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Coursework Paper 1: “Women in the Wilderness: An Analysis of Euripides’
Bacchae lines 660-774”

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a MA by coursework and thesis

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Contents

- 1.1 The Festival Context
 - 1.1.1. City Dionysia
 - 1.1.2. Anthesteria
 - 1.1.3. Lenaia
 - 1.1.4. Rural Dionysia
 - 1.1.5. Agrionia
- 2.1. The oikos and the polis
 - 2.1.1 The model
- 2.2. The Soul
- 2.2. Legislature
- 2.3. Thebes as Topos
- 3.1. Dionysos and Women
 - 3.1.1. Thiasos
 - 3.1.2. Liberator of Women
- 4.1 Wild and Civilisation: an analysis of lines 660 - 774
 - 4.1.1. Tripartite Division of Bacchants
 - 4.1.2. Nature
 - 4.1.3 The Bacchic dress
 - 4.1.4. Inversions
 - 4.1.5. Unity
 - 4.1.6. Sparagmos
 - 4.1.7. Wine
- 5.1 The House of Kadmus
- 6. Conclusion
- Appendix A: Figures
- Appendix B: Translation and Commentary
- Bibliography

The following paper aims to analyse lines 660 – 774 of Euripides' *Bacchae* paying close attention to the representation of the bacchantes in the account given to Pentheus by the herdsman.¹ Accompanying the translation is a brief commentary further elaborated and discussed in the paper below. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the Theban women are portrayed in the hills outside of Thebes and the implications this might for the inherent conception of the supposed structure of the *polis* and the *oikos*.

Dionysos' arrival in Thebes hails a systematic disruption of the social order of the Theban *polis*. His presence causes an inverting of all that is familiar to the Thebans, the unknown becomes known and the known reveals itself as unknown. Euripides' *Bacchae* was first performed at the City Dionysia in 405 BCE, in the year after the tragedian's death. The play dramatises the arrival of the god Dionysos to Thebes to exact vengeance on those responsible for his mother's death and to establish his mysteries there (line 24f & 47f). Before one can begin any analysis of the text, it is important to establish the context established by the play, as this context is important to a fuller understanding of the text.

1.1 The Festival Context

The first important element to take into account when analysing the *Bacchae* is the performance conditions. Many festivals were held in honour of the Dionysos. The City Dionysia or *ta megala Dionysia*, was held in honour of Dionysos Eleuthereus. The Anthesteria festival was held in honour of the viticultural aspect of the god, and the Lenaia festival honoured Dionysos Lenaios. Other festivals in honour of the god include the Agrionia festival in Orchomenos in honour of Dionysos Agrionios and the Rural Dionysia festival held in rural Attika, another festival celebrating the viticultural year. In the following paragraphs, I aim to provide some background information on the context of these festivals, as provided by ancient sources, to better glean the performance conditions for the play, the *Bacchae*, as well as to establish which elements of Dionysos were most celebrated and how these festivals may have arisen originally. By establishing the elements of Dionysos nature which were celebrated in other festivals, we may further understand the nature of the Dionysos celebrated at the relevant festival for this paper, the City Dionysia.

¹ The analysis will make use of the Greek as well as my own English translation of the passage, see Appendix B.

1.1.1 The City Dionysia

The City Dionysia or the Greater Dionysia took place in the month Elaphebolion (March) in honour of Dionysos Eleuthereus, “whose image had been brought to Athens from Eleutherai, on the borders of Attika and Boeotia”.² It was thought that the festival was established by a Dionysiac missionary named Pegasos³ and the introduction of the festival in Athens most likely correlated with the rapid spread of Dionysiac cult. The 6th century BCE saw the festival become of great importance to Athens, through the policy of Peisistratus, and the importance of the festival derived not only “from the performances of dramatic and lyric poetry but from the fact that it was open to the whole Hellenic world”.⁴ The City Dionysia was said to commence at the start of the sailing season, which meant that many foreign visitors were in Athens at the time of the festival⁵. During the reign of the Athenian Empire, many allied delegates were sent to the festival in order to bring their annual tribute and these tributes were often displayed in the theatre.⁶

The City Dionysia saw the inclusion of religious elements such as a procession and performances of dramatic plays which intended to honour the god, Dionysos, “since Greek dramas were produced within a ritual context, namely the various festivals of Dionysos, the texts they generate are heavily marked by ritual forms of action”.⁷ From ancient sources, we can glean more evidence for the nature of the festivals of Dionysos in Athens. Aeschines notes that prisoners and slaves are released for the duration of the City Dionysia⁸, just as Dionysos releases the Theban women from their private spheres of society. The procession of Dionysos Eleuthereus also formed a part of the religious context of the festival.

The procession or *pompê* was an integral part of ritual in many of the festivals for Dionysos, which is further linked to ritual epiphany of the god. According to Bremmer, “processions were particularly suited to make symbolic statements about power relations since they often drew large audiences”.⁹ An important element of the procession is the representation of the god, or the effigy. In Dionysiac cult, the effigy is made of a post, pillar or tree-trunk atop

² Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:57.

³ Paus, *Descr. of Greece*. 1.2.5 & 38.8.

⁴ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:58.

⁵ Cf. Theophrastus, *Char.* 3 & Aeschines, *In Ctes.* 43.7.

⁶ Isocrates, *de Pace*. 82

⁷ Goff, 2004:7.

⁸ Aesch. *Against Csetiphon*. 41

⁹ 1994: 40.

which is a mask of the god's likeness. A notable connection to be made with the god is the liminality or duality of his nature, which is presented by the effigy in the procession. According to Csapo, this liminality can be interpreted in two ways. The first is that the mask "presents and conceals at once, combining an outward fixed personality and a mysterious hidden voluble one" and in this interpretation, one can construe that the mask is symbolic of the duality of the god's nature. The second interpretation is more diachronic: of a "transition between states and identities... it is a form of possession and at least a partial expulsion of the familiar self".¹⁰ In this interpretation, the mask is not intended to conceal the face it covers, but rather to replace it completely.¹¹

The procession in the City Dionysia included a re-enactment of Dionysos Eleuthereus' introduction into Athens. During the procession, a *xoanon*, a wooden "small, portable", statue of the god, was taken to the temple of Dionysos "in the neighbourhood of the Academy, on the road to Eleutherai", where sacrifices were made and hymns were sung.¹² When the statuette was carried back to the theatre of Dionysos, the torch-light procession into the city, also known as the *Katagogia*, signified the beginning of the City Dionysia and further guaranteed the presence of the god at the festival.¹³ The preferred sacrificial victim for the festival was a bull, which was led to the sacrifice in a religious procession in the sacred precinct of Dionysos.¹⁴ The procession at the City Dionysia saw members of the great procession carrying phalluses.¹⁵ This phallic procession stems from the myth of the Athenians' initial rejection of the original arrival of Dionysos Eleuthereus, which "caused them a disease of the male genitals, of which they could be cured only by honouring the god".¹⁶ Other important sources for evidence regarding the Athenian festivals of Dionysos are inscriptions, known as the *Fasti*, which despite being exceedingly difficult to restore are invaluable as resources for the events and victors of the *Lenaia* and the City Dionysia.¹⁷

From the festival context of the City Dionysia, we may glean that the subject matter of the *Bacchae* may have been influenced by the religious nature of the festival in which it was performed. It is possible that the decision to produce a Dionysiac play for a Dionysiac festival

¹⁰ Csapo, 1997: 255.

¹¹ Frontisi-Ducroux 1995:40.

¹² Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:60

¹³ Pickard-Cambridge 1968:59–60

¹⁴ Pickard-Cambridge 1968:60-61

¹⁵ Cf. Plut., *Moralia*. 527d.

¹⁶ Schol. on Ar. *Ach.* 243.

¹⁷ See Millis, B.W. & Douglas Olson, S. (2012).

was deliberate. Many of the festivals in honour of Dionysos were established because of myths of Dionysos' wrath on those who reject his worship. For the City Dionysia, the myth concerning the festival's foundation is based on that of the Rural Dionysia's foundation myth. In Eleutherai, Eleuther refused to accept the worship of Dionysos into his city and as a result, Dionysos drove his daughters to madness.¹⁸ Subsequently, Eleuther establish the festival honouring the god and the worship of Dionysos in Eleutherai.¹⁹ The rejection of Dionysos, his wrath and the subsequent establishment of a festival and worship in his honour are seen in many of the foundation myths of Dionysiac festivals and is particularly pertinent for the events that take place in the *Bacchae*.

1.1.2. The Anthesteria

Another festival in honour of Dionysos was the Anthesteria, which took place in the Athenian winter (at the end of February) and took place over three days and was celebrated in both Attika and Ionia. "Each day began for religious purposes at sunset on the previous evening".²⁰ Philostratus suggested that the nature of the Anthesteria related to a rite of passage ritual, which saw boys and girls, who were just passing out of infancy, wearing crowns of flowers.²¹ The Athenian festivals of Dionysos also retain a strong connection with agriculture and the viticultural year.²² For instance, the Anthesteria is derived from the term *anthos*, which is a viticultural term for the fermentation process, "it centred on the opening and drinking of the wine produced in the previous autumn".²³

The religious days of the Anthesteria were the *Pithoigia*, *Choes*, and *Chytroi* (Opening of the New Wine, Jars, and Pots).²⁴ The *Pithoigia* took place near the sanctuary of Dionysos, where members of the community and slaves²⁵ all made libations to the god and drank wine of the grapes from the previous harvest. The *Choes* was celebrated by drinking of wine throughout the city, uniquely-shaped drinking vessels and vases²⁶, culminating in a drinking match.²⁷ The last day of the festival, the *Chytroi*, saw the opening of the sanctuary of Dionysos *en*

¹⁸ Suidas, s.v. Melanaigis.

¹⁹ Hyginus, *Fab.* 225.

²⁰ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:10.

²¹ *Heroicus*, xii.2

²² As suggested by Leinieks 1996:181.

²³ Seaford, 2006:17

²⁴ Goff, 2004:38.

²⁵ Schol. on Hesiod, *Op.* 368.

²⁶ Athen. xi. 495a-c.

²⁷ Plut., *Symp.* i. 613b.

*limnais*²⁸ in which various sacred and secret ceremonies took place, such as the *hieros gamos*. The *hieros gamos* was the sacred marriage of the *basilinna* or queen (wife of the *archon basileus*) to the god Dionysos.²⁹ The *archon basileus*, was a city official “whose duties included presiding at various ceremonies” and the *basileus* (king) element of his title indicates “the antiquity of his office”. It was therefore essential that his wife be an Athenian and “to have been a virgin at her marriage”.³⁰ This ceremony was doubtless a fertility ritual connected with the viticultural year, which “symbolized the union of the god of fruitfulness with the community represented by the wife of its religious head”³¹ and it also symbolised the union of Dionysos and Ariadne.³² Aristotle notes that the marriage ceremony between the *basilinna* and Dionysos did not take place in the shrine “in the marshes”³³ (where much of the activity of the Anthesteria took place), but rather in the *Boukoleion*, beside the *Prytaneion* in the centre of Athens.³⁴

The Anthesteria also saw a procession which escorted an effigy to the *Boukoleion*. The effigy of Dionysos was escorted into the city in a wagon shaped like a ship, which has a clear link with the myth of Dionysos and the pirates as in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos*, and it is possibly linked with Dionysos’ arrival to Athens from Thrace, Lydia, or Euboea.³⁵ Fig. 1 illustrates the popularity of this myth in the 6th century BCE in the form of an Attic black-figure cup by the painter Exekias dated to between 540 to 530 BCE.

1.1.3. The Lenaia

Another Dionysiac festival in the Athenian calendar was the Lenaia, which took place in the winter month of Gamelion (January). The Lenaia, like the City Dionysia, was also a state sponsored festival and was mostly attended by the resident population. According to Leinieks, the Lenaia was associated with the pruning of the vines which took place in the winter months.³⁶ However, Pickard-Cambridge argues that the festival was named for the term *lênai*, “known to be an appellation of the bacchanals or maenads”.³⁷ It is debated

²⁸ Aristoph., *Frogs*. 216.

²⁹ Democrit., *In Nea*. 73-78.

³⁰ Goff, 2004:38.

³¹ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:12.

³² Burkert, 1985:109.

³³ *Constit. of the Ath.*, 3.5.

³⁴ Goff, 2004: 38.

³⁵ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:12.

³⁶ 1996:181.

³⁷ 1968:29.

whether the Lenaia included mystical elements of Dionysiac religion, but it has been speculated that the festival was introduced into Athens from a foreign source, either Macedonia, Thrace or more likely, Thebes.³⁸

The Lenaia festival, like the two festivals previously mentioned included a procession. The procession, conducted by the archon basileus and the *epimeletai*, saw an effigy adorned with ivy followed by a band of bacchantes in Dionysiac dance. A variation of the *sparagmos* rite takes place after this - one done by men rather than women.³⁹ Aristotle notes that the Lenaia included dramatic contests and a procession.⁴⁰ The foundation myth of the festival might be linked to the death and dismemberment of Dionysos Zagreus at the hands of the Titans, as is noted in later scholars, such as Clement of Alexandria.⁴¹ Yet it cannot be stated with certainty that this Orphic myth was could be linked to the festival in Classical antiquity as it was done by the Late Antique scholars. Much of what we know about the Lenaia festival has been recorded by late antiquity authors and come from places outside of Athens and these inscriptions indicate a possible connection between the Lenaia and the Eleusinian mysteries attested by the invocation of *Iakchos* at the festival.⁴²

1.1.4 The Rural Dionysia

The Rural Dionysia or *ta kat'agrous Dionysia* was celebrated in the month of Poseidon (December). The most identifiable aspect of the festival was the phallic procession to encourage the fertility of the seeds sown in the autumn. It is possible that the fertility aspect of the festival is older than the rites of Dionysos in Attika.⁴³ The procession is best attested by Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, which dramatizes the phallic procession.⁴⁴ The connection between the Rural and City Dionysias are quite clear and it is possible that the Rural Dionysia allowed the rural demes to imitate the city in the performance of dramatic contexts.⁴⁵

³⁸ See, Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35, n. 3.

³⁹ Leinieks, 1996: 285-286.

⁴⁰ *Ath. Pol.*, 57.1.

⁴¹ Discussed by Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35

⁴² See, Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35, n.1.

⁴³ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:42-3.

⁴⁴ II.241-79

⁴⁵ Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:51.

1.1.5 The Agrionia

Although the Agrionia was an Aeolic and Dorian festival, it is still relevant for the purpose of this investigation of Dionysiac festivals. Burkert (1985) states that it was a festival “of dissolution and inversion, with a women’s uprising, madness, and cannibalistic fantasies”. The Agrionia has its roots in the myth of the Minyades.⁴⁶ The daughters of Minyas, Leukippe, Arsippe and Alkithoe refused to take part in the Bacchic revelries and reject Dionysos, they wish instead to honour Athena Ergane with their work at the looms and shuttles. Dionysos visited them in the guise of a young woman and urged them to take part in the mysteries, but when they refused, he sent forth ivy and vine tendrils to grow around their looms, snakes in their wool baskets, and the roof he caused to drip wine and milk.⁴⁷ After metamorphosing into a bull, a snake and a panther, the women are driven into frenzy and express their willingness to honour the god. Leukippe is chosen by lot to offer a sacrifice to the god and she gives her son Hippsaos, who she subsequently tears to pieces after which Leukippe and her sisters rush into the mountains where they are transformed into birds.⁴⁸ The Agrionia festival was established to remind the women of Orchomenos about the consequences of not honouring Dionysos. Plutarch notes that the rites at the Agrionia took place at night⁴⁹, and that the festival saw a Bacchic priest pursue a group of Orchomenian women with a sword, with the aim of killing the one he catches.⁵⁰ Plutarch also states that during the festival, the women seek and lament Dionysos, saying that he has fled to the Muses and thereafter come together and set riddles to each other.⁵¹ Although Plutarch is the best source we have for the events of the festival, we can still glean the significance in comparison to the Attic festivals.

A common aspect which infiltrates many of the foundation myths of these festivals is that of Dionysos’ wrath and vengeance. If the god is challenged and rejected from a city, he tends towards retribution, which most often results in frenzied women and daughters of that city. In order to appease the god, his worship must be established there and that worship results in the

⁴⁶ *Ov. Met.* 4.140; 390-415.

⁴⁷ Burkert, 1985:209.

⁴⁸ “A more familiar version says they were changed into bats and their weaving into vines” (Bell, 1991:309).

⁴⁹ *Rom. Quest.* 112.

⁵⁰ *Gre. Quest.* 38.

⁵¹ *Symp.* 8.

festivals I have discussed above. Another common feature many of these festivals share is the celebration of Dionysos' role as the viticultural god, just as Demeter is the agricultural goddess. Festivals like the Anthesteria and the Dionysia share the celebration of the harvest, whether it is drinking from the harvest and making libations or participating in phallic processions for the god's blessing of fertility. Therefore, the jealous Dionysos and the viticultural Dionysos appears to be of great importance in Attika.

2.1 The *oikos* and the *polis*

In the prologue of *Bacchae*, Dionysos states his purpose for coming to Thebes. He intends to establish his mysteries and make himself manifest as a god to all the Thebans (20-40). However, to fully establish his mysteries in Thebes, Dionysos must overcome the resistance of the Theban people and in doing so he has driven the women from their homes in madness. Dionysos disrupts the order of the *polis* and the *oikos* of Theban society and more precisely, that of his kinsmen Kadmos and Pentheus.

The *oikos* is a prominent theme in the *Bacchae*, as it was in 5th century BCE Athens political thought. It is not merely the 'house'/'home', but symbolises the family unit of which the mother is an essential member needed for the development of the family.⁵² The woman's role in the *oikos* is not only to manage the affairs of the home, but also to reproduce future members of *polis*, "she is seen as an integral part of the civic structure on the one hand, but also regarded as a threat to that structure on the other".⁵³ Therefore, it may symbolise a microcosm of the greater *polis*, which serves as the 'home' for the citizens. By stating the *oikos* is a microcosm of the *polis*, I mean that in the way the *polis* has structure and societal roles for its members, so too does the *oikos*. But the *polis* is inherently depended on the *oikos* for its structure to be fulfilled. The *oikos* is also not merely the household of the nuclear family, but rather "can also mean a multi-generational family ... a reminder that the household existed within a network of kin".⁵⁴ MacDowell (1989) argues that the term '*oikos*' is used to refer to the physical property of the house, whereas '*oikia*' is used to refer to the familial house of an individual. For the purpose of this paper, I will make use of the term *oikos* to refer to both the physical house, the household as well as the familial house.

⁵² For further classification of the term '*oikos*' see (Roy, 1999).
For the role of the wife in the household, see Xen., *Oeco.* 3.12-16.

⁵³ Segal, 1978:185.

⁵⁴ Roy, 1999:2.

2.1 The model⁵⁵

The relationship between the *oikos* and the *polis* could be helpfully understood as a series of permeable concentric circles such as provided in *fig.3*. The figure represents the *oikos* at the very centre of what constitutes a city *polis*. Within the *oikos* is the individual body *sōma* of the inhabitant of the *oikos*. As is evident in the model, the soul *psychē* could be beneficially viewed as the centre of the body. A collapse in any one of the rings within the walls may result in a collapse of the others. The city walls *teichē*⁵⁶ are all that separate the city from the mountains *horos*⁵⁷ and if those walls were to collapse, all distinctions between what constitutes a city and wilderness may become blurred, as these walls are permeable, particularly for the gods, as Dionysos says, “do not gods pass even over walls”.⁵⁸ The *oikos* ring does not merely represent the individual *oikoi* out from which the Theban women have been driven (signifying a collapse of their individual *oikoi*), but also the focus of secular power. In the *Bacchae*, we would say that the *oikos* circle represents the palace of Pentheus, as the palace is *the* focal *oikos* in Thebes.

The *polis* represents the city of Thebes and, as the events of the play illustrate, a collapse in the *oikos* entails a collapse of the *polis*, the destruction of Thebes on a societal level. The city walls of Thebes which are meant to keep the Thebans within the city and to act as a physical barrier which proves to be unimportant for the god and his followers when he goads the women to the mountains. The outermost is a ring which represents the wilderness, where many of the crucial events of the *Bacchae* take place. I put forward that the mountains could signify a Bacchic *oikos* of a sort, which the Theban women now inhabit. For the daughters of Kadmos are described in the prologue as being, “[mingled together] under green pines, they sit on roofless rocks”.⁵⁹

This imagery is especially significant when one considers the construction of the physical *oikos*. The construction of the *oikos* found in the *polis* consists of a familial home with separate spaces for men and women. The men make use of the *andron* in which they may

⁵⁵ Thanks to Cara van der Merwe for providing the basic layout of the model to which I have added and expanded.

⁵⁶ *Ba.* 1145; 1223.

⁵⁷ *Ba.* 116; 164.

⁵⁸ οὐχ ὑπερβαίνουσι καὶ τείχη θεοί. *Ba.* 654.

⁵⁹ *Ba.* 38.

conduct *symposia*, whereas the women are largely confined to the *gynaikon*, which is where the women work at the loom or cook. The late 5th Century Athenian soldier, historian and memoirist Xenophon describes the *gynaikon* as being separated from the *andron* with a bolted door.⁶⁰ The lives of women in the city are largely private, segregated and confined under the roofs of their homes. Dionysos dramatically releases them from their confinement and introduces them to what amounts to a new Bacchic kind of home, where they spend their time in the wilderness. It is important to note that they are still required to live privately (but differently from their existence in the *polis*) in the new Bacchic *oikos*, as consequences for observance of their private rituals may be severe.⁶¹

2.2 The Soul

Another important context to consider in connection with the aforementioned model is the philosophy of the soul with which Euripides may have been familiar with and possibly even echoed in his work. In the model, I propose that the soul in the centre most point of the all the constituents of the structure called the city. By this I suggest that the soul is the *oikos* of the body. In the way that the *oikos* may impact the *polis*, so too does the soul have impact on the body. This is iterated in the play by the way that Dionysos' delusion is manifest as a vibration of the body, which will be addressed later in this paper.

In late antiquity, "Euripides was widely acknowledged as a mouthpiece of philosophical doctrines, both ethical and 'physical'".⁶² If this is indeed the case, I wish to briefly investigate the philosophical context of the *Bacchae* and how this philosophy might be portrayed in the play itself. Already in the ancient world, contemporaries of Euripides represented him as a philosophical figure. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the character of Euripides states that he educated the Athenian public on matters of logic and reason (971-5). Plato uses Euripides as reference⁶³ and later many 4th century BCE orators also use the works of Euripides to further their arguments.⁶⁴ During Euripides' life, he is believed to have heard the philosophies of Anaxagoras and Archelaus⁶⁵. If this is the case, we can assume that Euripides was familiar with Anaxagoras' doctrine on the Mind being infinite.⁶⁶ Another contemporary of Euripides

⁶⁰ *Oeco.*, 9.5.

⁶¹ Cf. Pentheus' death and dismemberment

⁶² Dillon, 2004:48.

⁶³ *Symp.* 199a

⁶⁴ Aesch. *Against Timarchus*. 151.

⁶⁵ Dillon, 2004:50.

⁶⁶ *fr.*1 & 12.

was the philosopher Socrates. Although we do not have any textual evidence from Socrates himself, his pupil Plato expounded various philosophical ideas in his Socratic dialogues. With Socrates comes a new way of thinking about the human soul, “the soul is no longer just the principle of life, but the most precious possession we have, the very centre of our being, harbouring the nature of our personality and the value of our character”.⁶⁷ This theory of the soul is later expanded upon in many of Plato’s philosophical dialogues.⁶⁸ From Wildberg (2006), we can understand that Euripides and Socrates had a close prolonged friendship and therefore we may assume that Euripides was familiar with the Socratic belief concerning the soul.

2.3. Legislature

In his *Politics*, Aristotle defines a citizen as a member of the *Ekklesia* or one who shares office with the *dikastes* ‘jurors’.⁶⁹ Aristotle’s definition is limited to civic duties performed by members of the population who are considered citizens of Athens. When considering the notion of citizenship and the importance this holds for the inclusion and exclusion of women in the ancient world, it is necessary not to impose one’s own modern ideology on what it means to be a citizen because, as Goff noted, “as a ‘citizens club’ whose members all shared in the governance of the state, the Athenian polis excluded women. But as a closed community bound together by ties of kinship and religion it most certainly included women”.⁷⁰

The first written legislature at Athens was passed by Draco in 622/1 in response to the Cyclonian crisis, who intended to curtail violence after the killings of Cyclon’s supporters.⁷¹ The codes put forward by Draco would be instrumental in fashioning Athenian civic identities. The Draconian legislature saw privileges and protection in favour of the residents of Athens, allowing for these residents to create a civic identity, “with its apparently novel use of the term *Athenaios* to designate the fully entitled resident of Attika”.⁷² In the 6th century BCE, Athens experienced the economic, social, and moral reforms of Solon, who

⁶⁷ Wildberg, 2006:30.

⁶⁸ i.e. *Meno*; *Phaedo* & *Phaedrus*, etc.

⁶⁹ 1275a 20-32.

⁷⁰ Just 1989: 23.

⁷¹ Lape, 2010: 9.

⁷² Lape, 2010: 11.

acted as an arbitrator after civil unrest among the factions in Athens. Among these reforms was included a law which aimed to control the conduct of women, particularly at funerals.

The law stated the following:

He also established a law governing women's coming out into public, their mourning and their festivals, putting a stop to their lack of discipline and their licence. He ordered them, to go out with no more than three cloaks, carrying no more than three obols' worth of food and drink, nor a basket larger than a cubit, nor to travel about at night except in a wagon, with a lamp lighting the way. He forbade the lacerating of skin by those beating (their breasts) and prepared lamentations, and the shrieks of grief over someone at the burial of other people. (Plutarch, *Life of Solon*, 21.5–6)⁷³

Such laws indicate the extent of control that the legislators had over the lives of the Athenian residents as well as the extent of freedom experienced by women. Furthermore, Solon's laws "created and formalised spatial, legal, and psychological boundaries that gave greater definition to the city and its citizens".⁷⁴ This creation and formalisation of boundaries are important when considering the boundaries within the *polis* as discussed previously regarding the model.

The *polis* consisted and functioned best when there was an order in the *oikos*, yet the *polis* could also make legislation which interfered with the *oikos*. The most prominent example of this is Pericles' Athenian Citizenship law, which was passed in 451/0 BCE. This law stated that only children who came from a union between an Athenian male citizen and an Athenian woman would be recognised as citizens. Up until the law was passed, it was possible for children to gain Athenian citizenship even if only their fathers were Athenian citizens. This law indicates that the household/*oikos* was necessary for the *polis* to survive. This means that without structure in the *oikos*, the structure of the *polis* will collapse. As Roy notes, "this legislation was a major interference in the affairs of the *oikos*, by restricting the choice of marriage-partner with whom a citizen could create a new household. The *polis* thus did, on occasion, exercise its authority over the *oikos*".⁷⁵ The destruction of the *oikos* would inevitably lead to the destruction of the *polis* and as such, a collapse of the social order. If the individual members of the *oikos* were to not adhere to their specified roles, such as bear

⁷³ MacLahlan, 2012: 83.

⁷⁴ Lape, 2010: 12.

⁷⁵ 1999:5.

children or tend to the management of household affairs, the structure would fall apart upon itself. Therefore, this structure is pertinent to the *Bacchae*, for the removal of the Theban women from their homes signifies the beginning of the collapse of Thebes and Theban society.

2.4 Thebes as *Topos*

The legislation/ legal and constitutional conditions and reconceptualisation of citizenship of 5th century BCE Athens might influence the artistic choices of Euripides with regard to issues of autochthony in the *Bacchae*. The understanding of the concepts associated with the terms *oikos* and *polis* and how they can be subverted and altered for specific needs by the poet also may be seen to have informed or at an rate conditioned the choices in the play, yet is it possible that these artistic choices can be imposed on the city of Thebes?

One theory regarding the choice of Thebes as the place of the action belongs to Froma Zeitlin. Zeitlin (1993) indicates that when studying Greek tragedy, we should view Thebes as a *topos* in all senses of the word. On the one hand, it is a designated geographical place, yet on the other hand it is a sort of dramatic formula employed by the tragedian who can use it “through specific myths associated with Thebes on the Athenian stage, certain clusters of ideas, themes, and problems recur which can be identified as proper to Thebes”.⁷⁶ It is possible that the choice of Thebes for the tragedian is the city is meant to be “dramatically ‘other’” than Athens, yet when considering the myths associated with tragedy the choices are limited. Zeitlin also argues that Thebes is a negative counter-model to Athens in terms of the management of the *polis* and society and Thebes acts as a “site of displacement” where radical tragic events may take place.⁷⁷

Thebes is placed in the mythological distance as a place where these stories and myths may occur as it is away from Athens. It occurs in a time and place far enough away from Athens to not be a threat for the Athenian audience, but close enough for the audience members to know the events and outcomes of the play. Yet for the *Bacchae*, the subject matter, and the relevant god, Dionysos, are immediate for the Athenian audience. During the performance, the audience themselves are participating in a festival in honour of that very god, the distance between Thebes and Athens is closed. It is also possible that the choice of Thebes was due to

⁷⁶ 1993:131.

⁷⁷ 1993:131.

the fact that the myth is located in Thebes originally. The *Bacchae* is motivated by the god's need for recognition by the *polis* and more narrowly and simultaneously, by his *oikos*, a theme which would have resonated with the Athenian audience, for the festival they were celebrating was itself because of a rejection of the god and his subsequent acceptance into the city.⁷⁸

3.1 Dionysos and Women

Women are key participants in the festivals of Dionysos⁷⁹, as many of the festivals in honour of the god saw secret rituals that were performed by women.⁸⁰ Bremmer notes the role of Dionysian ritual in the lives of women.⁸¹ Firstly, he states that Dionysian ritual allowed women to have religious experience because of their connections and identification with Dionysos. Secondly, these Dionysiac rituals allowed women to leave the home and enter the company of other women without immediate male supervision. Lastly, he states that the trance-like states achieved by these women during the ritual allows them to “reach a more authentic [sic] self-expression than in their normal fixed roles”.⁸² The *Bacchae* depicts the inversion of gender roles, particularly regarding the Theban women. In the social context of 5th century BCE Athens, a woman could only ever hold an active role in her *oikos*, for that was her domain. Yet, it was strictly forbidden for her to hold any active role in the public sphere, the *polis*.⁸³ It is important in Dionysiac mysteries for the ritual to take place away from the city. Seaford notes that because the *polis* consists of individual *oikoi*, the woman must leave the space where she is usually confined:

“And so for her to leave her separate household (in some versions, as in *Bacchae*, specifically her loom) so as to transcend the boundaries, both physical and psychic, between herself and other women and between herself and nature – this is a symbolic reversal of the civilised structure of the polis”.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ See section 1.1.1 on the City Dionysia.

⁷⁹ This does not mean that men were excluded from Dionysiac worship.

⁸⁰ See, Leinieks, 1996:194-195.

⁸¹ However, it must be noted that these ritual celebrations and mysteries were only available to the upper-class women.

⁸² Bremmer, 1994:80,

⁸³ See, Demand, 1994:127.

⁸⁴ 2006:34.

Thus by leaving their looms and entering the wilderness, the domain of the god, the Theban women enter an initiation into the worship of Dionysos, which begins the disruption of social order within the confines of the *polis*. I propose that entering into the wilderness from the *oikos* and the *polis*; the women take up new roles without the confines of society. This new Bacchic *oikos* which they inhabit does not, however, represent any change in their social status, as they still experience a servile position. For just as in the *oikos* within the *polis*, where they may be active within the limits set by their husbands, so too are they allowed to be active in the wilderness, within the limits set by the god. Although all mortals are circumscribed by divinely established limits which are pertinent for human existence within the walls of a city, this god sets out limits for existence outside the walls. The women in the wilderness experience a greater freedom of body on the mountain, a freedom which is heavily dictated by the frenzy and delusion of mind by Dionysos. The freedom itself is subverted, because these women have no true freedom of choice. Their bodies might be liberated from the city, but their souls belong to the god. The influence of delusion is pronounced in the *Bacchae* and is often expressed through vision, as Leinieks states, “a person in the state of delusion cannot perceive what everyone else can, he can perceive more clearly the destructive aspect of others”.⁸⁵ An example of how this delusion is represented in the *Bacchae* is when Agaue enters the palace holding what she believes to be the head of a lion but is actually the head of Pentheus.⁸⁶

3.2 Thiasos

Another aspect of Dionysiac cult influenced by delusion and frenzy is the *thiasos* of the god. The liberated women form a part of Dionysos’ sacred band, his *thiasos*. The *thiasos* is unique to Dionysos in the pantheon.⁸⁷ A *thiasos* may be defined as a group of people who “have been breathed upon by a god and are under the control of the god”.⁸⁸ The members of the *thiasos* move in unison as there is a unity of spirit, over which the god has full control (692f). The result of this influence is that the subjects, over which the god has control, possess powers beyond human capabilities (761). The *thiasos* is the most important group for Dionysiac religion and the *Bacchae*. Of the *thiasoi* in the *Bacchae*, the Theban women and the daughters of Kadmus, the most important *thiasos* is the chorus, the Lydian women who

⁸⁵1996:82.

⁸⁶ *Ba.* 1233f

⁸⁷ Seaford, 2006: 32; Leinieks adds that Ares may also control a *thiasos* (1996:93).

⁸⁸ Leinieks, 1996:93.

“have left Tmolus, the bastion of Lydia” (55) and who accompany Dionysos to Thebes, where he will collect more attendants from amongst the Theban women and the daughters of Kadmos. The god’s influence over the women is visible from line 758, when the bacchants are described during their conflict with the villagers. They are described as carrying fire in their hair which did not burn them, which illustrates a supernatural control over the elements. In 761, the messenger describes that the spears of the villagers did not harm the women which also attests to Dionysos’ protection of his *thiasoi*.

