hands over his kingdom to his grandson, Pentheus. Pentheus is the one who did not allow the citizens of Thebes to worship Dionysus. Dionysus confides in the audience that when he arrived in Thebes he drove his mother's sisters, Autonoe, Ino and Agave mad, and drove them to Mt. Cithaeron to worship him and perform his rites on the mountainside. Teiresias and Cadmus enter the scene announcing that they are prepared to follow the Asian Bacchae at Mt. Cithaeron. These are the only two men who have

decided to participate in the rites of the new god. When Pentheus sees Dionysus' followers dressed in effeminate clothes, he becomes infuriated and is more than ever determined to put an end to this new cult. Pentheus has heard of a priest who is at the center of this new religion and orders his arrest. So, Dionysus is arrested and held as a prisoner in the palace. There, the god summons earthquakes and lighting which destroy the palace and he is able to escape his prison. Later on, a herdsman reports to Pentheus that the maenads have gotten mad and while he and his fellow herdsmen had attempted to take them into custody, the women went ballistic, ripping up their cattle and raising hell over the countryside.

After the hersdman's revelation, Pentheus summons his soldiers to kill the maenads. However, Dionysus convinces Pentheus to go to Mt. Cithaeron and observe the maenads' rituals himself before making his decision. He even persuades the king to dress up in women's clothing. Pentheus is dubious, but after the god places him in a weird trance, he is ready to do so. While Pentheus was spying on the maenads, Dionysus sold him out, and the women went mad. Pentheus ends up torn apart by his own mother, Agave.

Agave returns to the city of Thebes bearing her son's head, thinking that it was a lion's head. Cadmus, repulsed by his daughter's behavior, helps Agave realize the horrible thing she has done. In the end, Dionysus enters the scene in glory. He curses Cadmus, saying that he will be turned into a snake and must lead an army of barbarians in battles against Greece. As for Agave, she ends up exiled from Thebes. At the closing of the play, the Chorus of the Lydian women sing a song of praise for the victorious god, Dionysus. This is the outline of the story. It is strange and horrible, yet it strikes a chord in many readers today, perhaps because of late twentieth-century anxiety about the resistance that is felt from science and technology against fantasy, emotion, and religion.

The *Bacchae* is a play about an historical event-the introduction of a new religion[3] into Hellas and dramatizes the legend of the introduction of the worship of Dionysus to Thebes, a city in northern Greece[4]. Also, it is a drama of divine power combining various patterns typical of Greek myth[5] and elaborates on an aetiological myth, which ends with the foundation of a cult[6]. More than any other Greek deity, Dionysus is believed to have been present among his worshippers, whether that was in a secret ritual of the thiasos or in a public festival procession[7]. Dionysus' presence in the city of Thebes, which is dramatized thoroughly in the *Bacchae*, is the aetiology of his cult there. An aetiological myth often indicates the ritual whose origin it narrates, and the *Bacchae* indeed is pervaded by ritual[8].

The study of Dionysian religion is one of the most delightful and attractive subjects of Greek religion. In order for someone to understand the Dionysian ritual in depth, they must compare the phenomena of primitive and advanced religions[9]. In the prologue of the play *Bacchae*, Euripides sets up the play's dramatic plot by placing Dionysus in the center of the scene and making him narrate his origins. At this point there is a lapidary statement which concerns the origin and the geographical spread of this worship. According to the poet Dionysus was a god deriving from Asia Minor in general and specifically from Phrygia and Lydia and considers Thebes to be the first city that Dionysian religion invaded in Greece[10].

The time of the play was far in the past and the memory of this event survived only in the mythical form. The new religion had been adapted and

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[3] Dodds (1960), xi.
[4] Kraemer (1979), 58.
[5] Seaford (1996), 25.
[6] Seaford (1996), 26.
[7] One reason for his presence is to impose frenzy (32). On Dionysian ecstasy and 'possession' see most recently Henrichs (1994).
[8] Seaford (1996), 35.
[9] Farnell (1909), 85.
[10] Farnell (1909), 89.

modulated for a very long time and was accepted as part of the Greek life. Nevertheless, it expressed a religious attitude, which was totally different from the cult of the Olympian gods. In order for us to truly understand the play, we must take a closer look at the Dionysian religion, that is the intention of certain of its rites, the meaning of the myths which vest Dionysus and his religion and also the shapes it had assumed in Euripides' time[11].

The religious background of the play is elusive, because it deals with the rituals that were celebrated by women in secret, and because the worship of Dionysus was different in different cities and at different times. For example the *Bacchae* brings an Athenian sensibility to bear on what it represents as the foundation of a cult in Thebes; and although Thebes is neighbor to Athens, the two cities see themselves as opposed in culture. To make matters worse, ancient Greek literature tends to follow myth rather than religious practice, leaving a disturbing gap between the two. In the case of the *Bacchae*, we must be careful to force neither our understanding of Greek religion to fit the play nor our understanding of the play to fit what we know of religion. Still, we have no text from that period that expresses religious feeling more movingly than the *Bacchae*, so we do have something to learn about the play from the study of Dionysian ritual[12], as Seaford (1994) has shown.

As a genre, tragedy is informed by ritual practices, and this is especially evident in the *Bacchae*. Much of the play reflects initiation ritual, although it is initiation which has escaped the norms of religion[13]. In evoking mystic ritual Euripides evokes the powerful emotions one feels during the ritual by the initiated members (and perhaps the majority) of the audience[14]. In order for us to capture the real essence of the play *Bacchae* we must immediately detain from

[11] Dodds (1960), xi.
[12] Woodruff (1998), x.
[13] Woodruff (1998), xiii.
[14] Seaford (1996), 43.

Dionysus' image as a jolly god and his connection to wine. We must remember that *ὄργια* are not orgies, but acts of devotion. Also that *βακχεύειν* is not to "revel", but to have a particular kind of religious experience, a communion with God, which transformed a human being into a *βάκχος* or a *βάκχη*[15].

The name Dionysus, regardless of the diversities of local legend, was connoted everywhere with certain religious conceptions, and was linked with a specific religious emotion[16]. Harrison, in her work *Themis*, represents the most thorough interpretation of Dionysus, reporting that Dionysus was the expression of social effervescence and unity. Dodds affiliates Harrison's approach and stresses that the Dionysian religion constituted an effective way for a man to express dangerous psychological urges which otherwise would have erupted with uncontrolled fury. The purpose of this religion was expressive[17]. No other literary work of the period goes so far in conveying the depth of feeling that belonged to the religious spirit of ancient Greece; none depict a god behaving more savagely toward human beings. The play works by building, and at the same time resolving, conflicts between brute force and religion[18].

[15] Dodds (1960), xii.
[16] Farnell (1909), 87.
[17] McGinty (1978), 19.
[18] Woodruff (1998), ix.

3. Dionysus: a God of Epiphany

3.1. Dionysus' epiphany in the *prologue*

Dionysus was the god of epiphany, who would appear and disappear. The *Bacchae* itself is full of Dionysian epiphany, from his first appearance in Thebes[19] (1-64) through his disappearance at the earthquake scene and reappearance to the chorus and Pentheus[20], to his vanishing from the Mt. Cithaeron[21], and finally his reappearance in triumph[22].

In the prologue of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus appears in disguise in front of the audience, explaining to them who he is, why he has returned to Thebes and what he is planning to do[23]. Dionysus came to Greece, after having converted Asia to his religion, in order him to show all humanity that he is a god[24]. In the prologue's first verse, he declares his divine nature and his return to Thebes using the verb *ἥκω*, which usually characterizes the appearance of supernatural personas and it is meant to present the arrival of a god[25]. However, Dionysus does not appear as a god but rather as a mortal[26]. In contrast to other gods presented by Euripides in the play's prologue, Dionysus is going to withdraw from the scene immediately after his speech, and will keep his mortal appearance until he reveals his divine nature to king Pentheus. Dionysus' purpose in doing so is because he wants to establish his religion in the city of Thebes. But why is it that Dionysus appears in human form?

[19] *Ba.* 1-64.
[20] *Ba.* 604, 645.
[21] *Ba.* 1057.
[22] Mills (2006), 22-23; *Ba.* 1330.
[23] *Ba.* 1-64.
[24] Dodds (1960), 68; *Ba.*, 20-22.
[25] Dodds (1960), 63. For more information, see Roux (1972), Vol. 2, 239-240.
[26] *Ba.* 4.

In antiquity when a god made a visit in disguise, that may have resulted in the foundation of a cult, as e.g. in the myths of Demeter visiting Eleusis[27] and when Dionysus enters a place or a city he enters in the form of a stranger. He is considered the god who comes from the outside, who arrives from Elsewhere. Dionysus's guise as a foreigner points out his enigmatic form and it embodies something divine in it, but it is a divinity completely different from that of the Hellenic gods, different in the sense that it is both strange and foreign, which reflects the double meaning of the Greek word *xenos*. *Xenos* is a word referring to the distance between two cities: in their sacrifices, their assemblies and their tribunals[28]. In order for someone to be called *xenos* in the Greek world, he must have originated in the Hellenic world, ideally representing those who shared "one blood, one language and common sanctuaries and sacrifices"[29]. When Dionysus arrives in Thebes and appears before king Pentheus, he is wearing the mask of a foreigner. Pentheus is speaking to a *xenos*[30] and despite Dionysus' Lydian disguise, he is treated as a Greek. Dionysus ensures his epiphanic nature as a god who regularly alternates between presence and absence[31]. Dionysus is a god, who enters Thebes as a *xenos* and demands to be treated as any other *xenos* in Greece, that is to be offered hospitality by a peasant or by a king.

There is also the type of arrival-myths, which were very popular in the regions of Attica[32]. The arrival-myths were about the god's advent in the city, which was the central theme, and functioned as the mythical equivalent of the

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[27] Seaford, (1996), 26.

[28] Detienne (1989), 9.

[29] Hdt. 8. 114.

[30] *Ba.* 233, 247, 353, 441, 453, 642, 1059, 1077. But the women of his thiasos are of barbarian, Lydian, or Phrygian mountain origins.

[31] As was attested long ago by Otto, W. F., *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus*, (1960) 93-98 and more recently by Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and J.-P. Vernant, "Figures du masque en Grèce ancienne", *Journal de Psychologie* (1983): 53-69; J.-P. Vernant, "Le Dionysos masqué des *Bacchantes* d' Euripide", *L' Homme* 93 (1985): 31-58, Detienne, (1989), 10.

[32] Kerényi, *Dionysos* (1976), devotes one of the most lucid chapters of his book to the arrival-myths, both Attic and non-Attic.

cultic experience of divine epiphany. Dionysus is a god who is not fully contained or satisfied with one domain, the god who is always 'Other'. This side of Dionysus is connected with another dominant motif of his myth: resistance. Bringing him into the city is not a simple matter of acceptance and appreciation: it is controversial and always brings violence and suffering upon those who resist[33].

As a god of dynamic epiphanies, Dionysus becomes the eternal foreigner who is always making himself at home in the minds of the Greeks. Scholars used to think of him as a foreign god who became naturalized in Greece, but that belief was mistaken, because Dionysus was actually a Greek god who came to be seen as foreign[34]. This aspect of Dionysus is key to the action in the *Bacchae*, a play which contains many motifs common to the ancient myths of Dionysus' first visits to cities, especially their ruling families: these include the god's revelation of his powers through miracles which are ignored by non-believers, violence against the god, his revenge, often through the infliction of madness, and remorse which comes too late[35].

3.2. Dionysus' epiphany in the *parodos*

In the *parodos* of the Bacchae, which is structured as a cult hymn to Dionysus, the chorus describes to the audience how the god is made manifest in the Bacchic rites. This epiphany consists of a cult epiphany, because the god reveals himself to his worshippers during the *oreivasia*[36]. It is noticeable that a cult hymn of this sort to a god, describes not so much the nature of the god, but it mostly describes the nature of the devotees celebrating the god's rites[37]. After the

[33] Houser (1979), 3-4, 23.
[34] Woodruff (1998), xiii.
[35] Mills (2006), 22-23.
[36] Dancing in the mountains. For more information, see p. 29.
[37] *Ba.* 72-87.

digression of the god's birth story[38], the chorus continues to praise Dionysus and his mysteries, and invites Thebes to join in the god's worship, while giving detailed instructions on how to prepare for the oreivasia[39].

Also, there is another epiphany of Dionysus that takes place in lines 576-603, and is known as the palace miracles. The god was kept in prison at the palace by king Pentheus, and with his voice started an earthquake, which destroyed the palace and collapsed the stable[40]. This manifestation of the god is characterized as soteriological, because the god was summoned by his worshippers to come and save them from the grisp of oppression[41]. All this was a dramatic representation of myth[42]. Euripides drafted many elements of the Dionysian cult from traditional material in order to achieve a dramatic effect. The poet presents these events in an exaggerated way, in order to depict Dionysus as a powerful and dangerous god[43].

His epiphanies were marked by confrontation, conflict or hostility, in forms ranging from misrecognition and disavowal to outright rejection and even persecution. In these stories where the god is not only greeted with hostility but treated and accused as a foreigner, we can detect an echo of real history[44]. This script has been reproduced several times by many authors. Some have spoken of a foreign god who descended from the north and was the god of Thrace and Phrygia, and carried with him the virus of the trance and a savage religiosity[45].

Dionysus' captivity brings the Dionysian cause to its lowest ebb, but later on in the play this feeling is reversed because of the miraculous deeds of the god.

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[38] *Ba.* 88-104.

[39] Oranje (1984), 134; *Ba.* 105-119.

[40] *Ba.* 633.

[41] Oranje (1984), 140.

[42] Fisher (1992), 185.

[43] Fisher (1992), 185.

[44] Detienne (1989), 6.

[45] This view is originated from Rohde, *Psyche*, 296: "a kernel of historical truth". The cult of Dionysus came from outside Greece; it was a foreign cult. Along with Louis Gemet, H. Jeanmaire was sensitive to the proselytism, the propaganda, and the "missionary" figures of certain mediators of Dionysus (*Dionysos* 67, 85, 193, 355).

This new phase is presented to the audience by the god's exclamation *ἰώ*[46] and ends with the god's exclamation *ἄ*[47]. In lines 810-916 we still come across the god's miraculous powers now over his cousin and king Pentheus, which also continue in lines 1064-1083[48].

The meaning of the god's epiphany is that Dionysus is a god with divine power. It is one of the series of miracles which have already begun in the prologue and continue up to the destruction of Pentheus; all serve the same purpose, though with increasing force[49].

3.3. Dionysus' epiphany in the *exodos*

In the *exodos* of the play[50], Dionysus finally reveals his divine nature to the audience, as well as to the Theban citizens who see him as the true god he is. Dionysus declares his divine substance and reveals his glory, saying that he is Dionysus, the son of Zeus and not of a mortal[51] and if Cadmus and his family were wise instead of refusing him and his cult, they would have been happy[52].

One of Euripides' most persistent and important recurrent motifs in the *Bacchae* is the 'epiphany'. The *Bacchae* opens with the god's announcement that he will manifest his divinity to the Theban citizens and then throughout Greece. Also the play closes with the god's appearance, revealing his divine nature. All that has occured between the prologue and the *exodos* is similarly a manifestation of the

[46] *Ba.* 576.
[47] *Ba.* 810.
[48] Seaford (1996), 29.
[49] Hamilton (1974), 144-145.
[50] *Ba.* 1330-1392.
[51] *Ba.* 1340-1341a.
[52] *Ba.* 1341b-1343.

god in some guise to someone, e.g. Pentheus sees Dionysus as a double-horned bull[53].

Dionysus was one of the Greeks' major gods, and was worshipped by them; and to him as an object of worship, Euripides seems to adopt an attitude which was critical and satirical. The poet prepares and accompanies the god's final manifestation with such discordant themes, that Dionysus' glory becomes a mockery. The epiphany of the real 'deity' is made not by the personal god on the stage, but it occurs through the happenings he creates and the people he inspires throughout the play[54].

The poet's ironical stance towards the god's cult epiphanies, which he has described at the *prologue* and the *parodos*, lies in the fact that everything that takes place in the *orgia* of the mystic rituals finds its place in reality in the play's action, with one exception: the personal, joyful, appearance of the god[55]. The real Dionysus is the one who the chorus knows as a source of joy. His ambiguous and rather terrifying appearance seems to matter only to those who didn't know him (478)[56]. However the chorus's portrayal of Dionysus does not keep up with his appearance in the play: in Thebes the god is not among worshippers, but reveals himself to those who scorn him. It is noticeable that the Theban women have not experienced what the Lydian women have, that is, the feelings of joy and release which the celebrants of the rites experience, as it is also said at the *parodos* by the chorus, at the cult epiphany of the god.

Dionysus is a God of Epiphany. He is presented as a god who appears in person to those who celebrate him. Dionysus appears to those who honor his

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[53] *Ba.* 920. Winnington-Ingram (1948), 163. "Dionysus' theriomorphic manifestation, is not only part of the myth (100), but also of the cult. The god appears in his theriomorphic form in order to punish those who scorn him, as Pentheus did", Oranje (1984), 142.

[54] Winnington-Ingram (1948), 163-164.

[55] Oranje (1984), 139.

[56] Woodruff (1998), xiii.

divine nature and who ask for his help. Dionysus reveals himself to his maenads and to his dancing *thiasos*[57]. Although Dionysus is frequently referred throughout the play as a leader of his followers-worshippers, he remains invisible in his divine form to them while exercising his leadership. He never appears to Teiresias and Cadmus as a god. He remains equally invisible to the Theban bacchants. The Lydian bacchants see him only as the Stranger but not as the god. When talking to them, Dionysus refers to himself as a different person[58]. Although the Lydian women call him their savior[59] and protector[60], they do not refer to him as "Dionysus". To them, as to everyone else in the play before his epiphany, Dionysus is nothing more than the Stranger who has led them from Lydia to Thebes. It is ironic that the only person in the play who comes closest to seeing Dionysus as a god is Pentheus.

When Pentheus was deluded, he perceived Dionysus in his bestial shape of a bull leading him[61]. Dionysus appears in his divine form only in his epiphany at the end of the play. When he speaks to his worshippers as a god he is always invisible. Before he speaks to the Theban women in thunder as a god, he disappears as the Stranger[62]. When speaking to the Lydian women in the rumble of the earthquake[63], he is offstage. Thus, Dionysus appears in disguise when he does appear. This is also the meaning of the Stranger's ironic statement about his personal encounter with the god[64]. Therefore, when Dionysus presents himself to his worshippers or to other people he is usually either in disguise or invisible[65].

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[57] Schlesier (2011), 239-241.
[58] *Ba.* 629.
[59] *Ba.* 608.
[60] *Ba.* 612.
[61] *Ba.* 920.
[62] *Ba.* 1077.
[63] *Ba.* 576-603.
[64] *Ba.* 477-478.
[65] Leinieks (1996), 105.

Dionysus is a paradox. He is composed of several ambiguities which are irreconcilable if seen separately. The Greeks were never at ease with Dionysus. Such was their desire to get to the bottom of understanding the god's true personality, that they projected their mixed feelings into their conception of the god and their worship of him. Unable to do so, they perceived Dionysus as the god who comes and disappears[66]. In the *Bacchae*, the god's self-revelation and self-concealment are key concepts to the play's plot. The Dionysus presented to us from Euripides' point of view is acting on the principle that "Schein ist Sein". In the eyes of both spectators and believers, the god's presence is real whatever his appearance may be, whereas Pentheus, who does not believe in Dionysus, consistently mistakes the god for what he is not. The god in disguise is good theater, because it constitutes the highlight of the dramatic irony. And yet Dionysus' role in the *Bacchae* is identified with his role in his actual cult. As *deus praesentissimus*, he reveals himself and his divine nature to the world by setting up appearances memorable and powerful enough to change a human being's conception of himself and of the world, for good or bad[67].

Therefore in the *Bacchae's* plot Dionysus consist of a god, whose divine punishment over those who refuse his cult is accomplished with the most macabre ritual, and without the liberating epiphany of the god. In such a way, this god is continuously and oppressively present for his victims. Thus, Dionysus' final declaration of his divine origin and powers turns out to be a disastrous action upon his enemies and because of their persistent denial and refusal to accept and embrace the foreign god's religion and rituals, they became recipients of the god's fury and were punished.

[66] A concept first understood by Otto (1978), 74-85.
[67] Houser (1979), 2.

4. Maenadism in the *Bacchae*

4. 1. Maenads

One of the most fascinating and outstanding scenes of Euripides' *Bacchae* is the description of the maenads, Dionysus' female votaries. Dionysus believes that the Theban citizens need to find out through their own punishments what it feels like to deny something as holy, sacred and deep as is the Dionysian religion[68]. What Dionysus offered his worshippers was intoxication and/or ecstasy, two elements contrary to self-control. However, the Greeks believed that they were blessings from the god, if they did not get out of hand[69]. Dionysus is the god who becomes frenzied; when the maenads come under the god's influence they become frenzied too[70].

The maenads, possessed by the god, ran over the mountain Cithaeron, attacked men, moved like birds, were invulnerable to iron, fire and snakes, and tore apart animals, children, even the king of Thebes[71]. The play reports one of the most extreme and polarized versions of women's ritual legible within the extant corpus of tragedy. The *Bacchae* is defined as a play whose main theme is that the city of Thebes, by denying women the right to practice ritual activities, deprives them of their main avenue of civic identification. Thus, the women's practices bring disaster to the whole city[72].

The predominant character of the Phrygian religion was known for its spirit of violent enthusiasm and on such basis the Hellenized god Dionysus was probably inclined to revert to his primitive instinct[73]. From a religious point of view, what is considered to be dangerous in Dionysus' cult is the element of

[68] Dodds (1960), 73.
[69] Cassidy (1991), 28.
[70] Cassidy (1991), 36.
[71] Bremmer (1984), 267.
[72] Bremmer (1984), 350.
[73] Farnell (1909), 158.

ecstasy, which is the most forbidden aspect of the cult. Madness consists of a central theme in the *Bacchae*, however many objections have been raised as to how valid is the historicity of the ritual madness is, due to the lack of clear sources[74].

Semele's three sisters, Ino, Autonoe, and Agave, were inflicted with madness by their own nephew, Dionysus. This myth is said to explain the origin of maenadism as an act of divine punishment and vengeance. This type of myth embodies the resistance motif and the ritual of the triadic maenads. In myths of this type, the god establishes his divine credentials and punishes his opponents[75].

But why is it that Dionysus inflicts the women of Thebes with madness? What is he really trying to achieve? Maenadism has inflicted the women of Thebes as a punishment from Dionysus, because they refused to accept his divinity and to worship him, and despite the wonderful descriptions of the women's activities in the choral odes and the Messenger speeches, their maenadism reveals itself as ultimately disastrous[76]. Women who were under Dionysus spell were forced to abandon, at least temporarily, their domestic obligations and child-rearing in order to worship the god[77].

In the play, the chorus of the Lydian women are only once characterized as frenzied[78]. It is their fear which makes them here *μαινάδες* and not *βάκχες*[79]. Many scholars had interpreted religion as deriving from emotions. They depicted religion as arising from a primitive person's emotions or desires which overwhelmed his mind[80]. Jane Harrison was in a position to interpret Dionysian religion as an indirect expression of social emotions[81]. Scholars accepted the role

[74] Henrichs (1978), 152.
[75] Houser (1979), 3-4.
[76] Goff (2004), 351.

[77] Kraemer (1979), 67.
[78] *Ba.* 601.
[79] Leinieks (1996), 77.
[80] Mills (2006), 22.
[81] Harrison (1989), 22.

of emotions and desires as generators of religion[82]. Dodds compared certain characteristics of maenadism, such as the tossing of the head[83] and the carrying of fire, with the behavior of known religious hysterics, and suggested that maenadism was developed from a kind of collective hysteria, which was channeled into organized rites in later times[84].

The description of the Dionysian madness when it comes in touch with the women of Thebes by a simple observer is not a simple description of the maenadism of the Dionysian religion, which was organized and controlled as it was presented in the *parodos* of the play, but the «black maenadism», sent as punishment to those who were most respectable in the city and misled them against their will: the play's researchers were quite frequently over passed this distinction. Nevertheless, the «black maenads» would not harm anyone, unless they were attacked. In general terms this description was traditional[85]. Dionysian rituals and mysteries were charged with spiritual electricity in order to be put into practical use. This can be estimated for the maenads ecstasy, at least for its earliest history[86].

Dionysus, by bringing the women of Thebes to Mt. Cithaeron, disrupts every Theban household for the sake of a communal cult. Only the royal household resists the new cult and so is destroyed. In the *Bacchae*, there is a political conflict between two opponents, the first one being the community (represented by Dionysus) and the second one by the autonomy of the household,

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[82] McGinty (1978), 23.

[83] The frenetic toss of the head constitutes the constant movement of the Bacchae at pottery vases and in literate texts. Also the characteristic movement of the head is associated with ecstatic conditions in later years. Dodds (1951), 273.

[84] Bremmer (1984), 267.

[85] Dodds (1960), 219-220; *Ba.* 699-702, 704-711, 734-747, 748-764,

[86] Farnell (1909), 162.

especially that one of the ruling household, with which a polis in a political sense cannot coexist[87]. This conflict is resolved in favor of Dionysus[88].

The presence of women in the Dionysian religion is strikingly frequent. And there are several examples of the women's ministration in this cult. For example, in Attica noble maidens served in his worship as *κανηφόροι* at the city's celebration Anthestiria[89]. I. M. Lewis found that the key to understanding the ecstatic religious phenomena is in the social functions of the city, and he perceives that Dionysus' orgiastic rituals qualify themselves into this category[90].

In the play the only men who worshipped Dionysus unconditionally as a god were Teiresias and Cadmus. But both men were not allowed to participate in their beloved god's rituals. Only women had the privilege of doing so. Dionysian religion is the only example of a cult which excluded men from worshipping the god. On the other hand, women were frequently present in this worship and were an essential element to this cult than to that of any other male divinity and were never excluded from it as they were from other cults. And the myths are compatible with ritual[91].

The description of women's engagement in various religious practices by men is an issue which has to be evaluated in terms of how accurate their descriptions are. How can we evaluate men's descriptions who delineate women's rites from which they were excluded? The classical Athenian playwright Euripides, in an attempt to explain his source within the restrictions of drama, solved this problem by adding hidden male observers. In the *Bacchae*, a herdsman

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[87] Seaford (1994a), ch. 8.

[88] Seaford (1996), 49.

[89] Schol. Ar. *Ach.* 241 *κατὰ τὴν τῶν Διονυσίων ἑορτὴν παρὰ τοῖς Ἀθηναῖοις αἱ εὐγενεῖς παρθένοι ἐκανηφόρουν. C.I.A.* 2, add. 1388[b] *κανηφορήσασαν Διονύσῳ* (inscription found on Acropolis, second century B.C.). Cf. R 45[f]; *C.I.A.* 2. 420, Farnell (1909), 159.

[90] Lewis (2003), 66-69.

[91] Farnell (1909), 160.

hiding behind the trees reports back to king Pentheus[92], who himself later on in the play spies on the maenads to his ultimate detriment[93]. However, what were Euripides sources upon this matter and whether there were accurate, or even intended to be, remains uncertain[94].

The *Bacchae*, which brought Euripides victory at the festival of Dionysia in 406 B.C., features the origins and the character of women's worship of the Thracian god Dionysos. Modern scholars have continued to wrestle with the correspondence between Euripides' representation of the Bacchic worship, set in ancient Thebes, and practices currently held in the late fifth to early fourth centuries B.C.E. (including Athens and elsewhere). Most of Euripides' description is not significantly at odds with other ancient sources[95].

Maenadism was a poetic fiction of Euripides, and was not considered as a recurrent state of mind. It is certain that Euripides' representation of the maenads was not the one which was depicted in actual ritual. The maenads' movements were depicted by real women in Thyiad dances[96]. If the maenadic cult is a reenactment of maenadic myth, the *Bacchae* is its dramatic representation and transposition into a fictitious cultic setting[97]. However in Euripides' day, maenadism was not included in the Attic festivals; there were no winter rites, no mountain dancing, no omophagia. The Attic festivities, in honoring the god Dionysus, were, as Pericles cited, to provide *ἀνάπαυλαι τῶν πόνων*; their value was more social than religious. This aspect of Dionysian rites is not ignored in the *Bacchae*; Euripides includes this side of the mysterious rites and appears in the scene were Teiresias praises *εὐφροσύνη*[98], portraying the religious life of a

[92] *Ba.* 23-42, 677-765.
[93] *Ba.* 1114-1137a.
[94] Kraemer (1979), 9.
[95] Kraemer (1979), 12.
[96] Lawler (1927), 79.
[97] Henrichs (1978), 122; *Ba.* 23-43.
[98] *Ba.* 370.

Dionysian worshipper as that of one who lives in piety, gaiety and good fellowship[99]. However, there is no relation between the official Athenian cult and the *Bacchae* and there is no explanation why Euripides wrote such a thing[100].

In conclusion, Euripides' descriptions of maenadism throughout the *Bacchae* are not a figment of imagination. The maenads, even though their actions reveal a mythic dimension, are not in essence a mythological character, but an observable human type, in which we can foresee the emotional status of a Dionysian votary when entering the cult's rituals[101]. According to Walter F. Otto, expression was religion's true purpose[102] and it was through the expression of their emotions that the maenads achieved communion with Dionysus. Whether the Dionysian experience was, as most believed, -including Pentheus, filled by wine and sex[103], whether it was a sedate day out, or whether it was somewhere in between and varied dramatically from group to group, it is by definition temporary and, just as their divine leader comes and goes, so the women leave the city and become Other, but will return again to normality[104].

[99] Cf. Deichgräber (1935), 70.

[100] Dodds (1940), 168.
[101] Dodds (1940), 166.
[102] Otto (1960), 177.
[103] *Ba.* 260, 814, 958.
[104] Mills (2006), 29.

4. 2. Maenadic practices

4. 2. 1. Oreivasia

In the *parodos* of the *Bacchae*[105], the chorus of the Lydian women chants the god's double birth, declares the blessed state which the maenads are in, and summons Thebes to worship the god Dionysus. Also, there is a depiction of hysteria subdued to the service of religion; what happened on Mt. Cithaeron was hysteria in the raw, dangerous bacchism, which descends as a punishment to those who are most respectable and sweeps them away against their will[106]. Dionysus is the cause of the outbreak of the madness and the liberator from the madness[107]. These celebratory rites would take place in the mountains and were called oreivasia (*ὀρειβασία*).

The rite of oreivasia, or dancing of the maenads, consisted of contemporary ritual in the *Bacchae*[108] and took place in midwinter[109] in alternate years[110]. The skin of a young dear, the traditional garment of the maenads in poetry and pottery, was with no doubt used as protection towards the cold winter oreivasia. It is believed to be a *ἱερὸν ἐπενδυτὸν*[111], which means that when the votaries would wear the dears skin, the Dionysian power would be transmitted to them[112], just as the lion's skin did in Hercules' case[113].