3.3. The Liberator of Women

In the prologue, Dionysos tells the audience that the Theban women have been initiated into Bacchic mysteries (34;40), which Dionysos intends to establish in Thebes (32). However, the initiation of these women is not enough. Dionysos’ purpose is to be recognised by all the Thebans, which the king Pentheus refuses to do (44-6). Dionysos drives the women in frenzy, who are usually constrained to the home, to be released. Included in this liberation is freedom from servile tasks such as working at the loom and taking care of children. Instead, the women sit on the mountain and engage in Dionysiac activities⁸⁹, to the women, then; he is the liberator, *Lysios*.⁹⁰ Yet this liberation is only for the purpose of Dionysiac worship, as all the liberated women in the play are participants of some form of Dionysiac worship. This is not the only liberation given by Dionysos. There are various examples in the play where Dionysos liberates. For example, he liberates the bacchants that had been captured by Pentheus (226-227) and Dionysos also liberates himself (in the guise of the Stranger) from the bounds with which Pentheus tried to capture him (648). Dionysos also liberates from thirst and hunger (703-8), as well as pain (771). The liberation of the women in the *Bacchae* is expressed by Euripides as positive. This is evidenced in the negative portrayal of the *oikos* and the *polis* in the play. For Pentheus, who is representative of the city, rejects the worship of Dionysos (215-224). The home of Pentheus, the palace, is where Agaue brings the head of her son after her role in his dismemberment. This action is itself a subversion of the role between a mother and child in the *oikos*. The *oikos* is where the mother cares for the child, yet by bringing the dismembered head of her son into the same *oikos* in which she cared for her son, Euripides emphasises the destruction of that *oikos*. For the *oikos* of Pentheus, the palace symbolises imprisonment and violence:

⁸⁹ See Leinieks, 1996:315.

⁹⁰ Dionysos’ cult name in Korinth, Sikyon and Thebes (Leinieks, 1996:306).

The Theban women, as well as the daughters of Kadmos, have abandoned their houses and their city through the agency of Dionysos. That this abandonment is beneficial is made clear by the negative portrayal of both house and city in the play. [In the specific context of the play] The house is a place of slavery and violence. In the house the women are condemned to spend their lives at the loom”.⁹¹

Dionysos is a god of liberation and destruction. These two elements of his nature are expressed throughout the *Bacchae*. His destructive nature is visible during the palace miracle, when he orders the destruction of the Theban palace (585-595) and his liberating nature is seen in the manner in which he liberates the women from thirst (702-707). However, it is important to note that both the liberation and the destruction are self-serving, for Dionysos liberates the Theban women for them to become bacchantes and worship him as well as to have the whole city, including Pentheus, be aware of his power as a god.

4.1 Wild and Civilisation: An analysis of lines 660 - 774

From lines 660-774⁹², we can view a particular representation of the women in the wilderness from an objective source, namely the messenger. The messenger begins by requesting to speak freely and tells of the sights he saw in the mountains. This representation of the women provides the audience with insight on the power the god has over those under his influence and the unity with which his subjects conduct themselves. The lines depict the lives of these women outside of the city boundaries, where all that is known to the women becomes distorted and inverted through a shared delusion. The impact of this delusion results in the destruction of the *oikos* and the *polis*.

As Dionysos invades and destroys the sheltered space in the house, so even more radically does he open the bounded limits of the city to the forces of the wild alien to it... Euripides evokes the otherness that the city must exclude.⁹³

The driving of the women from their homes in frenzy sets off the chain of events that culminates in the destruction of the conception of the *oikos* and the *polis*. The wilderness represents a domain away from the city, it is without city limits and therefore cannot be dictated by those who have power within the city. Euripides powerfully describes the Theban

⁹¹ Leinieks, 1996:317.

⁹² For a translation and commentary of the lines, see Appendix B.

⁹³ Segal, 1997:78-124.

women on the mountain in the passage from line 660 to 774. The passage occurs after the palace miracle, when Dionysos was held captive in the palace. The herdsman interrupts Pentheus in an exchange with an escaped Dionysos.

The passage begins with the herdsman's address to Pentheus, as the leader of the Theban land (660). The significance of this account being dictated to Pentheus could possibly be as a result of his previous persecution of the women (215-225). Pentheus represents the power and authority of the *polis* and the events that happen to him a further rebellion against the *polis* and what it symbolises. In (670), the messenger appears to be unwilling to be forthcoming with his account for fear of Pentheus' quick temper. This description possibly indicates the youth of Pentheus, for Euripides places an emphasis on his quickness to anger⁹⁴, "his desire to win, and his lack of wisdom. These characteristics would place Pentheus in the below thirty age-class according to the current Athenian views on the subject".⁹⁵ Pentheus poses the greatest threat to the establishment of Dionysiac rites in Thebes, as such "the conflict between Dionysos and Pentheus, the religious, political, and familial issues, all unequivocally converge at the same point".⁹⁶

4.1.1 Tripartite Division of Bacchants

In line 680, the herdsman describes the three *thiasoi* which are headed by the three daughters of Kadmos. The three *thiasoi* are significant when one considers other myths of Dionysos' vengeance. One example is the myth of the daughters of Minyas. Another myth is that of the daughters of Proitos, king of Argos. The daughters of Proitos, Lysippe, Iphinoe, and Iphianassa⁹⁷ reject the worship of Dionysos.⁹⁸ As a result, they are stricken mad and leave their homes to wander the Peloponnese. Melampus the seer offers his services to the king but demands one third of his kingdom as payment. Proitos refuses and the madness of the women worsens and they begin to infect other women with their affliction. Melampus offers his help again and asks for another third of the kingdom for his brother, Bias. The king agrees and Melampus gathers the strongest men of Tiryns to hunt down the women. He finally catches up to them in Arcadia and is able to heal them with purifying waters of a spring. Thereafter, king Proitos orders the construction of a temple to Hera between Sicyon and Titane.

⁹⁴ See Leinieks, 1996:199-204 for discussion on the age of Pentheus.

⁹⁵ Leinieks, 1996: 205.

⁹⁶ Zeitlin, 1993:123.

⁹⁷ Or Iphianeira (Bell, 1991:382).

⁹⁸ "Others said they set their beauty above Hera's or stole gold from her statue" (Bell, 1991:382).

Subsequently, Melampus married Iphianassa and his brother, Bias, married Lysippe. In this way, the Argive kingdom was divided.

The similarities in the events of the *Bacchae* and the myth of the Minyades and the Proetides are interesting. All the victims of Dionysos' vengeance are from prominent houses. The kings all have three daughters who become the maenads and in the case of the *Bacchae* and the Minyades, there is a case of human sacrifice. Most notably, it is the sacrifice of a male heir to the kingdom, and it is the child's mother who must take the most active part in the sacrifice. This is the essence of Dionysos' vengeance. For as these myths indicate, Dionysos requires the full devotion of the city and when this does not occur, he sets madness on the women of the city which can only be sated once a sacrifice is made and the god's worship is accepted into the city. Further evidence attesting to the significance of the number three can be found in inscriptions from the third century BCE, which records the bringing of three maenads to Magnesia from Thebes.⁹⁹

4.1.2. Nature

Dionysos has a strong connection with the natural world, which is echoed throughout the play. Euripides uses the natural world to emphasise the presence of Dionysos by incorporating animal motifs. The arrival of Dionysos in Thebes is accompanied by an abundance of references to vegetation. For example, in the prologue of *Bacchae*, he has covered his mother's tomb in vines (12), the vine being the symbol of his gifts to men, wine. Similarly, he also sends forth a spring of wine when a bacchant strikes her thyrsus to the ground (707). At 726 all the beasts and the mountain itself react to the ritual cry of the bacchants and revel with them. The fusion of human and natural worlds in the Dionysiac revelry is not unique to Euripides, for it appears in Sophocles' *Antigone* (1146) as well as Aeschylus' *Lycurageia*.¹⁰⁰ The fusion with the animal and human world is also seen in the women's interaction with the animals.

4.1.3 The Bacchic dress

The Bacchic dress is another feature of Dionysos' relationship with nature. From line 695-8 the herdsman describes the dress of the bacchants. From the prologue, we know that they are wearing the Bacchic garb (33). There is significance in the outfit itself. The fawnskin is an

⁹⁹ See Seaford, 2006: 34 for more examples.

¹⁰⁰ See also *Il.* 19.32 & *Eur. IT.* 1242ff.

important signifier for both the audience and the other characters that the one wearing it has become a Bacchic reveller. For example, Kadmos and Teiresias wear it (176) and Pentheus is compelled by Dionysos to wear it (835). The fawnskin represents “the image of maenadic freedom and escape from oppression”¹⁰¹ freedom from societal constraints for the one who wears it. The fawn is a wild animal that experiences no confinement or the societal structure of humankind - it is free. The fawn has no sheltered *oikos* where it must be kept, away from interactions with other animals and in this way it is more liberated than the Theban women in the city. As such, the one who wears the fawnskin may become like the creature itself. This is echoed in the description of the women fleeing from the hunters in line 866-7, “like a fawn frolicking in the green pleasures of the meadow”. Their garments are girdled with snakes (698) which further indicate an uncanny fusion of the animal and natural world. The wearing of the fawnskin transforms the wearer into a Bacchic reveller.

4.1.4 Inversion of the mother’s role

In the passage, Euripides also uses animals to signify an inversion of the woman’s role as a mother and the suckling of the wolf pups and gazelles in (699) is an example of this subversion. The women who breastfeed the animals are described as those who had recently given birth and who had recently left their infants behind. This illustrates that Dionysos has not removed them from being the mother, but rather than mothering a human child they have young animals. Dodds suggests that the young animals are symbolic of the god and in nursing these animals, the women act as proxy for Dionysos’ own mortal mother, Semele.¹⁰² Therefore, the nursing of the animals is significant in terms of societal structure. The mother’s role is strangely deployed in the wilderness, for in the city the mother breastfeeds the child. In the case of a male child, she would then be breastfeeding a future member of the *polis* and the survival of the *polis* itself is dependent on women and their ability to bear children. In this scene, Dionysos has not only removed the women from their societal roles in the city, but he has re-appropriated those roles in the wilderness, for they have become Bacchic mothers. In 754, the messenger says that they snatched children from their homes. The motif of the child-stealing maenad is attested to in vase painting (*fig.2*) as well as late antiquity reception of Euripides.¹⁰³ Gibbons notes that by doing this the women “threateningly disrupt and invert normal restrictions and obligations of women in the Greek

¹⁰¹ Henrichs, 1995:88.

¹⁰² 1960:161.

¹⁰³ Nonnos, *Dion.* 45.294ff.

household”.¹⁰⁴ The woman in the *oikos* is the protector of the home and the members within and the stealing of children from the homes subverts this role.

4.1.5 Unity

The herdsman’s description of the manner in which the bacchantes slept (683-8) illustrates the unity of the group. This is further attested to in (693), when the women leap up in unison, and begin their revelries with that of the natural world which surrounds them. In line 725, the women call to Dionysos in unison.¹⁰⁵ This image is particularly significant when one considers the role of unity in Dionysiac mysteries. The formation of the *thiasos* in the *Bacchae* is an example of initiation into the Bacchic mysteries, for “mystic initiation merges the individual soul into the group”.¹⁰⁶ This initiation into a group soul is stated in the *Bacchae* (72-6) as well as in Plato, who notes that Dionysiac frenzy is ‘shared’.¹⁰⁷ This initiation, therefore, creates a unity of souls, for the unity of the *thiasos* is “presented as operating in the soul”.¹⁰⁸ The possession of the soul by Dionysos is manifested in a physical reaction in the body of the possessed, for Leinieks states that “the disturbance of the soul is transmitted to the body and is observable in the person’s bodily movements”.¹⁰⁹ The impact of frenzy and *mania* on the mind of the reveller is made visible in their bodies by the poet. This is seen later in the play when Kadmos asks Agaue “is the fluttering still in your soul?” (1268).¹¹⁰

One soul of an initiate becomes part of a unified whole with the other initiates. As such, the notion of the soul as represented by Euripides in the *Bacchae* corresponds to Aristotle’s views on the same subject, who speaks of harmony in the soul.¹¹¹ Dionysos is a god of communality¹¹², he states that he wants *all* of Thebes to join in his rites (39-40). Teiresias too, the priest and expert in matters religious and ritual says: “but he wishes to receive honour from all alike and he wants to be exalted without exception” (208-9). However, he is opposed by an individual, the most secular and powerful individual, the king. The king here is symbolic of the *polis*. Dionysos rectifies this by turning Pentheus into one of the maenads.

¹⁰⁴ 2001:119.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Leinieks, 1996:329 on Dionysiac unity

¹⁰⁶ Seaford, 2006:32.

¹⁰⁷ *Symp.* 218b.

¹⁰⁸ Leinieks, 1996: 339.

¹⁰⁹ 1996:107.

¹¹⁰ Cf. 214

¹¹¹ See Aristotle’s *Con. the Soul*, 408.1-4.

¹¹² See Seaford, 2006:26 for definitions of communality and Dionysos.

The unity of the *thiasoi* is expressed again when they notice Pentheus observing their mysteries, “Agaue, Pentheus’ mother, and her blood sisters and all the bacchantes” (1092) pursue him at once. The unity of the bacchantes, the chorus is one of the most important examples of communality in the *Bacchae*, the Bacchantes “reject individualism: their joys and ecstasies come from the *thiasos*, and their ideas are shared in common”¹¹³. Dionysos requires utmost devotion to his mysteries, body, and soul. In any case of rejection or doubt, he requires penance for that act of hubris. He will destroy the future of the great houses if he is not honoured by all. The sacrifice that Dionysos requires in the *Bacchae* is not only that of the male heir to Thebes, but also the city of Thebes itself. Schechner states, “the city of Thebes is sacrificed to Dionysos to satisfy his capricious [sic] ego”.¹¹⁴ However, it is not his so-called “capricious ego” that needs to be satisfied. Dionysos believes that the complete destruction of Theban society and especially, the house of Kadmos is a fair sacrifice and punishment for the acts of violence and rejection upon his mother and himself.

4.1.6 *Sparagmos*

From line 735 the herdsman describes how the bacchantes destroy the grazing cattle with their bare hands. This scene is patterned on the *sparagmos* rite of Dionysian ritual. In line 735, it is identified by the word *sparagmon*¹¹⁵, which is the ritual dismemberment of the sacrificial victim. In this case, it is a bull¹¹⁶, the most noble of the sacrificial victims¹¹⁷. In a fragment of Sophocles, Dionysos is called *taurophagos* ‘bull eater’ which indicates his choice of sacrificial victim in that instance.¹¹⁸ In his state of delusion, Pentheus sees Dionysos as a bull (920), for “he is an Olympian god, but he appears in the bestial form of bull, snake”.¹¹⁹ As such, the *sparagmos* of the bull is significant in terms of Dionysiac ritual. Thumiger notes that the appearance of the bull is meant to signify an individual character. In (618), there is a bull in the stables where Dionysos is locked up: “Then, there is the similarity or opposition of Dionysos and the king, so that the *tauroi ... hubristai* killed by the women at (743) are *figura* of Pentheus, while the bull he tries to imprison at (618) is a substitute for the god.”¹²⁰

¹¹³ Winnington-Ingram, 1948.

¹¹⁴ 1961:124.

¹¹⁵ παραγμόν

¹¹⁶ Possibly linked to his worship at Elis as a bull-horned god.

¹¹⁷ See Burkert, 1985, on animal sacrifice.

¹¹⁸ Fr. 688, as in Leinieks, 1996:158.

¹¹⁹ Segal, 1978: 186.

¹²⁰ 2006: 203.

Another notable *sparagmos* in the *Bacchae* is the death and dismemberment of Pentheus (1135), which is foreshadowed in the death of the bull which is killed by the bacchantes in (735). Just like the bull (743), Pentheus is also hubristic and proud. The resulting conflict between Pentheus and Dionysos lead to the death and dismemberment of Pentheus, which further symbolises the “vicissitudes of secular power”.¹²¹ The ripping apart of the body is significant when considering the body as a micro-*oikos*. It is the *oikos* which houses and protects the soul. A physical destruction of the body would most likely lead to a destruction of the soul, just as the societal destruction of the *polis* would lead to the destruction of the *oikos*.¹²² When one considers this motif in Bacchic mystery cult, a physical destruction for one who is initiated into Bacchic mysteries will allow for the immortal soul to live on in a blessed afterlife, but the soul of the uninitiated is not so fortunate.

4.1.7 Wine

The rest of the passage appears as a testimony to Pentheus as to what might happen to his own city if he refuses to accept the god. The passage ends with the last two lines (773-4), as a testament to the vitality and joys associated with wine. Dionysos is the wine, as well as the vine which provides the grapes from which wine is made.¹²³ He is a benefactor of humankind, like Prometheus who bestows fire or Demeter who bestows a bountiful harvest. Similarly, like Dionysos, Demeter is the bread itself for she provides the grain from which it can be made. This connection between Dionysos and Demeter is made by Teiresias in his speech (275 – 280). Dionysos’ connection with wine may also originate from his own mythology, for it is suggested that the dismemberment and subsequent rebirth of Dionysos symbolises the growth and harvesting of the grape-vine and the drinking of the wine as being the Titans devouring the body of Dionysos.¹²⁴ This allegory has connections with the Bacchic mysteries and the concept of the soul.

In line 707, one bacchant strikes the ground and a stream of wine bursts forth. This is liberation from thirst. However, the endless stream of wine also symbolises a life without toil. For the herdsman says that wine is the delight of mankind (774) and therefore we can assume that it is a symbol of freedom from toil. The herdsman’s description of the gift of wine is positive, associated with joy. However, Pentheus believes that wine is responsible for female

¹²¹ Thumiger, 2007:146.

¹²² Plut., *fr.* 178

¹²³ See Leinieks 1996:177f.

¹²⁴ Dio. Sic., 3.62.6-7 & Plut., *Moralia*, 389a.

promiscuity (260). Wine is itself medicinal in this context, for it is described as sleep-inducing (282) and *pausilupōn* “pain-ending” (772). Therefore, in the *Bacchae*, wine is also a form of liberation from pain and the menial tasks of everyday life. The description of the bacchantes in the wilderness is dramatically meant to foreshadow the events of the play to come, as well as warn the character Pentheus what the repercussions would be for those who refuse the god.

5.1. The House of Kadmos

Dionysos is the harbinger of destruction. Disorder and destruction are at his command, whenever he encounters an unwilling city or individual. In the *Bacchae*, Dionysos disrupts and subverts the social order of Thebes. In line (585-595), he destroys the palace by summoning an earthquake to shake the palace apart. He then sets it on fire, “light the fiery torch of lightning, burn, burn the house of Pentheus” (595). However, the total destruction of the palace does not occur, as Grube points out for the rest of the play, characters still enter and exit the palace.¹²⁵ As such he notes, “they call upon the god to seize the thunderbolt and burn the palace, but all that actually happens is that the living flame on Semele's tomb suddenly flares up”.¹²⁶ Rather, it is possible that in this instance, in Pentheus' state of delusion, the palace figuratively represents his secular authority which is shaken and destroyed by Dionysos. Dionysos is still able to destroy the *oikos*, but rather than only the physical house, he destroys the line of Kadmos. This destruction is significant, for Dionysos himself is a member of this house, as stated by Kadmos:

Nevertheless, the god, lord Bromios born of our kin, has rightly, but excessively, ruined our house. (1249-50)

Kadmos calls Dionysos a member of the *oikos* (1249-50), yet it is that *oikos* that brought ruin upon itself, for the other members, the sisters of Semele, Kadmos, and most importantly, Pentheus who refuse to acknowledge that their kinsman is indeed a god. For the proximity of Dionysos as *oikeios*, a member of the “*oikos*, shatters the protective security that the house provides for mother and child”.¹²⁷ This protective security is shattered again when Agaue brings the dismembered head of her son into their *oikos* (1268). It is possible that this can be

¹²⁵ It is most likely that the stables were destroyed.

¹²⁶ Grube, 1935:45.

¹²⁷ Segal, 1997: 86.

traced back to the manner of his (first) birth. The body of the mother is itself an *oikos* for the unborn child. Yet in the myth of Dionysos' birth, this first *oikos*, the womb of his mother was disturbed and destroyed by Zeus' lightning bolt when the infant Dionysos was not yet ready to be born. The sisters of Semele therefore destroyed the original *oikos* of Dionysos. The extent and excess with which he destroys the physical *oikos* and the house (and line) of Kadmos becomes clearer. For not only do his relatives refuse to acknowledge him and his divinity, but they destroyed the most important *oikos*, the body of his mother.

6. Conclusion

The city of Thebes itself is the sacrifice to appease the vengeful god. Despite the displacement of the Theban women from their homes and the *sparagmos* of Pentheus, Dionysos will not be sated until the entire city has been disrupted and fully accepts his rites (40). Leinieks argues that Dionysiac religion “is a vehicle for presenting political as well as psychological concepts in the *Bakchai*” and there are three Dionysiac religious principles conveyed by Euripides in the play. The first and most important of these is liberation. The result of Dionysiac liberation is freedom, which is “the basic political concept in the play” (1996:327). The second principle is the concept of universality. Dionysos wants all of Thebes to accept and take part in his rites, for even foreign lands already celebrate his rites (17). Dionysos wishes to reveal his divinity to all and make himself manifest as a god to those who do not believe, “the universality of Dionysiac religion extends not only to all mankind but even to animals and inanimate nature” (1996:327). Lastly, the third principle of Dionysiac religion, by Leinieks’ reading, is the political concept of unity. The purpose and goal of Dionysiac worshippers is unity of actions and goals, for the bacchantes even behave in unison (683). Leinieks states that these principles/ ideals of Dionysiac religion is what Euripides attempts to convey in his play.

After briefly investigating the various Dionysian festivals of both Attika and other parts of the Greek world, many of the foundation myths of those festivals were based on Dionysos’ rejection by a city and resulting frenzy of the women. Another important feature of these festivals is Dionysos’ role as the viticultural god, which leads to fertility rituals in many of his festivals. Therefore, the festival context appears to be important for the play itself, for the choice of a Dionysiac myth with Dionysiac influences would have been the perfect choice for a Dionysiac festival.

To understand the *kosmos* represented in the *Bacchae*, I proposed a pictorial depiction of the various societal structures in the play, for these societal structures are not mutually exclusive and may often be permeable in the presence of a god. As the model in *fig.3* suggests, there are multiple layers which must be in good order for the whole notion of the city to be in a state of order. When considering the *oikos*, one cannot merely just consider the physical house that is found on the streets of the *polis*, but it is also the members of the household. As I previously suggested that the relationship between the body and the soul is similar to the relationship between the *polis* and the *oikos*. The body also has a relationship with the *oikos*. For bodies are required within the *oikos* for it to be considered an *oikos*, if there are no bodies

in the *oikos*, does one still consider it to be an *oikos*. Therefore, I propose that if one considers the body as an *oikos*, then birth and its surrounding ideas become even more significant in the narrative of Dionysos and the displacement of the Theban women. The Theban women are taken from their physical homes, into a new Bacchic home to serve a god who was himself taken from his mother's bodily home. The significance of the *oikos* cannot be undermined when examining this play in its entirety, for Dionysos is the liberator and destroyer. In the *Bacchae*, he is the liberator of women and the destroyer of men. Euripides transforms all notions the Athenian audience might have had of the *oikos* and the *polis* and, with the *Bacchae*, he further emphasises the disorienting nature of the god himself. The god whose festival the audience is attending. The play is a brilliant sacrifice and praise of the god, Dionysos.

Appendix A



Fig. 1: Attic black-figure cup by the painter Exekias, c.540 - 530 BCE, via Beazley Archive Pottery Database.



Fig. 2: Attic red-figure pyxis lid depicting the following: Dionysos in boots (beardless), seated, and maenads, one with thyrsus, one holding an infant, some seated with lyre and tympanon, some tearing deer. c. 425-375 BCE, via BAPD.

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The Model

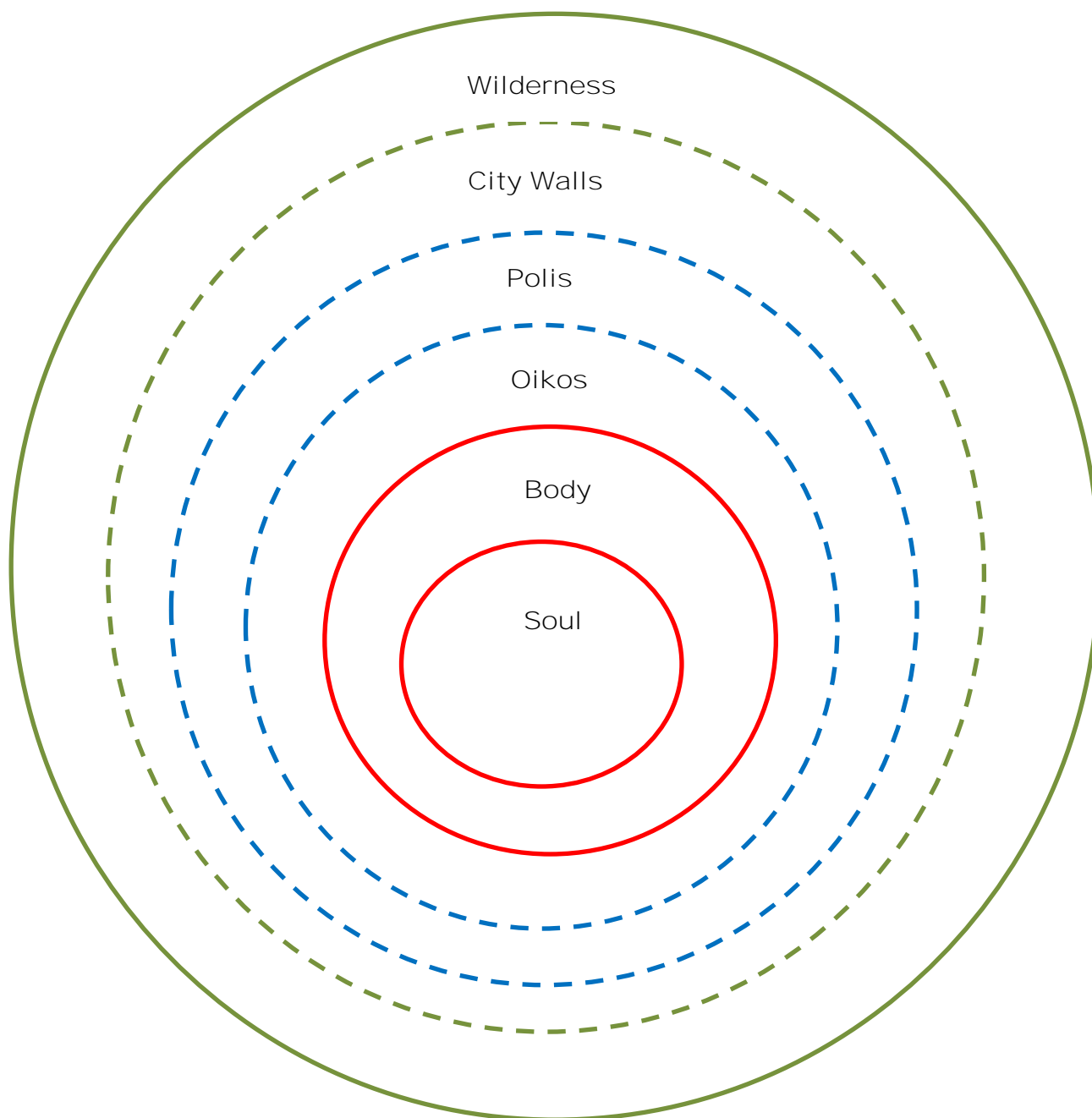


Fig. 3: The Polis-Oikos Model of the Bacchae.

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Images:

Fig. 1: Attic black-figure cup by the painter Exekias, c.540 - 530 BCE, via BAPD. URL:

<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/Watermark/displayImage.asp?id={C924FDFD-141A-46D5-A713-DF89CC217552}>. Accessed on: 14/02/2021.

Fig. 2: Attic red figure pyxis lid depicting the following: Dionysos in boots (beardless), seated, and maenads, one with thyrsus, one holding an infant, some seated with lyre and tympanon, some tearing deer. c. 425-375 BCE, via BAPD. URL:

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School of Languages & Literatures

Classical Studies Section

Coursework Paper 1: “Women in the Wilderness: An Analysis of Euripides’
Bacchae lines 660-774”

**Appendix B: Translation and Commentary of Euripides’ *Bacchae* lines
660-774**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a MA by coursework and thesis

Supervisor: Dr. David van Schoor (d.vanschoor@ru.ac.za)

Abbreviations

| | |
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| BAPD | Beazley Archive Pottery Database. Oxford University. URL: https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/ |
| D | Dodds, E.R. <i>The Plays of Euripides: Bacchae</i> . Second Edition. Oxford University Press. 1960. |
| G | Gibbons, R. <i>Bakchai: Euripides</i> . Oxford University Press. 2001. |
| K | Kirk, GS. <i>The Bacchae by Euripides</i> . Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1970. |
| L | |
| LSJ | Leinieks, V. <i>The City of Dionysos: A Study of Euripides' Bakchai</i> . B.G. Teubner: Stuttgart und Leipzig. 1996. |
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|--|--|
| <p>{ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ}</p> <p>660 Πενθεῦ κρατύνων τῆσδε Θηβαίας χθονός, ἦκω Κιθαιρῶν' ἐκλιπών, ἴν' οὔποτε λευκῆς χιόνος ἀνεῖσαν εὐαγεῖς βολαί. {Πε.} ἦκεις δὲ ποῖαν προσιθεῖς σπουδὴν λόγου; {Αγ.} βάκχας ποτνιαδάς εἰσιδών, αἶ τῆσδε γῆς</p> <p>665 οἴστροισι λευκὸν κῶλον ἐξηκόντισαν, ἦκω φράσαι σοι καὶ πόλει χρήζων, ἄναξ, ὥς δεινὰ δρῶσι θαυμάτων τε κρείσσονα. θέλω δ' ἀκοῦσαι πότερά σοι παρρησίαι φράσω τὰ κεῖθεν ἢ λόγον στειλώμεθα·</p> <p>670 τὸ γὰρ τάχος σου τῶν φρενῶν δέδοικ', ἄναξ, καὶ τοῦξύθυμον καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν λίαν. {Πε.} λέγ', ὥς ἀθῶιος ἐξ ἔμοῦ πάντως ἔση· [τοῖς γὰρ δίκαιοις οὐχὶ θυμοῦσθαι χρεῶν.] ὄσωι δ' ἂν εἴπηις δεινότερα βακχῶν πέρι,</p> <p>675 τοςῶιδε μᾶλλον τὸν ὑποθέντα τὰς τέχνας γυναιξὶ τόνδε τῆι δίκῃ προσθήσομεν. {Αγ.} ἀγελαῖα μὲν βοσκήματ' ἄρτι πρὸς λέπας</p> | <p>{Messenger}</p> <p>Pentheus, leader of this Theban land.</p> <p>I have come, having left Kithairon, where the pure flakes of white snow never melts.</p> <p>{Pentheus} What word have you come with in haste?</p> <p>{Messenger} I saw the sacred bacchants, who were goaded from this land, who darted on white limb.</p> <p>I have come to say to you and deliver word to the city, lord, as to the terrible and amazing and mighty things they are doing. I wish to hear whether I may speak freely to you to show the situation or repress the account.</p> <p>For I fear your quickness of mind, lord, and your quickness to anger and your kingly disposition.</p> <p>{Pentheus} Speak, as you will have immunity from me in all. For it is not right to be angry at the just.</p> <p>For the more terrible things you tell me about the Bacchants, the more this man here, who imposed his arts on the women, we will punish him.</p> <p>{Messenger} The herds and the cattle were just now climbing the bare rock, at the same time the sun sent forth rays warming the land.</p> <p>I have seen three bands of dancing women, one lead by Autonoe, the second by your mother Agaue and a third by Ino.</p> |
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| <p> μόσχων ὑπεξήκριζον, ἥνιχ' ἥλιος ἀκτῖνας ἐξίησι θερμαίνων χθόνα. 680 ὁρῶ δὲ θιάσους τρεῖς γυναικείων χορῶν, ᾧ ἦρχ' ἐνὸς μὲν Αὐτονόη, τοῦ δευτέρου μήτηρ Ἄγαυή σή, τρίτου δ' Ἴνῳ χοροῦ. ἠὔδον δὲ πᾶσαι σώμασιν παρειμέναι, αἱ μὲν πρὸς ἐλάτης νῶτ' ἐρείσασαι φύβην, 685 αἱ δ' ἐν δρυὸς φύλλοισι πρὸς πέδωι κάρα εἰκῆι βαλοῦσαι σωφρόνως, οὐχ ὡς σὺ φήεις ῶινωμένας κρατῆρι καὶ λωτοῦ ψόφωι θηρᾶν καθ' ὕλην Κύπριν ἠρημωμένας. ἡ σὴ δὲ μήτηρ ὠλόλυξεν ἐν μέσαις 690 σταθεῖσα βᾶκχαις ἐξ ὕπνου κινεῖν δέμας, </p> | <p> They all slept with bodies relaxed, some leaning against the foliage of the silver fir and others among the oak leaves with their heads on the ground, purposelessly, but decently, it is not as you say, intoxicated from the bowl of wine or the sound of the flute, hunting in the forest for Kypriis, in a state of abandon. Then your mother, standing up in the midst, cried aloud and disturbed their bodies from sleep, </p> |
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The scene of the messenger's report interrupts Pentheus' questioning of the Lydian stranger (Dionysos). In this scene, Pentheus redirects his anger (D 159) caused by the liberation of the Theban women to the messenger, who contradicts the fears held by Pentheus as to what exactly the women are doing in the wilderness.

663 λευκῆς χιόνος - λευκῆς is used frequently by Homer for the colour of pure white snow and skin (// 10.437 & // 11.573). It is used by Euripides in *Med.* 973 of bare skin. Dodds insists that there is some significance to the snow that never melts, "it was the right setting for a strange tale of maenadism" (D, 159). For Kirk, the snow is a poetical exaggeration, "whether the meaning is that it never stops snowing on Cithaeron or that snow lies there throughout the year" (K, 80).

664 βᾱκxας ποτνιαδας – ποτνιαδας usually used to refer to queens or goddesses. As an adjective, it is 'revered' or 'august'. Cf. Homer's use as an adjective to described goddesses (// 1.551; 4.2 & 5.592 and *Ody.* 1.14). I have translated ποτνιαδας as sacred, keeping to the Homeric sense, to indicate that they are sacred women due to their relationship with the god, Dionysos. In (D, 160), ποτνιαδας is a word of uncertain significance. It is possible that the word refers to possessed women, "their possession has conferred upon them the powers of ποτνιαί" (D,160).

665 οἴστροισι – the sting of the gadfly. It is an involuntary motion in a state of delusion or frenzy. Used metaphorically by Euripides to describe the manner in which the women left their homes and the city, cf. Eur. *Or.* 791. "frenzy induced by stinging" (L, 87).

668-671 θέλω... τὸ βασιλικὸν λῖαν – This description of the Pentheus' character appears to indicate Pentheus' youth and pride, for he is quick to anger. τὸ βασιλικὸν λῖαν "a cautious

description of Pentheus' temper in previous lines. It could also be hypocrisy coming from Pentheus, "although the picture of the ill-tempered ruler is conventional, Euripides makes no attempt to suggest that Pentheus is bad in this respect" (K, 80-1).