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[105] *Ba.* 64-169.
[106] Dodds (1940), 159.
[107] *Ba.* 86; Dodds (1960), xvi.
[108] Seaford (1996), 265.
[109] The maenads oreivasia was a ritual, which took place in the middle of winter. So Euripides invention of snow was the best setting and element he could have brought to his *Bacchae* (*Ba.* 661-662); Dodds (1960), 221.
[110] Hence the name *τριετηρίδων*, *Ba.* 133.
[111] *Ba.* 137.
[112] *Ba.* 866.
[113] Dodds (1960), 11.

The most important part of the Dionysian rites were the activities which took part 'on the mountain'[114]. The words "to the mountain"[115] must have been words which were used at real cult as a maenadic signal which opened the oreivasia. The same signal occurs several times in the tragedy the *Bacchae*[116].

The oreivasia, which was the free and wild dancing of women on the mountains, was an organized Dionysian ritual, and was a recognized part of the Athenian religion. Most of the times women in Athens were restricted in their own homes to a degree unusual even in the ancient Greek world. However, a woman through the Dionysian religion was able to leave home, family, and even city for a limited period of time every second year, and what she did was to dance, to utter wild cries, seeking contact with something beyond ordinary human life[117].

The women, through their chanting, expressed their reactions and emotions, while performing the Dionysian rites. By performing the ritual of oreivasia, women felt that they were communicating with the god, connecting with him[118]. However, there were other ways of someone to become *ἔνθεος*. The strange oreivasia or mountain dancing, which is described in the *parodos* of the *Bacchae* and again in the first messenger-speech, is not really pleasant to the poet, but it constitutes the reflection of a ritual which was practiced by women's societies at Delphi until to Plutarch's time, and for which we have inscriptional evidence from a great number of other places in the Greek world[119].

In this part of the play, and through the chorus's chanting, it is given the role of describing Dionysian rites from within, the women are expressing

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[114] Bowden (2010), 122.
[115] *Ba. εἰς ὄρος*, 977.
[116] Henrichs (1978), 149.
[117] William ([4]1996), xv.
[118] Dodds (1960), 221.
[119] Dodds (1960), xiii.

common reactions and most importantly they reveal to the audience the hysteria and the passion that these rites contain through music and dance[120]. Also there has been given a chance to depict the joyful and celebratory side of the Dionysian rites. The chorus of Lydian women consisted of a group of faithful worshippers of Dionysus that followed the Stranger from the East to Thebes. While their actions are bloodthirsty, their intentions are not.

4. 2. 2. Sparagmos & Omophagia

One of the maenads' ritual practices and one that was highly respected in the Dionysian rituals was the sparagmos and omophagia. In the *Bacchae*, the nature of sparagmos and omophagia is mentioned twice, firstly when the Theban maenads tear apart the cattle and secondly when tearing apart Pentheus. In lines 138-139 the chorus speaks of "hunting blood of slain goats, the omophagous joy" (*ἀγρεύων|αἷμα τραγοκτόνον, ὠμοφάγον χάριν*). The omophagous joy mentioned here is invariably taken to mean the eating of raw flesh[121]. However, this does not mean that the word *ὠμὸς* in the text is literate. It is true that its general meaning is "raw, uncooked", but in tragedy it means "cruel, savage"[122]. This meaning indicates the cruelness and the savageness of the maenads acts, while frenzied on Mt. Cithaeron.

As the Theban bacchants tear apart the cattle, their action is identified with the *sparagmos* rite[123]. The maenads attack the cattle[124] tear them apart[125], and scatter

[120] *ὀρειβασία*: may originally have developed out of spontaneous attacks of mass hysteria. canalizing the hysteria of the rite in an organized rite which took place once in two years, the Dionysian cult kept it within bounds and gave it a relatively harmless outlet. Dodds (1960), xvi.

[121] Segal (1982). "He hunts down his quarry... This meat is devoured raw" (23). Roux, (1970-72), "Dionysos Omadios, Omestès, mangeur de chair crue" (66). Dodds, (1960), "The culminating act of the Dionysiac winter dance was the tearing to pieces, and eating raw, of an animal body" (xvi).

[122] Leinieks (1996), 153.

[123] *Βα. σπαραγμόν*, 735; *σπαράγμασιν*, 739.

the pieces[126]. Afterwards, the pieces are found hanging in fir trees dripping blood[127]. Thereafter, the Theban women take off and attack the villages. They act like enemies[128], and subsequently, they return to the mountains and wash off the blood[129]. It is not implied that the maenads devoured raw meat at the time of the sparagmos or later on. The scattered pieces were never collected by the women. In the case of Pentheus the procedure is the same. His tearing apart is characterized as a sparagmos[130]. When the women attack king Pentheus[131], they tear him into pieces[132], and later on scatter them[133]. Afterwards his grandfather, Cadmus, collects the scattered pieces with great difficulty[134].

The culminating act of the Dionysian winter dance was the tearing to pieces, and eating raw, of an animal body, *σπαραγμός* and *ὠμοφαγία*[135]. Those who practiced the ritual of omophagia at the time were experiencing a mixture of supreme exaltation and supreme repulsion, it was a sacramental act and at the same time it was characterized as a pollution[136]. These emotional conflicts that run through the *Bacchae* were the root of all religion of the Dionysian type[137]. In the *Bacchae* the maenads render bulls[138] and goats[139], eating the latter's raw flesh[140]. The dismemberment of an animal in Dionysus orgiastic rituals was an essential part of the *omophagy*, which was the maniacal and precipitant devouring of the

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[124] *Ba. μόσχοις ἐπῆλθον*, 736,
[125] *Ba. διεφόρουν σπαράγμασιν*, 739; *διεφοροῦντο*, 746
[126] *Ba. ῥιπτόμεν' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω*, 741
[127] *Ba.* 741-742.
[128] Ba. *πολέμιοι*, 752.
[129] *Ba.* 767.
[130] *Ba. σπαραγμοῖς*, 1135.
[131] *Ba. προσπίπτει νιν*, 1115.
[132] *Ba.* 1125-1135.
[133] *Ba.* 1135-1139.
[134] *Ba.* 1218-1221.
[135] Dodds (1960), xvi.
[136] Dodds (1940), 165.
[137] Cf. Benedict (1960) 179.
[138] *Ba.* 743.
[139] *Ba.* 138.
[140] Dodds (1960), 166.

raw meat and blood, in which the divinity was temporarily resided. The cult's characteristic wild excitement did not allow its votaries to properly sacrifice the animal and then proceed to the slower processes of cookery[141]. Regardless, the *ὠμοφαγία* and the bestial incarnations of Dionysus point out a god who is not only a wine god, but also a dangerous god. He is considered the principle of animal life, *ταῦρος* and *ταυροφάγος*[142], the hunted and the hunter, the unrestrained potency which man envies in the beasts and seeks to assimilate. Dionysus cult was originally an attempt on the part of human beings to achieve communion with his potency[143].

Dionysus's relationship with women can be said to be a collaboration between them with him as an imagined leader of the rites performed by maenads. Dionysian religion had many forms, which were open to both sexes, male and female, but it seems that the maenads, whose name shared a root with the Greek word for madness (*μανία*), were exclusively women. Crazed violence, culminating in sparagmos of a wild animal and omophagia, is integral to the mythical representation of the maenads and already Homer associated Dionysus with bands of maddened women[144]. While the myth imagines spontaneous outbursts of the maenads in intense ecstasy, reality seems to be more down to earth: the archaeological records show us that, at least in historical times, the festivities of Dionysus' worship took place on a specific date in the calendar, and while a few individuals may have experienced true ecstatic possession, the reality was probably less intense, as exemplified in the saying, 'Many are the narthex bearers but few are the *Bacchae'*. While visits to mountains are attested for Bacchic votaries, there is no evidence that the more important parts of the myth reflect standard cult practice. Myth gives us the opportunity to *imagine* what is *not*

[141] Farnell (1909), 166. For more information on the *sparagmos* rite and the *omophagia*, see Dodds (1960), xviii-xix.
[142] Soph. fr. 668.
[143] Farnell (1909), xx.
[144] *Il*. 6.130.

literary done, and the act of murder can clearly symbolize the disorder and danger which seem deeply attached to the god's persona. Whether murder had or had not been a substantial part of the Dionysian ritual is unanswerable, but, even if one could prove that the murders, especially the ones of children, which occurred so often in the myths of Dionysus depicted ancient practice, it would say nothing about the cult in Euripides' time[145].

Moreover, sparagmos was never a standard means of sacrifice to Dionysus. The only inscriptional record we have of the Dionysian religion concerning to *omophagion*, is on an inscription from Miletus dated 200 years after the *Bacchae* and it mentioned a procession to the mountain and stated that no one was allowed to 'throw in the *omophagion*' before the priestess had done so on behalf of the city[146]. This inscription would immediately indicate that, at least in the city of Miletus, cult activity was more regulated than that which is described by Euripides and was controlled by the city, rather than being a spontaneous expression of rebellion against it. This current opinion defines the sparagmos less as a literal practice than as an imaginary act with several potential connections with the social contradictions under which the female votaries of Dionysus lived.

Sparagmos, as suggested, was an expression of female power, briefly but intensely experienced, or vice-versa, that in its peculiarity reflected the marginal

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[145] Mills (2006), 27.

[146] *Milet* vi. 22. The inscription is from Miletus and is dated to 276/5 B.C.:
...]. *ν ὅταν δὲ ἡ ἱέρεια ἐπι[τελέσ]ηι τὰ ἱερὰ ὑπὲρ τῆςπόλ[εω]ς*
πάσης], μὴ ἐξεῖναι ***ὠμοφάγιον ἐμβαλεῖν*** *μηθενὶ πρότερον*
ἢ ἡ ἱέ]ρεια ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἐμβάληι· μὴ ἐξεῖναι δὲ μηδὲ
συν]αγαγεῖν τὸν θίασον μηθενὶ πρότερον τοῦ δημοσίου.
ἐὰ]ν δέ τις ἀνὴρ ἢ γυνὴ βούληται θύειν τῶι Διονύσωι,
πρ]οϊεράσθωι ὁπότερον ἂν βούληται ὁ θύων καὶ λαμβανέτω
τὰ γέρη ὁ πρ]οϊερώμενος· κτλ.
For more information, see Sokolowski (1955), 48: for discussion and bibliography see Henrichs (1969) 235-238, (1978) 149-152 and (1996), 480-81; Versnel (1990), 139, especially 145-46; Obbink (1993) 70-71; Seaford (1994) 261 and (1996) 37; Dodds (1960), xvi-xvii; and Scullion (2013), 6-7.

social order by a brief period of abnormality. In normal sacrifice, a domesticated animal is ritually selected, cut up, cooked and eaten, whereas the sparagmos involved a supposedly spontaneous attack on a wild animal, which was torn apart and eaten raw by women away from their normal dwelling place within their homes in the city[147]. Raw meat was sometimes offered to Dionysus, but not through sparagmos and this kind of offering was similarly construed as a brief violation of the normal social order. Seeing that the Dionysus of myth and tragedy is so strongly associated with violations of social norms, such offerings provide one common link between the god of tragedy and the god of cult[148].

So while Euripides' version of Dionysian ritual is a thundering depiction, there is with no doubt a common ground between the way he perceives the cult and the actual practice. If women in their ordinary lives were restricted and isolated in their domains, then the brief period the turned into maenads, supposedly led by Dionysus himself, a state which they were allowed to break out of the normality away from the limitations and restrictions of their home and city - though only in terms strictly defined by that city - and to live in a purely female society would clearly be valuable to them. The sparagmos during that time would be an important symbol of the quality of their time away from the ordinary, whether it was purely imaginary, whether it was symbolized by the handling and consumption of raw meat, or whether it was ever at all close to Euripides' dramatized version of the ritual[149]. Indeed the *Bacchae* seems to embody a number of less impressive but genuine elements of the Dionysian experience, such as torchlight, thunderous music, dancing and head-tossing[150]. If anyone would participate in this festivity by dancing in the imagined presence of the god,

[147] Winnington-Ingram (1948), 20-1.
[148] Mills (2006), 28.
[149] Mills (2006), 28.
[150] Dodds (1951), 273.

with no doubt they could bring themselves into a sense of relaxation and well-being[151].

There is no mentioning of the maenads actually eating the king's raw flesh. The maenads acts remind us not of acts carried out by women practicing some kind of religious ritual, but of hunters. Their acts do not tell us anything about the sparagmos rite[152]. Euripides uses the sparagmos rite in the play not as a purification rite of the maenads, but as an act of violence fulfilled by the Theban women, in order to bring pollution upon them[153].

4. 2. 3. Pentheus

In Thebes, women maintained an ecstatic ritual which took place on Mt. Cithaeron. Based on this ritual, Pentheus' legend arose[154]. It is fairly clear that Euripides did not make up his version of the story[155]. The story of Pentheus and his mother, Agave, consist of one of a series of cult legends which describe the punishment of those mortals who refuse to accept the Dionysian religion[156].

Pentheus may be a persona compounded by historical and ritual elements- at once the god's historical adversary and his ritual victim. Euripides has given him a character that suits the former role: he consists the conservative Greek aristocrat who despises the new religion as *βάρβαρον*, hates it for its obliteration

[151] Mills (2006), 28.

[152] Leineks (1996), 159-160.

[153] Leinieks (1996), 167.

[154] Farnell (1909), 151.

[155] "It has emerged beyond doubt that the myth of Pentheus dramatized in the *Bacchae* does not derive from a single individual. Its uniqueness is rather as the only detailed account we possess of a kind of sacrifice that can be detected also in reports of other Dionysiac myths and rituals...", Woodruff (1998), xxxviii.

[156] It is said that Pentheus' death is associated with the Agrionia[156], a name which maybe derives from 'the pursuit' or 'hunting' of the god or his incarnation Pentheus or one of the Maenads. Euripides may have intentionally exclaimed towards the end of his tragedy, 'The King is a mighty hunter'. Farnell (1909), 182.

of sex and class distinctions, and fears it as a threat to social order and public morals[157]. Pentheus defends the old ways by attacking Dionysus worship as a dangerous innovation. The chorus treats Pentheus as guilty of New Learning by association, inasmuch as both he and science resist religion[158]. As the king of Thebes and the preserver of social order, Pentheus finds himself threatened by the Dionysian rites, which brought the women from the city to the mountains.

Versnel stands by the general view and predicates that Pentheus saw himself as defending the 'order of the polis'. But nowhere in the play do we see Pentheus associating himself with such beliefs. However, there is only one essential exception in the passage of the *Bacchae*. Dionysus says that Pentheus is suffering on behalf of the polis[159], meaning that king Pentheus' imminent death (as if a scapegoat) will benefit the polis. It is said that Pentheus had an 'excessive kingliness'[160], and it is implied that he was a bad citizen[161]. The king alone among all the Theban citizens defies the Dionysian cult, even after Dionysus had displayed his miraculous power.

Pentheus' irrational anger against the new religion is thought of as being both of political and psychological significance. Pentheus' lack of self-control[162], suspicion[163], lawlessness[164], and cruel violence[165] are all characteristics which Greeks attribute to the tyrants[166], while the Dionysian is that associated with the law[167]. Also Cadmus' funerary encomium[168] for his grandson, Pentheus, praises

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157 Dodds (1960), xxvii.
158 Woodruff (1998), xvii.
159 *Ba.* 963.
160 *Ba.* 671.
161 *Ba.* 271.
162 *Ba.* 214, 670-671.
163 *Ba.* 221-225, 255-257.
164 *Ba.* 331.
165 *Ba.* 241-242, 346-351, 511-513, 781-786.
166 See especially *Supp.* 429-455, Ion 625-628; Hdt. 3.80; Plu., *Publ.* 566d-576d; Thomson (1932), 6-9; Dodds (1960), xliii.
167 *Ba.* 891-896.
168 *Ba.* 1302-1326.

him not for his civic role, but as the defender of the royal household and as such a 'terror to the polis'[169]. Pentheus is the king of Thebes, which in the *Bacchae* consists of a polis[170]. Autocrats were not always thought of as ruling a city in favor of the well-being of its citizens. When in the *Bacchae* Dionysus is praised to Pentheus, that meant speaking 'free words to the tyrannos'[171]. Dionysus was a civic deity linked with the freedom of the state[172] as well as its communality. A supposed conflict between religion (Dionysus) and the state (Pentheus) has been wrongly read into *Bacchae*, because it is only natural to suppose that the Dionysian ecstasy would eventually threaten the order of the state and because there have been ancient historical instances of conflict between the state and the ecstatic cult, in some cases the Dionysian cult[173]. However two attributes to the Dionysian religion have been repeatedly mentioned in the play, *σωφροσύνη* (self-control, moderation) and *ἡσυχία*[174] (calm). These two attributions are the reason why the Dionysian cult is antithetical to the excited excesses of its opponents, such as Pentheus. Dionysian transformation is disastrous only to those who reject it, such as Pentheus and his mother, Agave. These qualities are also associated with the mysteries[175] and are evoked by the chorus, maybe as an important element to the cohesion of the city-state[176]. This is considered to be one of the ways in which the mystic pattern of the drama coheres with its political dimension[177].

Versnel points out that Euripides presents Pentheus' hostility towards the Dionysian cult in the same way that the Athenians showed their hostility towards

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[169] *Ba.* 1310.

[170] E.g. 50-1 (not realized) and 61 (certainly does not identify Pentheus with the polis). Thebes is a polis in the sense that it is a state with a single city. But on some (ancient and modern) political notions of a polis it would, as an absolute monarchy, not count as a polis.

[171] *Ba.* 775-776, 803.

[172] *Ba.* 497-498.

[173] Especially important here is the persecution of Dionysian cult by the Roman authorities in 186 B.C.: Liv. 39.8-19.

[174] *Ba.* 370-433, 389-391, 621-622, 647, 790, 1002, 1150-1153.

[175] *Ba.* 389-391, 621-622, 641, 647.

[176] *Ba.* 877-881.

[177] Seaford (1996), 47.

the new foreign cults. The rejection of a deity, which usually causes an aetiological crisis, is presented by Euripides to his audience in terms which were quite familiar to him. The genre of tragedy expressed best the aetiological pattern between the rejection and the acceptance of foreign cult[178].

According to René Girard (1977) such an abolition represents the memory of an actual event. Girard states that pre-modern societies were afflicted by "sacrificial crises', in which an escalating violent act could be eliminated only if it transformed into unanimous violence, the sacrifice of one victim whose death will not produce reprisals. This matter was common in Festivals commemorating an original sacrificial crisis. The same thing occurs with Pentheus' death. The *Bacchae*, he argues, 'traces the festival back to its violent beginnings, back to its reciprocal violence': Pentheus is torn apart by the women of Thebes. And so Dionysus becomes the 'god of mob violence'. Girard's theory on Pentheus' death might be implausible, the salutary effect of unanimous violence, as directed against the scapegoat, but it is a phenomenon of great significance in Greek religion and tragedy[179], in which the collective violent sacrifice of Pentheus gives rise to the founding of a cult for the whole polis[180].

Pentheus represses the demand of Dionysian experience both within himself as in others, thus transforming it into a power of destruction. He could be characterized as 'the dark puritan whose passion is compounded by horror and unconscious desire"[181]. Pentheus' repression and unconscious Dionysian longing within him is excited by the disguised god, and finally released in a flood[182]. His death satisfies the anger of Dionysus against Thebes, and his death will be marked with some features of the killing of a scapegoat[183]. In Pentheus' case, it is

[178] Seaford (1996), 51.
[179] Seaford (1994), 39-49.
[180] *Ba*. 963, 1024-1152, 1295; Seaford (1994), 89.
[181] Seaford (1996), 33.
[182] Dodds (1951), 272-3; (1960), 172.
[183] Woodruff (1998), xxviii. For more information see Bremmer (1983), 307.

concluded that the real moral of the play was 'tantum religio potuit suadere malorum' (only religion is able to persuade the mischievous)[184].

[184] Dodds (1960), xli.

5. Dionysian religion in Athens

'Unlike most Greek tragedies, the *Bacchae* is about a historical event-the introduction into Hellas of a new religion'[185]. Is it? A myth of a god's arrival from abroad may owe at least as much to ritual as to history. The annual re-enactment of Dionysus' arrival from abroad may not derive from an original actual introduction of the god, but it may be conceived as the community's need to renew and unite through the imagined entry of a powerful outsider[186].

The Greeks held that these singular rites were not native to Hellas. The play was written in Macedonia, where it received its extraordinary vividness. In the spring of 408 B.C., Euripides left Athens and attended the court of king Archelaus, the king of the Macedonians[187]. Euripides himself represents the Dionysian cult as a sort of 'world religion', which was carried out to the world by his missionaries (as no Greek cult ever was) from one land to another. According to the *Bacchae*, Dionysian religion was originated in the mountains of Lydia and Phrygia[188], a view that was supported by the modern discovery that *Βάκχος* is the Lydian equivalent of Dionysus[189].

In the play *Bacchae*, Euripides portrays a foreign god who presides over wild rituals which are culminated in the violent ripping apart of an animal (*sparagmos*) and its eating (*omophagia*). It was once believed that all myths directly reflected, or at least could be traced back to actual rituals and that the glamorous violence of the Dionysian religion led some leading scholars of this play, such as Dodds, whose commentary on the play remains fundamental, to believe that Euripides' depiction of the Dionysian ritual reflected actual cult practice, even

[185] This is the opening sentence of his introduction to the play. In this as in other respects he was heavily influenced by Rohde's *Psyche* (1925).

[186] Seaford (1996), 44.

[187] Dodds (1960), xxxix.

[188] *Ba.* 13, 55, 86 etc.; Dodds (1960), xxi.

[189] *Sardis*, vi. i. 39, Lyd. *Βακικαλις* = Greek *Διονυσικλῆς*.

after the general theory that myth is an outgrowth of cult had been abandoned. Recent studies have shown that Euripides' portrayal of the cult was less literally and with an understanding that myth has a complex and not necessarily direct relationship to cult realities. The details of a mythical story do not need to be literary true or even derived from historical truth, but the story will have a symbolic truth for the societies in which it is told and may even generate its own ritual.

Reviewing the evidence for the historical cult of Dionysus is a problematic exercise. Most evidence for cult practice derives from sources outside Attica and later than Euripides. Greek religion was regionalized and every city had its own forms of divine worship, one city's practice will not necessarily replicate that of Athens. The *Bacchae* itself is even a problem for the facts of Dionysian cult in Greece: to its remarkable popularity, the details of the cult which Euripides portrayed in the play may themselves have influenced later cult practice. However, even with these cautions, the historical and the archaeological records suggest on the one hand that the cult of Dionysus in Athens was significantly less impressive than its depiction by Euripides, and also that certain details stem from earlier mythical representations of Dionysus, implying that he was not creating a fictional account of Dionysian religion in Greece, but he simply exaggerated certain inherent elements of the cult for dramatic purposes. Euripides' portrayal of Dionysus worship contains a truth, but it is not a simple historical one. Some of the aspects of Dionysus are so constant in so many myths that they surely may be considered as fundamental to the nature of the god in Greek religion[190].

In Athens, Dionysian religion was tamed; during the Peloponnesian war, religion of the orgiastic type began to emerge again under other names. Athens had been invaded by many foreign gods and it is at this time that Attic literature began to be full with references of eastern and northern gods, Cybele and Bendis,

[190] Mills (2006), 21-22.

Attis, Adonis, and Sabazius[191]. Given this sentence, we must clarify in what way Pentheus' hostility against the new god is associated and resembled with the Athenian hostility to the new foreign cults in the classical period. Pentheus' attitude towards the entrance of a new foreign cult might resemble the way Athenian citizens treated this type of cult and also the Athenians might have perceived Pentheus' act as impious towards a central civic cult[192].

The dislike of a new cult and the need to accept it provided the Athenians a mythical model[193]. According to the mythological tradition, Athens, like other Greek cities, had experienced difficulties with Dionysus entrance in them[194]. Dionysus Athenian identity run full of his Theban identity. In Athens, Dionysus was a discreet and patient god, a benevolent and generous power, a total different view from the god's Theban character[195]. Dionysus, as portrayed from time to time in the Athens of Euripides, was not neglected in the *Bacchae*, where he is mentioned as a remote and most likely an unreal deity[196]. Still, there may be some distinction between the Athenian Dionysus and the Theban god.

Dionysus has his own places in Athens and official times in the Athenian year when he presides over abnormality, whether it is in the joyous naughtiness of comedy or the serious transgressions of tragedy. In order to give Dionysus a delineated space and time to execute his powers, enables Athens to incorporate without danger a god, who is otherwise connected with a dangerous lack of control. Furthermore, Athenian versions of myth commonly contrasted Athenian success with Theban disaster. So it is quite understandable that at a celebration of their own well-managed Dionysus, the citizens of Athens might be amenable to watching Theban destruction caused by handling Dionysus badly.

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[191] Dodds (1960), xxiii.
[192] Seaford (1996), 44.
[193] Seaford (1996), 52.
[194] Mills (2006), 32.
[195] Detienne (1989), 27.
[196] Showing that the god of Thebes was perceived in opposition to the Athenian Dionysus.

The fact that the Athenian citizens continued performing collective cult, meaning that the collective cult was performed in the tragedy, is essential for the cohesion of the polis. Dionysus is considered to have positive consequences for women and for the whole city. Specifically the Athenian maenads may have performed their rites party for personal reasons-for the experience of ecstasy and *enthousiasmos* and as a temporary escape from the restrictions of their daily life[197]. On the other hand, it was exactly these well-defined and socially acceptable outlets that guaranteed social order on the polis-level as a whole[198].

Dionysus in the city of Athens was a god of wine and vine miracles. He was also the god of wild nature, ecstatic possession, masking and disguise and mystic initiation. There is no clear evidence for Maenadic ritual within the borders of Attica, although later sources mention a joint celebration on the slopes of Parnassus between the Thyiads of Delphi and Athenian women[199]. Nevertheless, Dionysus was a central figure in a number of festivals in Athens which were worthy of brief discussion, because there was some unanimity in the depiction of the god and because there were no clear thematic connections between them and the Maenadic rites represented by Euripides[200].

[197] Bowersock, Burkert, Putnam (1979), 238.
[198] Seaford (1996), 50.
[199] Plu. *Moralia* 249e-f; Paus. 10.4.3.
[200] Mills (2006), 22.

6. Dionysus from Euripides' perspective

Euripides turns in favor of religion. In his earlier plays[201] Euripides was believed to attack religion, and came to repeat that stance in old age, when he wrote the *Bacchae*. The play, on this view, serves as Euripides' recantation (palinode) to the gods and his defense to the people of Athens on an unofficial charge of irreverence. Nineteenth century scholars who studied earlier plays of Euripides seem to believe that he had always recognized the power of the irrational, and the failure of rationalism to defeat it. However, modern critics have rightly pointed out that there is nothing in the *Bacchae* to counter the moral criticism of mythological religion that found expression in Euripides' earlier plays[202].

The *Bacchae* is a work of literature in which Euripides has thoroughly worked out a theory of Dionysian psychology[203]. It is said that Euripides' main reason for writing the *Bacchae* was his desire to give a clinical portrayal of Dionysus, meaning that he wanted to portray the impact that Dionysian religion had over men[204]. The *Bacchae* is not considered to be a deceptive account of Dionysian religion in the late fifth-century Greece, but instead, it consists of an original and self-consistent work of art. Euripides had selected specific features of the Dionysian cults and given them psychological interpretations relevant to his artistic purpose and has just as carefully avoided other features of these cults

[201] In his earlier plays Euripides placed them either in the beginning or in the end. In contrast, in the *Bacchae,* Euripides presents the god Dionysus from the prologue until the *exodos* of the play, as he is also the protagonist of the play. In his plays, the poet presented the gods to his audience as *deus ex machina*. With the *deus ex machina,* the god would provide divine criticism, approval, or disapproval of mankind and its actions. Euripides, by bringing the gods and the goddesses into the stage, incorporated religion in a very complete way, and he also made reference to feuds between gods, as well as amongst gods and men. In the *Bacchae's* case, when Dionysus enters Thebes, he expresses his desire to be worshipped by everyone, but the Theban citizens do not wish to do so, and this is how a vendetta was created between the god and the citizens. Appleton (1920), 10-14.

[202] Woodruff (1998), xxx.

[203] Leinieks (1996), 1, 49; McGinty (1978), 177.

[204] Rosenmeyer (1968), 150.

which were not suitable to his artistic purpose. As a historical document illustrating Dionysian religion, the *Bacchae* must be treated with extreme caution. Conversely, the few evidence of Dionysian religion from the late fifth-century B.C. can be used selectively in addition to interpreting the play. The *Bacchae* as a very popular play, has left numerous traces throughout antiquity both in subsequent literature and subsequent cult practice[205].

How much do the characteristics that Euripides inserts and embodies into his play show us that they are compatible with tradition? In the play are many indications that the poet had used many elements from tradition, but unfortunately, the majority of this tradition is almost entirely lost and for this reason our question cannot be answered. However, it is noticeable that Dionysus holds a central role in the *Bacchae*, giving us the opportunity to investigate the significance of Dionysus' power both in the play as well as what we know of his cult. The play's poetry, emotional power and dramatic structure cannot be fully appreciated without his exploration[206].

Nietzsche welcomed the *Bacchae* as a play which promoted and encouraged the power of the irrational in human life and its eventual triumph. Nietzsche, who said that Euripides, throughout his career, was a rationalist, a follower of "Socratic optimism" hostile to any display of emotion and desire, perceives the *Bacchae* as Euripides' swan song, meaning that the play was the poet's final and sudden acknowledgement of the divinity he had long scorned. And Nietzsche himself, seeing that the main enemies of human flourishing in his time was asceticism and otherworldliness, embraced the *Bacchae* and its Dionysus, observing that religion was a possible antidote to modern ills[207].

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[205] Dodds (1960), "It was well known as a schoolbook; popular recitations were given from it; it was widely quoted and excerpted in the Roman period". (xxix)

[206] Seaford (1996), 30.

[207] William (1996), xxvi.

In the *Bacchae*, Euripides decides not to present Dionysian religion as a mystery cult[208]. The reason for this decision is not immediately evident. One of the most important features to an ancient mystery cult consists of controlled and restricted access to membership in the cult. Membership is a privilege that confers special advantages, therefore it is important and is available only to select. Access to membership is controlled by means of an initiation rite[209]. The initiation rite immediately informs the initiate, the members of the cult as well as society, that the initiate now possesses a new and privileged status[210]. With reference to the initiation rite, the initiate adopted a new distinctive dress and behavior, in order for him to advertise his new status[211]. These two essential features of ancient mystery cults contradict Euripides' concept of Dionysian religion in the play *Bacchae*.