677 ὑπεξήκριζον – The grazing herds are climbing up the mountain, not driven.

680 ὀρῶ - the use of historic present. Translated by others as "I saw" cf. K, 81.

680 θιάσους τρεῖς – the significance of the three *thiasoi* is well attested in myth. For example, the daughters of Minyas and Proitos in Ovid, 4.140; 390-415. Also present 3rd century BCE inscriptions from Magnesia (Seaford, 2006:34).

683 σώμασιν - dative of relation ("apparently an extension of the locative use" D,162) Commonly used in Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 2. 1. 31).

686 σωφρόνως – translated as 'decently' for a paradoxical contrast with εἰκῆι, without plan or purpose. It indicates that the women are not in a state of frenzy. In Attic, it is defined as 'having control over the sensual desires', 'temperate', 'self-controlled', 'chaste' in LSJ, with regard to female sexuality. It is "intended to be a specific and forceful refutation of Pentheus' perception" (L,220).

686-8 ὡς σὺ φῆις – The messenger was not present at that conversation. θηρᾶν depends on the φῆις, for Euripides must avoid an awkward build-up of particles (D, 162).

668 Κύπριν – Kypris, an epithet of the goddess Aphrodite. When used in this sense, it stands as a euphemism for sexual

euphemism for 'your irritable temper' (D, 161). Cf. *Il.* 2.196. "A characteristic of Pentheus shared with earthborn monsters is his anger" (L, 272).

673 δικαίους – Observant of duty to gods and men or righteous, cf. *Od.* 13.209. it is governed by θυμοῦσθαι, "Pentheus himself acknowledges his habitual anger" (L, 272). "The herdsman is δικαίος as not being responsible for what he describes" (D. 161). In contrast to the

intercourse. LSJ defines it as love or passion in the Euripidean usage.

668 ἠρημωμένας – Defined as 'strip bare', 'desolate', 'lay waste' by LSJ. But the sense of the term is rather that the women are in a state of abandon.

689 ὠλόλυξεν – a ritual shriek or cry (K,81). This ritual cry sets off the frenzy of the women. Cf. Dionysos' shout to the bacchants in 1078-1088.

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| <p>μυκήμαθ' ὡς ἤκουσε κεροφόρων βοῶν.</p> <p>αἱ δ' ἀποβαλοῦσαι θαλερὸν ὀμμάτων ὑπνον</p> <p>ἀνήξαν ὀρθαί, θαῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐκοσμίας,</p> <p>νέαι παλαιαὶ παρθένοι τ' ἔτ' ἄζυγες.</p> <p>695 καὶ πρῶτα μὲν καθεῖσαν εἰς ὦμους κόμας</p> <p>νεβρίδας τ' ἀνεστείλανθ' ὄσασιν ἀμμάτων</p> <p>σύνδεσμ' ἐλέλυτο, καὶ καταστίκτους δορὰς</p> <p>ὄφεισι κατεζώσαντο λιχμῶσιν γένυν.</p> <p>αἱ δ' ἀγκάλαισι δορκάδ' ἦ σκύμνους λύκων</p> <p>700 ἀγρίους ἔχουσαι λευκὸν ἐδίδοσαν γάλα,</p> <p>ὄσαις νεοτόκοις μαστὸς ἦν σπαργῶν ἔτι</p> <p>βρέφη λιπούσαις· ἐπὶ δ' ἔθεντο κισσίνους</p> <p>στεφάνους δρυὸς τε μίλακός τ' ἀνθροσφόρου.</p> <p>θύρσον δέ τις λαβοῦσ' ἔπαισεν ἐς πέτραν,</p> <p>705 ὄθεν δροσώδης ὕδατος ἐκπηδαῖ νοτίς·</p> <p>ἄλλη δὲ νάρθηκ' ἐς πέδον καθῆκε γῆς</p> <p>καὶ τῆϊδε κρήνην ἐξανῆκ' οἴνου θεός·</p> <p>ὄσαις δὲ λευκοῦ πώματος πόθος παρῆν,</p> <p>ἄκροισι δακτύλοισι διαμῶσαι χθόνα</p> | <p>as she heard the lowing of horned cattle.</p> <p>Throwing off the fresh sleep from their eyes, they leapt upright, a wonder of good order to see - young, old and maidens still unmarried.</p> <p>And first they let loose their hair on their shoulders</p> <p>and tucked up the fawn-skins – as many as had undone the knots that held them – and the spotted skins they girdled with serpents that licked their jaws.</p> <p>Some held in their arms a gazelle or a wild wolf pup and gave them white milk – those who had recently given birth with still-swollen breast</p> <p>and those who had left their new-born infants behind. They put on garlands of ivy, oak and flowering smilax.</p> <p>One took her thyrsus and struck a rock, from which fresh water leapt out.</p> <p>Another let her thyrsus strike the ground and the god sent forth a spring of wine. As many as desired the white drink scratched the earth with the tips of their finger and got streams of milk.</p> <p>From their ivy-covered <i>thyrsoi</i>,</p> <p>sweet streams of honey dropped and if you were present, you would make prayers to the god which you now blame, because of these sights.</p> <p>We shepherds and herdsmen assembled to quarrel with one another, deliberating the accounts in common,</p> <p>as to the terrible and wonderful things worthy of mention that they accomplish. Some wanderer about the city and skilled in speech said to all,</p> |
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| <p>710 γάλακτος ἔσμούς εἶχον· ἐκ δὲ κισσίνων</p> <p>θύρσων γλυκεῖαι μέλιτος ἔσταζον ῥοαί.</p> <p>ὥστ', εἰ παρήσθα, τὸν θεὸν τὸν νῦν ψέγεις</p> <p>εὐχαῖσιν ἂν μετῆλθες εἰσιδὼν τάδε.</p> <p>ξυνήλθομεν δὲ βουκόλοι καὶ ποιμένες</p> <p>715 κοινῶν λόγων δώσοντες ἀλλήλοις ἔριν [ὡς δεινὰ δρωῖσι θαυμάτων τ' ἐπάξια].</p> <p>καὶ τις πλάνης κατ' ἄστου καὶ τρίβων λόγων</p> <p>ἔλεξεν εἰς ἅπαντας· ὦ σεμνάς πλάκας ναίοντες ὀρέων, θέλετε θηρασώμεθα</p> <p>720 Πενθέως Ἀγαυὴν μητέρ' ἐκ βακχευμάτων</p> <p>χάριν τ' ἄνακτι θώμεθ'; εὖ δ' ἡμῖν λέγειν</p> <p>ἔδοξε, θάμνων δ' ἐλλοχίζομεν φόβαις</p> | <p>“O you who dwell in the holy plains of the mountains, do you wish to hunt Pentheus’ mother, Agaue, out of the Bacchic revelry as a favour for the king?”</p> <p>We thought he spoke well, so we placed an ambush, concealing ourselves in the foliage of the bushes.</p> |
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694 θαῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐκοσμίας – “a strange sight for its ordered calm” (D,162). Euripides places an emphasis on the orderliness so that it is in opposition with Pentheus’ beliefs of what the women are doing on the mountain. Euripides makes this opposition deliberately, “perhaps to avoid playing on a popular prejudice and so weakening the Chorus’ emphasis on the benign aspects of the cult” (K, 82). The women leap upright in unison, which indicates the shared possession of the god, for they are in one spirit.

695 καθῆσαν – the women let their hair down after having it tied up while they slept, possibly to emphasise “their wildness and abandon” (K, 82). Cf. Eur. *Iphigenia at Taurus*, 52.

696 νεβρίδας τ' ἀνεστείλανθ' – appears to refer to the manner in which the women tuck the fawnskin. It appears as the perfect passive participle ‘tucked up’ in LSJ, but (D,163) argues that the movement is in fact the fastening of the fawnskin on to the shoulder, as is visible on vases. This fastening of the fawnskin to the shoulder is probably further evidenced in ὄσαισιν ἀμμάτων σύνδεσμ' ἐλέλυτο, ‘as many as had undone the knots that held them’, possibly referring to the knots used to fasten the fawnskin on the shoulder.

698 ὄφει – The girdling of the fawn-skins with serpents appear to be more ritual than practical use, as in 101-4 (D,163).” Thus the bacchantes may wear crowns of serpents in place of crowns of ivy” (L, 72). The serpent may also have a connection with the issue of autochthony in the play, for snakes are symbols of autochthony, cf. 1026.

699-700 δορκάδ' ἢ σκύμνους λύκων... γάλα – Maenads interacting and playing with wild animals is often represented in vase painting, but the suckling of the wild animals is not, apart from a villa frieze in Pompeii (D,163). It is possible that the young animals are symbolic

702-3 κισσίνους στεφάνους... μίλακός – ivy, oak and flowering smilax have ritual connotations. I had difficulty adequately translating μίλακός, as it seems to have been a vine-like plant used in Bacchic ritual practices. Other translators have translated μίλακός as ‘bryony’ (K,82). However, it appears that the plant is the *smilax aspera*, a flowering vine found in the Mediterranean (D, 80). As such, I have chosen to translate it as ‘smilax’. With regard to the ivy and oak, the use of it in ritual practice is well attested in the play (81, 109-110) as well as in representations of vases, cf. D, 77; L,195 & BAPD 20299.

704-711 θύρσον... ῥοαί – similar description is found in 141-2. Dionysos’ power of making wine is transferred to those under his influence when they have the thyrsus (D,163). Cf. *Hom. Hymn.* 7.35. “Miracles involving milk, honey, wine, and water are traditionally attributed to Dionysos and his maenads” (G, 118). Cf. Plato, *Ion*, 534a. For Dionysos’ connections with milk, see Hdt. 7.11. For his connection with honey, see *Ov. Fasti.* 3.736ff. The messenger’s description of these events is full of wonder, which is reflected “in an elevated, even portentous style” (K, 82-3). The god’s control over nature also emphasises his position as a god of nature, particularly viticulture. It is also a form of liberation, a liberation from thirst and hunger (L,315).

715 κοινῶν λόγων – similar to 667, and may have originally been the same (D.164-5). The inclusion of the ‘common accounts’ “effectively depict Pentheus’ stubbornness and folly” (G,118).

717 πλάνης – the inclusion of the wanderer by the messenger is perhaps to corroborate the decision of the hunters to attempt to capture the women.

of the god, Dionysos, himself and that these women are proxy for his own mortal mother (D.163). cf. Nonnos, *Dion.* 14.361f. In the context of the polis, breastfeeding is for the purpose of nourishing the children of the polis so that they might grow up to be members of society. The most important role of the women in the polis is to be mothers. The suckling of the wild animals rather than their children is an inversion of that important role.

“Euripides' Messenger perhaps means to suggest a contrast between the more naive, instinctively religious, and acceptant country folk and the sceptical, worldly man of the town” (G,118). **τρίβων** is a colloquial term introduced into tragedy by Euripides, cf. *Eur.Or.*1251.

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| <p>κρύψαντες αὐτούς· αἱ δὲ τὴν τεταγμένην ᾧραν ἐκίνουν θύρσον ἐς βακχεύματα,</p> | <p>The women, at the appointed hour, began to move the thyrsus in the revelries, calling together in voice, Bromios and Iacchos, son of Zeus.</p> |
| <p>725 Ἴακχον ἀθρώωι στόματι τὸν Διὸς γόνον Βρόμιον καλοῦσαι· πᾶν δὲ συνεβάκχευ' ὄρος καὶ θῆρες, οὐδὲν δ' ἦν ἀκίνητον δρόμωι. κυρεῖ δ' Ἀγαυὴ πλησίον θρώισκουσ' έμοῦ, κάγῳ 'ξεπήδησ' ὡς συναρπάσαι θέλων,</p> | <p>All the mountain and the beasts revelled with them, and nothing was unmoved by their running. Agauē happened to be leaping near me and I, leaving the lair where we had concealed ourselves, sprang forth intending to snatch her away. But she shouted, "O my roaming dogs, we are hunted by these men. But follow me,</p> |
| <p>730 λόχημην κενώσας ἔνθ' ἐκρύπτομεν δέμας. ἡ δ' ἀνεβόησεν· ὦδρομάδες ἐμαὶ κύνες, θηρώμεθ' ἀνδρῶν τῶνδ' ὕπ'· ἀλλ' ἔπεσθέ μοι, ἔπεσθε θύρσοις διὰ χερῶν ὠπλισμένοι. ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν φεύγοντες ἐξηλύξαμεν</p> | <p>follow armed with thyrsus in hand." So we fled and escaped being torn apart by the bacchants. But they came upon the grazing heifers, with unarmed hands. And you could look upon one who had drawn asunder a tight-uddered, lowing heifer. Others tore full-grown cows apart.</p> |
| <p>735 βακχῶν σπαραγμόν, αἱ δὲ νεμομέναις χλόην μόσχοις ἐπῆλθον χειρὸς ἀσιδήρου μέτα. καὶ τὴν μὲν ἄν προσεῖδες εὖθηλον πόριν μυκωμένην ἔλκουσαν ἐν χεροῖν δίχα, ἄλλαι δὲ δαμάλας διεφόρου σπαράγμασιν.</p> | <p>You could have seen ribs or hooves being thrown here and there and these hung in dripping in the fir trees, all mixed with blood. Bulls that before were proud and showed their fury with their horns, stumbled to the ground, dragged by a multitude of young hands.</p> |
| <p>740 εἶδες δ' ἄν ἡ πλεῦρ' ἡ δίχηλον ἔμβασιν</p> | <p>The flesh garment was torn faster than you could blink your royal eyelids.</p> |

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| <p> ῥιπτόμεν' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω· κρεμασὰ δὲ ἔσταζ' ὑπ' ἐλάταις ἀναπεφυρμέν' αἷματι. ταῦροι δ' ὑβρίσται κὰς κέρας θυμούμενοι τὸ πρόσθεν ἐσφάλλοντο πρὸς γαῖαν δέμας, 745 μυριάσι χειρῶν ἀγόμενοι νεανίδων· θᾶσσον δὲ διεφοροῦντο σαρκὸς ἐνδυτὰ ἢ σὲ ξυνάψαι βλέφαρα βασιλείοις κόραις. χωροῦσι δ' ὥστ' ὄρνιθες ἀρθεῖσαι δρόμῳ πεδίων ὑποτάσεις αἶ παρ' Ἄσωποῦ ῥοαῖς 750 εὐκαρπον ἐκβάλλουσι Θηβαίοις στάχυν, Ὑσιὰς τ' Ἐρυθράς θ', αἶ Κιθαιρῶνος λέπας νέρθεν κατωικήκασιν, ὥστε πολέμιοι ἐπεσπεσοῦσαι πάντ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω διέφερον· ἥρπαζον μὲν ἐκ δόμων τέκνα, </p> | <p> The women move like birds raised in their course over the plains stretched out along the streams of Asopus, which sends forth the fruitful Theban crop; and Hysiae and Erythrae beneath the bare rock of Kithairon, which they attack like enemies and which they turn upside down .They snatched children from their homes; </p> |
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724 βακχεύματα- they start the Dionysiac dance. This dancing is most likely sacred and the reason for their retaliation against the hunters, for the hunters should not have been present at this dance (see BAPD 217505 for maenads in revelry).

725-726 ἰακχον –connected with the verb ἰαχεῖν, to make the ritual cry. A mystic title of Dionysos linked to Athens and the Eleusinian mysteries “here put rather inappropriately into the mouths of Theban worshippers” (D, 165). **ἰακχον** as a cult title of Dionysos developed particularly in the Eleusinian mystery cult, where Dionysos is associated with Demeter (K, 83). The identification of Dionysos with **ἰακχον** is shown in the ritual shout of participants in the Lenaia festival (D, 166). Cf. Soph. *Ant.* 1146ff. **ἀθρόωι στόματι** has a connection with the notion of Dionysiac unity and the unity of the souls, cf. L, 329 & 340. **Βρόμιον** is another cult name of Dionysos, linked to the birth narrative of the *Ba.*, in which Zeus is his father. Thus, *bromios* is loud-thundering.

726-7 πᾶν δὲ συνεβάκχου' – the mountain and all the beasts upon it are now join in on the revelry and are under the same influence as the women, the Dionysiac delusion and unity of souls, see, L, 340. “A characteristically Dionysiac fusion of the human and natural worlds” (G,118). Similar notions of inanimate objects being personified in some form of dance or worship are seen in *Il.* 19.32, Aesch. *Lyc.*, Soph, *Ant.* 1146, and Eur. *IT.* 1242ff. “The inclusion of animals in Dionysiac revelry is not unique to Euripides” (L, 327), cf. Pindar’s *Dithyramb for the Thebans*.

727 δρόμωι- running appears to be a part of the Dionysiac revelries as much as dancing and it is also a group activity done in unison.

culmination of the Dionysiac winter dance, as well the eating of the meat or *omophagia* (D,xvi). However, “The pieces are never collected by the women” (L,159). Pentheus’ death parallels this *sparagmos* in 1135. As such, this *sparagmos* serves to act as a warning to Pentheus.

736 μόσχοις – it appears that the victims of the women increase in importance and significance (D,166). They begin with young cows, then mature cows and ultimately proud bulls. The culmination of this will be the death of Pentheus.

743 ταῦροι δ' ὑβρισταί - the choice of the sacrificial victim is significant. It is one of the most noble sacrificial victims and a Dionysiac victim, for Dionysos appears in bull form. In 618 and 920, the bull is a *figura* of the god, Dionysos. Dionysos is identified as *turophagos* in Soph. *fr.* 688.

746 σαρκὸς – genitive of material. It is not merely the skin of the animal that is ripped from its body, but the flesh. Cf. Empedocles, fr.126.

748-50 χωροῦσι... λέπας – the raid on the Theban villages is probably traditional rather than invented by Euripides (D, 167). **Ἄσωποῦ ῥοαῖς**, the river Asopus ran between Thebes and the foothills of Mount Kithairon (K,85). **Ἵστιάς τ' Ἐρυθράς**, Hysiae and Erythrae were villages on the northern foothills near Thebes. The herdsmen would pass through these villages in their flight to Thebes (D,168). Cf. Hdt, 1.142.

754 τέκνα – the snatching of the children from their homes is another example of how the societal roles of these women have now been inverted, “They thus threateningly disrupt and invert the normal restrictions and obligations of women in the Greek household” (G,119). The baby-

731 δρομάδες – the women are still running when the hunters attempt to capture them. Agaue is acting as a hunter, attempting to incite her hunting dogs to exert maximum effort in their pursuit, just as the Dionysos will do in 871-2. The women in their unison resemble the unison of a hunting pack of dogs.

735 σπαραγγμόν – a *sparagmos* ritual. The tearing apart of a sacrificial victim takes place, which gives a “sinister foretaste of what is to happen to the next intruder to wait in secret on the mountain” (K, 84). The *sparagmos* was the

stealing maenad motif is not uncommon at this time in Greece, for many vases depict scenes similar to this. Cf. pyxis by the Meidias painter in the British Museum (BAPD 220648), as well as late antiquity receptions of Eur. Cf. Nonnus, 45.294f.

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| 755 ὑπο | <p>ὅποσα δ' ἐπ' ὤμοις ἔθεσαν οὐ δεσμῶν</p> <p>προσείχετ' οὐδ' ἔπιπτεν [εἰς μέλαν πέδον,</p> <p>οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος], ἐπὶ δὲ βοστρύχοις</p> <p>πῦρ ἔφερον, οὐδ' ἔκαιεν. οἱ δ' ὀργῆς ὑπο</p> <p>ἐς ὄπλ' ἐχώρουν φερόμενοι βακχῶν ὑπο.</p> | <p>and whatever they put on their shoulders stayed there</p> <p>without being tied down, and did not fall to the ground.</p> <p>Not bronze, not iron.</p> <p>They carried fire in the locks of their hair, but did not burn.</p> <p>Some took to arms in anger at being plundered by the bacchants.</p> <p>It was a terrible sight to see, lord.</p> |
| 760 | <p>οὔπερ τὸ δεινὸν ἦν θέαμ' ἰδεῖν, ἄναξ·</p> <p>τοῖς μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἤμασσε λογχωτὸν βέλος,</p> <p>οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος,</p> <p>κεῖναι δὲ θύρσους ἐξανιεῖσαι χερῶν</p> <p>ἐτραυμάτιζον κάπενώτιζον φυγῆι</p> <p>γυναῖκες ἄνδρας οὐκ ἄνευ θεῶν τινος.</p> | <p>For the pointed spears did not draw blood.</p> <p>Not bronze, not iron.</p> <p>The women sent forth <i>thyrsoi</i> from their hands</p> <p>which wounded them and made them turn back in flight.</p> |
| 765 | <p>πάλιν δ' ἐχώρουν ὄθεν ἐκίνησαν πόδα</p> <p>κρήνας ἐπ' αὐτάς ἃς ἀνήκ' αὐταῖς θεός,</p> <p>νίψαντο δ' αἶμα, σταγόνα δ' ἐκ παρηίδων</p> <p>γλώσσηι δράκοντες ἐξεφαίδρυνον χροός.</p> <p>τὸν δαίμον' οὔν τόνδ', ὅστις ἔστ', ὦ δέσποτα,</p> | <p>The women did this to the men, but not without one of the gods.</p> <p>They went back whence they had come,</p> <p>to the very springs which the god had sent forth for them and washed off the blood and the drops on their cheeks the serpents cleared away from their skin with their tongues.</p> <p>So this god, whoever he is, O master,</p> |
| 770 μέγας | <p>δέχου πόλει τῆιδ'· ὡς τά τ' ἄλλ' ἐστὶν</p> <p>κάκεϊνό φασιν αὐτόν, ὡς ἐγὼ κλύω,</p> <p>τὴν παυσίλυπον ἄμπελον δοῦναι βροτοῖς.</p> | <p>receive him into the city, since he is great in other things as well,</p> <p>I hear they say that he has given mortals the pain-ending vine.</p> <p>For were wine no more, Kypris would be no more, nor anything else delightful for humankind.</p> |

οἴνου δὲ μηκέτ' ὄντος οὐκ ἔστιν
Κύπρις

οὐδ' ἄλλο τερπνὸν οὐδὲν ἀνθρώποις
ἔτι.

755-6 ὅποσα... ἔπιπτεν – an example of the perfect balance of these women in movement. The plunder which the women have taken from the villages is carried upon their shoulders, including the children, cf. Nonnus 45,294ff. It is possible that the text has been interrupted here, as (G,119) has noted and translated accordingly.

757 οὐ χαλκός, οὐ σίδηρος – the iron and bronze does not refer to weapons carried by the women, for they only have the thyrsus. Rather this refers to the plunder the women have taken while raiding the villages (D,169). Cf. Thuc., 3.68.3.

758 πῦρ- Dionysos' relationship with fire is evident in the palace miracle and the fire of Semele's tomb flaring up in 596f. The fire could possibly be of supernatural origins (D,170), cf. *Il.* 18.205ff. "the ability to endure pain by fire is attested for ecstatic cults in other parts of the world" (D,169 & K,85).

760 δεινὸν ἦν θέαμ' ἰδεῖν - "that dreadful sight (which remains in my memory)" (D,170).

763 θύρσους ἐξανειῖσαι – the power possessed by the women is given to them by the god, "The effectiveness of the *thyrsoi* as weapons is directly ascribed to the power of the god" (L, 76). It is this same power of the god that allows for no weapon to harm the women in 762. Cf. 1100f when the women use the *thyrsoi* as weapons again.

770-74 δέχου πόλει... οὐδὲν ἀνθρώποις ἔτι – the messenger reaches the moral of his account, that Pentheus should receive this god, who is able to protect and possess these women, into Thebes. He does this by telling Pentheus of the good things the god has given mankind, mainly wine. This attitude is one shared by Teiresias (274-83). The idea that wine contains "the stuff of life" is also attested to in Arist. *Probl.* 953^b 25 ff & *Ov. Ars. Am.* I.244 (D, 171). "As a positive force wine brings joy... By expelling pain and bringing joy wine contributes to the enjoyment of the simple and unambitious life" (L, 222-3).

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Coursework Paper 2: “Lysios and the Soul: An Analysis of Dionysos’
Relationship with the Soul”

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a MA by coursework and thesis

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Contents

1. The Early Greek Concept of the Soul
 - 1.1. Other Theories of the Soul
2. The Problem of the Pythagoreans and the Orphics
 - 2.1. The Immortality of the Soul
 - 2.2. The Theory of Metempsychosis
 - 2.3. Purity and Release from the Cycle
 - 2.4. Memory and the Doctrine of Anamnesis
 - 2.5. The Body as a Tomb for the Soul
 - 2.6. The Afterlife
3. Dionysos
 - 3.1. The Orphic Bricolage
 - 3.2. Dionysos the Liberator
 - 3.2.1 Liberation and Wine
 - 3.3. The Orphic Dionysos
 - 3.3.1 The Lord of Souls
4. Conclusion
5. Bibliography

This paper aims to analyse the role of Dionysos in ancient mystery cult, more precisely the Orphico- Bacchic cults. The relationship Dionysos has with the soul will be investigated using ancient literary evidence as well as textual evidence, found in the Orphic Gold tablets. In this investigation of the archaeological evidence, the analysis will focus mainly on the terms used and how they relate to Dionysos and the theory of metempsychosis in the context of mystery cult. The choice of this topic is due to my interest in Dionysos and his connection with the soul and I wish to investigate why Dionysos is an appropriate god for mystery cult and how this is represented. The investigation will have two focuses which will be consolidated at the end of the paper. The first focus will be the soul and relevant theories regarding the soul. The second focus of this paper will be Dionysos and his nature and representation in mythology and ancient mystery cult.

1. The Early Greek Concept of the Soul

The early Greek concept of the soul or *psychê*, as it would become known in later Greek philosophical thought, is one that should be traced philologically and linguistically. There are multiple terms which are used to refer to the early Greek concept of the soul throughout early philosophical texts. Yet the problem most often experienced by scholars of the Greek concept of the soul is that these terms are difficult to translate into English or even concepts which we modern readers can fully comprehend.¹²⁸ The first among these terms is *psychê* (*ψυχή*). The original meaning of *psychê* has been lost, yet it has been suggested by Furley (1956) that it most likely meant ‘breath’, yet in context it no longer is used for breathing.¹²⁹ It is possible then that in Homer, the use of *psychê* still refers to an act of breathing, but rather it is the final expiration taken upon death which signifies the transition from the living to the afterlife.

¹²⁸ “Their meanings must be allowed to emerge as their uses are discussed” (Furley, 1956: 2).

¹²⁹ 1956: 4.

Psychê in Homeric epic is used particularly in scenes of battle where it is said to leave the body at death or when the person swoons (*Il.* 22.467).¹³⁰ Yet *psychê* could also be considered a valuable possession in Homeric epic, one that signifies the life force of the individual. This is seen in the *Iliad*, when Achilles and Hektor vie for Hektor's *psychê* (*Il.*22.161). In this passage, the *psychê* becomes an object or possession which Achilles tries to win and which Hektor tries to keep and "what is valuable in this case is not the cold breath of death or the capacity to die, but simply life itself"¹³¹. *Thymos* (*θυμός*) is another among the terms for the early Greek concept of the soul. Although the meaning of *thymos* will undergo a change to refer to anger, particularly in Platonic theory. In Homer, *thymos* represents the "general psychic force under whose head anger and other emotions belong".¹³² *thymos* may once have been a primitive "breath-soul" or "life-soul"; but it is not (as in Plato) a "part of the soul".¹³³ The *thymos* is the force which compels the living to fulfil their needs and take action¹³⁴, which appears to function as an independent inner voice in Homeric epic¹³⁵.

Another important term regarding the mental and abstract notion of the soul is *nous* (*νόος*). Mostly associated with the Presocratics, *nous* appears to be what distinguishes the animate from inanimate objects, often translated as intellect or mind. For Anaxagoras, *nous* is the highest principle, whereas *psychê* retains its traditional sense of life.¹³⁶ Yet Presocratic philosopher, Empedocles, makes no reference to *psychê*. Rather *nous* is reason and acts as

¹³⁰ In Homer, a swoon is the soul temporarily leaving the body which returns once the person regains consciousness (Bremmer, 1983:18f).

¹³¹ Cairns, 2014.

¹³² Cairns, 2014.

¹³³ Dodds, 1951 :16.

¹³⁴ "*Psyche* is something substantial enough to be the shade or ghost which survives after a man's death, and *thymos*, whether it was originally the excited breathing in emotion or the seething turmoil of the blood, is substantial enough, in the Homeric poems, to 'give orders' and to 'talk' (Furley, 1956:3)

¹³⁵ *Il.* 20.174; 27.234; 13.163.

¹³⁶ Laks, 2006:251.

“the cause of order and of all arrangement”.¹³⁷ This Presocratic use of *nous* as introspection of the self would culminate in Plato’s use of *nous* as the ‘eye of the soul’.¹³⁸

Furthermore, in Homeric epic, there is no unified concept of the soul¹³⁹ and it carries no importance in the living. It is only once the person has died, that it exits the body to live a shadowy existence as a shade in the underworld.¹⁴⁰ In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus sees the shadowy figures or shades or *eidolon* (*εἶδωλον*) of those who have died at the borders of Hades (X.495; XI.207), whereas in the *Iliad* these figures appear as smoke (XXIII.100). These *eidola* (*εἶδωλά*) are generally recognizable as Odysseus can recognize Antikleia, his mother, and his other companions from this shadowy form. Similarly, Achilles recognizes the shade or *eidolon* of Patroklos due to the resemblance the shadow figure bears to the man in life. The soul of the dead may only speak once it has drunk from sacrificial blood.¹⁴¹ It is important to note that in Homer, the shade of the individual is not merely an image of the deceased as it will become in later philosophic theory, but rather it is a double of the individual and their human attributes, personality and essence, and it is “Homer’s holistic view of the human being as a psychophysical unity that determines the similarly holistic view of the *psychê* as survivor in Hades, not just as an image but as a fully formed doublet of the living person”.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Bremmer, 1983:40.

¹³⁸ Bremmer, 1983:40.

¹³⁹ Dodds, 1951:15.

¹⁴⁰ Hussey, 2006: 101.

¹⁴¹ *Ody.* x.495; xi.207; 24.6–9.

¹⁴² Cairns, 2014.

1.1. Other Theories of the Soul

By the 5th century BCE, the definition of the soul had shifted from the Homeric notion. In Pindar, the soul was a double of a person in dreams that can provide insights into the future:

“In happy fate all die a death
That frees from care,
And yet there still will linger behind
A living image of life,
For this alone has come from the gods.
It sleeps while the members are active;
But to those who sleep themselves
It reveals in myriad visions
The fateful approach
Of adversities or delights” (fr.131b)¹⁴³

According to Pindar, after death an individual leaves behind a ‘living image of life’. This image possibly refers to the Homeric classification of the *eidolon*. The concept of the soul being a double of man in dreams is one also attested to in Xenophon as well as in Aeschylus.¹⁴⁴ According to Hippocrates, when the body is asleep the soul takes over and performs the tasks of the body, much like what the soul does according to Pindar.¹⁴⁵

2. The Problem of the Pythagoreans and the Orphics

Like most theories that have been attributed to Pythagoreans or Orphics, it is impossible know for certain which of the two communities held the belief first. Even in antiquity there was a general disagreement about what was considered Pythagorean or Orphic. Firstly, I would like to highlight the discrepancies in using the labels of ‘Pythagorean’ and ‘Orphic’,

¹⁴³ Bremmer, 1983:7.

¹⁴⁴ *Cyropaedy* 8.7.21 & *Eumenides*, 104

¹⁴⁵ Hippocrates, *De victus ratione*, 4.86.

for these labels seem to suggest a clear-cut structuring of two opposing communities. But rather than separating the two (three if one includes the term Bacchic) into mutually exclusive categories, rather one should view these elements as multidimensional categories which overlap in literature and sources. The first problem we encounter when considering the multidimensionality of these categories is the problem of the Orphics. Although I use the term ‘Orphic’ in a broad and generalising sense, much like the maximalists in this paper.¹⁴⁶ There has been sufficient research to indicate that no Orphic community as such, ever existed.¹⁴⁷ There is undoubtedly Orphic literature, but the evidence to support the notion of a cohesive community is scarce. The term *orphikoi* (*Ὀρφικοί*) was used in antiquity to refer to authors of Orphic literature¹⁴⁸ or used with reference to the itinerant priests who performed initiations and purifications under the guise of being priests of Orpheus.¹⁴⁹

The Orphics followed the teaching of the mythical figure of Orpheus found in poems and “their fundamental goal was to attain salvation in the Beyond”.¹⁵⁰ From ancient sources we know that the connection between Orpheus and the Bacchic mysteries had already been established by the middle of the 5th century BCE, for example in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*.¹⁵¹ According to mythology, Orpheus possessed musical gifts that drew to him birds and animals.¹⁵² He took part in the expedition of the Argo and he had saved the Argonauts from the sirens with his singing.¹⁵³ Orpheus was also able to descend into the underworld to release his wife, Eurydice, from Hades.¹⁵⁴ According to Classical mythology, Orpheus was killed by

¹⁴⁶ Due to the length of this paper, I do not feel a distinction is necessary when referring to Orphico-Bacchic mysteries in this context, but I am aware of the debate regarding the use of this term.

¹⁴⁷ Burkert, 2006: 195.

¹⁴⁸ Apollodorus, *FGrH* 244 F 139; Sch. Eur. *Alc.* 1

¹⁴⁹ Plato, *Rep.* 364b-365a.

¹⁵⁰ Bernabé, 2012:117.

¹⁵¹ 953f.