The first evidence detected in the play is the fact that Euripides rejects the idea of restricted access in the cult. Teiresias' comments[212] indicate that becoming a Dionysian worshipper is a matter of personal choice and putting on the appropriate costume and join the dance[213]. Not only is everyone welcomed to join the Dionysian cult, but, according to Teiresias' own words the god himself expects everyone to do so[214]. The Thebans negativity towards the Dionysian worship

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[208] Bianchi (1976). "The cult of Dionysos, as celebrated in the trieteric rites of an orgiastic nature, described in a lively manner in the *Bacchae* of Euripides, was not properly a mystery cult". (13)

[209] Burkert (1987). "Mysteries are initiation ceremonies, cults in which admission and participation depend upon some persona ritual to be performed on the initiand. Secrecy and in most cases a nocturnal setting are concomitants of this exclusiveness". (8) Claas J. Bleeker, 'Preface' Initiation, (1965). "Rites of initiation in the strict sense of the word, i.e. rites introducing people into closed religious societies". (IX)

[210] Burkert (1987, note 3). "From a sociological point of view, initiation in general has been defined as 'status dramatization' or ritual change of status" (8). Bianchi (1976, note 2). "The rites of accession to a new status which implies adhesion to a clearly defined group". (4)

[211] Leinieks (1996), 123.

[212] *Ba.* 175-177.

[213] *Ba.* 191, 195; Bianchi (1976, note 2). "Nor does it appear that participation in these rites was an exclusive privilege". (13)

[214] *Ba.* 206-209.

willingly is a reason for complaint by the chorus[215]. Dionysus' longing desire to be worshipped by all Theban citizens is so strong that he will even force those who do not wish to worship him to do so[216]. Although the Theban women were forced to worship Dionysus, again there is no indication that they are compelled to undergo an initiation ceremony. Also there is no indication in the play of any kind of initiation ceremony undergone by the choruses' Lydian women. The god has brought the Lydian women as assistants and partners[217], in order to spread his religion. Likewise, the Stranger claims to have been authorized to bring Dionysian rites to Greece and that Dionysus himself sent him[218] after ordering him in the rites[219]. Both the Lydian women and the Stranger have been pointed out to be the god's missionaries. Therefore, they have not been initiated in a mystery cult[220].

Secondly, Euripides rejects the idea of benefits in the hereafter life. The poet's perception on this matter is that the benefits of Dionysian religion are here and now. When Pentheus inquires the after form of the Dionysian rites, the Stranger mentions their benefit[221]. The rites are not to be told to those who have not been participating them and since they are essential for the Dionysian dance, they also need not be told to those who do not participate in them. They are to be explained and discovered by themselves, understood through engaging in the practice itself[222].

Throughout the play, there is no evidence that Euripides wished for Dionysian religion in the *Bacchae* to be understood as a mystery cult. Quite the opposite. To the Athenian audience mysteries were identified and linked with the Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter. In this case, Euripides had to avoid language

[215] *Ba.* 530-533.
[216] *Ba.* 39-40.
[217] *Ba.* 57.
[218] *Ba.* 466.
[219] *Ba.* 470.
[220] Leinieks (1996), 124.
[221] *Ba.* 10-474.
[222] Leinieks (1996), 126.

and ideas in the play which betrayed any connection with the mysteries at Eleusis. Moreover, there is no persuasive evidence for Dionysian mysteries anywhere in the fifth-century B.C., but such mysteries were a later development. Therefore, Euripides' audience would have no reason to connect the *Bacchae* with mysteries. The reason Euripides acted in this manner is quite obvious. It was not the poets wish to portray Dionysian religion as a mystery cult. According to Euripides himself, Dionysian religion yields its benefits in the here and now and it is accessible to every human being[223]. In contrast, ancient mystery cults promised their members benefits in the hereafter life and strictly differentiated between initiates and non-initiates. Thus, it was extremely important for Euripides to avoid any reference of mysteries in connection with Dionysus in the play[224].

Euripides' interest in the orgiastic religion of Dionysus does not date from his Macedonian period: already it appears in the chant of the initiates in the *Cretans*[225], and the remains of an ode in the *Hypsipyle*[226]. Thus, the choruses that are contained in the *Bacchae* are the last and fullest utterance of feelings which had haunted[227] Euripides for at least six years before his death, and probably for much longer[228].

Euripides' depiction of Dionysian religion is also considered to be a political statement. The *Bacchae* was written immediately after the end of the Peloponnesian War. Euripides' approach consists of advocating the concepts of universal freedom and unity by presenting them as essential features of a

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[223] Dodds (1960), note 11: "Dionysus is a democratic god: he is accessible to all... directly in his gift of wine and through membership of his *θίασος*" (127).

[224] Leinieks (1996), 152.

[225] *Cret*. 472.

[226] frs. 57, 58 Arnim = 31, 32 Hunt (1912).

[227] Significant is the connection in his especial fondness for the metaphorical use of *βάκχη*, *βακχεύειν*, and related terms. In the Euripidean work there are twenty examples, against two in Aeschylus and one in Sophocles.

[228] Dodds (1960), xlii.

universal Dionysian religion. These elements are to be implemented by Dionysus. They apply not only to Greeks but also to barbarians[229].

At the end of his life and while writing the *Bacchae*, Euripides was exiled to Macedonia. It is known that the poet was holding a grudge against the Athenians, and thought that Athens was headed toward ruin. About the same time foreign religions made their entrance in Greece, and become quite popular in the city, and such a religion was Dionysus'. Surely, Euripides was saying something to his fellow Athenians. He foresaw the ending of fifth century civilization. The chorus's constant references to "tradition" and "custom" are ironic: they refer to Dionysus as a new god[230].

Euripides' *Bacchae* literally depicted the contemporary religious life in Greece[231]. Also, the poet did not wish to present the Dionysian religion as a mystery cult, as he perceived this cult as non-exclusive. In the Dionysian religion everyone is welcomed to join and there are no boundaries, and the benefits of the Dionysian religion according to Euripides are here and now[232]. Winnington - Ingram admits that Dionysus is made to appear in the play both beautiful and dangerous but points out the order of these appearances: Dionysus worship may at first be seductive as seen through the eyes of the chorus in the beginning of the play, but by the end of it this impression is altered perceiving him as a god who is surrounded by a sense of the horrible dangers that are associated with its extravagant joys[233].

Finally, it is said that Euripides' intention in composing the *Bacchae*, was to provide an emotional perspective of the Dionysian cult. The modes theory is one of great interest, and gives a new perspective for interpreting the poet's intention

[229] Leinieks (1996), 341.
[230] Schechner (1968), 424.
[231] Farnell (1909), 151.
[232] Leinieks (1996), 129.
[233] Woodruff (1998), 11.

in writing the *Bacchae*. According to Teiresias' speech[234], who was considered Euripides' mouthpiece in the play presenting the poet's worldview, it is impossible to suppress and eliminate this kind of religion represented by Dionysus, and therefore, it would be wise to integrate such an ecstatic cult movement and reconcile the different types of religions. By welcoming and joining the "new" movement and worshipping the "new" god, Teiresias does not abandon his traditional religious function as a seer[235]. In short, what is recommended is not to eliminate or to convert, but to integrate[236]. Actually in the fifth century B.C., Dionysus' cult was integrated into the Greek religion as a repetitive-ecstatic ritual[237]. So, Dionysus was a god, who was given many jurisdictions, and one of those could be considered the emotional outbreak of the worshippers while taking part in his cult's rituals.

[234] *Ba.* 266-327.
[235] Martin, Pachis (2009), 44-45.
[236] See *Ba.* 328.
[237] Versnel (1990), 131.

7. Conclusions

For any student of the Dionysian religion, the *Bacchae* of Euripides consists of a landmark as well as a watershed, and also something of a problem[238]. Dionysus and his cult have been for many centuries a scarce mention, but in the *Bacchae* the silence breaks and initiates a new era of abundant documentation. The genre of tragedy is a piece of creative writing and constitutes an inseparable blend of mythology, literary reminiscences, poetic fantasy, and sometimes allusions to contemporary forms of Dionysian worship. Throughout antiquity, the *Bacchae* has served as a goldmine in terms of Dionysian imagery and cult language. Today the play remains a fundamental and essential text for anyone who wishes to study the magical and enigmatic world of Dionysus and his religion. Although the Dionysus presented in the *Bacchae* lacks a clear identity for many reasons, such as dramatic, and marks a turning point in the god's Greek perception. Savage hunter, foreign missionary of his own cult, and at the same time being a cultural benefactor, Dionysus combines archaic and contemporary characteristics and personifies the Dionysus Hellenistic image[239].

The whole picture we perceive throughout the tragedy is that it is unparalleled to earlier Greek literature. This enhances the idea of the Bacchae representing the first reflection of - and on - the phenomenon of new cults of

[238] Aeschylus' Pentheus and Lycurgus trilogies were very much on Euripides' mind when he wrote the *Bacchae*, but the Aeschylean fragments are too incoherent for more than a superficial comparison.

[239] "It is fair to say that appreciation of the *Bacchae* has suffered a great deal from literary critisism which ignores Dionysiac religion, and from historians of religion who mistake the play for a bible of maenadism. Both fallacies have many followers, but the first is more common and less productive than the second. Balanced critisism of the play will give equally competent consideration to both its literary form and religious content. Such balance is difficult to achieve. When reading the *Bacchae* one should keep in mind that each dramatic unit typifies a different religious experience: self-revelation of the deity in the prologue; confrontation, dispute and conversion in the dialogue parts; myth and ritual in the messenger speeches; and Dionysiac "theology" in the lyrics (especially the parodos, after which the chorus tends to lose its maenadic identity). In other words, Euripides' multifaced grasp of Dionysiac lore is the main key to a full understanding of his dramatic art in the *Bacchae*", Houser (1979), 7.

'foreign' gods with their 'sectarian' deviation from routinized forms of religion[240], deviant above all in their explicit professions of a structural 'adversion'[241] to a 'unique' god. It would be very difficult to find another passage with a more direct instance of ritual inspiring myth. In the words of a scholar:

In this way, the *Bacchae* captures perhaps better than any other document of Greek religion the feelings of fifth-century Greeks as they contemplated these non-Olympian and non-epic deities: such powers are new to our polis and its religious and mythological traditions, but their rites are immemorial and demand recognition and respect[242]. This is not to deny the evidence that the new gods were regarded with suspicion by some (or treated as suspicious in order to make a rhetorical point), but at the same time we should beware lest the relative literary and mythical poverty of the new gods leads us to neglect or deny their religious importance[243].

The point of the play is that we should not be content with mystery and give up our ambition for a clearer understanding of the Dionysian religion. It is a peculiarly modern error to prize the mystery or ambiguity of Dionysus for its own sake. The point is rather that clear understanding comes only with initiation and not by active intellectual efforts. If a god or a deity strikes us as a mysterious

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[240] It is quite obvious that there is never a one-to-one relationship between tragedy and historical reality, but it is no less true that, in the words of Allan (2004) 148: "Yet the poet's very decision to include such features tells us much about their audience's shared religious attitudes". At p. 131 Allan quotes a passage from a tragedy called *Semele* by Diogenes of Athens (Ath. 14, 636a = *TrGF I* 45 fr. 1.1-6) which shows a 'syncretism' of Dionysos' and Cybele's worshippers, which is very similar to the one in the *Bacchae* of his contemporary Euripides. This means that "Euripides was not alone in combining Dionysiac myth and cult with that of the new gods". For a full discussion on this matter see *TER UNUS* 172-189.

[241] The term was introduced by Nock (1933) in order to distinguish this type of surrender to henotheistic forms of belief from the (rare conversion to a monotheistic creed. On these notes see Versnel (2011), Ch. 3.

[242] Bowersock, Burkert, Putnam (1979), 42.

[243] Allan (2004) 146, concluding: "As H.S. Versnel has shown in his magisterial study of Dionysiac ambiguities, the Bacchae reflects contemporary uneasiness concerning new cults and their ecstatic worship".

one, this is because we have not been initiated to his or her mysteries. The mystery will only deepen if we try to lead ourselves to a solution[244].

[244] Woodruff (1998), xlii.

8. The introduction of the Bacchanalia in Rome (186 B.C.)

After presenting Dionysian religion extensively as viewed and depicted by Euripides in the *Bacchae*, from this point onwards we shall turn our attention to Dionysian religion in Rome. Specifically, we will view Dionysian religion from Livy's point of view. But before I start my analysis, I am obliged to mention the Bacchanalian episode's plot.

Livy does not begin his narration of 186 B.C. by listing the consular and praetorian provinces, but he mentions the *coniuratio*, details the praetorian assignments, and then says that the consuls were assigned the *quaestio de clandestinis coniurationibus*[245]. From Etruria the cult spread to Rome and was immediately concealed[246]. This cult came to light in Etruria by a *Graecus ignobilis*, and describes the participant's corrupted behavior[247]. From there, the cult was spread to Rome were it was also concealed[248]. But the cult became widely known in the following way. T. Sempronius Rutilus was the legal guardian of his stepson, P. Aebutius, the son of his wife, Duronia. Rutilus had embezzled Aebutius's fortune, and hoping to avoid the consequences of his actions, he tried corrupting him by initiating Aebutius to the Bacchanalia. When Aebutius told his lover Hispala Faecenia, who was a courtesan and now a freedwoman, about his future initiation to the rites she was appalled; she then told him that she had been initiated to this rite, when she had been a slave, but had not taken part in them since her manumission. However, she was aware of the fact that for the past two years no one over the age of twenty had been initiated, and that the initiates, meaning both men and women, first suffered rape and were forced to suffer and

[245] Liv. 39.8.1-3.
[246] Liv. 39.9.1.
[247] Liv. 39.8.3-8.
[248] Liv. 39.9.1.

perform every kind of heinous act. Aebutius promised his lover that he would not be initiated to this rite[249].

When Aebutius informed his mother and stepfather about him not being initiated to the Bacchic rites, they threw him out of the house. He then went to his paternal aunt, Aebutia, and then, on her suggestion, to one of the consuls, Spurius Postumius Albinus. After consulting his mother-in-law, Sulpicia, Postumius summoned Aebutia, who testified for her nephew's good character[250]. Then Postumius summoned Hispala, who at first hesitated in confessing the goings on during the Bacchanalia. When Postumius made it clear to her that he had been informed by Aebutius about the Bacchic rites, she unleashed the whereabouts of the rites, giving the consul the full story[251]. According to her version, the rites had originally been all-female, and took place only three days a year. A Campanian priestess, Paculla Annia, brought some alterations to the ceremonies conduction, meaning that it was because of her that men started initiating to this rite, as she was the first one to initiate men in them, after initiating her two sons, and making the festival nocturnal, and taking place five times a month.

After Hispala's revelation, Postumius presented this evidence to the senate, which the latter voted that all priests and priestesses of the cult should be apprehended, and for a decree, issued both in Rome and throughout Italy, saying that no one could participate in the Bacchic rites and that a *quaestio* should be held concerning all those "who had come together or conspired in order to bring about illicit sexual acts or other criminal action"[252].

In chapters 15 and 16 there is a speech embedded in Livy's narrative by a consul, Postumius. After this speech, many tried to escape but were arrested. The leaders of the Bacchanalian 'conspiracy' were imprisoned, and confessed to the

[249] Liv. 39.10.
[250] Liv. 39.11.
[251] Liv. 39.12.1-14.3.
[252] Liv. 39. 14. 3-10.

consuls[253]. Thereupon the consuls proceed to their *quaestio*. Those who had been infected by heinous acts and murders where either executed or imprisoned[254]. Livy's narrative ends with rewards and privileges handed out to both Aebutius and Hispala[255].

Livy's account of the Bacchanalia falls into two parts, the first one being the domestic 'drama' of P. Aebutius and his courtesan girlfriend Hispala Faecenia[256], and the second one concerning the senator's reaction to the horrific information provided by the couple regarding the Bacchic rites[257]. The Bacchanalian episode narrated by Livy in comparison to the inscription of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* consist the only literary texts provided for the Bacchic religion in Italy[258].

The episode concerning the Bacchanalian affair has been one of the clearest examples of how Rome interfered in the internal affairs of Latin and allied communities in Italy, and presents a statement of Polybius that the senate concerned itself with cases of treason, conspiracy and murders throughout Italy[259]. It is clear that the primary threat of the Bacchanalia towards the state was of a religious matter[260].

The cult of Bacchus (in Greek, Dionysus) had spread vastly from southern Italy to Etruria and Rome[261]. The Bacchanalia, as are called the Bacchic rites, created a violent reaction on the part of Rome's Senate to the effect that it

[253] Liv. 39.17.

[254] Liv. 39.18.

[255] Liv. 39.19; Briscoe (2008), 230-231; for a summary of Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair, see also Chaplin & Kraus (2009), 328-331; Beard, North, Price, *Volume II*, (1998), 289-290.

[256] Liv. 39.8-14.2

[257] Liv. 39.14.3-19.

[258] Nousek (2010), 157.

[259] Briscoe (2008), 244.

[260] Nousek (2010), 160.

[261] Bacchus's cult was wide-spread in Italy, north and south as well as in the Roman area too (39.8.3). His cult was also distributed in the Roman allies too. Beard, North, Price, *Volume I*, (1998), 93.

suppressed it in 186 B. C. This was the earliest attested religious group in the Roman world, though it is hard to understand, due to the fact that the cult's activities were uniformly hostile, which pointed out the immorality of the cult and the fact that the Bacchanalia were treated by the Roman Senate as a political threat towards the state. Livy's account on the Bacchanalia adumbrates the dangerous practices of the Bacchic rites, being that of magic, theft, immorality, fraud, even murder. These practices were common accusations against secret religious groups, as were later against the Christians[262].

According to the historian's method, Livy intended to give a free version with picturesque details and to give a moral dimension to the material which was handed down to him by annalists. As it was very difficult for Livy to detect sources upon this matter in antiquity, justifiably, he would first complete the more "official" parts of the Bacchanalian episode (meaning the proceedings of the Senate and consuls). Thus, he began with the report of the cult's exposure, which he comprised in a romantic story between Aebutius and Hispala, and of the *quaestio*. Afterwards, he wrote the parts which were based on his own invention: of these, the introduction of chapter 8 was located in the beginning of the episode and Postumius' speech was finally inserted[263].

The Romans considered an individual cult to be a foreign one[264]. Book 39 of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* was thought of as being relevant to religion: the idea of external corruption and the Roman response to it[265]. The degenerated attitude of the Bacchants inspired by this foreign religion was developing as a conspiracy against the state's well-being[266].

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[262] Beard, North, Price, *Volume II*, (1998), 288.
[263] Son (1960), 206.
[264] Orlin (2002), 2.
[265] Levene (1993), 92.
[266] Walsh (1996), 189.

What is intended to be studied in the following chapters is why the Bacchanalian affair brought such distress to Rome, in what way it was perceivedas a political threat to the state, and how Livy viewed this dangerous religious movement. Therefore, I shall separate Livy's narration into two parts, the first one concerning Hispala's confession to the consul Postumius, in which she mentions the alterations of the Bacchic rites from the moment they invaded to Italy until Paculla Annia's changes, and the second part being about Postumius' speech, in which he mentions the Bacchic rites as a political threat to the state.

9. Hispala's confession

Livy is the major source for the suppression of Bacchus' cult in Italy. During his narration, Livy inserts, the-courtesan-and-former-slave, and once-cult-member, Hispala Faecenia's confession to the consul Postumius[267], in which with great hesitation[268] confides in him details of this secret conspiracy[269]. As Hispala said, at first the cult was practiced wholly by women, and was tolerated until the first decade of the second century, when a priestesses from Campania, Paculla Annia, had altered the structure and ritual of the Bacchanalia. The Campanian version of the cult was outlined as that of Euripides *Bacchae*[270].

Primarily, she started initiating men as well, for she had initiated her sons, Minius and Herennius, to the cult. Also, Paculla Annia had introduced the worshippers to the nocturnal rites, as in the beginning they were held in the day, and instead of a mere three days a year, she had established five days of initiation in every month[271]. The Campanian priestess had also restricted membership to persons under the age of 20[272], and encouraged promiscuity. Initiates where bound by a *coniuratio*, 'a swearing together', which obligated them both to

[267] Liv. 39.12.1-14.3

[268] Liv. 39. 13. 2 *capitalem*: Hispala interprets Postumius' words at 39.12.8 as a threat of execution. Walsh strangely reports that "participation in the Bacchanalia, interpreted as a conspiracy against the state, was punishable by death', as if it was an established rule of Roman criminal law", (Briscoe 2008, 64); Liv. 39.13. 8. 5: *manibus suis discerpturi*: If the Bacchic participants found out that Hispala had informed against them, they would have torn her limb from limb with their own hands. This description is a reflection of the motif of tearing limb from limb in Bacchic myth (*σπαραγμός*), both of animals whom the Bacchants proceeded to eat raw (cf. Dodds (1960), xvi-xx), and particularly of human victims, as in the story of Pentheus, as it was deligated in an earlier chapter concerning Pentheus death in the *Bacchae* of Euripides (Briscoe, 265); Liv. 39.13.8-11: *pro victimis immolari*: those who refused to accept the Dionysian religion, and disinclined to endure abuse or where reluctant to commit crime, became the victims of sacrificial rituals (Briscoe 2008, 266).

[269] Bauman (1990), 35.

[270] Takács (2000), 305.

[271] Liv. 39.13.9.

[272] Liv. 38.7.

fornication and to common-law crimes, such as murder and forgery. As regards to the number of members, there were more than 7.000 participants in the cult, including a number of men and women of rank[273], and the movement almost formed a second state[274]. On this matter Pailler suggests that the reason why the senate was concerned with Paculla Annia's reformations of the Bacchanalia was because they thought she was trying to sabotage the existing cult of Ceres and replace it with the foreign cult of Bacchus[275].

Even though Hispala mentions that certain participants of the Bacchanalia were noblemen and gentle-women, it is sure that the new cult was consisted mainly of people who belonged to the lower classes, plebeians, or people in Italy who were not Roman citizens; the chief seat was Southern Italy. However, it is implied that the new Bacchic mysteries at the end of the Republic were favored by rich and wealthy people[276]. It is worth noticing that the leaders and the followers of the Bacchanalian affair in 186 B.C. may have been aristocrats or might have belonged to the socially privileged[277]. This factor must have been taken under serious consideration, explaining why the senate was so drawn to the Bacchanalia. Perhaps free Roman citizens, recruiting their leaders from noble families, participated in the exotic rites of Bacchus in 186 B.C.[278] Also, Hispala told

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[273] Bauman (1990), 25.

[274] Liv. 39.13.14. Many were astonished with the Bacchic movement's spread in Italy. The worshippers number was so big, that when Hispala mentions that they could be considered as a second state, the Roman senate esteemed this religious movement as a seditious group, and a genuine threat for the state's wholeness, and passed legislation to suppress them. Tripolitis (2002), 25; Chaplin & Kraus (2009), 336.

[275] Briscoe (2008), 236.

[276] Nilsson (1957), 21. In Livy's narration is disposed the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* prohibitions, and one of them was that the Bacchants were not allowed to have a common purse (*neu qua pecunia communis*, 39. 18. 9).

[277] Liv. 39.13.14, 39.17.6.

[278] Liv. 39.8.7. Also the courtesan Hispala Facenia was a freewoman and possibly even of aristocratic birth. Hispala clams to the consul Postumius that she had never visited the shrine of Bacchus after receiving her freedom (Liv. 39.9.5 [*libertina*], 39.10.5, 39.12.6). Also *matronae* are mentioned of being followers of the Bacchic cult (Liv. 39.13.12). It is quite interesting that Livy has not mentioned slaves of being followers of Bacchus, for he would certainly not have failed to mention them, given his contemptuous attitude.

Postumius that while she was a slave she had attended her mistress to that shrine, but as a free woman she had never visited it[279].

After hearing Hispala's sayings, Postumius and his consular colleague, Q. Marcius Phillipus, were commissioned by the senate to conduct a special criminal investigation (*quaestio*) into the Bacchanals and their nocturnal rites. Livy pays a great amount of his narrative in repeating allusions about the cult's nocturnal aspect, which could only point to the fact of the central position which women held in the movement. Cicero, in his dialogue *On the Laws*, advocates a ban on nocturnal sacrifices by women. Women's reputation must have been protected by the clear light of day, and should not have been associated with any forms of rituals held by night. The initiations into the cult of Ceres were carried out only by rites performed in the Roman manner. Postumius, in a speech written for him by Livy himself, mentions that women were not the main reason for this problem, but Bauman adds that young men were also involved, since their wrongdoings had merely made them effeminate, thus, unfit for military services[280]. Unfortunately, Livy's account of the Bacchanalian affair is deficient, because his main influence was the traditional picture of the Bacchic orgia, thus, we cannot trust the details he mentions of the cult in his narration[281].

[279] Liv. 38.6; Lipka (2009), 171, 178.
[280] Liv. 39.15.939.15.9, 13-14. Bauman (1990), 35-36.
[281] Nilsson (1957), 14.

9. 1. Women's position in the Bacchanalia.

According to Bauman, the Bacchanalian affair was the biggest manifestation of women's power in Roman history[282]. Livy's narrative is full of family tensions. The Roman family was based on the authority of the father over all his descendants, who formed a religious as well as worldly community. But with Bacchus's cult, the family structure changes. The position of women in the cult must have been a sensitive matter at the time. In the text, there is mentioning of women's involvement in the groups, but the source's hostility is directed towards the men's addition to the rites, which were perceived as a female cult. The last regulations report that women would keep fulfilling their priestly duties, in addition to men, who were banned from doing so. Also the attendance to the cult's meetings seems to be referred to as 'being sent among the <female> Bacchants', as though this was the religion's primary form[283].

In the year 186 B.C., Rome was dominated by the suppression of the Bacchanalian cult, a version of Dionysus' cult in Italy. It is said that the Bacchanalian cult had given women a great outlet of their energy and that this cult was all about giving power and authority to them, as it is reported that this religion's characteristic element was the massive participation of women, and it was practiced at first only by women. But whether the cult was seen as a feminist one and its suppression as anti-feminist remains to be seen.

In the episode of the Bacchanalia Livy mentions three women, but the only one which was for certain a member of the cult was Aebutius' mother, Duronia. Also, there is Aebutius's paternal aunt, Aebutia, who was not a cult member and was opposed to this foreign cult, despite her residence on the Aventine. The third woman mentioned was the great patrician matron, Sulpicia, Postumius' mother-in-law. In spite of the solitary example of Duronia, Livy mentions the four male

[282] Bauman (1990), 31.
[283] Beard, North, Price, *Volume I*, (1998), 95.

leaders of the *coniuratio* without any hesitation, Marcus and Gaius Atinius, Lucius Opicernius and Minius Cerrinius. It is clear that Livy's mentioning of Paculla Annia's reforms mean one thing: the Bacchanalia was an exclusively female cult, which was transformed into one of both sexes. There is no doubt of the *quaestio* of 186 B.C. having been anti-feminist[284]. It is because of Livy's narration that supported this notion that women must have made up the most influential group within the cultic organization[285].

[284] Bauman (1990), 35, 37.
[285] Takács (2000), 301.

10. Postumius' speech

Livy, while describing the episode of the Bacchanalian affair, intends to explain how the consul Spurius Albinus Postumius, with constant work and persistence, reviled the secret cult of Bacchus' worshippers. As soon as Postumius is informed the terrible truth, he goes straight to the Senate and the people and launches an investigation through Rome and Italy[286]. Afterwards an informal meeting was called upon, and one of the two consuls who were assigned as administrators of wars and provinces to the suppression of the Bacchanalian conspiracy, addresses the people. This consul is said to be Postumius, the consul we saw in the earlier chapter, who took Hispala's testimony. In his speech[287], Postumius points out the Bacchanalia as "vile and alien rites"[288], trying to bring forward that Bacchus's cult was an alien cult, compared to the traditional religion of Rome. He also stresses the great danger these secret gatherings bring to the Roman citizens, and urges the citizens to resist and defend the well-being of their state, and of course, their religion's, too.

One of the first things Postumius mentions to his fellow citizens is the time the Bacchanalia were carried out: during the night. What was considered as an act of crime by the Bacchanals was that they gathered illegally, and what enraged the senate more was the time these rites took place. Postumius mentions that the Bacchanalia were nocturnal meetings (*nocturnus coetus*) and that these night gatherings (*nocturna contio*) were the same as those that took place during the day by consuls, therefore, the Bacchanals created an alternative society. The alteration of the gathering's meeting from day to night brought suspicion to the senators, because meetings which took place during the night time were always suspect.

[286] Beard, North, Price, *Volume I*, (1998), 93.
[287] Liv. 39.15-16.
[288] Liv. 39. 15. 3.

Only those who had to hide something used the night, thus it was the conspirator's favorite time[289].

It is interesting that in his speech, Postumius takes for granted that the Bacchanalia had been practiced in Italy for a long time, and says that they took place during the night in various parts of Rome, of which noises have been the evidence. However, according to the consul, whoever considers the Bacchic rites as a cult of gods (*cultus deorum*) or a game (*ludus*) is wrong. Bacchanalia was a serious matter and had to be considered for many reasons, such as the fact that by the number of its participants alone it could be considered a second state, because most of them were women who were prostituting, effeminate men, and also all of them were possessed by madness (*fanatici*). And finally, Postumius accuses the participants of these secret meetings of conspiracy (*coniuratio*)[290]. *Coniuratio* meant the oath taken by initiates and it also implied a plot against the state, therefore, Postumius says that the ultimate aim of the suppression of the Bacchanals and their cult was control of the state[291].

The protection of Rome from foreign rites is a significant matter, and consists of a religious priority rather than the exclusion of foreign gods. The virtual synonymity of the introduction of foreign, and the declination of traditional, rites is reinforced in the polarities used by the consul in the Bacchanalian affair: Livy stresses the role of the priests in preserving the appropriate rites for the Roman citizens, naming the pontifical and augural colleges individually, as well as mentioning the senate's role, referring to the senate as 'masters of all human and divine lore'[292]. What Livy's consul is trying to do is to establish that the Bacchic rites were alien to Rome.

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[289] Musiał (2009), 13.
[290] Musiał (2009), 13.
[291] Liv. 39.16.3; Bauman (1990), 36.
[292] Liv. 39. 16. 9, *prudentissimi viri omnis divini humanique iuris*.