¹⁵² Eur. *Ba.* 562

¹⁵³ Pind. *P.* 4.176f

¹⁵⁴ E. *Alc.* 357-9; Pl. *Symp.* 179d. A theme which became popular in Late Antiquity.

a group of Thracian women while his dismembered head continued to sing.¹⁵⁵ Yet Orpheus presents a more shamanistic figure¹⁵⁶ than Pythagoras, for Orpheus could transcend the boundaries of the living and the dead, which made him an appropriate ‘founder’ of a mystery cult that focused on transcendence of those boundaries. Despite this difference, the Pythagoreans and the Orphics shared some similarities in their ideologies and practices. Certain Orphic-Bacchic communities, if they existed, also practiced vegetarianism as a prohibition of shedding the blood of living beings.¹⁵⁷

When considering the Pythagoreans, one encounters a different obstacle. Unlike the Orphics, we are aware of the existence of a community of Pythagoreans who followed the teachings set forth by Pythagoras. Yet the extent to which the Pythagoras of the Pythagorean literature is true to the historical person is greatly exaggerated. Most of what we know about Pythagoras has been recorded in later literature, namely Iamblichus’ *Life of Pythagoras* from the 3rd century CE. Although it is important to note that Iamblichus was writing when Neoplatonism “turned anti-Christian, inaugurating the ‘pagan reaction’ while Christianity attained its world triumph”.¹⁵⁸ For Iamblichus, Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism was “an antidote to the progress of Christianity”¹⁵⁹. According to the ancient sources, the Pythagoreans lived an aesthetic life of ritual purity, abstaining from the consumption of meat, beans and eggs, as well as the prohibition of wearing wool.¹⁶⁰ The abstention from meat was linked to the Pythagorean belief that animals were endowed with a soul or *empsychos* (ἐμψυχος), while plants were without a soul or *apsychos* (ἄψυχος).¹⁶¹ The Presocratics valued

¹⁵⁵ Pl. *Symp.* 179d; *Rep.* 620a

¹⁵⁶ West, 1983:5.

¹⁵⁷ Pl. *Lg.* 782c; OF 625

¹⁵⁸ Burkert, 2006:206.

¹⁵⁹ Burkert, 2006:206.

¹⁶⁰ Prohibition on beans see Clem. Al. *Strom.* 3.3.24.1. Prohibition on eggs: also a prohibition shared by the Orphics, see: Plut. *Quaest. con.* 635E. Prohibition on wearing of wool see: Hdt. *Hist.* 2.81

¹⁶¹ Bernabé, 2012:121.

intellect and rational thought over the Homeric beliefs of the soul, yet Empedocles also practiced abstention from meat. Empedocles associated meat consumption and blood sacrifices with “the possibility of killing a member of one’s own family (that is, a living being embodying the soul of a relative)”.¹⁶²

Within later Pythagoreanism, there were two branches of philosophy -the *akousmatikoi* (ἄκουσματικοί) and the *mathematikoi* (μαθηματικοί). The *akousmatikoi* practiced strict adherence to the rules and sayings of Pythagoras which had been handed down through community tradition, “and those among them they think outstanding in moral insight who have acquired possession of the largest number of *akousmata* (ἄκουσματα)”.¹⁶³ On the other hand, the *mathematikoi* followed rational thought, scientific proof, and mathematics.¹⁶⁴

Although Pythagoreanism and Orphism are distinct from one another on the basis of ritual and mythology, there are important similarities in the doctrines of the two categories.

2.1 The Immortality of the Soul

The theory that the human soul was immortal is one shared by all the philosophies discussed in this paper. The Pythagorean belief of the soul’s immortality is attested to by Diodorus Siculus in the first century BCE¹⁶⁵ as well as in the *Life of Pythagoras*, a late antiquity biography by Porphyry of Tyre.¹⁶⁶ Other late sources, such as Diogenes of Oenoanda (2nd century CE), also attributed the immortality of the soul to the Pythagoreans and the Orphics.¹⁶⁷ The Orphic theory of the immortality of the soul is evidenced to in two fragments from the *Rhapsodic Theogony*:

¹⁶² Bernabé, 2012:122.

¹⁶³ Iambl. VP. 82.

¹⁶⁴ Iambl. VP. 87.

¹⁶⁵ Dio. Sic. Libr. 5.28.6

¹⁶⁶ *Life of Pyth.* 19.

¹⁶⁷ fr. 40.

“The soul of all men is immortal, but their bodies are mortal” (OF 425)

“The soul is immortal, ageless and from Zeus” (OF 426).

According to the Orphic tradition, the immortality of the soul stems from the myth of Dionysos’ dismemberment at the hands of the Titans. The infant Dionysos is given objects with which to distract him and the Titans are able to murder the child and begin cooking him. All but the heart of the child is consumed and Zeus, enraged by this action, kills the Titans with thunderbolts. It is from the ash of the Titans that human beings are then made. When the Titans consume the child of Zeus and Persephone, the immortality of the god becomes the immortality of the human soul.¹⁶⁸ The result of this action by the Titans results in the guilt of humans or ‘original sin’, which is attested to in a fragment from Pindar:

“Those for whom Persephone receives
The payment for an ancient sorrow
She returns their souls to the sun above in the 9th year,
From which illustrious kings and men distinguished by strength and great in wisdom
arise
For the rest of the time they are pure heroes among men” (fr. 133).

Keeping in mind the Orphic mythology, “the ancient sorrow” of the fragment is taken to mean the death and dismemberment of Dionysos. The death of Dionysos and the sorrow of his mother, Persephone, are thus the cause of the endless cycle of rebirths.

The belief that the soul is immortal was not only believed by individuals who practiced Pythagorean or Orphic philosophy but was widely believed by many of the Greek intelligentsia. Plato attests to Pindar’s belief in the immortality of the soul in the *Meno*, when he states, “Pindar also and many other poets endowed with the heavenly gifts...they say that the soul of man is immortal” (81a). In the extract on page 6, Pindar states “for this alone has

¹⁶⁸ Pl. *Laws*. 701b & OF 37i

come from the gods”, which indicates a belief in the immortal human soul. And Plato himself also viewed the soul as immortal.¹⁶⁹

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates argues that the soul is most like the Forms and the body is least like the Forms.¹⁷⁰ The Forms are the “invisible, unchanging, pure things not subject to dissolution”¹⁷¹ and as such if the soul were to be most like the Forms, it must be immortal while the body is mortal (*Phaed.* 80a-c).

“if [the soul] is in that state, then does it not depart to the invisible, which is similar to it, the divine and immortal and wise; and on arrival there, isn’t its lot to be happy, released from its wandering and folly, its fear and wild lusts, and other ills of the human condition” (*Phaed.* 81a).

This extract indicates that Plato was aware of the cycle of rebirths of metempsychosis for the soul in this extract, must be released from the cycle to join the divine and immortal.

2.2 The Theory of Metempsychosis

The theory of metempsychosis, otherwise referred to as the transmigration of souls, is the hallmark of Pythagorean and Orphic theories of the soul. This theory has been systematically attributed to both Pythagoreans and Orphics from antiquity and attempting to determine which group originated this theory has proved fruitless. Before Plato, no other evidence of metempsychosis appears in antiquity apart from a fragment of Pherecydes of Syros.¹⁷² Of Pherecydes, there is limited evidence and only “two testimonies state that he held that the soul is immortal and was the teacher of Pythagoras”.¹⁷³ From ancient sources, we know that

¹⁶⁹ Cic. *Tusc.* 1.16.38 & *Hdt. Hist.* 2.123.1

¹⁷⁰ 78b

¹⁷¹ McPherran, 2006:256.

¹⁷² Bernabé, 2012:127.

¹⁷³ Cic. *Tusc.* 1.16.38

Pythagoras was a believer in the doctrine of metempsychosis. This is attested to by Xenophanes, a near contemporary of Pythagoras:

“καί ποτέ μιν στυφελιζομένου σκύλακος παριόντα φασὶν ἐποικτῖραι
καὶ τόδε φάσθαι ἔπος: "παῦσαι μὴδὲ ῥάπιζ",
ἐπεὶ ἦ φίλου ἀνέρος ἐστὶ ψυχὴ, τὴν ἔγνω φθεγξαμένης αἴων

Once they say that he (Pythagoras) was passing by when a dog was being beaten and spoke this word: "Stop! don't beat it! For it is the soul of a friend that I recognised when I heard its voice" (Xenophanes, fr. 7)¹⁷⁴.

Later writers, such as Diodorus Siculus and Ovid¹⁷⁵, also attribute the doctrine of metempsychosis was attributed to Pythagoras. And Aristotle attributes the theory of metempsychosis to both the Orphics and the Pythagoreans.¹⁷⁶ Yet according to Aristotle, the Pythagorean belief of metempsychosis held that “any soul could be clothed in any body”.¹⁷⁷ Pythagoras was thought to believe in the cycle of rebirths of the soul as well as the “doctrine of the theoretic, contemplation, as the highest form of life”.¹⁷⁸ The Pythagoreans believed that a man who devotes himself to “contemplative understanding of existence” and who can achieve an atonement of the soul to the cosmic harmony is one who is able to release himself from the cycle of rebirths.¹⁷⁹ The cycle of rebirths is necessary for the Pythagoreans¹⁸⁰ as it is a process of the regular world order. The Pythagorean belief of living a life that is pure to achieve release from metempsychosis was reflected in the Pythagorean way of life.

¹⁷⁴ As in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers*, 8.36.

¹⁷⁵ *Libr.* 10.6.1; *Met.* 15.156.

¹⁷⁶ *Concern. the Soul.* 410b27; 407b21

¹⁷⁷ *Concern. the Soul.* 407b21

¹⁷⁸ Berriedale Keith, 1909:576.

¹⁷⁹ Berriedale Keith, 1909:576.

¹⁸⁰ Dio. Laer. 8.14

From this tablet, we can glean that the purity of the soul is an important element in the soul's journey in the afterlife, for they must come before Persephone "pure from the pure". "The concern with purity was characteristic of the religious movements that arose as a counterculture to the mainstream *polis* life and religion".¹⁸⁴

The notion that the lifestyle of the Orphic and Pythagorean communities was one of deliberate opposition to popular Greek religion is not novel, for Detienne notes that the vegetarianism and the prohibition on the killing of animate beings was done to oppose popular Greek religious tradition. For "Orphism is a movement of religious protest that defines itself by an attitude of refusal, refusal of the whole politicoreligious system organized around the Olympian gods and the distance that separates them from men".¹⁸⁵ The Orphics and Pythagorean community distanced themselves from the *polis* and popular Greek tradition by abstaining from animal sacrifice and the sacrificial burning of the thigh bones and fat to the gods and in doing so, distance themselves from the Olympic pantheon, and the refusal to adhere to the dietary customs of the *polis* and to change one's diet "is to throw into doubt the relationship between gods, men, and beasts upon which the whole politicoreligious system of the city rests".¹⁸⁶

This rejection of the *polis* is not complete with the dietary restrictions of the Orphic¹⁸⁷ but it is also expressed in their dress. Those who pursue the Orphic lifestyle, *bios orphikos*, present themselves as marginal figures, such as the wandering *Orpheotelestai* described by Plato.¹⁸⁸ "They even took care to mark the distance between themselves and the city in practical terms. Their clothing stood out, for they wore white garments only, and they refused to let

¹⁸⁴ Edmonds, 2004:69.

¹⁸⁵ Detienne, 1979:70.

¹⁸⁶ Detienne, 1979:70.

¹⁸⁷ "It is a sect that radically questions the official religion of the city-state and at two levels in particular. The first is that of theological thought, the second that of practice and behaviour" (Detienne, 1979:70).

¹⁸⁸ *Rep.* 364b-e

themselves be buried in woollen garments since wool is also completely alive”.¹⁸⁹ Yet although their intentions were to distance themselves from popular Greek religious traditions.¹⁹⁰ Their lifestyle choices were founded in their literature and served an important purpose in the purification of the soul for the initiation in the mysteries and the soul’s journey in the underworld. It is through the ritual purification of the soul and living a life that is morally good that the soul may experience the blessed afterlife.

In Plato’s works, the goal of the philosopher’s life, and each rebirth of the soul, is to release the soul from this cycle through purification and philosophical contemplation. This is significant as it shows Plato’s knowledge of the mysteries, which he uses as metaphor throughout his discussion of the soul. Purification, release, and the joining of the soul with the divine throughout the dialogues of Plato indicates that he was well educated in these theories of both the Pythagoreans and the Orphics.

2.4 Memory and the Doctrine of Anamnesis

The doctrine of *anamnesis* is a Pythagorean theory and one that cannot be attributed to the Orphics. Later, the doctrine would also be used by Plato in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*.¹⁹¹

Iamblichus notes that the Pythagoreans believed that “everything they had learned and heard was supposed to be retained and preserved in the memory... hence memory was greatly honoured”¹⁹², indicating that the Pythagoreans worshipped Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory.

“and you, too, who having drunk [from the lake of Memory], will go along the sacred road on which other glorious initiates and *bacchoi* travel”.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Detienne, 1979:71.

¹⁹⁰ “To abstain from eating meat in the Greek city-state is a highly subversive act” (Detienne, 1979:71).

¹⁹¹ 81a & 73a-b.

¹⁹² Iamblich *VP* 151

¹⁹³ Hipponion tablet no 1, in Graf & Iles Johnston

Memory is also an important element in Orphic tradition. In the Orphic Gold tablets extensive reference is made to the lake of Mnemosyne (Memory).¹⁹⁴ By drinking from the Lake of Memory, the soul does not wish to be remembered by the living community, “the power of Mnemosyne to rescue the heroes from oblivion is called upon to provide salvation for the individual in the world of the dead by her own recollection of herself”.¹⁹⁵ By recollecting the self, the soul is not aimless and wandering in the underworld like the shades in the *Odyssey*, but rather retains important information given through the initiations of the mysteries and this “type of memory provides a kind of immortality very different from the [*kleos aphthion*] κλέος ἀφθιτον of the hero who is honoured by his city, his clan, and his family”.¹⁹⁶ The Lake of Memory is interesting due to the connection Memory has with the doctrine of *anamnesis* in both Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy. The Orphic initiates must drink from the lake of Memory so that they may not forget the secrets of the mysteries and knowledge they have acquired from their initiation into the cult.¹⁹⁷

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates elaborates on the doctrine of recollection or *anamnesis*.¹⁹⁸ The basic explanation of this doctrine according to Socrates is that everything we learn in life is simply a process of recollection of knowledge which the soul acquired in a previous existence.¹⁹⁹ Socrates also argues that forgetting is a loss of this knowledge in that instant of forgetting and the process of forgetting knowledge we have acquired in a previous existence must occur during the rebirth of the soul into a new physical body.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ “Mother of the Muses, she represents the way in which epic heroes attain their immortality through the preservation of their deeds in epic song. The epic heroes remain alive in the memories of the poets and their audiences long after their mortal remains have crumbled into dust” (Edmonds, 2004:52).

¹⁹⁵ Edmonds, 2004:52.

¹⁹⁶ Edmonds, 2004:52.

¹⁹⁷ *OH* 77.9f

¹⁹⁸ 73a

¹⁹⁹ cf. *Meno*, 81c.

²⁰⁰ 75d

2.5 The Body as a Tomb for the Soul

The notion of the body as a tomb is also shared by the Pythagoreans as well as the Orphics, which is attested to linguistically with the term used for the body being *sōma* (σῶμα) and a tomb *sēma* (σῆμά). The use of these terms is not a coincidence as they refer to metempsychosis.²⁰¹ In the *Cratylus*, Plato attributes the belief of the body as a tomb for the soul directly to the Orphics, stating:

“the soul is buried in the present life; and again, because by its means the soul gives any signs which it gives, it is for this reason also properly called “sign” (σῆμα). But I think it most likely that the Orphic poets gave this name, with the idea that the soul is undergoing punishment for something; they think it has the body as an enclosure to keep it safe, like a prison, and this is, as the name itself denotes, the safe (σῶμα) for the soul, until the penalty is paid” (400c).²⁰²

It is from Orphic mythology that this idea originates and therefore cannot be attributed as solely belonging to the Pythagoreans. The Pythagoreans merely shared the belief that the soul was entombed in the body.

The Platonic theory of the soul according to the *Phaedo* indicates that the belief in metempsychosis had infiltrated the Greek philosophical consciousness. For Plato, the soul is immortal and suffers a series of reincarnations, which the physical body (*sōma*) is a tomb (*sēma*) which traps the soul in its cycle of rebirth, a metaphor he attributes to the Orphics (62b). This notion of the soul being entombed by the physical body is again mentioned by Plato in the *Gorgias* (493a).

²⁰¹ Long, 1948:151.

²⁰² καὶ γὰρ σῆμά τινές φασιν αὐτὸ εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς τεθαμμένης ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι... δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ...ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα... Pl. *Craty.* 400c.

2.6 The Afterlife

There are no Pythagorean references to a blessed afterlife for initiates as is found in the Orphic mysteries.²⁰³ According to Alexander Polyhistor, the Pythagorean belief of the underworld was as follows: “Impure souls were not allowed to approach each other, much less to come close to pure souls, since they were fettered in unbreakable bonds by the Erinyes.”²⁰⁴ This indicates a Pythagorean belief in what happens to the soul after death and that the souls of the pure, ones who had followed the rules set out by the sect, and the souls of the impure experienced different positions in the underworld. Secondly, it appears that the Erinyes take an active part in the punishment of impure souls.²⁰⁵

The Orphic idea of a blessed afterlife is one prominent in literary and archaeological evidence. In 5th century BCE Athens, Orphic literature was well-known and in circulation. The Orphic *katabasis* was one of the oldest poems that was circulating Athens at the time.²⁰⁶ The *katabasis* detailed Orpheus’ descent into the underworld to retrieve his wife Eurydice from Hades. According to Epigenes (late fifth or early fourth century) tells us that the Orphic *katabasis* was written by a Pythagorean named Cercops, which indicates a Southern Italian origin.²⁰⁷ Another work of Orphic literature that was circulating Athens at the time was the Orphic *Theogony*, of which the oldest surviving example is quoted in the Derveni Papyrus. The *Theogony* presented in the Derveni Papyrus alludes further to a Southern Italian origin due to the closeness with Parmenides.²⁰⁸ The Orphic *Theogony* is in opposition with the Hesiodic *Theogony* of Greek religion, for it contains scenes of incest and cannibalism.

²⁰³ (Bernabé, 2012:138). In the Hipponion tablet, the tablet urges the initiate to refrain from drinking at the nearest spring (5), which must be the spring of forgetting. This indicates an extreme thirst experienced by the dead in the afterlife.

²⁰⁴ D.L. 8.31 *FGrHist* 273 F 93

²⁰⁵ Bernabé, 2012:138.

²⁰⁶ Bremmer, 2014:59.

²⁰⁷ Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.21.131.3; OF 707; Bremmer, 2014:60.

²⁰⁸ Bremmer, 2014:61.

3. Dionysos

The focus of the paper will now turn to the relevant god, Dionysos, to distinguish a clearer image of the god celebrated by the initiates of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries. Dionysos is a god of dualities in his nature, descriptions, and character. Despite his perceived foreignness, Dionysos' roots in the Ancient Greek pantheon are as valid and Greek as most of the other Olympians. It was previously thought that Dionysos entered popular Greek religion as a foreigner from Thrace, Phrygia, or Lydia.²⁰⁹ However, it is commonly accepted by modern scholars that this is not the case, because of the discovery of his name on Linear B tablets from Pylos.²¹⁰ The god's worship contained many aspects like the worship of Phrygian Kybele and Egyptian Osiris²¹¹ which made him appear foreign and 'other' in the eyes of the ancient Greeks.

Yet it is his 'otherness' which makes him an appealing deity, a deity which can experience the worship of the so-called 'other' sects of human society, such as women and slaves. He is simultaneously "present within and without the city" and delights "in the ritual game of hospitality, *xenismos*, in which this citizen of the Pantheon and certified Olympian is received and welcomed by the whole political community as an alien power." Within the city walls and beyond them, "he calls up at will the haunting figure of the 'Other', wearing a mask that exposes but always conceals him".²¹²

²⁰⁹ "Dionysus must have made his way into the Greek mainland from Thrace as well as from Phrygia, once in his old-Thracian form, the other time in a form modified by the influence of neighbouring religions in Asia Minor" (Otto; 1965:52).

²¹⁰ Larson, 2007:126.

²¹¹ "At the same time, his worship shares features with the cults of Phrygian Kybele, who was likewise celebrated with ecstatic dancing to percussive music, and Egyptian Osiris, a chthonian vegetation god who experienced dismemberment and resurrection" (Larson, 2007:126).

²¹² Detienne, 1979:68.

The epithets used for the god often denote the sphere of his influence, a specific mythological connection or function of Dionysos. Dionysos is:

“the nurturer and the god of rapture; he, the god who is forever praised as the giver of wine which removes all sorrow and care; he, the deliverer and healer (*lysios, lyaios, sōter, iatros*)²¹³, “the delight of mortals” (*charma brotoisin*)²¹⁴, “the god of many joys” (*polygetes*) the dancer and ecstatic lover, the bestower of riches (*ploudotes*), the “benefactor” (*eurgetes*) - this god who is the most delightful of all the gods is at the same time the most frightful”.²¹⁵

The relevant epithet that will be further investigated for this paper is *lysios* and *lyaios*. One of the main cult centres for Dionysos was the Temple of Dionysos Lysios in Thebes, believed to be the site where Semele had been engulfed in Zeus’ lightning.²¹⁶ It was also believed that Dionysos’ own grave was to be found in Thebes.²¹⁷ However, Thebes was not the only cult centre of Dionysos Lysios, but Delphi, Korinth and Sikyon had cults of Dionysos Lysios.²¹⁸ Cults of ecstatic frenzy rites followed the set structure of god which they worshipped: mother, son, and dancing attendants. The characters of these roles varied depending on the location of the cult centre and practice. For example, the ecstatic cult in Crete worshipped the figures of Rhea, Zeus and the Kouretes. The Phrygian ecstatic cult worshipped Kybele, Sabazios and the Korybantes and the Theban ecstatic cult saw the worship of Semele, Dionysos and the Satyrs, and later a syncretism of the Cretan Zeus and the Phrygian Sabazios with Dionysos Lysios took place.²¹⁹ Dionysos’ associations with mystery cults of a Bacchic

²¹³λύσιος, λύαιος, σῶτερ; ἰατρος

²¹⁴χαρμα βρότοισιν

²¹⁵ Otto, 1965:113.

²¹⁶ Paus. *Desc. of Greece*. 9.16.6 & 9.12.4

²¹⁷ Ps. Clem. *Recogn.* 10.24

²¹⁸ Leinieks, 1996: 306.

²¹⁹ Leinieks, 1996:306.

nature are found in literary evidence from 5th century BCE Athens, for Euripides describes a Bacchic initiation in a fragment of the *Cretans*:

“Pure is the life I have led since
I became an initiate of Idaean Zeus
and a servitor of night-ranging Zagreus,
performing his feasts of raw flesh
and raising torches high to the mountain mother
among the Kouretes,
I was consecrated and named a Bakkhos.
I clothing all of white I shun
the birthing of men and the places of their dead
I do not go near; against the
of animal foods I have guarded myself”.²²⁰

The inclusion of Bacchic elements to the cult of Idaean Zeus indicates that syncretism has already occurred by the time Euripides produced the *Cretans*. Further syncretism is evident with the reference to the mountain mother, most likely Rhea or Kybele and the use of ‘Bakkhos’ for the initiate and the use of the epithet ‘Zagreus’ for Dionysus are strong indicators that what is being described is an initiation into a Bacchic mystery cult.²²¹ A ritual in Crete in which a bull was torn apart was ceremonially meant to represent the Orphic myth of Dionysos’ rendering apart by the Titans.²²²

²²⁰ *Cret. fr.* 1.9–20.

²²¹ The epithet ‘Zagreus’ refers to Dionysus as the child of Persephone who was dismembered and consumed by the Titans to later be reborn from Semele and this epithet is strongly associated with the Orphic mysteries.

²²² Otto, 1965: 192.

3.1 The Orphic Bricolage

Before the discussion of Dionysos veers into the world of *Orphica*, it is important to indicate the provenance of the Orphic mythology. The Orphic Dionysiac mythology was composed as a bricolage from popular Greek mythology. It is only by the 6th century CE that we have a complete narrative in Olympiodorus' commentary on Plato's *Phaedo*. It is in this commentary that Olympiodorus notes that humans have an immortal soul from Dionysos, as a result of the Titans' consumption of the infant god, "We are, indeed, part of Dionysus if we are composed from the soot of the Titans who ate Dionysus' flesh".²²³ In the mythology of popular ancient literature, no mention is made of the Titans consuming Dionysos. Yet Pindar's *fr.* 131b specifically makes mention of some ancient sorrow of Persephone, which would firmly place the myth in the 5th century BCE. Yet we are still left wondering how the Orphic myth of Dionysos remained undocumented for centuries. Iles-Johnston argues that there are four possible models through which we can consider the myth of Dionysos. The first is that the myth itself might have been around for centuries before it was documented, and "the "author" was an author only in the sense of choosing the poetic words through which to transmit it".²²⁴ This author attributed the poems and mythology to Orpheus, a common practice in the literature and poetry of the ancient world. Yet the problem encountered with this hypothesis is the lack of literary allusions to the Orphic myth before the mid-5th century. The next three models suggested by Iles-Johnston all dealt with the itinerant priests or *orpheotelestai*. These models assume that "one or more of these "entrepreneurs of the sacred" developed a new mystery cult (perhaps in imitation of Eleusis' success) and a new myth to accompany it".²²⁵ Despite these theories put forward by Iles-Johnston, we still do not know to

²²³ Olympiodorus, in Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007:66.

²²⁴ Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 71.

²²⁵ 2007:72.

which of these groups the bricoleur of the Orphic mythology belonged. The theory that the Orphic mythologies and mysteries originated as a response to the already popular Eleusinian mysteries is compelling. The Eleusinian mysteries served as a model from which the Orphic bricoleur could create a mythology for a new cult.

“if one were inspired by Eleusis to create a new mystery cult and sought a god who could be drafted into a role comparable to those played by Demeter and Persephone – that is, a god with ties to the world of the dead who could offer eschatological advantages – Dionysus would be the most obvious choice”.²²⁶

In the 6th century BCE, Dionysos had already been associated with death and the underworld. Heraclitus, the presocratic philosopher, connected Dionysos with Hades and even the Dionysiac festival of popular Greek religion - the Anthesteria - included “rituals designed to ensure that the dead were happy in the afterlife”.²²⁷ Dionysos also held a marginalized position in both the Olympic pantheon, as well as in civic worship. For the bricoleur, Dionysos had the ability to transcend the boundaries of the physical world and the underworld. In late-5th and early 6th century vases, we see depicted a myth of Dionysos’ journey to the underworld to retrieve his mother, Semele. If this myth were known to the Orphic bricoleur, the god’s ability to transcend chthonic boundaries would have allowed him to serve the needs of the new mystery cult. The same could be concluded about the inclusion of Persephone in the Orphic narrative. The bricoleur made the choice not to remove Semele as his mother, but to add a deity already associated with mystery cult and the ability to transcend chthonic boundaries. Similarly, the addition of Dionysos’ dismemberment and rebirth could be connected to the myth of Osiris, who became the king of the underworld in Egyptian mythology. The bricoleur took careful considerations in the construction of the

²²⁶ Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 73

²²⁷ Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 73.

mythology of the Orphic Dionysos. It is important to note that the Orphic myth of Dionysos was created as a metaphor and allegory. This new Dionysos could become the saviour figure of the mysteries.

3.2 Dionysos the Liberator

A compelling reason why Dionysos was chosen by the Orphic bricoleur is his role as a liberator. This role of the god is often recalled in Greek theatre²²⁸ and for the establishment of festivals in honour of the god in the civic festival calendar²²⁹, yet it is also a significant feature of the god's Orphic mythology. The epithet 'Lysios' refers to Dionysos as a liberator or deliverer. The use of this name for Dionysos in the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries is attested to in the Orphic fragments²³⁰ as well as the Orphic Hymn 50 to Lysios Lenaios:

“Hear, blest, Zeus’ son, winepress Bacchos, two-mother,
Solicited seed, many-named, delivering daimon,
Hidden-birth, shoot of the blest, evian Bacchos,
Well-nursed, fruitful, increasing the fruit of joy,
Burst-earth, god of the winepress, great-might, variform,
To mortals revealing the pain-pausing cure, holy bloom,
Men’s joy of relief, Epaphios, beautiful haired,
Deliverer, thyrsus-mad, roarer, crier, kind to all,
Manifest at will to immortals and mortals,
I call you now, come to the mystae pleasant, fruit-bearing”.

²²⁸ Euripides’ *Bacchae*.

²²⁹ the foundation myth of the Rural Dionysia – the myth of Eleuther.

²³⁰ OF 52.2; 42.4; 65.7

Dionysos as a liberator is expressed in various myths of the god and many of these myths led to the establishment of festivals in honour of the god, and interestingly most of the Dionysiac festivals took place in the winter. For example, the Lenaia festival of Athens which took place in the winter month of Gamelion. The Lenaia, like the City Dionysia, was a state sponsored festival and was mostly attended by the resident population of Athens. According to Leinieks, the Lenaia was associated with the pruning of the vines which took place in the winter months.²³¹ Pickard-Cambridge argues that the festival was named for the term *lênai*, “known to be an appellation of the bacchanals or maenads”²³². It is debated whether the Lenaia included mystical elements of Bacchic religion, but it has been speculated that the festival was introduced into Athens from a foreign source, either Macedonia, Thrace or more likely, Thebes.²³³

The Lenaia festival also included a procession. The procession, conducted by the *archon basileus* and the *epimeletai*, saw an effigy adorned with ivy followed by a band of bacchantes in Bacchic revelry and included a *sparagmos* rite – ritual rendering apart of a sacrificial animal.²³⁴ The foundation myth of the festival might be linked to the death and dismemberment of Dionysos at the hands of the Titans, as is noted in later authors, such as Clement of Alexandria.²³⁵ Much of what we know about the Lenaia festival has been recorded by late authors and come from places outside of Athens. These accounts by later authors indicate a connection between the Lenaia and the Eleusinian mysteries evidenced by the invocation of *Iakchos* at the festival²³⁶, an epithet of Dionysos in some cases.²³⁷ In other festivals in honour of the god, such as the City Dionysia, there were also elements of

²³¹ Leinieks, 1996:181.

²³² Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:29.

²³³ See, Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35, n. 3.

²³⁴ Leinieks, 1996: 285-286.

²³⁵ Discussed by Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35

²³⁶ See, Pickard-Cambridge, 1968:35, n.1

²³⁷ Linked with Demeter in the Eleusinian Mysteries

liberation. Aeschines notes that prisoners and slaves are released for the duration of the City Dionysia²³⁸ and Plutarch states that Dionysos releases from everything.²³⁹ In Eretria (308 BCE) the cult of Dionysos was established to celebrate the liberation of the city, and at Athens (294 BCE) the liberator Demetrius Poliorketes became associated with Dionysos.²⁴⁰

Further important literary evidence for the rites of Dionysos Lysios in Thebes comes from Pindar's *Dithyramb for the Thebans*:

“What rite of Bromios the heavenly ones keep in their halls
beside the scepter of Zeus. In the sacred presence of the Great
Mother the whirling of the tambourines begins; there is the
rattle of castanets; the torch blazes beneath the golden pines.
The loud wailings, the frenzies, and the shouts of the Naiads
arise along with neck-tossing motion. There also stir the powerful
fire-breathing thunderbolt and the spear of Enyalios. The
stout aegis of Pallas resounds with the hissing of ten thousand
serpents. Solitary Artemis steps lightly, having yoked in Bakchic
rites the fierce tribe of lions. He delights also in the dancing
of herds of wild beasts”.²⁴¹

The dithyramb details the rites and worship of the Theban Dionysos who delivers and liberates and further acts as a source for Euripides in the *Bacchae*'s representation Dionysiac religion in Thebes and since it was written for the Thebans, Pindar's dithyramb describes a rite that is “undoubtedly a Theban Dionysiac rite. It is almost certainly the rite of the Theban

²³⁸ Aesch. 3.41

²³⁹ *Moralia* 613c

²⁴⁰ Seaford, 2006:29.

²⁴¹ Snell 70b, as in (Leinieks, 1996:136).

Dionysos Lysios, Dionysos the Liberator”²⁴². As for Euripides’ choice in the Theban Dionysos Lysios, he purposefully made use of this type of Dionysiac worship for the *Bacchae* as, “this Theban Dionysiac rite was, no doubt, familiar to his Athenian audience. The audience understood the play in terms of Dionysos Lysios, not in terms of a mystery cult”.²⁴³

How does Dionysos liberate? From Euripides’ *Bacchae* we learn that he has liberated women from their daily work and freed them from the private sphere of society where they must remain:

“The Dionysos of the *Bacchae* is not a god of antirationalism but rather a god of liberation. What Euripides has done in the play, is to extend and elaborate his ideas about freedom and present them in religious terms, using as his vehicle the Dionysus of a specific Theban cult, the cult of Dionysus Lysios, ‘Dionysus the Liberator’”.²⁴⁴

3.2.1 Liberation and Wine

In the *Bacchae*, he liberates the bacchantes that had been captured by Pentheus (226-227) and Dionysos also liberates himself (in the guise of the Stranger) from the bounds with which Pentheus tried to capture him (648). He also liberates from hunger (703-8), as well as pain (771). It is through wine that he provides this liberation from pain. Another important feature of Dionysos’ liberation is that he liberates from thirst. This is found in the *Bacchae* (703-8), but it is a very noteworthy feature of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries. The Hipponion tablet urges the initiate not to drink from the spring where “the souls of the dead refresh themselves”(4).²⁴⁵ This thirst is again evidenced in one of the tablets from Pelinna, where the

²⁴² Leinieks, 1996:137.

²⁴³ (Leinieks, 1996:137).

²⁴⁴ (Leinieks, 1996:4)

²⁴⁵ No 1 in Graf & Illes Johnston

initiate must say, “I am parched with thirst. But grant me to drink from the spring” (9-10).²⁴⁶

The initiate must drink from the lake of Memory where they will be liberated from their thirst and retain their knowledge of the mysteries in blessed afterlife. The mysteries of the Orphic Dionysos allow these initiates then to experience this liberation.

In Hesiod’s *Works and Days* we learn that Dionysos is the giver of wine and at this point he is not the product itself but he is associated with the vine that gives it.²⁴⁷ Euripides would be the first to associate Dionysos with wine itself, identifying him as *Bakchos* regarding wine.²⁴⁸ In the *Bacchae*, Teiresias argues that wine is the relief of pain and the anxieties of the human world (281-3) and wine is described by Aristophanes’ *Wasps* as a sleep-inducing agent (9). According to Seaford (2006), wine in the *Bacchae* “does not sustain life to the extent that corn does, but it does embody – in nature and not merely in ritual – the transformation or liberation of the psyche”.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, it is through the consumption of wine that humans attain a Dionysiac madness through intoxication. And regarding the connection between Dionysos and wine there is also an association of wine and blood, “with wine being described as the blood of the vine, [which] is ancient and widespread”.²⁵⁰ In the *Bacchae* wine is given to the Theban women on the mountain without any toil on their part and along with milk from the earth, nourishes them and liberates them from thirst (703-8).

Dionysos’ connection with wine also originates from his own mythology, for it is suggested that the dismemberment and subsequent rebirth of Dionysos symbolises the growth and harvesting of the grape-vine and the drinking of the wine as being the Titans devouring the body of Dionysos²⁵¹ and this association ultimately leads to the discussion of Dionysos as a

²⁴⁶ No 25 in Graf & Illes Johnston

²⁴⁷ Hes. *Works and Days*, 614.

²⁴⁸ Eur. *IT*. 953-4.

²⁴⁹ Seaford, 2006:22.

²⁵⁰ Seaford, 2006:117.

²⁵¹ Diordorus, 3.62.6-7 & Plutarch, *Moralia*, 389a.

god of vegetation²⁵² and fertility. The vegetation with which he is most well-connected serves to act as a foil for the god in the natural world, one that is observable by his followers. The ivy and the vine are most important in this aspect. The life cycle of the vine which bears the madness-inducing fruit is peculiar like the god. At first, the vine puts out “shade-seeking shoots, the scandent tendrils with the well-known lobed leaves”. However, later a second type of shoot appears on the plant which grows “upright and turns toward the light.” And it is this type of shoot that bears the flowers and berries and “like Dionysos, it could well be called “twice-born””.²⁵³ But it is this life cycle and Dionysos’ connection with the plant that make him a vegetation deity²⁵⁴, for the viticultural cycle of the vine symbolises the god’s own journey into death and rebirth. It is this connection that has immediate connections with the Bacchic mysteries and the concept of the soul. As such Dionysos’ connection with the viticultural cycle and status as a god of vegetation and agricultural fertility, like Persephone, makes him a suitable candidate for a mystery cult whose deity is able to transgress boundaries of the physical world and the spiritual afterlife.

²⁵² “His theatre of operation is not vegetation in general, as is said currently, but a mysteriously aroused element of life which appears in an unusually clear focus in certain plants but also can be perceived in numerous aspects of the human and animal world” (Otto, 1965:152).

²⁵³ Otto, 1965:154.

²⁵⁴ “Dionysos’ original function as the anthropomorphized representation of the vine is thus still strongly represented both in the cult names and the epithets applied to him” (Leinieks, 1996:180).

3.3 The Orphic Dionysos

As previously mentioned, there is a definitive link with Dionysos and the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries as is evidenced in the Orphic hymns to Dionysos and the various gold lamellae and tablets that attest to a Bacchic mystery cult. These links can also be attested to in the Orphic fragments, most notably fragments 497-505. Then who is the Dionysos of these Orphico-Bacchic mysteries? I would propose that he is Dionysos Lysios. By this I mean that he is the Dionysos that liberates, but he is not the Dionysos as represented by Euripides in the *Bacchae* or the Theban Dionysos Lysios of Pindar's *Dithyramb to the Thebans*. He is one that is distinct from the Dionysos celebrated in the public festivals of the Athenian calendar but undoubtedly a derivation of this Dionysos.

We know from Orphic mythology that the Dionysos celebrated by the Orphics is one born three times: once from Zeus and Persephone, a second time from Zeus and Semele and a third time from Zeus' thigh. This already contrasts the Dionysos of popular Greek religion who was not born of Persephone, but only from Semele and Zeus' thigh. It is from the death and dismemberment of the Orphic Dionysos that the theory of original sin comes about which all humans have, and it is this crime by the Titans that is the ancient sorrow of Persephone as seen in the Thurii tablet. It is this Dionysos who has seen death once before and was reborn that the initiates of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries worship and call upon in their hymns to the god, who is the giver of the vine which acts as the god's foil in the natural world. This rebirth of the god must provide the reasoning behind the choice of Dionysos as the god of these mysteries. For as Firmicus Maternus states, "be confident, *mystai*, since the god has been saved; you too will be saved from your toils".²⁵⁵ Therefore, the initiates are compelled to worship the god who has died once before and who has been reborn, for he has the

²⁵⁵ See, Burkert, 1987:156, n.50.

knowledge of the underworld and “it is evident that the fate of the initiate is modelled on the fate of the god as represented in myth and ritual”.²⁵⁶

I propose a further investigation into the purpose served by Dionysos Lysios in public Greek religion and literature. This character we can glean from the representation of Dionysos in Euripides’ *Bacchae*²⁵⁷ and the brief account of telestic worship in Pindar’s *Dithyramb to the Thebans*. Firstly, I will begin by briefly giving an account of the rites as presented by these two texts, for they are in essence similar. Both the play and the poem indicate that the worship of Dionysos Lysios entails the presence of percussive instruments²⁵⁸ that have in been attributed to Rhea or the Great Mother. Further, the use of these instruments occurs in conjunction with dancing and revelry as well as an exhibition of frenzy in the form of cries and shouts of the participants. Both texts indicate a close connection of the revellers with the natural world and animals. These texts serve to support the theory that the worship of Theban Dionysos Lysios was one of ecstatic frenzy. It is important to note that Euripides’ *Bacchae* was not a treatise of Dionysiac religion. This is not Euripides’ intention. The play, “rather than depicting Dionysiac religion in the late fifth century, gives us those elements of Dionysiac cult or cults that Euripides for one purpose or another found useful”.²⁵⁹ This does not mean that it should be disregarded in a discussion about Dionysiac religion, for it provides useful insights into the worship of Dionysos in Thebes. What Euripides and Pindar do support is the idea that liberation is one of the main tenets of Dionysiac religion, particularly in public religion. This tenet of public Dionysiac religion is one shared with the

²⁵⁶ Burkert, 1987:75.

²⁵⁷ Eur. *Ba.* 720-5.

²⁵⁸ Eur. *Ba.* 58-60.

²⁵⁹ Leinieks, 1996:4.

private Orphico-Bacchic mystery cult in which Dionysos is key²⁶⁰, particularly the liberation of the soul from metempsychosis.

3.3.1 The Lord of Souls

In the context of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries, Dionysos is then the liberator of the soul from its continuous cycle of rebirth and metempsychosis. In one of his *Dirges* Pindar states, “happy they all [are] on account of the *teletai* that free from suffering”.²⁶¹ The use of the word ‘*teletai*’ specifically indicates Bacchic initiation rites. Although not much is known about the initiation process, we do know that the purification ritual conducted by itinerant priests included *karthamoi* and *epaoidai* (purifications and incantations).²⁶² Dionysos as the ‘Lord of Souls’ is also evidenced in a fragment dithyramb by Melanippides.²⁶³

The suffering of the Orphic initiate is metempsychosis. The deity of mystery cult who promises a blessed afterlife also tends to be a deity associated with fertility and vegetation. This is evidenced by the roles associated with Persephone, Demeter and Dionysos, and their positions as fertility deities. This association between chthonic vegetation deities and a blessed afterlife for initiates is one established in Thrace. For example, the Thracian god Zamolxis was worshipped by the Getai-Daci, “with whom the departed spirit entered into wished-for communion” and often “the human victim was sometimes dispatched to him as messenger from the living”.²⁶⁴ From this cult we are aware of a theory of the soul’s immortality present in Thrace. Also present in Thrace was a cult of souls that worshipped Dionysos, known as Sabos or Sabazios in Thracian cult. The worship of the god included

²⁶⁰ It is not possible to apply this hypothesis to the entire Orphic community, but I suggest that there was possibly a sect within the community that worshipped a Dionysos Lysios –type deity. See (Leinieks, 1996:149) for an argument against this hypothesis, and one in favour of Zeus as the deity of the mysteries.

²⁶¹ Burkert, 1987:22.

²⁶² Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease*. 1.10. & Plato, *Rep.* 364b-365a.

²⁶³ PMG 762 in Hordern, J.H. ‘Two Notes on Greek Dithyrambic Poetry’. *The Classical Quarterly*, 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1998), pp. 289-291. Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Classical Association.

²⁶⁴ Farnell, 1909:99.

ecstatic revelry and dancing to reach a state known as *ekstasis*. Once *ekstasis* was achieved, “the soul is liberated from the cramping prison of the body, it communes with the god and develops power of which, in ordinary life of everyday, thwarted by the body, it knew nothing”.²⁶⁵

Dionysos as the liberator of the initiated soul from metempsychosis is also evidenced in the bone plaque from Olbia²⁶⁶, which specifically name a Dionysos of the Orphics. In plaque A, the words are “life-death-life” which makes obvious reference to metempsychosis. Following this is the word “truth”, which possibly refers to the knowledge the initiate has learned from the *teletai* of the mystery cult. Lastly, the words “Dio(nysus) Orphic” occur, which firmly place these plaques in the cult of an Orphic Dionysos. This plaque clearly links the theory of metempsychosis with the worship of the Orphic Dionysos, indicating that he acts as a liberator from the cycle of rebirth.²⁶⁷

Dionysos’ relationship with the soul is well-known and evidenced in popular Greek religion and Greek drama. In the *Bacchae*, the chorus describe the relationship the god has with those initiated into his rites:

“Blessed is the one who, truly happy,
knowing the initiations of the gods,
is pure in life and
joins his soul to the thiasos” (72-6).²⁶⁸

This passage indicates that the initiated joins his soul with the other initiates. Plato also notes that Dionysiac ‘frenzy’ is shared²⁶⁹, which indicates a unity of spirits experienced by initiates

²⁶⁵ Rohde, 1966:206.

²⁶⁶ Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007:185-7.

²⁶⁷ cf. Zhmud, 1992.

²⁶⁸ transl. Seaford, 2006:32.

²⁶⁹ Pl. *Symp.* 218b

of Dionysiac worship. This unity of the spirit within the *thiasos* is further attested to in (693), when the Theban women leap up in unison, and begin their revelries with that of the natural world which surrounds them. In (725), the women call to Dionysos in unison.²⁷⁰ The formation of the *thiasos* in the *Bacchae* is an example of initiation into the Bacchic mysteries, for “mystic initiation merges the individual soul into the group”.²⁷¹ This initiation creates a unity of souls, for the unity of the *thiasos* is “presented as operating in the soul”.²⁷² This is Dionysos’ position as the Lord of Souls, for he allows his initiates to join into his *thiasos* and be released from the cycle of rebirths to re-join the cosmic world soul, which is Dionysos. The purpose of the release is to become one with Dionysos.

Also presented in Greek drama is the possession of souls by the god. The possession of the soul by Dionysos is manifested in a physical reaction in the body of the possessed, for Leinieks states that “the disturbance of the soul is transmitted to the body and is observable in the person’s bodily movements”.²⁷³ The impact of frenzy and *mania* on the mind of the reveller is made visible in their bodies by the poet. This is seen later in the play when Kadmos asks Agaue “is the fluttering still in your soul?” (1268).²⁷⁴ If this is how the soul functions in the service of Dionysos Lysios, a god of popular and public Greek religion, then how can it not be that the soul should function in the same way for the private mystery cult of a god that possesses essentially the same sphere of influence and function? For it is through the ritual service and revelry that the initiate can achieve purification and learn the secrets of the mysteries to reach the blessed afterlife in the company of chthonic Persephone.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Leinieks, 1996:329 on Dionysiac unity

²⁷¹ Seaford, 2006:32.

²⁷² Leinieks, 1996: 339.

²⁷³ Leinieks, 1996:107.

²⁷⁴ Cf. 214

The immortal part of human beings, the soul, comes from Dionysos because the Titans consumed him.²⁷⁵ By taking this mythology into account, we are better able to understand how Dionysos can infiltrate and possess human souls as no other god of the Olympic pantheon is able to do, because it is the soul that comes from Dionysos. Macrobius (4th c. CE) even argues that Dionysos is the soul of the world and that through *teletai*, the human soul is returned to the soul of Dionysos, the world soul. It is because of this intricate relationship Dionysos has with the human soul that he can liberate the soul from the cycle of rebirth, for he acts as the Lord of Souls.²⁷⁶ The metempsychosis not only being a payment of punishment for Persephone, his mother, but also to the god himself for the injustice done to him by the mortal part of humans, the Titans.

²⁷⁵ Pl. *Laws*, 701b & 854b & Olympiodorus & Damascius, *In Plat. Phaedon*.

²⁷⁶ "Mysterious dedications called him the Lord of Souls" Otto, 1965:49.

4. Conclusion

To conclude this paper, I wish to offer a correlation between the points made above. Firstly, how do the three theories regarding metempsychosis relate to each other? There are overlaps. It is uncertain which of the three theories discussed came first, but essentially, they all have similar beliefs regarding the soul. Plato's doctrine of the soul is one that has undoubtedly been influenced by the theories of Pythagoras, for even Aristotle notes that Plato followed Pythagoras in many things.²⁷⁷ The general theory that is shared by Plato, the Pythagoreans and the Orphics is that the soul is immortal and that it experiences a cycle of rebirths known as metempsychosis or transmigration and that the eventual aim of human life is to try and break free from that cycle through purification of the soul and living a morally good and pure lifestyle, including the prohibitions to which they must adhere. It is in the breaking free from the cycle that the theories differ, with the philosophical theorists believing that it is through leading a pure life and contemplation that the immortal soul is released. However, the religious account, that of the Orphics, believe that it through initiation into the mysteries of the Orphico-Bacchic deities, who have themselves experienced death that the immortal soul is able to be ritually released.

Then why is Dionysos an appropriate god for these Orphic-Bacchic mysteries? I proposed above that it because of his function as a liberator and the relationship he has with the human soul that he is the ideal candidate for the chosen god of these mysteries. His function as liberator and origin of the human soul is one that is possibly even shared between popular and public Greek religion and the private mystery cult. The mystery cult acts an allegory for the journey of the soul, because, according to the late antiquity literature, human souls are made of the same immortality as Dionysos. Thus he can possess and control the soul, and this also

²⁷⁷ Arist. *Met.* 1.6.987a30

gives him the power to decide whether the soul should be freed from its cycle. Therefore, it is important to be initiated into his cult, for those *teletai* hold the insurance of release from metempsychosis. As is known in many myths regarding the rejection and wrath of Dionysos, we know that he is a vengeful and jealous god when he is not accepted or worshipped appropriately.²⁷⁸ The initiates of these Orphico-Bacchic mysteries become his worshippers and accept Dionysos as their god. They essentially become a part of a collective *thiasos* made up of other initiates that allow them to partake in a community of worship and a unity of religious ideals. Thereafter, in death, they are united to the cosmic world soul which is Dionysos and take their place in a cosmic *thiasos*. Dionysos' own mythology and birth narrative make him an appealing figure for a cult which believes in life after death. He himself was resurrected after his death and dismemberment by the Titans and this myth provides an appropriate liturgy for the cult members. They believe that their souls, although immortal, are bound to suffer continuous rebirth as a payment for the ancient sorrow of Persephone. The death of Dionysos then adequately provides reason for both metempsychosis as well as the notion of original sin. Secondly, his position as a god of vegetation and his connection with the vine further makes him an appropriate deity for the cult, for like the vine, Dionysos must also experience chthonic capabilities. He can transcend the boundaries of the underworld and the physical world in a way that many of the other gods cannot. This also explains why other chthonic deities such as Persephone and Demeter have minor roles in the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries and why Orpheus, a mythical figure who was able to enter the underworld and return to the living, is the 'founder' of these mysteries. Furthermore, Dionysos' role as the liberator is vital for the mysteries. He is described in ancient sources as liberating from all the pains of life, including thirst. From other ancient sources and archaeological evidence, we are aware that a great thirst is experienced by the dead and that

²⁷⁸ Cf. Myth of the daughters of Minyas, Proteus and the *Bacchae*

upon arrival in the underworld; the dead quench this thirst by drinking from the spring of Forgetting. Therefore, by drinking from the lake of Mnemosyne, the initiates can be liberated from their thirst and retain their knowledge of the mysteries to enter the blessed afterlife.

I have proposed that the Dionysos of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries is similar, if not derived from, Dionysos Lysios. Dionysos Lysios is a publicly celebrated deity with cult centres. He is described by ancient sources as a vengeful god who wants to have all the people of a city be initiated into his cult. His cult contains elements that are like the cult of the Great Mother and of Idaean Zeus and requires worship through frenzy and revelry. The cult of Dionysos Lysios is best described in Euripides' *Bacchae*, Pindar's *Dithyramb for the Thebans*, and the descriptions of the Thracian worship of Dionysos, as being an ecstatic cult, yet one major difference between the public and private cult is the theory of the soul of the initiate.

Although it is possible to infer this connection in the *Bacchae*, it is one that is not noted by Euripides and therefore cannot be explicitly inferred about the public cult of Dionysos Lysios. We can, however, infer this from the private mystery cult, as we have the evidence of this connection.

I do not suggest that Dionysos Lysios is the exact same as the god celebrated by the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries, but rather that the two share a similar function regarding the liberation and the relationship with the soul. An important difference between the two is that the Orphic Dionysos was worshipped relatively privately in the confines of the mystery cult, and most likely remained relatively hidden from public view. In contrast, Dionysos Lysios was worshipped publicly in his cult centres around Greece and especially in Thebes.

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Classical Studies Section

MA Thesis: “Thrice-born Dionysos: an analysis of the birth narrative of
Dionysos in Nonnos of Panopolis’ *Dionysiaca*”.”

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a MA by coursework and thesis

Supervisor: Dr. David van Schoor (d.vanschoor@ru.ac.za)

Table of Contents

Introduction

1. Nonnos of Panopolis in Context

1.1 The When and Where of Nonnos of Panopolis

1.2 The Political Context

1.3 The Social Context

1.4 The Religious Context

2. The History Dionysos

2.1 The Bronze Age

2.2 The Archaic Period

2.2.1 Homeric Epic

2.2.2 The Homeric Hymns

2.2.3 Archaic Iconography

2.3 The Classical Period

2.3.1 Historiography

2.3.2 Greek Drama

2.3.3 The Mysteries

2.3.3.1 Archaeological Evidence

2.3.4 Classical Iconography

2.4 The Hellenistic Period

2.4.1 Literature

2.4.2 Hellenistic Iconography

2.5 The Roman Period

2.5.1 Literature

2.5.2 The *Orphic Hymns*

2.5.3 Roman Iconography

3. The First Birth of Dionysos

- 3.1 The *Dionysiaca*: A summary of the first birth
- 3.2 The Analysis of the First Birth
 - 3.2.1 Deo and Persephone
 - 3.2.2 Cave Symbolism
 - 3.2.3 Serpent Symbolism
 - 3.2.4 Persephone and the Mysteries
- 3.3 Zagreus
 - 3.3.1 The Metamorphoses of Zagreus
 - 3.3.2 The *Sparagmos* of Zagreus
- 3.4 Zeus' Vengeance
- 3.5 Conclusion
- 4. The Second Birth of Dionysos
 - 4.1 The *Dionysiaca*: a summary of the second birth
 - 4.1.1 Book 7: Summary
 - 4.1.2 Book 8: Summary
 - 4.2. The Analysis of the Second Birth
 - 4.2.1 The God of Vegetal Rebirth
 - 4.2.1.1 Ivy and Vine: Plutarch on Dionysus and Vegetable Life
 - 4.2.1.2 Dionysus, Viticulture and Farming Festivals
 - 4.2.2 The Bull
 - 4.2.2.1 Nonnos' Bull God
 - 4.2.3 The Metamorphoses of Zeus
 - 4.2.4 Semele
 - 4.3 Conclusion
- 5. The Third Birth of Dionysos
 - 5.1 The *Dionysiaca*: A summary of the third birth
 - 5.2 The Analysis of the Third Birth
 - 5.2.1 Zeus' Thigh
 - 5.2.1.1 Active vs Passive

5.2.1.2 The God of Duality

5.2.2 Zeus and Dionysos: Like Father, Like Son

5.2.2.1 Metamorphoses

5.2.2.2 Bulls

5.2.2.3 Caves

5.2.2.4 Rape

5.2.2.5 Theogamy and Voyeurism

5.3 Conclusion

6. Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix A: Images

Introduction

This project aims to investigate and analyse the birth narrative of the god Dionysus as presented in Books 6, 7, 8 and 9 of Nonnus of Panopolis' epic the *Dionysiaca*. It will describe and examine the implications this narrative might have for the representation of the god's character and nature in the epic. The Nonnian birth narrative will be compared to other birth narratives of Dionysus, to trace and identify the possible sources for the narrative as we find it in the *Dionysiaca*. Furthermore, by considering the research questions such as : What elements of the Nonnian birth narrative can be traced to earlier representations of the narrative? How does the representation of Dionysus' birth in the *Dionysiaca* reveal and prepare for elements of Dionysus' character and nature as presented in the rest of the *Dionysiaca*? What is the relationship between Dionysus and his father Zeus, and how does this impact the events in the rest of the narrative? How does the birth narrative of Dionysus as presented in the *Dionysiaca* bear upon his position in the hierarchy of the Olympian pantheon? I expect to develop a comparative study of historical texts and iconography which may have informed the poet's characterisation of Dionysos.

The methodology of this project will be qualitative and comparative, entailing an investigation of sources and their relationship to later texts that they can be said to engender, since this is a comparative literary study having late antiquity poetry as the principle object while seeking to fully explicate its emplacement in a tradition that reaches back a millennium to the 6th and 5th Centuries BCE²⁷⁹. This project therefore aims to collect data largely from Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* in Rouse's translation (1940). The analysis of the data will require isolating key events within the relevant books, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In conjunction with the analysis of Nonnus' work, this project will also make use of other sources in the form of iconography and archaeological texts. The purpose of the inclusion of archaeological texts and iconography is to establish a coherent image of Dionysus from the early Archaic period up to the Roman period. This will be addressed in the project in the form of an investigation and a brief compilation of Dionysus' chronology in the ancient literary and iconographic world. Sources which will be especially useful in this investigation include: Euripides' *Bacchae*, the Orphic account of Dionysus' birth and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as certain visual

²⁷⁹ This project aims to combine qualitative and comparative literary methodologies focused on literary and philological evidence. This approach will not exclude the use of other helpful evidence, such as archaeological or epigraphic.

representations²⁸⁰ found in vase paintings from the *Beazley Archive Pottery Database* (BAPD²⁸¹) and the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC²⁸²), which will be used as corroborating evidence for the events in the *Dionysiaca*. By analysing earlier accounts of the birth narrative, I will be able to form a reasoned hypothesis about the implications that elements of Dionysus' birth have for the role of the god in the rest of Nonnus' narrative.

The primary ancient sources will be used comparatively to better understand the elements of the birth narrative that have been inherited from the archaic and classical period and after. Here it will become discernible which elements Nonnus himself introduced and we may begin to infer his purposes and objectives from the inclusions, transformations, and reconfiguration of the traditional material which he makes. The comparative analysis of the primary texts will be inset within the frame of recent work in Nonnian scholarship. The comparative analysis of the ancient texts is expected to occupy the larger part of the body of the project, which will culminate in an assessment of the findings in relation to the initial goals of the research.

1. Nonnos of Panopolis in Context

The socio-political and religious context of an ancient text can reveal much about the author and the surrounding conditions in which the text was composed. By considering these factors, one can formulate a better understanding for the choices made by the author within the text itself. For this research, the socio-political and religious contexts of late antiquity Egypt need to be considered to gain a better understanding of Nonnos of Panopolis and his motivations in the composition of a pagan epic in a time where Christianity was fast gaining popularity. By providing a brief investigation of these contexts, I am attempting to place the project in the immediate context of the poet. The goal is to approach a better understanding of the poet's particular narrative choices.

²⁸⁰ Isler-Kerenyi (2006).

²⁸¹ The BAPD is an online corpus of pottery and vases of the ancient Mediterranean.

²⁸² The LIMC is a multivolume encyclopaedia which catalogues iconographic representations in classical antiquity.

1.1 The When and Where of Nonnos of Panopolis

Little is known about the life of Nonnos. Only Panopolis, his place of birth, is certain. There have been many attempts to reconstruct a biography of the poet's life, most famously the forged biography of Constantine Simonides and works of fiction by more modern authors, such as Richard Garnett's *The Poet of Panopolis* (1888). The *Suda* provides a brief biography as a marginal gloss which conveys little information, apart from his birthplace, that he was a learned man and that he composed a hexameter version of the fourth Gospel.²⁸³ What is interesting about the entry in the *Suda* is that it makes no mention of Nonnos' most extensive work, the *Dionysiaca*. Some modern scholars have attempted to reconstruct his biography, with Liebeschuetz at the forefront of this endeavour. He claims that it is possible that Nonnos had studied in Beirut,²⁸⁴ which had become a legal centre of study after Romanisation of the Phoenicia.²⁸⁵ Yet no other biographical information can be gleaned from contemporary Nonnian sources. The most intriguing aspect of Nonnos' life is regarding his own religious beliefs. His paraphrase of the Gospel of John precedes his epic of Dionysos²⁸⁶, yet it is unknown to what end he composed the two works or for what purpose. One could speculate that Nonnos was indeed a Christian who had composed a vast epic of pagan mythology as a compendium or for use in teaching, yet this is merely speculation, and will be explored later in this research project. The focus therefore shifts to the primary text of this research, the *Dionysiaca*, to place it in its socio-political context.

Although most scholars agree that the probable date of composition of the *Dionysiaca* falls within the 5th century CE, the exact date of composition is widely debated.²⁸⁷ Rouse offers 500 CE as the date of composition,²⁸⁸ yet modern scholars such as Accorinti offer other methods for determining what he calls the "*terminus post quem*".²⁸⁹ This possible '*terminus post quem*' is provided by Claudian Claudianus, another Egyptian poet from the 4th century CE, whose work the Greek *Gigantomachy* was well-known to Nonnos. A more convincing *terminus post quem* comes from an epigram by Cyrus of Panopolis dated to 441 CE, which Nonnos appears to imitate in Book XVI and XX of the *Dionysiaca*.²⁹⁰ The exact dates of

²⁸³ *SOL*, s.v. 'Nóvvaí'.

²⁸⁴ Liebeschuetz, 2001: 236-7.

²⁸⁵ Jones-Hall, 2004: 195-200.

²⁸⁶ Dilley, 2018: 186.

²⁸⁷ Friedländer (1912); Lind (1934); Vian (1976) ix–xviii; Baldwin (1986); Miguélez-Cavero (2008) 17–18

²⁸⁸ 1940: vii.

²⁸⁹ Accorinti, 2016: 28f.

²⁹⁰ *Dion.* XVI.321 & XX.372.

composition may never be definitely established, but if we can reasonably assume that the text was composed by Nonnus during the 5th century CE, more specifically 450 CE,²⁹¹ we may investigate the contemporary socio-political context, and that may provide further clues to dating and potentially illuminate the poet's motivations.

Nonnos lived during the height of religious and social changes in Egypt. It is argued by scholars that his connection with Egypt and Panopolis can be seen in his work²⁹² and that the composition of his epic took place in Alexandria.²⁹³ It is further offered by Accorinti that Nonnos may have been from a "Christian family from Asia Minor", and the evidence he offers for this claim is that the name 'Νόννος' (holy, or pure) "probably a nickname for 'uncle' or 'grandfather',²⁹⁴ was not only widespread in late antique Egypt, but also in Asia Minor and in Greece (Boeotia)".²⁹⁵ Evidence for Nonnos' travels throughout Asia Minor are attested to in the *Dionysiaca* by his descriptions of natural landscapes, particularly Tyre in Book XL, 319-326. Much of the poet's biography has been created by scholars to understand the poet and his possible motivations for creating two supposedly opposite works of poetry, one seemingly pagan and the other Christian. This alone makes Nonnos a figure worthy of study and investigation. The lack of evidence and distinct biographical information hinders any effort to understand the mind of the poet.

1.2 The Political Context

Constantine became emperor of the Western Roman Empire in 306 CE, including Britain, Spain, and Gaul and, by 325 CE, Constantine had declared himself *Augustus*.²⁹⁶ In 330 CE, Constantine established a new imperial residence in the east and renamed it Constantinople.²⁹⁷ Constantine, like Diocletian many years before, established and implemented many new reforms to the political, social, and religious structure of the Empire. The Eastern half of the Roman Empire would thenceforth be known by modern scholars as the Byzantine Empire and it was during the reign of the Byzantine Empire that Nonnos lived

²⁹¹ Chuvin, 2016: 116.

²⁹² Chamberlayne points out that the author of this papyrus had some knowledge of Egyptian fauna, for he "speaks of the hippopotamus" (1916: 41).

²⁹³ Accorinti, 2016: 23.

²⁹⁴ 2016: 25.

²⁹⁵ The name 'Νόννος' appears to be of Eastern Christian origin and it is rarely witnessed before the fourth century (Hernandez de la Fuente, 2018: 356).

²⁹⁶ Pohlsander, 1996: 21.

²⁹⁷ Pohlsander, 1996: 66.

in Alexandria around the mid-5th Century CE. In 408 CE, Theodosius II became emperor of the Byzantine Empire at the age of seven. Upon his death in 450 CE, he was succeeded by Marcian who would rule the Byzantine Empire for a further seven years until 457 CE. It is during the reign of Theodosius II and Marcian that Nonnos was a resident of Alexandria.

1.3 The Social Context

The social context of 5th century CE Alexandria refers to the social hierarchy, class system and civic relations and relationships present in the city at the time. The position of the city of Alexandria is key for understanding its social and political significance. As a hub of trade and intellectual resources, Alexandria became a meeting place for great minds of the ancient world and it “proved an intellectual magnet attracting generation upon generation of the finest scholars, philosophers, poets, and inventors”²⁹⁸ and was referred to by ancient scholars as “the conjunction of the whole world”.²⁹⁹

The most significant social conflict in 5th century CE was the religious tension between the Christian and pagan communities which ultimately lead to the death of the pagan philosopher Hypatia in 415 CE at the orders of the patriarch, Cyril. After the death of Hypatia, the pagan community led a tenuous existence and slowly diminished over the century. This is significant in the overall picture of Nonnos’ context as he would have risked his life if he were to openly live as a pagan in 5th century Alexandria as is evidenced in a story reported in Zachariah of Mytilene’s *Life of Severus* in which he tells of a young man named Paralios who questioned pagans on their religious rituals, the result of which was mass anti-pagan sentiment in the city.

1.4 The Religious Context

The environment of 450 CE Alexandria was permeated by religion. “Alexandrians of differing persuasions all inhabited the same religious landscape” and yet, “conversion to Christianity required a sharp break from many practices” that made up the urban life of Alexandria”.³⁰⁰ The religious environment surrounding Nonnos possessed a rich history of violence and unification. To illustrate what Nonnos would have experienced in the religious context of Alexandria, one must consider the position of all the religious communities. In 450

²⁹⁸ Pollard & Reid, 2006: 12.

²⁹⁹ Dio Chrysostom. *Orations*, 32.

³⁰⁰ Haas, 1997: 182.

CE, Christianity was the chief religion of the city, followed by smaller sects of Judaism, Gnostics, and variations of Abrahamic religion. Although paganism was not as openly practiced, there still existed evidence of the cults of the Hellenistic and Roman ages and as with all religious syncretism, aspects of these pagan cults could still be gleaned from the Christian literature.

Politically, the city underwent many changes of government from the time of its conception in 330 BCE and each of these governments laid the foundation for its successor, culminating in the Byzantine city in which Nonnos was a resident. Social conflict, coupled with religious conflict, often made the city rife with violence and upheaval. Yet despite these difficulties, Alexandria maintained a large population of academics, historians, theologians, scientists, and philosophers. It is this class to which Nonnos belonged, his own social position having been altered and challenged by the community around him and his work reflecting the religious context of his time.

2. The History of Dionysos

To conduct any investigation into the representation of Dionysos in the *Dionysiaca*, I must first provide a brief history of the god, from the first instances of his name in the ancient world up to the Dionysos preceding the Nonnian version. The purpose of this chronology is to illustrate the development and permutations of Dionysos through the ages, for the Dionysos of the Ancient Greeks did not necessarily serve the same purpose and function as the Dionysos of the Roman world. Nor was the Hellenistic Dionysos the same as the Byzantine Dionysos. This investigation and chronological outline serve simultaneously as source studies for Nonnus' work, for they trace the early sources and the changes in the representation and therefore in the conception of the god, which may be seen to have shaped the character of Dionysos as realised in the *Dionysiaca*.

2.1 The Bronze Age

The earliest surviving appearance of Dionysos' name appears on three Linear B tablets from Mycenaean Pylos and Khania (Crete) dated to around 1250 BCE.³⁰¹ On the first tablet from Pylos appears the name *di-wo-nu-so-jo* in the genitive case [that which is of Dionysos]. On the second tablet, *di-wu-nu-so-jo* appears as a payment for a man. Kerényi (1976) thought that the genitive use of the name in this context can only refer to wine, or that which is of Dionysos.³⁰²

The Russian linguist Vadim Tsymbursky took the investigation of the origins of Dionysos further, by considering the god's name based on Thracian onomastics. He proposed the meaning: "Our God", a God of Middle Earth – between Earth and Sky".³⁰³ Shephard, meanwhile, proposed that the elements which form the Dionysiac retinue, such as the *thyrsus*, Silenus, Satyrs and Maenads could indicate an origin around the lower Dniester region.³⁰⁴ He went on to argue that during the prehistoric Neolithic Era, the Dniester River was the "centre of one of the most advanced civilizations on earth at the time" and that the area "corresponds to the natural habitat of wild grapes as well as all above mentioned criteria".³⁰⁵ Usatovo archaeological evidence from the Dniester region indicates the emergence of a cult of wine. Due to an abundance of animal products, such as hide, the people living in the Lower Dniester region were able to create storage containers for their wine, "it is clear, from the evidence, the remnants of leather products, including bags and even wineskins found in the inventory of burial barrows of Yamna /Pit-Grave culture in the Lower Dniester region".³⁰⁶ The idea that Dionysos was a foreign god brought to Greece from Thrace has been forcefully argued through a linguistic and philological investigation of Proto-Thracian and Indo-European terms since the 19th Century and Erwin Rohde's work.³⁰⁷

The argument that Dionysos was brought to mainland Greece from Thrace or Phrygia was popular in 20th century scholarship. Nilsson argued that Dionysos made his way to the Greek mainland from Thrace and Phrygia, "once in his old-Thracian form, the other time in a form modified by the influence of neighbouring religions in Asia Minor".³⁰⁸ Nilsson's theory and

³⁰¹ Hornblower, *et al.* 2014: 244.

³⁰² 1976: 68.

³⁰³ Shephard, 2008, 3.

³⁰⁴ "and this implication does not originate merely because of the semantic and phonetic attraction to the ancient river Dniester name – Tyras/ ό Τύραξ" (Shephard, 2008: 2).

³⁰⁵ 2008: 2.

³⁰⁶ Shephard, 2008: 3.

³⁰⁷ Rohde, E. (1925). *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd: London.