One curious feature of Postumius' speech was his claiming that the Bacchic rites took place and were conducted in several centers of Rome, and that the citizens were well aware of this 'through the drumming and howling reverberating in the night through the whole city'. In the first part of the Bacchanalian episode, Livy gives his readers the impression that the ritual which took place in the grove of Stimula was a new and disturbing feature in the religious life of Rome. Yet, in his speech Postumius says: 'In your ignorance of reality, many of you believe that it is a form of worship of our own gods, and others that it is a licensed exercise of playful excess'. What the consul suggests here is that some citizens associated the new ritual of the god Bacchus with the native festival of the Liberalia which took place on March 17; and this festival was associated with the Bacchanalia. The importance in this indication of the great familiarity with the existence of the Bacchic cult accords with the evidence of Plautus, thus, making a nonsense of Livy's earlier claim that the consuls first discovered of the Bacchic rites through the revelations of Aebutius and Hispala[293].

Postumius' knowledge on the Bacchic rites depended solely on Hispala's account. This could help deal with one of the problems concerning Livy's story: various references to followers of Bacchus in plays of the comedian Plautus performed in 186 B.C. indicate that the nature of the rites were well known to the audience. The repressive policy of the Senate towards the Bacchanalia could be easily interpreted as a result of anxiety that had increased in the past years, rather than something decided suddenly as a result of information that came as a total surprise.

Postumius' speech should be entirely conceived as a speech of Livy's own composition[294]. It is considered that Livy presented the events of the Bacchanalia, because he aimed to explain to the Roman citizens the threat that provoked their

[293] Walsh (1996), 194-195.
[294] Briscoe (2008), 234.

ancestors to react vehemently. The readers must always have in mind that during this period, the god Dionysus was a commonly known and accepted god. The Greek god, who did not have a position in the official republican pantheon, was captured by the Roman elite's imagination, and was kept under the spell of Greek culture. Dionysus prevailed his divinity in the private sphere of life, and influenced the poetry and the visual art of the Augustan period. Sophisticated Hellenism reigned in the Roman aristocracy's villas, and the attraction of Dionysian religion, as well as its mythology, was one of its manifestations[295].

In his narration, Livy mentions the word Bacchanalia in the sense of the rituals being celebrated by the Bacchants and he uses the name twice, so as to indicate the place of the Bacchants' gatherings (*bacchanal*). When Hispala confesses to Postumius, she mentions that she used to be initiated in Bacchus (*Bacchis initiari*). Even though the god's name is not mentioned, he is always in the back of our minds, as it was only his rituals that were considered as heinous and a subject of controversy. Thus, only the god's rituals, meaning the Bacchanalia, were the actual reason for the intervention of the authorities, and not Bacchus himself. Livy perceives the whole matter as a situation when 'shameful rituals' were performed and therefore the state's authorities could not remain indifferent[296].

To sum up, in the Bacchanalian affair, the person who depicts Livy's aims in the most sufficient way is the consul Postumius. Postumius' speech[297] is an interesting testimony of how the Roman elite of the Augustan times experienced the events of 186 B.C. It contains the message to people interested in the past, who had in the past searched for confirmation of the greatness of their city, and the prudence of their ancestors, who had to face and fight such serious threats[298]. The

[295] Musiał (2009), 12.
[296] Musiał (2009), 18.
[297] Liv. 39. 15-16.
[298] Musiał (2009), 12.

Bacchanalia does not have the power to overpower the state, instead, as Postumius mentions, it grows daily and must be suppressed[299].

10. 1. The Bacchanalia as a political threat

As Postumius quotes, "never has there been so much evil in the state affecting so many people in so many ways"[300], and also that the Bacchanalia's "objective is the control of the state"[301]. Why did Postumius make such statements? Was he trying to warn his fellow citizens about a major danger lurking in the form of a religious movement? Before I deliberate upon these matters, I must stress the following. It should be in the reader's mind that in the beginning of the second century B.C. Dionysus did not belong to the official pantheon of the Roman gods. Thus, the Bacchanalia were not considered to be performed under the state's supervision, and therefore, were not a part of the practices of the state religion. So, the Bacchic rites were considered as foreign and exotic rites[302]. Bacchus was one of Rome's popular gods, and belonged in the pantheon, thus, the senators must have considered these facts, and not tried to offend the god by forbidding his religion altogether. In the senate's decree sufficient provision was made for worshipping the god on a smaller scale. In addition, although Bacchus' cult and rites had diminished in the years after 186 B.C., his worship continued throughout Italy on a smaller scale and was revived under Caesar[303].

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[299] Liv. 39.16.3-4; Nousek (2010), 165.

[300] Liv. 39. 16. 2, *numquam tantum malum in re publica fuit, nec ad plures nec ad plura pertinens.*

[301] Liv. 39. 16. 3, *ad summam rem publicam spectat*.

[302] Musiał (2009), 16-17.

[303] Pagán (2004), 55; Nilsson (1957), 19-20, see also North (1992), 183 and Beard, North, Price, *Volume I* (1998), 95-96 on the cult's destruction; Toynbee (1965), 402 on its long-term resilience.

The Bacchants were considered to be the first corporation in which the state's authorities intervened[304]. It is outstanding how the senate took exceptional measures, when one considers that a group of foreigners, both women and young men were conspiring against the state[305]. Nilsson says "it is evident that the Senate considered the Bacchic associations a genuine threat to public security"[306]. Whatever the Bacchanals were doing during the rites, from the moment they named it *coniuratio* the consul and the senate instantly defamed the cult and its participants[307]. The senate took precautions against the Bacchanalia, because it feared those who participated in it. Livy's narrative incorporates a strategy of containment, which assures the reader of the Senate's desire to halt the conspiracy's activities.

The Senate was against the Bacchanalia, because it considered it to be dangerous for the city-state's well-being. For this reason, in 186 B.C. it issued a *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, a law which restricted the worship of Dionysus - Bacchanalia in Rome and Italy. This information is preserved thanks to an inscription that was found in the region of Calabria, in the city of Tiriolo[308], and contained the Senate's decision to suppress the Bacchic cult, shown briefly in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* (39.8-19). The inscription contained many prohibitions concerning the religious rituals of Bacchus in the allies of Italy, and, apart from the traditional practices, it prohibited the following: the becoming master or vice-master by any man or woman; the exchanging of oaths, pledges or promises to one another and not having in mind to swear solemn faith with one another. Moreover, no one could perform ceremonies in secret, or allow anyone to have a mind to perform ceremonies, whether in public or in private or outside the city.

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304 Lipka (2009), 180.

305 Pagán (2004), 56.

306 Nilsson (1957), 19.

307 Gruen (1990), 47.

308 *Epistula consultum ad Teuranos* of 186 B. C., which was found in Tiriolo in 1640, and is now at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, in Vienna.

Likewise, they decided that the Bacchic rites should not be held in a group larger than five people, men and women together, and to not allow more than two men and three women to be present among them. Additionaly, it had to be kept in small groups of Bacchists, who would not be allowed to retain their internal organization, that is to say, they were prohibited from having a cult-leader, a common fund, taking oaths and so on[309]. This tells us two things: firstly, that the cult had previously been based on a well-structured group basis, and secondly, that this was what the Senate feared most and wished to destroy by all means. However, even though the group's ritual activities would seem to have been most unacceptable, it was actually the cult's form and structure that the Roman Senate wanted to control[310].

Another reason why the Roman élite were afraid of Bacchus' cult, was because the group's leaders had power over individuals, which caused a major threat towards the state. The Roman élite were accustomed to controlling the city's religious life, but now they were facing a movement, which was opposing to the traditions of the state's religious life generated by the personal commitment of individuals[311]. It is clear that the Roman Senate considered the Bacchic associations as a real threat to the state's security. This is the reason why the Senate did not allow the Bacchic association to have officials or money. But the Bacchanalia could not be entirely prevented, because Bacchus was a member of the Roman pantheon[312].

As Livy mentions, and the Tiriolo inscription shows, the Senate gave out a *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, in which it prohibited the citizens of Rome and Italy to attend the Bacchanalian rites, as well as those of other cults that held secret meetings. But the cult of Bacchus could not be entirely suppressed due to

[309] *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, lines 3-21.
[310] Gruen (1990), 65-78.
[311] Beard, North, Price, *Volume I*, (1998), 95.
[312] Nilsson (1957), 19.

the fact that he was one of the acknowledged members of the pantheon, and thusly, the public cult was not able to forbid this cult completely, but it, too, was severely restricted. According to the Senate's decree, during the initiation rites, no more than two men and three women could be present, and the group was forbidden from having a common treasury or cult officials. This restriction was a caution taken by the senate, in order to prevent the Bacchanalia from operating in the future under the guise of a public cult[313].

Livy's summary of the senatorial decree[314] mentioning the repressive measurements of the Bacchanalia was, a) the maintenance of places of Bacchic worship, b) the attendance of meeting of Bacchic women by male citizens, those with Italian rights, and allies, c) the performance of worship in secrecy or in public, and d) the service in a group larger than five persons. It is obvious that the Senate was in control of the cult's suppression[315]. Thus, we could say that the Bacchanalia were considered by the Senate as a political threat because during the initiative rites, the participants performed every kind of heinous, licentious, and violent crime, even murder. Also, the state feared the priests' hierarchical organization, which Livy assumes there was at the Bacchanalia[316].The Roman citizens were used to being in control of the city's religious life, and were hesitant towards people with great power, such as priest-leaders. This anxiety derives from the fact that many of the Bacchanalia's participants were well-established people in Rome, having noble origins or belonging to the high-society[317]. Finally, what seemed to worry the senators was the participation of women in the Bacchanalia, as the majority of the participants of this cult were women.

[313] Tripolitis (2002), 25.
[314] Liv. 39.18.
[315] Takács (2000), 308.
[316] Liv. 39.14.7.
[317] Livy 39.13.14; Lipka (2009), 170-1.

According to John North: 'It was not that the senate discovered something that it did not know, but that it decided to act against something it knew all too well'[318]. Also, Gruen's conclusion on the matter was: 'it was a staged operation. The *coniuratio* was not that of the Bacchants, but of those who sought to make an example of them...; it was a demonstration, a posturing to exhibit senatorial authority, to declare dominion in Italy'. The senate was seeking 'to claim new prerogatives in the judicial sphere, in the regulation of worship, and in the extension of authority in Italy'[319].

The Senate's reaction towards the Bacchanalia and its participants was embedded in its role as the guardian of the state. The Bacchanalia had political implications which legitimized senatorial involvement, and thus, established the Senate as the controlling force in sanctioning foreign cults[320]. Rome was under pressure because of her extensive war efforts in the East. At this point it was easier for the new and unconventional religions to rise and flourish, a fact that made some scholars say that this happened because it seemed that these cults were able to satisfy more sufficiently the religious and emotional needs than traditional cults. The new cults did not replace the existing and traditional ones, but they co-existed with them. New cults would not be attacked by the state, as long as the traditional cultic rituals were properly exercised, and if they did not undermine the political order of Rome's ideology. In order for these cults to be legitimized, meaning that if they would turn into official Roman cults with specific festival days depended on Rome's political and religious leadership[321].

As for Rome's political situation, at the time everything seemed under control. The Romans had successfully stopped the expansionist advances of the Seleucid Antiochus III in 188 B.C. This victory sealed Rome's supreme position in

[318] North (1979), 88.
[319] Gruen (1990), 65.
[320] Takács (2000), 302.
[321] Takács (2000), 303.

the Mediterranean world. The most common reason for a foreign cult's suppression , an intense social and/or political distress did not apply in this case. The senatorial decree against the Bacchanalia and the practice of its immoral rituals seemed to show that any possible threat to the traditional status quo and ideology could indeed create a reaction from the body of the ruling elite at any time. The Senate's prejudiced reaction was not as Livy states, an action which dealt with religious or moral scruples, but it was a question of traditional senatorial rights and political power. As Gruen concluded "[t]he episode served to exhibit senatorial vigilance and responsibility for the security of state and legitimize senatorial authority in the regulation of alien worship"[322].

The Senate's task was not to reduce the Bacchanalian rites, not to suppress a non-Roman type of worship within the parameters of the *pax deorum*/*pax hominum*. In order for the Senate to achieve this venture, it became the authority in deciding the cult's legitimacy[323]. The main reason why the Senate feared this foreign cult was because they were scared of a mass insurrection. A second reason for the Senate's extravagant reaction against Bacchus' cult, was because of the immorality associated with the initiatory rites. The Greek practices of mixed gatherings of both sexes under cover in the darkness were detested by the Roman moral sense, and there was a basis for heterosexual and homosexual debauchery. Allegations about ritual murders were attested[324].

It has been said that the senate did not suppress a new and unacceptable cult, but rather it desired to repress a well-known religion whose rising development had previously tolerated. The time was right, as that year was the first of many years that Rome did not have to deal with military problems. Also, the Senate might have thought that it was time for them to show the Roman

[322] Gruen (1990), 76.
[323] Takács (2000), 307.
[324] Walsh (1994), 5.

citizens the dangers of meddling with foreign religions, right after Rome's victorious armies had returned from the East[325].

In Livy's narrative, he deliberates the rise and the decline of Bacchus' mystery cult in Italy, focusing on the cult's suppression by the Roman Senate in 186 B.C[326]. Livy briefly describes the cult's expansion from ancient Greece to Rome, and through his narration tries to give us the impression that it was some kind of a strange religion because of its emotional arousal which was alien to the Roman religion and tradition of Livy's time[327], and because of its dangerous impact on the moral and legal order of the state[328]. However, the most interesting fact about this episode is not the allegations about Dionysian religion being immoral and inclined to criminal acts, but the fact that the senate, which was issued after the suppression of the Bacchanalia, allowed Dionysian ritual to be carried out under certain conditions[329].

It is suggested that the Senate was aware that this new religious movement contained a mode of religiosity that was not easy to suppress for a long time, because it was appealing to people with deep religious sentiments, who would never be satisfied with the repetitive public rituals organized by the state's religion[330]. For this reason, it seems that the Senate decided to give the Bacchanalian rituals some limited space alongside the established rituals of the state religion, as their main intention was to make sure that the Bacchanalia would not transform from a religious to a social movement, threatening the law

[325] Beard, North, Price, *Volume I*, (1998), 93.

[326] Liv. 39. 9-18.

[327] The same thing occurs with Euripides' *Bacchae*. Dionysus' cult seemed to the unfaithful as a strange religion descending from the East, and was considered as a revolting religion, because of the emotional arousal it transmitted to its votaries. Dionysian religion was also comprehended by the head of the state, meaning the king and his cousin, Pentheus, as a alien to the cult and tradition of his time.

[328] Martin, Pachis (2009), 42.

[329] Liv. 39.18.7-9.

[330] Cf. Turcan (1996), 301: "It must be said that the strict ritualism of national worship left little room for feelings or imagination". Nevertheless, in this context, Turcan does not refer to the Senate's decree.

and order of the city state. The decision of limiting the number of people participating in the rituals to five, and making the execution of the ritual dependent on official approvement by the senate, was an effective way for the Roman Senate to control this foreign cult[331].

Ultimately, the Senate was compelled to take action, for various reasons, one of them being for fear of inherent political aspirations. The revival of Dionysus' cult may have been associated with a social-political propaganda. So, the Senate was not only afraid of conspiracies in connection with the flourishing Bacchic cult, but also it was afraid of a revival, in the pan-Italic frame-work of the Bacchanalia, of the resistance still extant among Hannibal's former allies[332].

[331] Martin (2009), 43.
[332] Son (1960), 198.