³⁰⁸ Nilsson, 1927.

those of other scholars attempted to validate Dionysos' supposed foreignness by emphasising his arrival in Greece from neighbouring regions.³⁰⁹

2.2. The Archaic Period

2.2.1 Homeric Epic

The chronological survey of evidence for Dionysus then proceeds on to the most ancient literary source for Dionysos, in the epic works of Homer. Dionysos is first mentioned in the *Iliad* in book VI, which tells of Lykourgos' conflict with the young god and the driving of Dionysos' nurses from Nysa, when Dionysos fled into the ocean and was taken in by Thetis.³¹⁰ Although mention of the god is itself scarce in the *Iliad*, Homer's representation of Dionysos suggests that in this early phase in literature, Dionysos was not yet primarily associated with wine. Despite the many references to wine in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, apart from one instance in the former, the poet never directly connects wine with Dionysos. It is in *Iliad* XIV that he is identified as the son of Zeus and Semele and referred to as 'a delight for mortals' (*charma brotoisin*).³¹¹ This has been argued as "unquestionably a reference to the giver of wine".³¹² Although the god is, at least once then, connected with wine in the *Iliad*, in the *Odyssey* he is more strongly associated not with that substance so much as with other divine persons, with Hephaistos, Artemis and Ariadne.³¹³

In Hesiod's *Work and Days*, Dionysos is identified as the god of wine,³¹⁴ and in the *Theogony* he is the son of a mortal mother as well as the god of wine (940-2):

Semele, Kadmos' daughter, bore the radiant boy she'd bred
When she had mixed with Zeus: glad Dionysos, god of wine,
Immortal son of mortal woman – both now are divine.

From the ancient texts of Homer and Hesiod, we may conclude that by the late 8th to early 7th century BCE, Dionysos was becoming more definitively associated with wine. We may also

³⁰⁹ Otto (1965) suggests that mainland Greece was the "third seat of the Dionysiac movement" because the excitement which the Dionysiac arrival caused was a "re-awakening of an age-old worship". Wilamowitz (1956) argued that Dionysos arrived on the mainland in the eighth century BCE and "his victory over the orthodox believers may not be dated prior to the year 700".

³¹⁰ *Il.* VI.130ff.

³¹¹ *Il.* XVI. 325.

³¹² Otto, 1965: 55.

³¹³ *Od.* XXIV.75; XI.325.

³¹⁴ *WD.* 614.

observe that these authors were already aware of a tradition attached to the god, in which he was the son of a mortal woman, Semele, and the immortal Zeus.

2.2.2. The *Homeric Hymns*

The *Homeric Hymns* are dated uncertainly to between the 7th and 5th centuries BCE.³¹⁵ They served as *prooimia* or preludes sung by rhapsodes before the recitation of epic. In the extensive corpus of Homeric hymns, there are three dedicated to Dionysos. The first hymn is fragmentary and consists of 21 lines. The hymn details the birth of Dionysos on Nysa from the thigh of his father, Zeus.³¹⁶ The second, consisting of 59 lines, is hymn number seven, where he is named as the son of Semele and the account of the episode of Dionysos and the Tyrrhenian pirates is given. The events of the myth present Dionysos' sphere of influence and power, for the ship fills with wine and vines shoot forth from the sail.³¹⁷ The events also delineate the relationship the god has with the natural world. He summons a bear and a lion aboard the ship (45-50) and metamorphoses the pirates into dolphins (54). The events depicted in this hymn were popular sources for vase-painting. The third and final hymn to Dionysos amongst the *Homeric Hymns*, Hymn 26, is also fragmentary and consists of 13 lines. Like the first, the last hymn also locates his place of birth in Nysa and connects him with Zeus using the epithet *eribromos* and with wine using the epithet *polustaphulos*.³¹⁸ The *Homeric Hymns* thus make plain an established Dionysiac connection with wine and the grape-bearing vine. In addition, his representation has been extended to include an influence over animals, as is presented in *Hymn. Hom. 7*.

2.2.3. Archaic Iconography

Although, as this brief review betrays, there is scant evidence for Dionysos in the literature of this period, he is seen to appear on quite a few vases: "Dionysos made his entry in the early 6th century BCE. He was the most frequently chosen figure because of his connection with the *symposion*".³¹⁹ While he is described as a young god in the literature (in the *Homeric Hymns*), iconographically he is rarely represented as a youth or young deity on Archaic vases.

³¹⁵ For arguments regarding the latest discussion of the dates, see Càssola, 1975; West, 2011; Faulkner, 2011 and Herrero de Jáuregui, 2013.

³¹⁶ He is named *Eiraphiôtês* or in-sewn, referring to Dionysos being sown into the thigh of Zeus after the death of Semele. A variation of this name (*εἰραφιῶτα* or *eiraphiôta*) occurs three times in the Hymn –line 2, 17 and 20.

³¹⁷ *Hom. Hymn. 7.35-40*.

³¹⁸ *Hom. Hymn. 26.1. & Hom. Hymn. 26.11*.

³¹⁹ Mannack, 2012: 58.

Instead, he is depicted as bearded (*fig. 1*), a common convention of vase painters to indicate maturity and the authority of the subject.

In *fig. 1*, the so-called “Francois Vase”, late 6th century Attic black figure volute krater by Kleitias, Dionysos does not hold a central position on the main image on the vase. Rather he occupies a secondary position on the reverse or B side of the vase, leading Hephaistos to Olympus. According to Isler-Kerenyi, one characteristic of Dionysos that distinguishes him from other Greek gods is that “he is almost always moving around with a procession of male and female followers”.³²⁰ In the Archaic Period, Dionysos and his followers are directly connected to wine in their iconographic representation.³²¹

³²⁰ 2007: 2.

³²¹ Isler-Kerenyi, 2007: 16.

2.3 The Classical Period

2.3.1 Historiography

In Herodotus' *Histories*, dated to around 425 BCE, extensive reference is made to Dionysos in connection to the Egyptians. The *Histories* was intended as an account of the Graeco-Persian wars, yet Herodotus spends much of the work detailing various foreign cultures, which he supposedly encountered on his travels. The first reference made to Dionysos is found in Book II, where Herodotus describes the religious beliefs of the Egyptians. In the passage, Herodotus states that the Egyptians worship two major deities, namely Isis and Osiris and Osiris, he says, is Dionysos.³²² Herodotus also claims that a man named Melampus learned divination from the Egyptians and brought it into Greece along with the worship of Dionysos.³²³ He also claimed that the Egyptians believed that Demeter and Dionysos-Osiris were the chief chthonic deities, and that they were the first people to suggest a theory of immortality of the soul.³²⁴ Herodotus claims that the Egyptians believed that Apollo and Artemis were the children of Isis and Osiris-Dionysos³²⁵ and that the Ethiopians held festivals in honour of Osiris-Dionysos.³²⁶ Regarding the Thracians, Herodotus claims that they only worshipped Ares, Artemis and Dionysos.³²⁷ In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides refers to the temples of Dionysos in Greece,³²⁸ but he does not engage in speculation concerning the origins of the god or his introduction into Greece in the way that Herodotus did.

2.3.2 Greek Drama

Extensive representation and characterisation of Dionysos in the 5th century BCE comes in the form of Greek drama. Such representation and characterisation could be found in the dramatic works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes. Many of the Dionysiac themed plays during this period dealt with conflict between Dionysos and punishment of a mortal who had offended the god in some way. Many of these plays were also first introduced to the public audience at the City Dionysia, an annual Athenian festival in honour of Dionysos.

³²² *Hist.* II.42.

³²³ *Ib.* II.49.

³²⁴ *Ib.* II.123.

³²⁵ *Ib.* II.156.

³²⁶ *Ib.* III.97.

³²⁷ *Ib.* V.7.

³²⁸ *Thuc.* II.15; III.81; VIII.93-4.

Among the plays debuted at the festival was Euripides' *Bacchae* in 405 BCE and Sophocles' *Triptolemos* in 468 BCE. Aristophanes' *Frogs* also provided a compelling representation of the god for the Athenian audience members. Although comedy should usually be taken with a pinch of salt, the exaggerations and parodies are usually drawn from some element of truth in the poetic and religious consciousness in which the work was produced. The representation of Dionysos in the *Frogs* is exaggerated for comic value, the inclusion of Dionysos as the comic hero indicates the extent to which the god has infiltrated popular Greek thought and religion by the late 5th century BCE. The festival context and surrounding cultic practices also played a vital role in the rise of Dionysos' popularity. It was during this heightened popularity in Athens that more cult worship of the god was taking place and more temples and sanctuaries established. The festival context itself in which many of these plays were performed included processions and rituals in honour of the god, further emphasizing his importance in the pantheon for the Athenians of the 5th century.

2.3.3. The Mysteries

The Orphico-Bacchic mysteries of the Classical Period were secretive, and little is known about them. The sources for the presence of these mysteries in this period are mainly found in archaeological evidence of the so-called Orphic Gold Tablets, which serve further to preserve the secrecy of these little-known mysteries. It is only in the Hellenistic Period, discussed below, that these mysteries appear to spread out to the common worship of the god. Although I include here the archaeological evidence for the mysteries, it appears that Dionysos was most associated with the theatre during the Classical Period and his position as a personal and votive deity only appears in literature and iconography during the Hellenistic Period. Dionysos served two roles during this period. On the one hand he was a private mystery god to individual devotees, but on the other hand he was a public god who was worshipped communally during festivals and at the theatre.

2.3.3.1. Archaeological Evidence

The first archaeological evidence which can be used for an argument of Dionysos' involvement in a mystery cult is the Gold Tablets discovered in Pelinna. These two ivy-shaped tablets, dated to the late 4th century BCE, were found in a woman's grave in a sarcophagus in Pelinna (Palaiogardiki), "lying on the chest of the deceased".³²⁹ The

³²⁹ Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 36.

significance of these tablets is that they both explicitly mention a ‘Bacchic’ one (β<acute>ακ<grave>χιος). More specifically, this ‘Bacchic one’ has released the initiate. In previous representations of Dionysos, he is referred to as *Lysios* or ‘Deliverer’. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the Bacchic one who releases the initiate being referred to in the tablet is Dionysos. Similar evidence comes from a cemetery in Pherae, where a rectangular gold band (originally rolled into a cylinder) was discovered. The gold band, which is now housed in the Museum of Volos, has been dated to around 350-300 BCE.³³⁰ This text further provides evidence of a Dionysiac mystery cult which was established in Greece by the 4th century BCE at least. The use of the term ‘thyrsos’ clearly connects the holder of this golden band to such a mystery cult. The epithet ‘Brimo’ used in the text indicates a feminine chthonic aspect of this cult as well.

The last important example of archaeological evidence on which I will draw is another gold tablet which was found in a sarcophagus in Amphipolis. It was found folded on the chest of the deceased woman and can be dated to around the late 4th to early 3rd century BCE.³³¹ This tablet provides clear evidence for mysteries of Dionysos. Although there was a Dionysos of the mysteries, we cannot assume, however, that this Dionysos was the exact same one that was being honoured in the Athenian theatre or that this was the same Dionysos who had a cult and temple in Thebes. This was a new Dionysos, created for the individual initiates based on an obscure mythology and various *hieroi logoi* (sacred accounts)

These archaeological finds are valuable in any chronological description of the career of the deity, for they provide proof of the shift in his worship and representation. Such Orphic tablets, dated to the late 5th and early 4th century BCE, represent a different Dionysos from the one of the theatres and public life. We can see that he has shifted from being a foreign figure embodying otherness, to becoming an integral part of individual worship and mystery cult. He is no longer the obscure figure that he was in the time of Homer and Hesiod, but as the extent of the literary and archaeological evidence of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE indicate, he has become a highly important and even central deity for the Greek population, most manifestly through his sponsorship of and strong connection with the theatre, where he had his temple, procession, altar and a presence marked not only by his statue in the amphitheatre but also the prominence of his priests.

³³⁰ Graf & Iles Johnston, 2007: 39.

³³¹ Graf & Iles Johnston, 2007: 41.

2.3.4 Classical Iconography

Scenes and depictions of myths of Dionysiac nature or association proliferated in the Classical Period. By this period, vase painting had become a well-established art form and because of a political change from tyranny to democracy with Cleisthenes' reforms after 510 BCE, the occurrence and number of sympotic scenes indicate that the vase painters and potters were still catering to an aristocratic clientele (*fig. 8* in Appendix A). The death and dismemberment of Pentheus at the hands of bacchantes is one Dionysiac myth that was portrayed by the Attic red-figure painter, Euphronios (*fig. 2*),³³² as well as on a cup produced by the Douris painter, for Shapiro these violent scenes are primarily associated with celebration and enjoyment. "It is a celebration of the god Dionysos and his cult, as is Euripides' play, on a vessel made for the enjoyment of Dionysos' gift of wine".³³³ From 450 BCE onwards, a change in the appearance and representation of Dionysos occurs. He is no longer portrayed as a bearded authoritative figure, but he experiences a rejuvenation in his image. He is portrayed as a youthful, beardless, and often naked figure and according to Isler-Kerenyi, "this transformation first took place at the Parthenon".³³⁴ It is this beardless and youthful Dionysos which will become his standardized representation in Late Antiquity and in Nonnos.

Despite the changing appearance of the god himself, there appears to be no significant change in the depiction of the Dionysiac retinue on vases during the Classical Period. Dionysos is still accompanied by dancing maenads and satyrs and the symbols of Dionysiac worship (*thyrsos* and *kantharos*). In comparison to his representations in the Archaic Period, Dionysos himself has become a more popular subject for Classical Period potters and painters, with an increasing interest in the god's mythology such as his birth and his union with Ariadne. Classical sculpture, however, "had no intention of replacing the old Dionysos by the youthful, erotically attractive one".³³⁵ The Dionysos of Classical sculptural iconography appears to take two forms. The first is the bearded authoritative figure of local cult worship, such as the gold and ivory statue in his temple near the Theatre of Dionysos, created by a collaborator of

³³² "A full century earlier than Euripides' play, the scene of the death of Pentheus had entered the repertoire of Attic red-figure, in a masterful rendering by Euphronios" (Shapiro, 1994: 159). Vase number: 200077 on *BAPD*.

³³³ Shapiro, 1994: 160.

³³⁴ Isler-Kerenyi, 2015: 8. *LIMC* Object ID: 6326.

³³⁵ Isler-Kerenyi, 2015: 240.

Phidias named Alkamenes,³³⁶ and the second is the youthful, nude god of the Parthenon's east pediment.

2.4 The Hellenistic Period

The inception of the Hellenistic Period is usually dated to 323 BCE, the death of Alexander, when the Macedonian Empire expanded its rule over Greece, ultimately causing the downfall of democracy in Athens. This marked the end of popular rule and ushered in the age of kings throughout Ancient Greece. The Dionysos of the Hellenistic Period appears to be a god of kings rather than of the people, as one scholar has summarised the transition: "Dionysos enjoyed great popularity in the ancient Greek world, but it was not until the Hellenistic-Roman age that his cult gained wide acceptance and was publicly promoted by kings and emperors".³³⁷ During this period, a slight shift in his iconographic depiction is observed, as well as the increasing association and comparison drawn by Hellenistic rulers with the god. Dionysos was not the only god to undergo a change during this period. There also appears to be a shift in the beliefs and minds of worshippers of the gods, a shift which seems to indicate the acceptance of a more personal religion in which the king may be representative of the divine of earth. This was known as cults of divine rulers, in which Hellenistic rulers were worshipped as though they were divinities.³³⁸ This is evidenced by the hymns dedicated to Hellenistic kings, such as Demetrios Poliorketes of Athens, which was sung on his arrival in Athens from Kerkyra in 291 BCE.³³⁹

Hymns such as these indicate the appearance of ruler cults present in Athens at the time, in which the ruler is associated with the gods or as in the case above, equated with the son of the gods. The rest of the hymn indicates the reasons for the praise of Demetrios Poliorketes. He, unlike the Olympians, is flesh and blood. This emphasises the need for a god which individuals can see, feel, or touch. These individuals wanted to pursue a personal and private relationship with their own deity as opposed to the previously communal worship.

³³⁶ *LIMC* iii.1, 446 Dionysos 214.

³³⁷ Tripolitis, 2001: 23.

³³⁸ For a discussion on the cults of divine rulers in the Hellenistic Period, see Chaniotis, 2003.

³³⁹ "How the greatest and dearest of the gods have come to the city! For the hour has brought together Demeter and Demetrios; she comes to celebrate the solemn mysteries of the Kore, while he is here full of joy, as befits the god, fair and laughing. His appearance is majestic, his friends all around him and he in their midst, as though they were stars and he the sun. Hail son of the most powerful god Poseidon and Aphrodite. For the other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can see present here; you are not made of wood or stone, you are real". Douris *FGrH* 76 F13, cf. Demochares *FGrH* 75 F2, as in Chaniotis, 2003: 431.

Worshippers now required a personal saviour in the ever-changing and globalising environment of the Hellenistic period.

The notion of the personal saviour is a role which Dionysos was already known to play, particularly in the private religious context of the mysteries.³⁴⁰ It is then no surprise that Dionysos became the patron god of many of these Hellenistic rulers, such as Demetrios Poliorketes. Dionysos “seems to have been a symbol for charismatic power based on a combination of military might and his sponsorship of fertility”.³⁴¹ He, like Apollo, was an ever-youthful god from which Hellenistic rulers could claim their authority, youth, and divinity. “By the 3rd century BCE, the Dionysiac cult was widespread in Egypt and Asia Minor and favoured by their kings, many of whom considered themselves descendants of the god”.³⁴²

2.4.1 Literature

The first Hellenistic source for Dionysos in the Hellenistic Period that we include in this survey is Apollodorus’ *Bibliotheca* or ‘The Library’. Apollodorus was an Athenian writer who lived in the 2nd century BCE. In ‘The Library’, he gathers accounts of Greek myths and, in this mythology, he presents one that recounts the birth narrative of Dionysos. Like his predecessors, Apollodorus gives the following account of Dionysos’ birth: Zeus seduced Semele, the daughter of Kadmos and Harmonia, who became pregnant. After requesting to see Zeus in his true godly form, she was struck down by his lightning and the unborn Dionysos was expelled from his mother’s body. The infant was sewn into the thigh of Zeus until his gestation was complete, after which Zeus gave the child (in the form of a kid) to Hermes to avoid the persecution of Hera. Hermes then took the child to Nysa where he was raised by nurses.³⁴³ Apollodorus also noted Dionysos’ various expeditions to Asia Minor and the East, as well as his visit to Phrygia where he was purified by Rhea and introduced to the rites of initiation.³⁴⁴ The rest of Apollodorus’ account of Dionysos includes his expeditions and wanderings around Greece, and his punishment of Lycurgus, the Thebans, and the Argives. The account concludes with humankind recognising Dionysos as a god and the

³⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 2.5.

³⁴¹ Mac Góráin, 2020: 20.

³⁴² Tripolitis, 2001: 24.

³⁴³ *Apollodorus* III. 4.3.

³⁴⁴ *Apoll.* III. 5.1.

deification of his mother Semele who, after having been brought up from Hades, was named Thyone.³⁴⁵

The most important Hellenistic source for the representation of Dionysos is Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE). *The Library of History* forms a compendium of Greek mythology in which Diodorus addresses the histories of mythical, Greek, and non-Greek peoples. In Book IV, he relates myths of Dionysos. Diodorus, like his predecessors, believes that Dionysos and the Egyptian god Osiris are essentially one in the same (IV: i). His account of Dionysos' birth narrative agrees with the earlier accounts, in which Dionysos is born to Semele by Zeus (IV: ii) and subsequently raised by nurses on Nysa. According to Diodorus, this Dionysos invented the cultivation of the vine and the production of wine which he bestowed on humankind and "he also discovered the drink made out of barley and called by some *zythos*, the bouquet of which is not much inferior to that of wine".³⁴⁶ Diodorus Siculus also includes Dionysos' expedition to India and his triumph there, which is alluded to briefly in earlier literature through the mention of his defeat of Lycurgus. We also learn about a second Dionysos, called 'Dionysus Sabazius', who was born of Persephone to Zeus (IV: iv) and this Dionysos' rites occur at night and in secrecy.³⁴⁷ He states that the first Dionysos, born of Semele, is more effeminate, "was addicted to indulgence in the delights of love, and on his campaigns, he led about with himself a multitude of women who were armed with lances which were shaped like thyrsi" (IV: iv).

Regarding the two 'Dionysoi', Diodorus notes that the older Dionysos has "a long beard because all men in early times wore long beards", the younger one "being youthful and effeminate and young". He further states that "certain writers say, however, that it was because men who become drunk get into two states, being either joyous or sullen, that the god has been called "two-formed".³⁴⁸ This observation regarding the physical representation of Dionysos is one that is found attested in the ambivalent depictions of the god in Hellenistic art. The duality of the god's nature appears to suit the model suggested by Diodorus and the other writers he mentions.

³⁴⁵ *Apoll.* III.5.3.

³⁴⁶ *Dio. Sic.* IV.ii.

³⁴⁷ "because of the disgrace resulting from the intercourse of the sexes" (IV.iv).

³⁴⁸ *Dio. Sic.* IV.v.

2.4.2 Hellenistic Iconography

Hellenistic sculpture saw an increase in the heightened depiction of subject, ethnicity, and emotion. After the rise of Alexander the Great in 330 BCE and the spread of the Macedonian Empire across Greece, the sculptural depictions of the gods also underwent a change. From the Classical Period, we already know that younger gods were portrayed in heroic nude from time to time, but the Hellenistic period established this style of depicting as convention.³⁴⁹ The classicising form became the style of the gods in the Hellenistic Period. Dionysos and Apollo reached a new a height of popularity in the Hellenistic Period and underwent a striking re-styling as a result. Dionysos had metamorphosed from the bearded venerable god of the Classical Period into an Apolline youth (*fig.3*). His representation, “like his mythology, was re-worked for its new role as a model for divinized kings”.³⁵⁰ This transition is most likely patterned on Alexander’s youthful portrayal in iconographic depictions and the ideal of an ever-youthful king.

Similarly, in vase painting, Dionysos is also presented as an ephebe surrounded by his usual Dionysiac retinue (*fig. 4*). The red-figure bell krater, dated to the 4th century BCE depicts a beardless Dionysos, seated among satyrs and maenads. The popularity of the youthful Dionysos was further exemplified by the connection Hellenistic rulers had with the god, with Ptolemy XII declaring himself the “New Dionysos and portrait features, in particular, Ptolemaic family traits, can be seen on several images of the god”.³⁵¹ The Hellenistic Period also saw the inclusion of syncretised gods enter into the artistic repertoire, where the usual depictions of older Olympians were joined by figures such as Zeus Ammon, Isis, Tyche and Zeus Sarapis. The expansions and ruler cults of the Hellenistic Period saw the transformations of the priorities and objectives of Greek art, moving from the representation of the ideal to that of the real, the inclusions of art forms from throughout the known world and the metamorphosis of Dionysos.

³⁴⁹ “Classical form was retained for male youths (ephebes) and for women as a sign of youth and beauty, and for gods as a sign of elevation”, Smith, 1991: 63.

³⁵⁰ Smith, 1991: 65.

³⁵¹ Boardman & Wagner, 2012: 216.

2.5 The Roman Period

In terms of the chronology of this project, the Roman period will refer to the beginning of the Roman Empire under the rule of the first emperor, Augustus, (27 BCE) until around 476 CE, when the last Roman emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus was overthrown by the Odoacer, a Germanic chief. From the 3rd century CE onwards the chronology falls into the territory of Late Antiquity. It is within this period that we shall begin our study of Nonnos of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca*. Roman religion was heavily influenced by Greek culture and religion, and Greek cults had found a new home in Rome since the 5th century BCE.³⁵² It is then no surprise that the Roman literature on Dionysos is like the Greek narratives, with few exceptions.

2.5.1 Literature

The first notable work of the Roman Period to inform this chronologically organised outline of the biography of the god Dionysos is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, composed early in the first century CE. The *Metamorphoses* offers an example of how Greek mythology had permeated and was adapted in Roman religion. As a leading scholar of Roman literature has put it, the *Metamorphoses* "most clearly embodies Ovid's global outlook, subsuming all major forms of Greek and Latin literature into a unique and transforming synthesis".³⁵³ In Book III of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid recounts the birth narrative of Dionysos (Bacchus). The narrative follows the Greek account in which Juno hears that Semele has become pregnant with the child of Jupiter. The jealous Juno convinces Semele to lie with the god in his true form, which resulted in the ejection of the unborn child from his mother's burning body. The child was then sewn into the thigh of Jove and reborn from there. In Ovid's narrative, Ino, Semele's sister, takes the child to Nysa to be raised.³⁵⁴

Another author from the Roman Period to provide insight into the representation of Dionysos in this period is Hyginus. His *Fabulae*, also dated the early 1st century CE, contains many myths regarding Dionysos, whom Hyginus calls Liber. Some myths include Liber saving the life of his nurse, Ino (2), his romance with Ariadne (43) and his conflict with Lycurgus (132). The most enlightening evidence for the changing representation of Dionysos in the Roman Period is Hyginus' entry on Liber (167). The entry states that Liber, the son of Jove and

³⁵² Orlin, 2007: 62.

³⁵³ Tarrant, 2006: 19.

³⁵⁴ Ov. *Met.* 3.287f.

Proserpina, was dismembered by the Titans. Jove gave Semele the torn-up pieces of Liber's heart to drink, which caused her to become pregnant. Juno, disguised as Beroë, encourages Semele to sleep with Jove in his true form, which causes the child to be expelled (as in the earlier narratives). In Hyginus' version, Jove takes the child from Semele's womb and gives him to Nysus to be raised. Hyginus omits the narrative of the child being sewn into his father's thigh, but states that the birth from two mothers is why he is called Dionysos. However, later in the *Fabulae*, in the entry on Semele (179), Hyginus states that Mercury takes the child to Nysus. It is unclear why this discrepancy is present, but the *Fabulae* is the first instance in which two birth narratives of the god have become one. The Greek narrative in which Semele is Dionysos' mother is common in literature, but the other narrative in which Dionysos is the son of Zeus and Persephone (Proserpina) is novel and it may well stem from the mythology and theology of the secretive Orphico-Bacchic cults present throughout the Graeco-Roman world at this time.

An author who provides some insight into the practice of these Orphico-Bacchic cults is Plutarch, dated to the late 1st century to the early 2nd century CE. In his biography of Alexander, Plutarch notes that Alexander's mother, Olympias, zealously took part in Dionysiac mysteries and rites.³⁵⁵ Although Plutarch does not provide a mythological account of the Olympian pantheon, his work does provide insight into the practitioners of these religious events, such as Olympias. Another text of Plutarch which provides insight into the progression of Dionysos' representation is the *Quaestiones Convivales*. In the *Quaestiones Convivales*, Plutarch notes that there are similarities between Adonis and Dionysos:

Now Adonis is supposed to be the same with Dionysos; and there are a great many rites in both their sacrifices which confirm this opinion. Others will have Adonis to be Dionysos's paramour; and Phanocles an amorous love-poet writes thus, Dionysos on hills the fair Adonis saw, and ravished him, and reaped a wondrous joy.³⁵⁶

The *Quaestiones Convivales* provides many other unique accounts of Dionysos, which cannot all be fully investigated in this brief chronology.

Another author from the Roman Period of particular interest here is Pausanias, who dates to the 2nd century CE. In his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias attests to the widespread worship

³⁵⁵ Plut. *Alex.* 2.5

³⁵⁶ Plut. *Quae. Con.* 670 (transl. Goodwin, 1878).

of Dionysos³⁵⁷ and provides important details regarding various temples to the god.³⁵⁸ From the 3rd century, Aelian also provides some mythological accounts in the *Varia Historia*, including the myth of the Minyades (3.42) and includes an account of Dionysiac worship (13.2).

2.5.2 The *Orphic Hymns*

An especially relevant piece of evidence is dated to the 3rd century CE as well. *The Orphic Hymns* form a collection of texts concerning ancient deities which contain narratives and descriptions often different from the accounts of gods we find in the canons of Ancient Greek literature. The date is very debated as, although ancient sources refer to hymns by Orpheus,³⁵⁹ the extant collection itself appears not to have been widely known outside of scholarship even in the ancient world. It is possible that the *Orphic Hymns* may have “existed quite early and gone unnoticed”.³⁶⁰ However, the argument that these hymns are from the first four centuries CE remains compelling due to the “relative purity of the language” and the “nearly flawless hexameter”.³⁶¹ Furthermore, the hymns were composed to be used in a context of mystery religion and were treated as secret in this context.

Of the 87 Orphic hymns, 9 are dedicated to Dionysos in some form or other. These hymns occupy a central part of the collection and the emphasis they lay on his importance is evident. The hymns are addressed to various aspects and epithets of the god in the context of the mystery cult, including Liknites (46), Perikionios (47) and Lysios Lenaios (50). The mythology portrayed in these hymns is not the same as the mythology of earlier authors such as Homer or Hesiod. The narratives of these hymns are, however, like the mythologies found in Hyginus, which indicates that Hyginus must have come across these narratives by the early 1st century CE. The predominant narrative of these hymns indicate that Dionysos has two mothers, “Hear, O blessed son of Zeus and of two mothers”³⁶² and that he was sewn into the thigh of his father, “Hear me, father Sabazios, son of Kronos, illustrious god, you sewed into your thigh Bacchic Dionysos”.³⁶³ The Orphico-Bacchic theology of Dionysos also contains mythological elements from popular Greek narratives, such as Dionysos and the Theban

³⁵⁷ 1.2.5.

³⁵⁸ 1.20.3.

³⁵⁹ Plato, *Laws*, 829d & Paus. 9.30.12.

³⁶⁰ Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013: x.

³⁶¹ Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013: x.

³⁶² Hymn 50 to Lysios Lenaios (Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013: 41).

³⁶³ Hymn 48 to Sabazios (Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013: 40).

women, and Dionysos and the house of Kadmos is found in Hymn 47 to Perikionios. The narratives of the Orphico-Bacchic communities are of special interest to this project due to the influences of these mythologies on the birth narrative of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.

2.5.3 Roman iconography

The period of Roman iconography begins with the end of the Republic and emergence of the Empire and comes after an already long history of Italian and Etruscan art traditions in Italy. The reason for the focus on the Imperial art is due to the integration of Greek religion and customs into Roman art, with the height of this integration occurring during the Imperial period. The art of the Roman follows on from the Hellenistic period's emphasis on realistic detail, with notable importance laid on the representation of the emperors. The portraiture of the early Roman emperors saw a return to the visual dialect and accents of Classical sculpture of 5th century BCE Athens (*fig. 5*).³⁶⁴

The use of Classical portraiture entrenched the youthful ideal, which “reinforce(s) both the notions of the new golden age as well as the needs of the dynasty to create an imagery of dynastic succession, something the Romans had never before needed”.³⁶⁵ In *fig. 5*, Augustus is portrayed with in a toga with a covered head, called the *capite velato* style and he is styled as if to embody *pietas*, religious devotion, and dutifulness to established virtues. The return of the idealised male figure in Imperial art accompanied the rise in popularity of the accounts of heroic deeds in historical myth. Dionysos' position in Imperial art remained one of great importance for his connection with wine. Evidence which attests to this can be found in the case study of the Villa Negroni in Rome, which dates to the 1st century CE. The paintings from the villa, which are unfortunately no longer extant, can themselves be dated to the “late Hadrianic or early Antonine period”.³⁶⁶ Five rooms of the villa contained panels painted with scenes from myth, representing Adonis, Aphrodite, Ares and Dionysos. The Dionysiac myth depicted is a scene from the myth of Dionysos and Ariadne. These Dionysiac murals were intended to evoke “the pleasures of the Dionysiac world, identifying these in turn as drink, music and love”.³⁶⁷ Another such case study can be taken from a villa outside of Pompeii called ‘The Villa of the Mysteries’. The painting contains an apparent depiction of Dionysiac

³⁶⁴ Augustus as Pontifex Maximus, from the Via Labicana, Rome, c. 12 BCE. Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. Marble, 6 ft 9 in (2.06 m). Photo courtesy Steven L. Tuck. (Tuck, 2015: 115).

³⁶⁵ Tuck, 2015: 115.

³⁶⁶ Newby, 2016: 201.

³⁶⁷ Newby, 2016: 206.

mysteries (*fig. 6*).³⁶⁸ In Rome one of the most “popular ways to show Dionysos is as a herm or pillar”.³⁶⁹ The most popular example of the Dionysiac herm was the bifrontic herm of Liber/Dionysos found in the Palatine in Rome (*fig. 7*). One face of the herm is a bearded Dionysos, and the other is unbearded, which possibly alludes to the god’s duality. Herms were mostly used for decoration or cult objects in the Roman period and differed from the apotropaic function of Greek herms.

The Dionysos of Rome differed from the Greek Dionysos by becoming Liber Pater. He was no longer a bearded god, for the Romans associated the so-called ‘fatherhood’ of Liber with his youth and the bearded god was not considered to be typically Roman.³⁷⁰ For the Romans, the Dionysiac world symbolised a world of release from the toils of everyday life and Liber became associated with these Greek ideas of release and inebriation. Liber also assumed the role of fertility god and male virility. Yet it was the elements of Bacchic ritual and cult which the Roman Republic deemed as inappropriate which led to cultic practices allowed to continue only under strict senatorial controls. Although no longer occupying a powerful position in the hearts of the citizens, as he had once done in Athens, Dionysos continued to be an integral part of the Roman pantheon. It is this version of Dionysos that permeates into the Byzantine Period and Late Antiquity, a youthful deity who is mostly associated with wine.

In summary, Dionysos’ journey from a suspicious foreigner to an established member of the Olympian pantheon is evident in a diachronic account of his transforming representation in literature, painting, sculpture, and cultic texts. Although believed to be a new god, the evidence verifies that he is more ancient than many of the Greeks believed. His sphere of influence also expanded from his identification and association with wine to a much larger psychological sphere, including epiphany, delusion, and the human psyche. Each period of this chronological investigation shows that the figure and representation of a notably plastic Dionysos was adapted to meet the social, political, and emotional requirements of the given period, its artists, and consumers. In times of social calamity, he was venerated as a god of the afterlife and received more funerary offerings for he was thought to be able to assist an initiate towards a blessed afterlife. In times of merriment, he was praised and honoured in the symposium as the bringer of wine, where he became the recipient of libations poured from vessels bearing his likeness or that of his ever-present retinue. In times of political reform, he

³⁶⁸ Mysteries frieze, Villa of the Mysteries (*DAIR Inst. Neg.* 58.1849), as in Hales, 2007: 336.

³⁶⁹ Hales, 2007: 338.

³⁷⁰ Ovid, *Fasti.* 3.774.

became a symbol of liberation from tyranny and in times of extravagance, he was revered as the god of revelry and the release of inhibitions.

3. The First Birth of Dionysos

The analysis portion of this project focuses on three parts of the birth narrative of Dionysos as presented in Nonnos of Panopolis' *Dionysiaca*. The first section deals with the first birth of Dionysos to Persephone, and the attributes of the god's character and sphere of influence that apparently derive from this birth and subsequent death. Our approach will be to draw from and compare with earlier sources that refer to the same or a similar birth narrative, in order to better observe and describe the interests and innovations discernible in Nonnos' work.

3.1 The *Dionysiaca*: summary of the first birth

“Look for marvels in the sixth, where in honouring Zagreus, all the settlements on the Earth were drowned by Rainy Zeus”.³⁷¹

Here, I offer a brief recapitulation of the action of the 300 or so lines in which the poet narrates the first of the births of Dionysos. The birth narrative of Dionysos begins in Book VI of the *Dionysiaca*, opening with a description of the desire of the Olympians for a union with Persephone, the daughter of Deo (Demeter). This is followed by a brief passage concerning Deo's grief and concern for her daughter, and her anxiety that Hephaistos might woo her. In her desperation, Deo goes to the house of the Astraioi, the god of prophecy, who gives her an oracle. He tells her that she must guard against a “robber-bridegroom”, “a secret ravisher” who will steal the girl away, but before this marriage takes place, “a false and secret bedfellow” will ravish Persephone (VI.90-102).

After hearing the oracle, Demeter yoked a pair of snakes to a chariot, and placed Persephone inside, driving the chariot away in a “black veil of cloud” (VI.114). Demeter then found a cave in which to hide her daughter and unyoked the snakes from the chariot. She placed the snakes on either side of the cave's entrance to act as guardians of the girl, and she left her nurse Calligenia in the cave as well (VI.136-140). With Demeter away from the cave of Persephone, Zeus transformed himself into a snake and entered the cave undetected. He lay with her in his reptilian form and from this union, Persephone became pregnant with his child (VI.155-163). She gave birth to the horned baby Zagreus (VI.165), who himself climbed

³⁷¹ Nonn, *Dio.* VI.1-3. I included the *periochae* in this research as a means of structuring the argument to follow – I am aware that the *periochae* are absent from early fragments of the *Dionysiaca* and that they are likely later additions. For discussion of their addition, see Middleton, F. (2018). ‘The Poetics of Later Greek Ecphrasis: Christodorus Coptus, the Palatine Anthology and the Periochae of Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*’. *Ramus*, 47 (2), pp. 216-238.

Zeus' throne and "brandished lightning in his little hand" (VI.166). But, incited by Hera, the Titans smeared their faces with chalk and while he "contemplated his changeling countenance reflected in a mirror", they stabbed him with a knife (VI.169-174). As the Titans dismembered the child, the infant changed forms. "Now young like a crafty Cronides shaking the aegis-cape, now as ancient Cronos heavy-kneed, pouring rain" (VI.177-8). He transformed into a peculiar looking baby and a young man. He mimicked a lion and uttered a terrible roar. He metamorphosed into the form of animals as well, including a lion (187), a horned serpent (192), a tiger (197) and a bull (197). He continued to fight for his life until Hera, "with a jealous throat bellowed harshly through the air" (VI.201-4). And then the bull collapsed. The Titans then continued to dismember the god. Once Zeus had learnt of the trick with the mirror, he attacked the mother of the Titans and shut up the murderers within Tartaros (VI.206-10). Zeus then scorched the Earth, blasting his thunderbolt out of grief for his beloved child. Oceanos then "poured rivers of tears from his watery eyes" (225) and Zeus calmed at the sight of the Earth and pitied her. He sent down rain and flooded the Earth he had burned (229). To drain the floodwaters, Poseidon split the "midmost peak of the Thessalian mountain, and dug a cleft through it by which the water ran sparkling down" (VI.374-77). After the water had subsided, nature returned to normal and "cities were fashioned by men with better skill and established on stone foundations, palaces were built, and the streets of the new-founded cities were made strong for later generations of men" (VI.383-6).

3.2 Analysis of the First Birth

3.2.1. Deo and Persephone

In the Classical period, Demeter and Persephone were already well established as deities of a mystery cult. Demeter appeared as Demeter Kidaria, a mystery cult deity in Arcadia³⁷² and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* lays the foundational myth of what would become the goddess' most extensively documented cult, the Eleusinian mysteries. The Eleusinian mysteries or *ta mysteria* was an annual Athenian festival which comprised of initiation rituals, sacrifices and purification ceremonies.³⁷³ The festival itself is based on the myth of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and many of the ritual aspects of the festival are done to mimic the events of the narrative.

In the *Homeric Hymn*, Zeus is named as Persephone's father. The hymn tells of Zeus' approval at Hades' kidnapping of Kore and taking her to the underworld to be his bride. Hearing her daughter's screams, Demeter searched for Kore and the one who took her away. Unable to find her daughter, Demeter roams the Earth in search, holding a torch and refusing all forms of nourishment. Upon hearing the truth of what happened to Kore from Helios, Demeter was infuriated at Zeus for his willingness to allow her daughter to be taken. In her anger at the gods, she abandoned Olympus and disguised herself as a mortal woman and came to Eleusis. Once in Eleusis and after revealing her divinity, she ordered the people of Eleusis to erect a temple and altar in her honour where she would teach them her rites. Thereafter, while still longing for the return of her daughter, she caused a devastating crop failure in which no grain could be harvested. To ease Demeter's longing and to prevent famine, Zeus ordered that Hades release Kore. Hades agreed but not before feeding Kore pomegranate seeds which would bind her to him as his wife and ensure that she returned to him every year. Persephone would spend two thirds of the year with her mother and one third with Hades. Demeter then went to Eleusis where she taught the leaders of the people the secret rites and rituals of her mysteries and the secret to a blessed afterlife for her initiates. The Nonnian narrative of Dionysos' first birth contains elements which can be recognized in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Firstly, Demeter is concerned over her daughter's safety and sanctity. In both narratives, Persephone is a victim of kidnapping. The grief and concern for her daughter in the Nonnian narrative echoes the much earlier version of the *Homeric Hymn*

³⁷² Burkert, 1985: 136.

³⁷³ Burkert, 1985: 363.

to *Demeter* in which the goddess searches longing for her kidnapped daughter. These similarities are significant as it reveals that Nonnos was aware of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. If it was his intention to contrast his narrative to the *Homeric Hymn*, it is not certain. It is more likely that Nonnos made use of the knowledge of Demeter and Persephone's mythology in conjunction with Orphic mythology to formulate a compendium or amalgam of mythological narratives surrounding Dionysos' first birth.

Nonnos refers to Demeter by her epithet Deo throughout the first part of the birth narrative. This epithet has been used of the goddess by earlier authors long before Nonnos.³⁷⁴ From the *Orphic Hymns*, we are aware that Deo was a cult name for Demeter in that religious context. In the *Orphic Hymn to Eleusinian Demeter*, the goddess is invoked as "Deo, divine mother of all".³⁷⁵ The epithet also appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,³⁷⁶ Sophocles' *Antigone*³⁷⁷ and in Aristophanes' *Wealth*.³⁷⁸

3.2.2 Cave Symbolism

Caves play a vital role in cults concerned with fertility, for very often heroic births or the consummation of mortal and divine unions will take place in caves.³⁷⁹ Caves in mythology typically serve to hide the occupant from the interest and even from the mere sight of the Olympians. The "metaphor of the cave as the womb of the earth and the connection of caves with fertility and chthonic cults are common".³⁸⁰ Therefore Demeter's connection with the caves agrees with her position as a fertility goddess, the same can be said about Persephone. The Nonnian birth narratives of Dionysos often employ cave symbolism as a means of hiding the infant child from the gaze of gods who might aim to kill him. In ancient Greek religion, caves were often the sites of cult practice, dating as far back as the Neolithic period.³⁸¹ The goddess of childbirth, Eileithyia is also strongly associated with caves. In the *Odyssey*, she is noted as being the owner of a Cretan cave near Amnisos,³⁸² where the worship of the goddess was present from the Bronze Age until the Roman period.³⁸³ Caves are important features of

³⁷⁴ Cf. Apollon. Rhod. 4.988 & Callim. *Hymn. to Dem.* 133.

³⁷⁵ *Orph. Hymn.* 40.

³⁷⁶ *Hom. Hymn to Dem.* 47.

³⁷⁷ *Soph. Ant.* 1121.

³⁷⁸ *Arist. Wealth* 515.

³⁷⁹ Cf. the unions of Peleus and Thetis, Jason and Medea, Aeneas and Dido.

³⁸⁰ Ustinova, 2009: 16.

³⁸¹ See Burkert, 1985: 37 on Cretan cave cults.

³⁸² *Od.* xix, 189.

³⁸³ Dietrich, 1974: 220-1.

birth narratives for the gods. An outstanding example of this being the cave of Zeus' birth on Mount Ida on Crete, used to conceal the child Zeus from his father.

3.2.3 Serpent Symbolism

Demeter employs snakes as the guardians of Persephone, and it is the guise of the snake that Zeus takes, to rape his daughter. Snakes retain a special position in Dionysiac religion and poetic iconography, which may in part be traced to his conception and birth narrative. The serpent imagery, however, persists through another birth account, namely that of the final birth from his father's thigh. In the Orphic myth, the nurse Hipta entwines a snake around the winnowing basket that contains the heart of Dionysos, which she carries on her head.³⁸⁴ The snake's versatility and flexibility, its rope-like morphology suit it to the suite of accoutrements – their *skeuē* – belonging to the adherents of Dionysos, the 'releaser' god in Euripides' influential 5th century representation in the *Bacchae*, who uncannily undoes all bindings. The snake is a likely element of Dionysiac markers in that it will "enclose, like a belt or bow, and the symbolism of the crown surrounding the small world of the new-born god like a sacred mark of identity".³⁸⁵

3.2.4 Persephone and the Mysteries

Rape and impregnation of Persephone by Zeus is also found in the Orphic fragments (OF 180) and is noted by the Roman author Hyginus.³⁸⁶ The *Orphic Hymn* to Persephone (29) depicts the same events later related in the Nonnian narrative:

Persephone, blessed daughter of great Zeus,
sole offspring of Demeter, come and accept this gracious sacrifice.
Much-honoured spouse of Plouton,
discreet and life-giving, you command the gates of Hades in the bowels of the earth,
lovely-tressed Praxidike, pure bloom of Deo,
mother of the Erinyes, queen of the nether world,
secretly sired by Zeus, in clandestine union.
Mother of loud-roaring, many-shaped Eubouleus,

³⁸⁴ OF 329.

³⁸⁵ Diez Platas, 2011: 134.

³⁸⁶ Liber is the son of Jove and Proserpine. *Fab.* 167.

radiant and luminous, playmate of the Seasons,
revered and almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, only-beloved of mortals.³⁸⁷

Persephone's role in Orphico-Bacchic mystery cult has a similar importance to that of Dionysos. She is the chthonic queen of the underworld to whom many initiates pray to be granted an audience and receive a blessed afterlife. This importance of Persephone is attested in various gold lamellae from the 4th century BCE. Two gold tablets from Thurii, dated to the 4th century BCE, indicate the prominent position of Persephone as chthonic queen of the Orphico-Bacchic mysteries, so, for example, we may read one of the faithful addressing her as follows:

Now I come, come as a suppliant (feminine) to Persephone,
so that she may kindly send me to the seats of the pure.³⁸⁸

It appears that Persephone's role in the mysteries was to act as the gatekeeper to the blessed afterlife and a judge of initiates who had entered the underworld. The origin of the myth in which Persephone is the mother of Dionysos is not only found in Orphic *hieroi logoi*, but also in more ancient texts. In the *Meno*, Plato quotes a fragment from one of Pindar's threnodies in which he says,

But for those from whom Persephone accepts retribution
for her ancient grief, in the ninth year she returns their souls
to the upper sunlight; from them arise
proud kings and men who are swift in strength
and greatest in wisdom, and for the rest of time
they are called sacred heroes by mortals.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ *OH 29* transl. Athanassakis & Wolkow, 2013: 26.

³⁸⁸ Tablets 6 & 7 in Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 15.

³⁸⁹ Plato. *Meno*. 81b; fr.133, as in Graf & Iles-Johnston, 2007: 68. It should be noted that there is debate whether this fragment by Pindar, analysed by Comparetti, holds any early evidence of an Orphic myth of Dionysos. This is considered by some scholars (Edmonds, 1999) to be a modern reconstruction made in the puritan Orphic-Christian paradigm which finds little evidence in the fragments themselves. See Edmonds, 1999 for an argument against Comparetti's analysis.

This ancient grief to which Pindar refers is the death and dismemberment of her son at the hands of the Titans and this connects to the Orphic belief in metempsychosis. Persephone's role in the Orphic mysteries is modelled on her and Demeter's roles in the Eleusinian mysteries. As a fertility goddess and a deity which possesses the ability to permeate through boundaries of the underworld and the physical world, Persephone becomes bonded to mystery cult.

3.3 Zagreus

From the incestuous union with her father, Persephone gives birth to the horned baby Zagreus. Other versions of the myth of this birth include the Korybantes or the Kouretes, who were employed by Zeus to stand guard over the infant Zagreus in the Idaean Cave.³⁹⁰ The Korybantes were the attendants of the Great Mother of the Gods, who partook in orgiastic rites. The Korybantes are often confused with the Kouretes, who were the guardians of the infant Zeus while he was stowed away in the Cretan cave.³⁹¹

This version of the Zagreus myth alludes to a Cretan birthplace for the god in older dramatic work,³⁹² while in Aeschylus' fragment 124, Zagreus is the son of Persephone and Hades. The Neo-Platonist Porphyry connects Zagreus to a Cretan mystery cult in his *De Abstinencia*.³⁹³

The Titans then whitened their faces with gypsum³⁹⁴ until the guards had fallen asleep and lured the child out of safety with toys, such as a cone, a mirror, a bull-roarer, golden apples, a knuckle bone, and a tuft of wool.³⁹⁵ In comparison, the Nonnian version of the Titans' trickery is relatively poorer in detail. In that version, the Titans smear their face with chalk while Zagreus contemplates his reflection in the mirror. Nonnos' narrative does not include the toys with which the child is lured away from safety. Nonnos does not include any novel elements to his account of the myth, but rather offers a retelling of the narrative.

3.3.1 The Metamorphoses of Zagreus

As the Titans stab the child, the god takes various forms. The transformations are significant to his characterisation and each peculiar form reveals some aspect of the god's nature as that

³⁹⁰ Dio. Sic. V. 75.4.

³⁹¹ Eur. *Bacch.* 120; Eur. *Hipp.* 140.

³⁹² Cf, Eur. *Cretans. Fr.* 79.

³⁹³ Porphyry *De Abst.* 4.56.

³⁹⁴ Cf. OF 35.

³⁹⁵ OF 308.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.18.

will be revealed in his adult life. What looks random or merely a means for evasion in one instance in fact reveals truths about his identity.

The first form Zagreus assumes is that of a young Zeus bearing an aegis. This asserts the connection the young god has with his father, an important characterisation of Dionysos in the greater narrative of the *Dionysiaca*, and where this connection is denied and therefore more strongly re-asserted as Dionysos aims to emulate his father throughout the epic.³⁹⁶ The second form assumed by the child is that of ‘rainy Kronos’, a further allusion to his kingly heritage attesting to the mythology in which Kronos is his grandfather. The god then takes the forms of a baby and a young man. The form of the young man may be inspired by the iconographic depiction of Dionysos at the time of the writing of the epic. By late antiquity, Dionysos’ representation in art as a beardless young man was well established, as I have indicated in the previous chapter.

The first animal form that the child assumes is that of a roaring lion. Throughout ancient literature and drama, Dionysos and Dionysiac manifestations are associated with the lion and other felines, such as panthers. The most prominent example from Greek drama of this Dionysiac connection with the lion is present in Euripides’ *Bacchae* in the dismemberment of Pentheus. In that episode, Agaue under the delusion of the god, perceives Pentheus as a lion and takes an active part in her son’s death and dismemberment (Eur. *Ba.* 1138-46). This example emphasises Dionysos ability to delude and induce madness, yet he also chooses the lion as the delusion, further strengthening the god’s connection with the animal. Also present in the *Bacchae*, the chorus calls upon Dionysos to appear in the form of a hundred-headed serpent or as a raging lion (*Ba.* 1019). The Dionysiac-lion connection is not solely a Euripidean construct but was also evident in other mythology of the god. For instance, in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos*, the god appears in the form of a lion on the pirate ship³⁹⁷ and in another myth, Dionysos appears to the Minyades as a lion as well.³⁹⁸ Apart from literary evidence to establish a feline connection with the god, iconography also makes this connection. *Fig. 8* depicts a vase dated to the Late Classical Period on which a youthful and beardless Dionysos rides side-saddle on the back of a panther in a procession. Nonnos would

³⁹⁶ This will be discussed later in the analysis.

³⁹⁷ *Hom. Hymn.* 7. 49.

³⁹⁸ Antoninus Liberalis, 10.

have been aware of these feline associations with the god, for the poet appears to have been well-read on the god's mythologies and would have likely been familiar with the *Bacchae*.

The second animal the child metamorphoses into is an unyoked horse, thereafter followed by a transformation into a horned serpent. The serpent has long been identified with Dionysos and the Dionysiac retinue. In the *Bacchae*, the bacchantes are portrayed as having snakes entwined in their hair, using serpents as belts and girdles and after their dismemberment of a bull, serpents lick the blood from their cheeks.³⁹⁹ In many artworks, Dionysiac maenads are identified by the serpents entwined in their hair (*fig. 9*). In the *Bacchae*, the chorus calls upon Dionysos to appear as a bull, a many-headed serpent, or a lion (1019). In Ovid's Minyades myth,⁴⁰⁰ when the daughters refuse to accept Dionysos as a god, snakes appear in their wool baskets. The snake is an aspect of Dionysos' chthonic characterisation, just as Zeus Meilichios is the chthonic characterisation of Zeus which takes the form of the snake.⁴⁰¹ Just as the snake is considered autochthonous and close to the earth, so too Dionysos possess the abilities to transcend physical and terrestrial boundaries to enter the underworld. The horns of the serpent into which Zagreus transforms is most likely linked to his position as the horned god, for even in his infant form, the child is horned.

The third transformation of Zagreus is into a tiger. Tigers are portrayed in art and literature as drawing the chariot of Dionysos, for example in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, the lamenting Ariadne wanders the shore where she was abandoned by Theseus, when the Bacchic thiasos appears with Bacchus in a chariot drawn by tigers (1.550). The tiger was among one of the sacred animals of the god and the association with Dionysos had persisted well into Late Antiquity.⁴⁰² Nonnos' inclusion of these sacred animals indicates that he was well-educated on the cult of the god. He includes them to highlight why these animals are sacred to Dionysos. These feline predators are symbols of the wild and perhaps even femininity, yet they possess incredible strength and destructive capabilities, much like the god. The inclusion of these animals therefore successfully integrates the knowledge of Dionysos' sacred animals into the Nonnian narrative.

The last animal in which Zagreus transforms is the bull. The bull is the most widely depicted characterisation of the Dionysos throughout literature. In the *Bacchae*, the bull is the "is a

³⁹⁹ Eur. *Ba.* 100; 699; 769.

⁴⁰⁰ Ov. *Met.* 4.1-55.

⁴⁰¹ Versnel, 2011: 27-8.

⁴⁰² cf. Paus. 8. 39; Theocrit. 26.4; Plut. *Sympos.* 3. 5; Virg. *Eclog.* 5.30.

form of the god Dionysos in his destructive aspect” for the chorus calls on the god “to appear in this shape to destroy his enemy”.⁴⁰³ In Plutarch’s *Moralia*, we learn that the women of Elis called upon Dionysos to appear to them in the form of a bull (299b). In the play, the deluded Pentheus perceives the Stranger (Dionysos) as a bull (920), and earlier in the tragedy, the bacchantes in the mountains tear a bull apart in a frenzied *sparagmos* (Eur. *Ba.* 743-5). The epithet *taurophagos* (bull-eater) is often used for Dionysos due to the sacrifices of bulls in the god’s honour.⁴⁰⁴ This epithet also connects to the epithet *omophagos* (raw eater) which is used with Dionysos, who is a god to whom torn flesh is sacrificed as well.⁴⁰⁵

3.3.2 The *Sparagmos* of Zagreus

In later tradition, *omophagia* is also linked by Clement of Alexandria to the *sparagmos* rite of Bacchic ritual:

The bakchoi celebrate the frenzied Dionysos with omophagia indulging in sacred frenzy and celebrating the rite of dividing the flesh of the slaughter.⁴⁰⁶

The basis on which Clement wrote this observation is unclear, but it may be speculated that this precedent was set by the playwright Euripides who notes that the eating of raw flesh was done by the god.⁴⁰⁷

The dismemberment of Zagreus at the hands of the Titans is an example of the *sparagmos* rite of Dionysiac ritual. The *sparagmos* rite is characterised by the tearing apart of a sacrificial victim in a ritual context and the rite became associated by modern scholars with Dionysiac rituals and festivals.⁴⁰⁸ A prominent example of the *sparagmos* rite’s association with Dionysiac mythology is found in the *Bacchae*. In the play, there occurs two instances of the rite taking place, the first foreshadowing the second. In the first *sparagmos* of the play, the bacchantes on the mountain come across a bull, which they tear apart limb from limb with

⁴⁰³ Leinieks, 1996: 83.

⁴⁰⁴ Paus. 8.19.2; Athenaios, 456d.

⁴⁰⁵ Henrichs, 1978: 150-1.

⁴⁰⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos*, 2.12.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Eur. *Cretans Fr.* 472; Eur. *Ba.* 139.

⁴⁰⁸ See Seaford (1981); Detienne (1979) on the classification of the rite as Dionysiac. See Leinieks (1996) on the presence of the ritual in festivals.

their bare hands in their frenzy (735-9). The bull as the sacrificial victim is notable in this instance, for Zagreus in the *Dionysiaca* is torn apart by the Titans in the form of a bull, underlining the importance the animal has for the god and its recurrence as a motif in accounts of him. The second *sparagmos* in Euripides' 405 BCE play is the actual death and dismemberment of Pentheus, whom the women take to be another Dionysiac animal, a lion (Eur. *Ba.* 1135). It is important to note that the torn flesh of the victims is not consumed as is done to Zagreus in the Nonnian narrative, but rather the flesh of the animal and Pentheus is scattered.⁴⁰⁹

In the viticultural sphere, with Dionysos' position as a vegetation deity, the *sparagmos* represents the pruning of the vines, according to Leinieks.⁴¹⁰ In the Orphic mythology, the dismemberment of Zagreus at the hands of the Titans has been understood to mark the origins of cardinal sin in humanity according to Comparetti's 1879 analysis of the Orphic gold tablets.⁴¹¹ Comparetti made this connection in his analysis of the Thuri tablets in which he interpreted that the payment of a penalty for unrighteous deeds referred to the dismemberment of Zagreus by the Titans. According to this tradition, humanity was created from the ashes of the slain Titans.⁴¹² When the Titans consume the child of Zeus and Persephone, the immortality of the god becomes the immortality of the human soul.⁴¹³ The result of this action results in the guilt of humans, which is alluded to in Pindar's fragment 133, which refers to the ancient grief of Persephone.

The ancient sorrow to which the fragment refers is the death and dismemberment of Dionysus. The initiates of these Orphico-Bacchic mysteries are aware of this titanic guilt and through initiation into the mysteries, are they able to be released from the cycle of rebirths and enjoy a blessed afterlife as described by the tablets from Thuri.

The *sparagmos* of Zagreus is thought to have substantial implications on the worship and mythology of Dionysos. In non-Nonnian versions of the dismemberment myth, the body of

⁴⁰⁹ Eur. *Ba.* 735-750; 1129-1136.

⁴¹⁰ Leinieks, 1996: 375.

⁴¹¹ "The interpretation of all these tales about Dionysos and the Titans in terms of original sin passed from the Titans to the human race by this anthropogony first appears in 1879, in Comparetti's analysis of the Thuri gold tablets" (Edmonds, 1999: 38). It should be noted that Edmonds is critical of Comparetti's analysis and discredits the historicity of the Zagreus myth in his argument. But for the sake of brevity, this argument could not be included and we must make use of Comparetti as well as Graf & Johnston's analysis of the Zagreus myth in this research.

⁴¹² Cf. Plato. *Laws.* 701b-c; 854b. Paus. 8. 37.5.

⁴¹³ Pl. *Laws.* 701b & OF 37i

Zagreus is dismembered into seven pieces, the pieces are boiled and roasted and eaten.⁴¹⁴ However, these details of the myth are not included in the *Dionysiaca*, which removes any possible implications of the Orphic idea of original sin in Nonnos' Dionysos. It is apparent from the extensive Orphic details which Nonnos includes that he was aware of the Orphic narrative of Dionysos, yet the poet omits the eating of Zagreus from his narrative. One can only assume his motivations for this omission, but his true motive is impossible to know for certain. Nonnos does not omit this element of the narrative because he is unaware of its existence. The poet has revealed throughout his account that he was well-educated on Dionysiac mythology. Rather I speculate that because of the consumption of Dionysos' connection with ideas of soul immortality and metempsychosis, a common doctrine in Neo-Platonist Alexandria, that Nonnos deliberately omitted this element.

3.4 Zeus' Vengeance

The first act of retribution performed by Zeus is the imprisonment of the Titans in Tartaros. This action differs from other Late Antique accounts in which Zeus strikes the Titans down with thunderbolts and from their ashes creates humankind.⁴¹⁵ In the *Dionysiaca*, Zeus does not create humankind from the ashes of the Titans, but rather attacks their mother, Earth. This allows Nonnos the perfect opportunity to weave the flood myth and Deucalion into his narrative, an event which in other versions had no connection with the birth of Dionysos. Flood myths have persisted throughout the literature of Antiquity. Other flood myths include the Akkadian version, the *Atrahasis*, the Sumerian version in the epic of Gilgamesh, and the Hebrew version of the Old Testament.

The most extensive version of Deucalion and the Great Flood survives in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Ovid's account, the deluge was Zeus' punishment for the hubris of the Pelasgians and so ended the Bronze Age. Nonnos' account of the flood bears a striking resemblance to Ovid's. In the *Metamorphoses*, Jove, offended by the savagery of a sacrifice made to him by the Arcadian king Lycaon, convenes a meeting of the Olympians (Ov. *Met.* 1.777). Jove and the other gods concluded that humanity must be punished for this hubris and Jove shuts each of the winds in caves as he begins his scorching of the earth (1.253-73) and with assistance from Neptune, Jove flooded the earth (1.283). There follows the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha. Nonnos' account appears to follow the same pattern as Ovid's. In both

⁴¹⁴ OF 311; Proclus, *In Plat. Rempublicam*, 2.338; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortations*, 2.9; Plutarch, *Mor.* 299b.

⁴¹⁵ Olympiodorus *In Phd.* 1.3.

cases, Zeus or Jove is offended. In his wrath he scorches the earth and only once he is appeased does he send forth a deluge. Nonnos diverges from the Ovidian account in the reason for the deluge. The cause of Zeus' wrath in the Nonnian account is the death and dismemberment of his son. The inclusion of the scorching of Earth and the flood myth as severe acts of retribution by Zeus allows for an increased prominence in the pantheon for Dionysos. This is because of the extent to which Zeus will act for his son to be born and to survive into adulthood. Further, in Zeus' rage at the death of his son, he destroys the earth with fire and water.

3.5 Conclusion

The first birth of Dionysos, as Zagreus, is a useful addition to Nonnos' Dionysiac compendium. While arguably based on liturgy and theology of an Orphico-Bacchic cultic nature, it provides helpful insights into the character of the adult Dionysos as represented in the epic. Yet despite these Orphic associations, the poet does not commit to the retelling of a solely Orphic narrative. He deliberately omits elements, such as the consumption of Dionysos by the Titans, which would have been markedly Orphic.

The relationship the young god has with his first mother and maternal grandmother, Persephone and Demeter, informs his characterisation as a chthonic and vegetation deity, as well as his later representation as a god of mystery cult. His incarnation as Zagreus allows for an inclusion of elements and manifestations during the metamorphoses, which will become a part of the god's characterisation in the rest of the Nonnian epic. The poet successfully provides a compendium of sacred animals which has been informed from a long history of Greek drama. It is also Zagreus who is the god that undergoes a *sparagmos*, a ritual which is highly Bacchic and connected solely with Dionysos and thus establishes a method of worship of the god. Finally, from Zeus' reaction and retribution for the death of his son, we begin to see the integral part Zeus will play in the life of his son, who he will repeatedly bring into the world in the Nonnian birth narrative. The relationship of Zeus and Dionysos is one much more intricate than the relationships Zeus has with his other children, and it is this relationship which is an important feature of the *Dionysiaca* as the adult Dionysos continuously attempts to imitate his father, to gain approval from the other Olympians and take his place among them.

In the first birth narrative of Dionysos, Nonnos successfully provides a cohesive narrative which has been carefully constructed from various older versions of the myth. In doing so, he shows his knowledge and education on the subject matter as well as his purpose for the composition of the epic as a whole – to provide a compendium of Dionysiac mythology.

4. The Second Birth of Dionysos

4.1 The *Dionysiaca*: a summary of the second birth

4.1.1 Book VII: Summary

The seventh sings of the hoary supplication of Time, and Semele, and the love of Zeus, and the furtive bed.⁴¹⁶

Books VII and VIII of the *Dionysiaca* detail the second birth of Dionysos, the account, which is most familiar for students of Ancient Greek mythology. For much of Book VII, Zeus foretold of his plans to bring Dionysos into the world, the god whom Zeus will give to humanity to “heal their sorrows” (VII, 77). The Dionysos described by Zeus is the god of wine, he is the “bringer of a glorious gift, [who] shall plant in the earth the moist fragrant fruit of vintage the Allheal” (85-7).

Eros takes an active role in the second birth of Dionysos, for he took the fifth arrow out of the divine quiver, which held twelve “firefed arrows for Zeus” (113) and the fifth arrow was one destined for Semele. Eros took the arrow and fit it to his bowstring, first putting a sprig of ivy on the barb and dipping the shaft in a bowl of nectar (129-135). The scene then moves to Semele and the audience sees her driving her mules through the city (137-8). Overcome by sleep, she had dreamt that she saw a tree in a garden laden with clusters of swelling fruit “yet unripe and drenched in the fostering dews of Zeus” (145-7). A flame from the sky appeared and struck the tree down but did not touch the fruit. A bird “flying with outspread wings caught up the fruit half-grown” and carried it to Zeus (148-151). Zeus received the fruit and sewed it into his thigh, but a bull-shaped figure was born from his thigh (154).

⁴¹⁶ Nonn. *Dion.* VII.1-2.

Semele interpreted that she was the tree in her dream. Trembling from the dream, she told her father Kadmos about the dream. Kadmos then summoned the seer Teiresias and reported the dream to him (159). Upon hearing the seer's interpretation, Kadmos ordered Semele to sacrifice two animals to Zeus, the first a bull "the image of likehorned Lyaaios" and a boar "vine-ravaging enemy of the vintage to come" (162-4). Semele obeyed her father's order, sacrificed the victims, and sprinkled her bosom with their blood - her body, her hair, and her clothes becoming drenched with the blood of the bull (167-170). She then made her way to the river Asopos to wash the blood from herself (173). But Erinys flew by and saw Semele bathing, amused at the fate of Semele. Zeus also watched the maiden as she bathed, and Eros shot the fifth arrow from his bow with Zeus as its target (190-197). The arrow finding its mark, Zeus is filled with desire at the sight of Semele and changes his form to that of an eagle and flew closer to Semele, watching her bathe from the bank.

After an encounter with a nymph, Zeus returns to Olympus and concocts a plan to bed Semele (283). Under the cover of darkness, Zeus visited Semele's bed and leaned over her "with a horned head on human limbs, lowing with the voice of a bull" (319-20). Zeus then undergoes a series of metamorphoses: first in the likeness of a bull-horned god, then the form of a lion or a panther (322). Then he appeared as a bridegroom with snakes, vine leaves and ivy intertwined in his hair (324-5). In the form of a serpent, he writhed over the body of Semele and "made a long wooing and shouted "Euoi!" (332). During the conception, vines sprouted around Semele's bed (345), and flowers budded from the walls (345). Following this, Zeus consoles Semele with loving words and hopes for the future of their child by telling her, "you bring forth a son who shall not die and you I will call immortal" (364) and "you have conceived a son who will make mortals forget their troubles, you shall bring forth joy for gods and men" (366-7).

4.1.2 Book VIII: Summary

The eighth has a changeful tale, the fierce jealousy of Hera, and Semele's fiery nuptials, and Zeus the slayer.⁴¹⁷

The relationship of Zeus and Semele continues into the eighth book of the *Dionysiaca* and recommences later during Semele's pregnancy. She plaits her hair with flowers and ivy "like a prophetess of the Bassarids" (11). During her pregnancy, she exhibits bacchic behaviour,

⁴¹⁷ Nonn. *Dion.* VIII.1-2.

such as rushing wildly out of the house when she hears a shepherd playing the panpipes (17). If she heard the double pipe, she leapt up and ran to the woods, shoeless (19), or if she heard cymbals clashing, she began to dance (20-1). If she heard the lowing of a bull, she mimicked a response (23).

Seeing Zeus and Semele, Envy, jealous of the unborn god, conceived a plan. He donned the likeness of Ares and smeared his breastplate with poison from a flower to imitate blood. He dipped his hands in vermillion dye and pretended that his hands were covered in the gore and blood from his slain enemies (39-49). He told Hera that Semele had stolen her husband and goaded her by retelling of her wrath against the other mortal women with whom Zeus had had children (61-109). Concerned that Semele would take her place as the wife of Zeus and the queen of the gods (152-155), Hera transformed herself into an old woman (181) and spoke to Semele. She urged Semele to ask Zeus to come to her bed “with amorous thunders, armed with bridal lightning” (247-250). After Hera’s departure, Semele asked Zeus to come to her bed in his true and godly form, that she may embrace his lightning and thunderbolts (310-312) as he would appear in Hera’s marital bed. Zeus was aware that the request was Hera’s doing (351-2). Knowing the consequences of this, he ordered Hermes to catch his new-born son out of the flames (333-4). Zeus attempted to dissuade Semele from her request by urging that she was with-child and that his true form was not a gentle flame (357-366). But he reluctantly agreed to her request and entered her bed in his godly form (367-374). Semele perished “rejoicing in a childbearing death” and the child was delivered into the flames (396-406). Zeus gave Semele a home in the sky and she received immortality (407-414).