11. Livy's perspective on the Bacchanalian affair

Book 39 of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, covered the years 187 to 183 B. C., and constituted of fifty-six chapters. It is astonishing that the Bacchanalian narrative occupied eleven chapters of this book, meaning that twenty per cent of this book referred to an episode which lasted for less than a year, 186 B. C[333]. When Livy's story seems to give him an opportunity to mention religious themes, the historian immediately turns the theme down. However, this was not the case for the Bacchanalian affair[334]. Why is it that this crisis triggered the historian's interest more than any other religious matter?

This fact suggests that Livy, by incorporating this episode in his historiography and giving such big dimensions to the matter, probably had in mind to relate it with the larger historiographical theme of Roman moral decline and its dangers[335]. Livy's historic narration was filled with ethical preconceptions. He looks at the past as if it were a battlefield of manners, and seeks to clarify the moral qualities which are needed for the state to thrive, and for the prosperity of the Roman citizens. Livy was a supporter of patriotism, which leads him to depict the Roman citizens as a whole as uniquely possessed of these virtues, and successive Roman leaders as typical examples of her uniqueness. Thus, he unites moral and patriotic considerations for didactic purposes, with his ultimate objective being that national greatness cannot be achieved without the possession, especially by the leading men of the state, of the attributes which promote a healthy morality and wisdom in external and domestic policies[336].

In book 39, Livy narrates the episode of the Bacchanalian affair, which took place in the year 186 B.C. The historian's mentioning of the Bacchanalia follows

[333] Nousek (2010), 159.
[334] Levene (1993), 102-103.
[335] Nousek (2010), 159.
[336] Walsh (1961), 50.

his report on the trials of Scipio in book 38, and upon "the beginnings of foreign luxury... introduced to the city by the army from Asia"[337] suggests that he envisaged the Bacchanalia as the beginning of moral decline at this date in the early second century[338]. The Bacchanalian affair was the most important invasion of foreign rites into Italy in Livy's whole narration. "The beginnings of foreign luxury were introduced into Rome by the army from Asia", says at 39.6[339].

Livy dedicated four-fifths of his historic narration to the year 186 B. C. We must assume that the reason why he does so is because he desires to illustrate the changing complexion of Roman *mores*[340]. Livy's Stoic attitude, which he had affiliated with traditional Roman beliefs, is partly conditioned by the spirit of the age. This view makes Livy seem like he was in harmony with the official religious revival. This was the historian's religious view of life, which he conceives as sane and objective, in contrast with the subjective superstition of foreign religions, which he despised, and condemned them for their mental illness and the bodily corruption which they caused their participants[341]. This view of Livy we see clearly at the Bacchanalia scandal, saying that 'this ruinous scourge spread to Rome from Etruria like a contagious disease'[342].

Livy describes the Bacchanalia in various ways, but not in a positive way. He reports it as being an internal and secret conspiracy[343], a contagious disease[344], an evil[345], as the factory of all sort of corruption[346], and as a vile and alien rite[347]. As

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[337] Liv. 39.6.7. Levene (1993), 92: At 39. 1.3-4, Livy has prefigured for his readers the corruption of the soldiers by Asia, and at 39.6.7 mentions it as "luxuriae enim peregrinae origo ab exercitu Asiatico invecta in urbem est".

[338] Walsh (1994), 4.
[339] Walsh (1996), 189.
[340] Walsh (1996), 190.
[341] Walsh (1961), 50, 61.
[342] Liv. 39.1.
[343] Liv. 38.1-3.
[344] Liv. 39.1.
[345] Liv. 39.1; 39.16.5.
[346] Liv. 38.6.

we can see, Livy was not very fond of the Bacchanalia and the Bacchic cult. The reason why he expresses himself in such a way proclaims the historians true self, as he was a person deeply conservative, traditional[348], patriotic, and above all moral. Whether Livy's moralistic attitude to history is legitimate or not, the fact that he always has a moral purpose while narrating a historical event lends a unity to his work, which bears a compelling appearance of truth[349].

Livy's main objective in his narration is to present to his own as well as to later generations an example of state policy in regard to a foreign religion (*externa religio*). This objective is keeping with his views on the practical value of history, and also, with his conception of the task which is "to give a free version with picturesque details and moralizing tendency of the material handed down to him by annalists"[350]. Immorality was considered a religious offence by a Roman citizen and Livy lays just as much stress on the specific religious affair. According to Livy's beliefs, the participants of the Bacchanalia were immoral, and he focuses on the way the cult makes its members act, think, and behave. It's a religion which turns people into criminals[351]. The cult's immorality is exaggerated. The reason why Livy does so is because his subjective element, concerning his own outlook on life, makes him yield to a hostile tradition which is influenced by prejudices already existing at the time the Bacchanalian affair took place. Livy is fond of the old Roman religious tradition, making him hostile to foreign cults. Therefore, the historian emphasizes the Bacchic cult's immorality and devalues the social-political background of the persecution[352].

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[347] Liv. 39.15.3.
[348] Livy was known as an eminent traditionalist, Walsh (1961), 50; (1958), 356.
[349] Smethurst (1950), 80.
[350] Naudé (1962), 202.
[351] Levene (1993), 94.
[352] Naudé (1962), 203.

Livy appears to criticize some religious manifestations of his time, and one of those were mystery cults[353]. For Livy, the most outstanding feature of the Bacchanalia was the secrecy of the rites. Based on this fact, Livy decided to portray the Bacchanalia as a 'anti-Roman' cult, thereby altering all the features of the rite in order to point out the cult's demoralization. For instance, in Livy's eyes the customary meals offered by the participants of the rites to the gods turned into luxuriant banquets; also, the mixed religious gatherings of men and women were transformed into sexual orgies; ceremonial animal sacrifices resulted in murders of the dissenters; the flute which accompanied the official religious ceremonies was replaced by dazzling nocturnal noises of tambourines and kettledrums; the processions of maidens were represented as the frenzy of matron bacchants descending to the bank of the Tiber and placing their flaming torches into the river[354]. However, it is worth mentioning that Livy suggests that some of these rituals were not totally prohibited by the Senate, and that some 'Bacchan' rituals may be considered necessary in order to maintain the *pax deorum*, but only if they were approved by a specific number of senators[355].

Livy, by contrasting Bacchic religion with Roman religion, also contradicts new religion with traditional religion, and when he refers to the Bacchanalia's crisis, he ultimately desires to emphasize the centrality of traditional religion to the Roman state[356]. Livy's history had a developmental concept, meaning that the birth and growth of the Roman national character was based on historical circumstances. Rome's moral decline was narrated in Livy's history as a result of Rome's, and thus, Italy's interaction with the East. Livy conceived Rome's moral decline as a slow and complex one: there were some glimpses in 200 B.C., but its growth was triggered when it came across with the rich kingdoms of the Greek

[353] Liebeschuetz (1967), 49.
[354] Liv. 39.8.5-8; 39.13.10.7; 39.13.10-14; 39.14.8; 39.15.9; 39.15.12-14, etc.
[355] Liv. 39.18.8; Lipka (2009), 112-113.
[356] Levene (1993), 95.

East in the second century. Livy describes this interrelation between Rome and the East as that of a disease[357] that is communicated to a healthy body[358].

Finally, it is argued that Livy believed that in his time, there could have been a moral reformation, and also, that the emperor Augustus was able to bring it about. Since authoritarian measures had been necessary to create Roman national character in the first place, he may have thought that its restoration required analogous treatment[359]. And this he would achieve by reminiscing to the Romans their ancestors, and would tell them in what way their ancestors would have reacted, if they were dealing with the Bacchic cult and its dangerous rites[360].Thus, Livy in an attempt to evoke and recreate Rome in its beginning, does not intend to be exhaustive: he selects from, or builds on, the available material according to his overall material of 'creating' Rome (and Roman religion). Specifically, Livy's religious material is dominated by his overall agenda; it is intended not so much to 'establish the facts', but to reaffirm what he presents as traditional religious practice through his depiction of behavior and its consequences[361].

[357] Livy mentions the Bacchanalia as a *contagione morbi*, 39.1.
[358] Luce (1977), 294.
[359] Luce (1977), 295.
[360] Liv. 39.15.11.
[361] Davies (2004), 26.

12. Conclusions on Livy's account regarding the Bacchanalian affair

It is without doubt that Livy's account of the Bacchanalia was a fundamental part of Dionysian religion, and it is because of Livy that we have information regarding the importation of this enigmatic religion in Rome. Livy adumbrates the Bacchanalia as a cult which was recently innovated and was a non-Roman aberration, but his account could be described as tendentious, and as John North mentions, the Bacchic cult existed in Rome for many years before the scandal that erupted in 186 B. C.[362]. Livy clearly depicts the Bacchanalia as an un-Roman activity, but he never explicitly says[363].

Livy comprehends the Bacchanalia as being a deceptive movement and a false religion[364]. As we have examined in previous chapters, Livy was an advocate of tradition and morals, a true patriot. However, the rites of god Bacchus did not stand for the same things. The historian, throughout the episode, attempts to depict the Bacchanalia as a dangerous and secret conspiracy which produced many debaucheries and grim acts. It was a religion which breeds criminals, and allows them to have their outlets in the name of their god, Bacchus.

The historian prefers to allow us to draw a conclusion based on his mentioning of a "nameless Greek" [365], Etruria, and then the activities of the Campanian priestess, Paculla Annia, as it was reported in the speech of the freedwoman, Aebutia, to the consul Postumius[366]. It is because of this event that Livy provides us with even more detail. For the vast majority of the cults, there is no evidence of how the Roman citizens viewed and perceived each one of them.

[362] North (1979), 88.
[363] Orlin (2002), 2.
[364] Liv. 39.16.6-7.
[365] Liv. 39.8.3.
[366] Liv. 39.13.9.

This silence must be instructive, for it may indicate that it was not as important for the Romans as it was for modern scholars to categorize cults as Roman and non-Roman in origin. What mattered to the citizens was whether each cult was accepted by the state religion[367].

Finally, after the reference to the Bacchanalia, of Bacchus' entrance to Rome, only one question arises, why is it that Livy decided to dedicate such a big part of Rome's historical narration to this new and foreign cult? As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Livy was a moralist. Thus, the Bacchanalia was a type of rites that were closely associated with the city's moral declination[368], which in the eyes of Livy must have been an extremely interesting subject worth mentioning, which is obvious in the Bacchanalian's episode preface[369].

[367] Orlin (2002), 2.
[368] Walsh (1996), 189-190.
[369] Liv. 38.1.9.

13. Epilogue

Dionysus is widely known as the divine embodiment of wine, of mystery-cult, of ecstasy, and ritual madness. Throughout this treatise on Dionysian religion, I presented Dionysian religion drawing upon two different sources, each one corresponding to a different civilization, in ancient Greece and Rome. Specifically, two major sources were thoroughly discussed, a) Euripides' *Bacchae*, and b) Titus Livy's, *Ab Urbe Condita* (39.8-19). Both works adumbrate the introduction of a new and foreign god in the city of Thebes and in Rome. The god's entrance carries consequences and agitates the social, political, and religious foundations of ancient Greece and Rome. My main objective in both the *Bacchae*, as well as the Bacchanalian episode, was to focus on Dionysus' religion as perceived from the poet Euripides and the historian Livy.

Euripides and Livy have different backgrounds and origins, and majored in different literary genres[370]. However, as opposed as these two men were, they both presented Dionysian religion in a similar way. For starters, both narrations present Dionysus' entrance in Greece and Rome. Euripides informs the Athenian audience that the god himself mentioned that he descended from Asia, and desired more than anything to be worshipped by everyone, thus establishing his religion throughout Greece[371]. Also, Livy mentions Bacchus' origin as one that was introduced by a nameless Greek, and which was associated with Asia[372]. According to the two sources given above, Dionysus' cult descended from Asia, was brought to Greece, and later introduced to the Roman civilization by a person of Greek origin, which explains why the cult embedded many characteristics from Dionysus' worship in Asia. Therefore, despite its long journey, it did not lose its original characteristics.

[370] Euripides majored in poetry, and Livy in historiography.
[371] *Ba.* 1-64.
[372] Liv. 39.8.3.

Afterwards, I tried to stress Euripides' and Livy's points of view on Dionysian religion, in what way they perceived the enigmatic god's cult, and how they adduced it to the audience and readers of their works. As was mentioned in earlier chapters, Euripides is considered as being a conservative poet and a traditionalist. Therefore, *Bacchae* contains many traditional elements of Dionysus' cult, such as the god's origins from Thrace and the conducting of mystic rituals. Euripides also depicts, to a great extent, the emotional arousals of Dionysus' worshippers which originated from their religious faith. Through Dionysian religion, the poet unlocks his own emotions towards the mystery cult and surrenders to the god Dionysus[373]. On the other hand, Livy was an advocate of conservatism, tradition, and morals, and focused on Dionysus' religion as being one that brought great danger to the city of Rome, because its ritual rites corrupted its participants, making them commit heinous crimes, as they were possessed by madness and ecstasy. Ultimately, both men approached this matter based on what they perceived as being the cult's traditional elements. Under the influence of their comprehension of the god's image and rituals, as well as from their being influenced by their own ideas and morals, they portrayed the Dionysian religion and let their morals affect them

Dionysus' worship, as indicated previously, was associated with the participants' emotional outbreak. The Dionysian worshippers, when being initiated into the cult's rituals, set themselves free and behaved in an extreme way, e.g. in the work *Bacchae*, when the Theban women were in ecstasy, they would run to the mountains and commit the *sparagmos* rite, and in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, they committed debaucheries and all sorts of crimes[374]. Therefore, I believe Euripides and Livy intended, each one on a different scale, to portray Dionysus' religion as one that associated religious behavior with emotional

[373] Teiresias says that Dionysus should be worshipped by everyone, (*Ba.* 312-313).
[374] Liv. 39.10.6.

behavior, meaning that religion was a source of an emotional outbreak in which its participants would free themselves from their social, political, and religious status, and behave in a way which would contradict the state's traditional religious behavior.

Euripides' and Livy's accounts on Dionysian religion affected the way in which we perceive Dionysus himself and his religion. Euripides promoted the image of a new and foreign god who entered the city of Thebes, desired to spread his religion throughout Greece, and would seek vengeance from those who would refuse to do so. Livy mostly portrayed the rites of Dionysus, and not the cult itself, which contained all sorts of crimes. Therefore, both of them depicted the god's dark side, which contradicts the image we all have of him in contemporary times. He was perceived as being a demoralizer god. Also, his religion was treated with fear, as his rites were stamped by massiveness and unity, two elements which contradicted the traditional status of religion. Additionally, in both accounts, the presence of women in the religion and the rituals was active, with the exception of Livy's account, in which, after Paculla Annias' alterations, men who were effeminate, were introduced into the religion. Dionysus was a misunderstood persona of religious history. The god Dionysus was viewed as an ambiguous persona, and a very popular deity who, from the two writers' literary perspective, is adumbrated as a dangerous god who ultimately wanted to prevail over the traditional gods, and wished for his cult to predominate. This perspective is the way in which the unfaithful depict this cult, which contradicts the way his votaries portrayed him, e.g. the chorus of the *Bacchae*, who conceived him in a benignant way, and did not go to extremes.

Finally, the conclusion that can be drawn from both texts is that Dionysian religion, apart from its well-known image, is considered as being dangerous for the state's socio-political affairs. Also, the introduction of Dionysian religion in ancient Greece and Rome was episodic, and in every case brought agitation to its

non-believers. Dionysus was a persona of paganism who brought forward fear and mystery, and was able to seduce both those who resisted the cult's charm as well as those who aimed to embrace it.

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