4.2. Analysis of the Second Birth

4.2.1 The God of Vegetal Rebirth

It is well-known that Dionysos is a god of vegetation and even people who are not remarkably familiar with the god's spheres of influence are aware that he is the god of wine.⁴¹⁸ In the opening lines of Book VII, Zeus describes the roles that will be associated with the god in his adult life, namely that he will be the bringer of wine which will heal the sorrows and bring joy to humanity. However, Dionysos' position as the god of viticulture is more complex than merely just providing wine for the purpose of release from sorrows.

It is difficult to establish when Dionysos first became associated with wine and many scholars have differing opinions of the ancient evidence. For many, Dionysos' appearance in Homeric epic alludes to a connection with wine, particularly in the *Iliad*. In Book 14, Dionysos is described as a joy for mortals,⁴¹⁹ which scholars such as Seaford suggest implies an association with wine.⁴²⁰ Other scholars, such as K.O. Müller are not convinced that Homer ever made mention of wine as a gift of Dionysos.⁴²¹ The first definitive mention of Dionysos' connection with wine from archaic literature is found in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. In the passage, grape clusters and wine are referred to as the gifts of Dionysos (614). Much of the evidence supporting Dionysos' association with wine is found in iconography of the 6th century BCE, particularly in Athenian vases (*fig. 10*).

4.2.1.1 Ivy and Vine: Plutarch on Dionysus and Vegetable Life

The connection between the second birth and Dionysos' nature can be found in his association with the vine and ivy. This connection is well-established in the Nonnian narrative, particularly when Eros ties the sprig of ivy to the arrow that is destined for Semele. By doing this, Nonnos marks the association of the god with vegetation. Both ivy and vines undergo metamorphoses, as Dionysos does in the narrative. In the winter seasons, the vine is dormant, but in the warmer months the vine is awakened by the heat of the sun and blossoms

⁴¹⁸ For Dionysos' connection with vegetation, see (Otto, 1965: 49-50); for his connection with wine, see (Otto, 1965: 145).

⁴¹⁹ *Il.* 14.325.

⁴²⁰ Seaford, 2006: 16.

⁴²¹ Müller, K.O. *Kleine Schriften*, Vol. II, as in Otto, 1965: 145.

“in a riot of green and with a fiery elixir without compare”.⁴²² The ivy undergoes a similar metamorphosis. First it sends out its “shade-seeking shoots” and the familiar lobed-leafed tendrils.⁴²³ Its ‘second birth’ occurs when another type of shoot appears, which grows upright and towards the source of light. These two types of shoots and leaves are vastly different from one another and the plant is now able to produce blooms and berries. Otto remarks that the duality of the ivy plant is likened to the two births of Dionysos. Another distinct difference between the vine and ivy occurs in their growth requirements, with the vine requiring much more sunlight than the ivy. During the winter months, when many festivals of Dionysos take place, the ivy can grow. This growth is often imagined as a snake and “the cold nature ascribed to it and to the snake” emphasise the connection with Dionysos. Nonnos also provides evidence for the association of snakes with the ivy. In XLV.311f of the *Dionysiaca*, snakes are hurled at trees by bacchantes and they entwine themselves around the tree trunks and become ivy.

Many of Dionysos’ cult names refer specifically to his association with the vine and ivy, as we read in the work of Plutarch in the Roman era. For example, *Dionysos Dendrites* originally referred to the vine.⁴²⁴ Various epithets of the god also directly connect the vine to his sphere of influence, for example: *botruos* ‘bunch of grapes’ and *eustaphulos* ‘rich in grapes’. Epithets related to the ivy include: *orthos* ‘upright’ and *problastos* ‘of sprouting’.⁴²⁵ And each plant emphasises a certain aspect of Dionysos’ nature. The vine symbolised the fertile aspect of the god, able to provide his followers with relief from sorrow and toil with wine made from its fruit.

In contrast to the vine, ivy occupied darker and more chthonic associations according to Plutarch. Ivy did not require as much sunlight and could thrive even in the winter months. Recalling Dionysos’ destructive characteristics, ivy was grown far away from temples to

⁴²² Otto, 1965: 154.

⁴²³ Otto, 1965: 154.

⁴²⁴ Plut. *Quaest. Conviv.* 675d.

⁴²⁵ Others include: *anthios* ‘with blossoms’; *auxites* ‘of growth’; *briseus* ‘heavy with fruit’; *dasullios* ‘bushy’; *dendrites* ‘of the tree’; *endendros* ‘in the tree’; *hebrôn* ‘luxurious’; *thullophos* ‘leafy’; *karpios* ‘of the fruit’; *homphakites* ‘of unripe grapes’; *protrugaios* ‘of the vintage’; *spaphulites* ‘of the grape’; *phleus*, *phloios* ‘abundant’ (Leinieks, 1996: 179). See also Aelian, *Varia Historia*. 3.41. Further: *ampeloeis* ‘of the vine’; *botruephoros*, *pherestaphulos* ‘grape-bearing’; *elinophoros* ‘with tendrils’; *eristaphulos*, *polustaphulos* ‘rich in grapes’; *eukarpos*, *karpimos*, *pherekarpos* ‘fruitful’ (Leinieks, 1996: 180).

prevent the plant from invading and destroying too much of the surrounding plant life,⁴²⁶ but instead was planted in graveyards to decorate graves, again revealing an association with the chthonic and the world of the dead.

Plutarch draws further contrasts between the vine and ivy, regarding their relation to fire and flames. Wine from the vine is associated with fire due to its ability to create heat within the consumer, this can be associated with Dionysos' birth into the flames of Zeus. Ivy, on the other hand, is associated with the ability to cool the flames and extinguish the heat associated with wine,⁴²⁷ it is for this reason, perhaps, that Dionysos and his followers wreath themselves in ivy.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, the ivy produced poison which was believed to cause sterility and was used as a medicine for cooling and purification.⁴²⁹ It was also believed that ivy possessed the ability to induce madness and that it could produce a state of intoxication similar to that of wine. According to Plutarch, bacchantes under Dionysiac possession would tear apart ivy and eat it.⁴³⁰

4.2.1.2 Dionysus, Viticulture and Farming Festivals

According to Themistius' *In Praise of Farming*, most religious cults and beliefs originated in their connection with agriculture. With the benefits and harvests reaped from agriculture being viewed as the clearest evidence of gifts from the divine:

We will include in our account the wisdom of Prodikos, who connects all sacrifices, mysteries, festivals, and rites among men with the benefits of agriculture, considering that through it the favor of the gods comes to men and pledging to it his utmost respect.⁴³¹

The Dionysiac connections and associations made with the vine and ivy correspond to an antique vegetative nature of Dionysos. The connection with viticulture and Dionysos' influence over nature is undeniable and it is attested to throughout Greek literature.

⁴²⁶ Plut. *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 112.

⁴²⁷ Otto, 1965: 155.

⁴²⁸ Plut, *Quaest. Conviv.* 3.1.3.

⁴²⁹ Plut, *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 112.

⁴³⁰ Plut, *Mor. Quaest. Rom.* 112.

⁴³¹ Themistius, 349b.

Euripides' *Bacchae* is an important example of this connection, for throughout the play Dionysos and his followers can produce growth of vegetation. In the prologue, he has covered his mother's tomb in vines (*Ba.* 12). This growth of vegetation surrounding Semele is also echoed in the *Dionysiaca*, when vines sprouted around Semele's bed (VII.345), and flowers budded from the walls (VII.345). Similarly, the god also sends forth a spring of wine when a bacchant strikes her thyrsus to the ground (*Ba.* 707). At 726 of the *Bacchae*, all the beasts and the mountain itself react to the ritual cry of the bacchants and revel with them. The fusion of human and natural worlds in the Dionysiac revelry is not unique to Euripides, for it appears in Sophocles' *Antigone* (1146) as well as Aeschylus' *Lycurgeia*. Nonnos similarly make use of ivy and vine imagery throughout the god's narrative, underpinning what Nonnos knows to be an ancient connection to these plants.

Further evidence attesting a strong association between Dionysos and vegetable life can be found in the abundance of festivals relating the god to the fertility of viticulture. The Anthesteria, which took place in the Athenian winter was a festival which spanned three days and was celebrated in Attika and Ionia. The Anthesteria is derived from the term *anthos*, which is a viticultural term for the fermentation process, centred around the opening and drinking of the wine produced in the previous autumn.⁴³²

The religious days of the Anthesteria were the *Pithoigia*, *Choes*, and *Chytroi*: Opening of the New Wine, Jars, and Pots. The *Pithoigia* took place near the sanctuary of Dionysus, where members of the community and slaves all made libations to the god and drank wine of the grapes from the previous harvest. The *Choes* was celebrated by drinking of wine throughout the city, with peculiar-shaped vases and a drinking competition. The last day of the festival, the *Chytroi*, saw the opening of the sanctuary of Dionysos *en limnais* in which various sacred ceremonies took place, such as the *hieros gamos*. The *hieros gamos* ceremony was undoubtedly a fertility ritual connected with the viticultural year, which "symbolised the union of the god of fruitfulness with the community represented by the wife of its religious head" as well as the union of Dionysos and Ariadne.⁴³³

⁴³² Leinieks, 1996: 181.

⁴³³ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 3.5.

Another festival linked specifically to Dionysos' position as a vegetative deity is the Lenaia, which took place in the winter month of Gamelion. According to Leinieks, the Lenaia was associated with the pruning of the vines which took place in the winter months (1996:181).⁴³⁴ Pickard-Cambridge argues, however, that the festival was named for the term *lênai*, "known to be an appellation of the bacchanals or maenads" (1968: 29). The Rural Dionysia was another winter festival of Dionysos, which included a phallic procession to encourage the fertility of the seeds sown in the autumn. It is possible that the fertility aspect of the festival is older than the rites of Dionysus in Attika. The procession is best attested by Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, which dramatises the phallic procession. Nonnos was aware of these vegetal associations with the god when he created the Dionysos of his epic.

In summary, many authors from antiquity make the connection between Dionysos and vegetation, particularly the ivy and vine, with Plutarch being the most informative source. According to Plutarch, during the time he was writing, Dionysos was celebrated all over Greece as a "tree god" (*dendrites*) and he also relates the numerous myths in which ivy or vines are symbols associated with the god. Thus, Nonnos' inclusion of the vine and ivy, as well as Zeus' prophecy of his son's gift to humanity are in keeping with what was already established throughout antiquity about Dionysos' position as the god of viticulture.

⁴³⁴ The word for pruning is *kladeuein* and has no direct connection to the name of the festival.

4.2.2 The Bull

As Dionysos relates to vegetation, the god is also strongly associated with animals throughout ancient mythology and particularly, in the *Dionysiaca*. In the second-birth narrative, Semele dreams that a bull-shaped figure is born from Zeus' thigh (154), foreshadowing the metamorphoses that the infant Dionysos will undergo as well as his connection with the bull in his adult life. In popular and cultic Dionysiac religion, epithets attributed to the god, *dimorphos* the god of 'two forms' and *polueides kai polumorphos* 'the god of many forms' are indicative of Dionysos' ability to undergo metamorphoses.

Crete was known to be the centre of a bull cult associated with Zeus and the myth of Europa's abduction.⁴³⁵ Nonnos begins his epic with the retelling of this myth.

In antiquity, the bull was associated with fertility and a connection between the bull and water was made in iconography (*fig. 11*) and in ancient authors such as Homer, who referred to the river Skamandros, which roared "like a bull".⁴³⁶ This connection is attested to by the presence of a bull and water cult of Dionysos the Bull or *bougenes Dionysos* in Argos, where the theriomorphic Dionysos was summoned from the waters with trumpets.⁴³⁷ Other cults of Dionysos also revered the bull-shaped god, particularly the cult of Dionysos in Elis.

According to Plutarch, the women of Elis would call upon the god to appear to them as a bull.⁴³⁸ In the City Dionysia festival in Athens, the bull was also the sacrificial victim of choice, perhaps because of its Dionysian association⁴³⁹ and the Arcadian Cynaitha, a winter festival in honour of the god, saw men seize a bull out of a herd and carry it to the sanctuary, supposedly while under the god's influence.⁴⁴⁰

For Dionysos' association with the bull, ancient literature, Greek drama and iconography are the best sources of evidence. Dionysos appears to be represented throughout antiquity as an occasionally theriomorphic deity, able to take the form of animals, one of these forms being that of a bull. In the myth of the Minyades, Dionysos appears to the daughters of Minyas as a

⁴³⁵ In which Zeus, in the form of the bull, abducts the Phoenician princess and brings her to Crete.

⁴³⁶ *Il.* 21.237.

⁴³⁷ Otto, 1965: 166.

⁴³⁸ *Moralia* 299b.

⁴³⁹ Pickard-Cambridge 1968: 60-61.

⁴⁴⁰ Otto, 1965: 167.

young girl but then transforms himself into a bull, a lion, and a panther.⁴⁴¹ This myth corresponds to the transformations of the god discussed in the first birth narrative, in which Zagreus undergoes metamorphoses. It appears that in all the god's metamorphoses, he will take on the likeness of a bull. Apart from Dionysos' associations with the bull, other Olympians also appear to be connected to the animal. For example, Hera is referred to as *boôpis* 'oxen-eyed' in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Mycenaean iconography has shown evidence of Hera's association as 'cow-headed'.⁴⁴²

A prominent myth which connects Dionysos to the bull is found in the *Bacchae*. The play makes extensive use of bull imagery which is explicitly linked to Dionysos. For example, at 1017, the chorus calls on the god to appear to them as a bull and throughout the play, those under the god's influence and delusion can perceive him in this form. Leinieks argues that the bull form of Dionysos is indicative of the destructive aspect of his nature⁴⁴³ and it has been stated by ancient authors that the connection between Dionysos and the bull are linked to the effects of wine. According to Athenaeus, Dionysos was compared to a bull due to the wildness which intoxication by wine evokes.⁴⁴⁴ I am inclined to agree with the argument put forward by Leinieks, that only those under delusion can see this destructive nature of the god, and this is evidenced in the *Bacchae* when Pentheus is able to perceive the Stranger as a bull (920-1).

Further bull imagery in the *Bacchae* is directly connected to the god's cult and sacrifices. The scene in which the women on the mountain come across a bull and undertake a ritual *sparagmos* on the animal by tearing it apart is a well-attested element of Dionysiac ritual. In the ritual context, the bull is considered the most noble of the sacrificial victims. In a fragment of Sophocles, Dionysos is called *taurophagos* 'bull eater' which indicates his choice of sacrificial victim in that instance.⁴⁴⁵ Furthermore, in the *Bacchae*, the *sparagmos* of the bull is significant in terms of Dionysiac ritual. Thumiger (2006) notes that the appearance of the bull is meant to signify an individual character. In (618), there is a bull in the stables where Dionysos is locked up: "Then, there is the similarity or opposition of Dionysos and the

⁴⁴¹ Ant. Lib. *Met.* 10.

⁴⁴² Nilsson, 1949: 25.

⁴⁴³ 1996: 82-3.

⁴⁴⁴ Ath. 11.476A.

⁴⁴⁵ Fr. 688 Radt, as in Leinieks, 1996: 158.

king, so that the *tauroi ... hubristai* killed by the women at (743) are *figura* of Pentheus, while the bull he tries to imprison at (618) is a substitute for the god”.⁴⁴⁶

In iconography, bull statues were common. Statues of the god often depicted him as bull-horned, according to Plutarch and Athenaeus.⁴⁴⁷ A statue of the god in his bull form was also set up in Cyzicus and Laphystian maenads wore bull horns on their heads in honour of the god.⁴⁴⁸ In Greek pottery, bull imagery could be found on 5th century oinochoe (*fig. 12*), a wine jug, often used in the symposium. Oinochoai often depicted Dionysiac imagery and it was not uncommon for members of the Dionysiac retinue, such as satyrs and maenads, to be present on these types of vases.

4.2.2.1 Nonnos' Bull God

The connection with Dionysos, Zeus and the bull is one often made by Nonnos throughout this particular birth narrative. For example, once Semele has the dream foreshadowing her pregnancy, she relates the details of the dream to Kadmos who urges her to sacrifice a bull to Zeus. The bull is explicitly linked to Dionysos, as Kadmos tells her to sacrifice the bull as “the image of likehorned Lyaïos”. He also tells her to sacrifice a boar, “vine-ravaging enemy of the vintage to come” (162-4). These two choices of sacrificial victims are indirectly linked to Dionysos in this instance and connect the god with these two animals.

After the sacrifices, Semele drenches herself in the blood of the bull, further emphasizing the Dionysiac link to the animal, particularly because the bull was the preferred Dionysiac sacrificial victim. It would therefore be fitting that his mother would drench herself in the blood of the god's sacred animal. The scene where Semele, drenched in the blood of the sacrificial victim, bathes in the river to wash off the blood is like a scene in the *Bacchae* in which the bacchantes, after a frenzied *sparagmos* of a bull, return to the mountain to wash off the animal's blood (765-8). Similar rituals are recorded by Firmicus Maternus, who stated that members of the Cretan ecstatic cult would rip apart a live bull with their teeth and partake in a bloodied feast.⁴⁴⁹ If this is the case for these ecstatic cults, then Nonnos was

⁴⁴⁶ 2006: 203.

⁴⁴⁷ Plut. *Mor. De Is. et Os.* 35; Ath. 11.476A.

⁴⁴⁸ Otto, 1965: 167.

⁴⁴⁹ *The error of pagan religions*, 6.5.

aware of the rituals surrounding bull sacrifice in the Dionysiac religious context and uses the scene in which Semele undertakes such a sacrifice as an opportunity to include elements of Dionysiac ritual. By including these elements of sacrifice and Dionysiac ritual, Nonnos sets up Semele's position as a priestess in his narrative.

4.2.3 The Metamorphoses of Zeus

The metamorphoses undergone by Zeus during the Nonnian second birth narrative cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of the birth narrative. The theme of metamorphosis, particularly theriomorphic metamorphosis, is prevalent throughout the epic but particularly prevalent regarding Zeus and Dionysos. The point I will continue to explore throughout this study is the intricate father-son relationship between Zeus and Dionysos, which underpins the epic. It is, in this light, important to investigate elements of this relationship whenever relevant in the investigation. The table below details the series of metamorphoses in the first and second birth narratives, respectively. The first column indicates the number and order in which those metamorphoses occurred in that narrative. By isolating these narrative events in tabular form, one can more clearly draw distinctions and similarities between the two sets.

| Order of Metamorphoses | Zagreus (VI) | Zeus (VIII) |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Zeus | bull |
| 2 | Kronos | bull-horned god |
| 3 | youth | lion/ panther |
| 4 | lion | ivy-wreathed youth |
| 5 | serpent | serpent |
| 6 | tiger | |
| 7 | bull | |

As shown, both Zeus and Zagreus, the Dionysos fathered to Persephone, undergo anthropomorphic and theriomorphic transformations. Zagreus' metamorphosis when he is murdered by the Titans, begins with his transformation into Zeus and ends with his final

transformation into a bull. Zeus' transformations during the conception of Dionysos begin with his metamorphosing into a bull and end with the serpent.

I posit that the last transformation of Zagreus and the first transformation of Zeus was a deliberate artistic choice included by the poet. Considering the relationship between the two deities, which Nonnos subtly underpins throughout the epic, it does not seem to me that the transformation into a bull was an incidental choice. In keeping with the tradition of epic's ring composition, Nonnos also includes this ring composition in his characterisation of Zeus and Dionysos – where one god's metamorphosis ends, the other begins. The author continuously, yet subtly, attempts to conflate Zeus and Dionysos into one deity.

4.2.4 Semele

Semele is an ancient element of Dionysian religion. Semele's name itself is argued to be derived from a Thracio-Phrygian word meaning 'earth'⁴⁵⁰ which has been attested in Phrygian inscriptions.⁴⁵¹ If this is so, then from her very name she represents another aspect of the foreignness of Dionysos' heritage. The myth of Semele's seduction and impregnation by Zeus was one well-known in antiquity. The oldest evidence for the belief in this myth is found in Homer and Hesiod. The *Iliad* briefly makes mention of her position as the daughter of Kadmos and indicates her status as Dionysos' mother.⁴⁵² Similarly, Hesiod's *Theogony* briefly mentions Semele's seduction and impregnation by Zeus as well as indicating that both she and her son are now gods.⁴⁵³ This reference to her divinity indicates that Hesiod was aware of Semele's deification as Thyone.⁴⁵⁴ In the 5th century BCE, when Dionysos' popularity was on the rise in Athens, poets and playwrights begin to give a more detailed account of the myth of Semele. The most prominent examples from the 5th century BCE

⁴⁵⁰ Burkert, 1985: 208.

⁴⁵¹ Nilsson, 1949: 32.

⁴⁵² *Il.* 14.312.

⁴⁵³ *Theog.* 940.

⁴⁵⁴ After Semele's death, Dionysos fetches her from the underworld and she became the goddess of Bacchic frenzy. *Hom. Hymn. 1 to Dio.* 21; *Apollod.* iii.5. § 3; *Cic. de Nat. Deor.* iii.23; *Pind. Pyth.* iii.99; *Diod. Sic.* iv.25; *Apollon. Rhod.* i.636.

found in Pindar's *Odes*⁴⁵⁵ and Euripides' *Bacchae*.⁴⁵⁶ Iconographically, Semele is already present on Greek pottery from the 6th century BCE.⁴⁵⁷

In the Nonnian birth narrative, Semele appears to take on the role of a priestess and conducts a sacrifice in the temple of Athena after a prophetic dream. This particular aspect of the narrative appears to be a Nonnian invention, as no other ancient author makes mention of it. It is possible that this aspect as well as the sacred marriage that takes place between Zeus and Semele is linked to the Anthesteria festival's *hieros gamos*. The *hieros gamos* of the Anthesteria festival saw a ritual marriage take place between the *basilinna* (wife of the archon of Athens) and the god, a ritual marriage between a mortal woman and an immortal god. Parallels can be drawn with the Nonnian birth narrative from this alone, as the immortal partakes in a sacred marriage with the mortal mother of Dionysos. Semele will become the first priestess of Dionysos as the narrative progresses.

In the ancient cult practices of the god, priestesses of Dionysos underwent a similar *hieros gamos* ritual in certain Bacchic rites. The presence of Dionysiac priestesses, known as *Gerarai*, at the Anthesteria festival are attested to in ancient sources. Fourteen Athenian women were selected by the *basilinna* to take part in secret rituals in the sanctuary *en Limnais* together with the *basilinna*.⁴⁵⁸ It is possible then that the *basilinna* was able to act as a high priestess in this context, due to the secrecy surrounding these rites. The *hieros gamos* would take place in the presence of these *Gerarai* and the sacred marriage would occur between the *basilinna* and a mortal representative of the god.⁴⁵⁹ The sacred marriage was described by Aristotle as an actual 'marital union' or sexual intercourse (ἡ σύμμιξις καὶ ὁ γάμος). The evidence for this is scanty,⁴⁶⁰ but it appears to signify a union of mortal and immortal as a fertility ritual to act as a climax for the festival, which was in honour of the viticultural harvest.

Although evidence for the specific Anthesteria *hieros gamos* as a fertility ritual is unclear and scanty,⁴⁶¹ I posit that when one examines the more ancient examples of this ritual from Asia Minor and surrounding areas, one can see a link to the fertility aspect. For example, in the Ancient Near East, there existed a tradition of sacred marriage which took place between

⁴⁵⁵ Pindar, *Olym. Odes. & Pyth. Odes*;

⁴⁵⁶ Eur. *Ba.* 1-63. cf. also Bacchylides' *Dithyrambs*.

⁴⁵⁷ see LIMC ID: 647.

⁴⁵⁸ Otto, 1965: 80.

⁴⁵⁹ Ar. *Pol.* 3.5.

⁴⁶⁰ Burkert, 1985: 108.

⁴⁶¹ Not much is given by ancient authors regarding the purpose of the *hieros gamos* in general.

Sumerian kings and high priestesses of the goddess, Inanna.⁴⁶² In the Sumerian *hieros gamos*, the king would ceremonially consummate his marriage to the goddess in her temple.⁴⁶³ Similarly, in Egyptian Thebes, a high priestess of Amun would take part in a *hieros gamos*.⁴⁶⁴ If the sacred marriage ritual of Near Eastern religion did in fact have fertility connotations, it would not be a far stretch to assume the same of the Greek *hieroi gamoi* because of the extensive influence ancient Near Eastern religious practices had on the religious practices of the Greeks. The sacred marriage is also found in other Greek myths, where it connects directly to fertility. The most prominent example of this is the sacred marriage between Demeter and Iasion, and this *hieros gamos* can be linked to fertility.⁴⁶⁵

When considering the purposes served by these more ancient examples of the sacred marriage and their link to fertility, one can suggest that the *hieros gamos* of the Anthesteria could also contain aspects of fertility. In establishing that connection, one can again connect the Anthesterian *hieros gamos* to Semele's seduction by Zeus in the Nonnian narrative. This seduction and sacred marriage between mortal and immortal may provide a link with the sacred marriage in the Anthesteria festival, again drawing the comparison between Zeus and Dionysos which Nonnos continually underpins in the narrative. Dionysos, like his father, partakes in a sacred marriage with a mortal woman, Ariadne. This further indicates Dionysos' replication of his father's actions in his own life, who is himself the product of a consummated sacred marriage. If connections are made between the fertility ritual and the sacred marriage of the priestess and the immortal god, then one can more clearly understand the inclusion of the ritual scene and Semele's position as a priestess in the Nonnian birth narrative.

Semele's later position as Thyone,⁴⁶⁶ the goddess of Bacchic frenzy, is also emphasised in the second-birth narrative. For example, during her pregnancy she adorns herself as a bacchant, with flowers and ivy in her hair "like a prophetess of the Bassarids" (VIII, 11). She also begins exhibiting bacchic behaviour, such as rushing wildly out of the house when she hears a shepherd playing the panpipes (VIII, 17), or if she heard the double pipe, she leapt up and ran to the woods, shoeless (VIII, 19).

⁴⁶² Goddess of love, warfare and fertility.

⁴⁶³ Burkert, 1985: 140.

⁴⁶⁴ Burkert, 1985: 140.

⁴⁶⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.* 969-974.

⁴⁶⁶ Nonn. *Dion.* VIII.402-415. cf. Cic. *de Nat. Deor.* iii.23; Pind. *Pyth.* iii.99; Diod. Sic. iv.25; Apollon. Rhod. i.636.

The inclusion of music, particularly the pipes or flute music, is heavily connected to ecstatic cults such as the Phrygian Korybantic rites and cults of the Mother goddess.⁴⁶⁷ In these ecstatic cults, music was accompanied by dancing and revelry which lead to a state of frenzy among the participants, like that experienced by bacchantes of Dionysiac ecstatic cults. In the Phrygian cult of Mēter Kybele, participants are possessed by the goddess and in mythology, the wild animals, and predatory felines, join in her procession.⁴⁶⁸ Her followers partake in a symbolically significant processional exodus from the domain of human civilisation to the wilderness and mountains where they perform their revelries.⁴⁶⁹ There is also a link between the ecstatic cult of Meter Kybele and Dionysian ecstatic cult. Evidence of these practices in the Dionysian context are prominent in Greek literature, with Greek drama being the best-known example.⁴⁷⁰ As such, Semele's behaviour during her pregnancy proleptically foreshadows a frenzied Bacchic relationship to come. The most obvious relationship to Bacchic cult is her giving birth to a god of an ecstatic cult, but there is also her position as the goddess of Bacchic frenzy, Thyone.

4.3 Conclusion

The second birth narrative of Dionysos provides insight into the already well-established myth of Dionysos' birth in popular Greek religion. Nonnos undoubtedly included this birth narrative because it was well-known to his potential audience, and if the overall purpose of the *Dionysiaca* was a compendium of Dionysian mythology, this birth narrative would be the most important version to include. Through the inclusion of certain Dionysiac imagery and elements in the narrative, Nonnos can mould and develop the character of Dionysos as he would become in adulthood. The use of viticultural imagery and connections firmly establish Dionysos as the god of the vine and ivy. Further inclusions of animalistic imagery, such as the bull, establish Dionysos as the bull-horned god which was familiar in Ancient Greek popular religion.

By including those elements, Nonnos is also able to strengthen the link between Zeus and Dionysos, for the bull is an important sacrificial and ritual symbol for both deities. The merging and equating of Dionysos to his father, Zeus, continues throughout this birth

⁴⁶⁷ Plato, *Ion*. 536c & *Krit.* 54d. Cf Burkert, 1985: 143.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. *Ov. Met.* x.682.

⁴⁶⁹ Eur. *Hel.* 1346–56; the Meter Hymn from Epidauros (*PMG* 935 = *IG* IV I, 2nd edn, 131; HN 263 f), as in Burkert, 1985: 228.

⁴⁷⁰ Eur. *Ba.* 79.

narrative, as Zeus metamorphoses into similar forms to Dionysos (Zagreus) in the first birth narrative. As I have noted above, where one god's transformation ends, the other god's transformation begins. This is again in keeping with the ring composition of the narrative.

Lastly, and possibly the most interesting feature of this Nonnian version of the narrative, is Semele's role as a priestess of Zeus. Nowhere in antiquity is she named as a priestess, but Nonnos has included this feature for some purpose. The inclusion of this characterisation of Semele is important when one considers her role as Thyone, the goddess of Bacchic frenzy.

I have argued that we may posit that Nonnos' inclusions and invention of Semele as a priestess was done intentionally to draw further parallels between Zeus and Dionysos by creating narrative links between the two deities, such as the sacred marriages that occur between the deities and mortal woman. The evidence for this claim is not extensive, because evidence for the events in the sacred marriage ritual of the Athenian Anthesteria is scant. Therefore, I cannot say with certainty that parallels can be drawn from this. Nonnos does, however, often include elements from Dionysiac ritual in his characterisation of Dionysos.

5. The Third Birth of Dionysos

5.1 The *Dionysiaca*: A summary of the third birth

The ninth book of the *Dionysiaca* begins with the retelling of Dionysos' birth from the thigh of Zeus. Zeus had received the unborn god from the flames and had sewn him into his thigh, "while he waited upon the light of the moon which was to bring him to birth" (IX, 4). Nonnos indicates that Zeus' thigh "became female" and soon the child was born (IX, 8). As soon as the child was born, the Seasons crowned him with an ivy garland, and wreathed the "horned head of a bull-shaped Dionysos with twining horned snakes under the flowers" (12-15). Hermes received the child and named him Dionysos, or "Zeus-limp" because Zeus carried his pregnant thigh with a limp (20-1). Hermes then took the child to the river nymphs, the daughters of Lamos, who breastfed the baby (28). Hera, seeing the child, brought down a divine madness on the daughters of Lamos, which caused them to become frenzied. They would have murdered and dismembered the infant Dionysos, had Hermes not taken the child to safety and brought him to Ino, who had recently given birth to her own son, Melicertes (37-55). Hermes gave the child to Semele's sister, Ino, and ordered her to keep the child safe from Hera, in exchange for Zeus' favour (61-91). Obeying Hermes' orders, Ino breastfed Dionysos and her own son, and gave Dionysos over to the care of her attendant maid, Mystis (92-102).

Mystis took the child and hid him in a dark pit, to hide him from Hera, but "a brilliant light shone from his face, which declared of itself the off-spring of Zeus" (103-105). Ino and Mystis took care of the child together and Mystis taught the young god about the mystic rites of Dionysos at night, teaching him the music of the mysteries, wreathing her hair in vine and ivy and the sacred things involved in the mystic rites (111-131). Hera, however, had caught sight of the infant god and once again Hermes saved the child from her wrath. Hermes took him to the wooded ridge where Cybele lived and while Hera was in pursuit of Hermes, he took the form of Phanes (132-140). Hera feared the most ancient of the gods, and she bowed before him, unaware that the form was Hermes. Hermes was thus able to successfully escape her and gave the child to Rhea, the mother of Zeus (141-148). In Rhea's care, Dionysos was taught how to drive a chariot drawn by lions and he was surrounded by Corybantes who would dance and make music, in order to conceal the child (149-168). When the god had reached the age of nine, he became a hunter in the woods, hunting dappled fawn and tigers to show Rhea. As the child grew older, he would dress in Bacchic gear, wearing furry tunics

with a dappled stag skin over his shoulders, and became skilled in driving chariots drawn by wild animals (169-199). In this way, Dionysos grew up to be a healthy young man beside Rhea. The rest of the narrative turns to Semele in Olympos and her addressing Hera's failure at being unable to kill the child. However, the analysis of this narrative will end with Dionysos' childhood and begin with Zeus' thigh.

5.2 Analysis the Third Birth

5.2.1 Zeus' Thigh

The narrative in which Dionysos is sewn into Zeus' thigh was popular in antiquity and had been recorded by ancient authors as well as later Roman-era writers.⁴⁷¹ The earliest account of Dionysos coming from the thigh of his father is possibly found in early 5th century art. In literature, we observe this in the work of Herodotus⁴⁷² and in Euripides' *Bacchae* (94-8; 295). This version of the birth narrative firmly places the myth of Dionysos as born from Zeus' thigh in 5th century BCE and suggests that it was already well-established by that time. From this method of birth, various epithets for Dionysos arose, including: *purigenês*, (born from fire), *ianigena* (fire-begotten) and *Eiraphiôtês* (in-sewn).⁴⁷³ According to the Suda, the epithet 'Eiraphiôtês', which occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysos*,⁴⁷⁴ was given to Dionysos because he was sewn into his father's thigh and is linked to the verb 'erraphthai' It could also, however, be linked to the word 'eriphos' or 'goat-kid', which offers a varied etymology for this epithet. In the *Bacchae*, Euripides uses the word *mêros* for thigh.

The significance of the thigh as a homoerogenous zone is interesting regarding the god's characterisation. Evidence from Aeschylus' fragmentary play *Myrmidons* depicts a scene in which Achilles speaks of Patroclus' thigh (*mêrôn*) and their many kisses, an indication of the thigh's homoerotic functions.⁴⁷⁵ The suggestion that Dionysos' birth from a homoerotic zone of Zeus leads to Dionysos' own sexual ambiguity and passive nature has not been fully explored in scholarship on the subject.⁴⁷⁶ Burkert does offer the following on the matter:

⁴⁷¹ Strabo, *Geo.* 13.4.11; Dio. Sic. iv.5; Ov. *Met.* iv.11.

⁴⁷² *Hist.* 2.146.2

⁴⁷³ Strabo, *Geo.* 13.4.11; Eur. *Ba.* 295; Dio. Sic. iv.5; Ov. *Met.* iv.11.

⁴⁷⁴ *HH to Dio.* 1.2, dated to between 7th and 4th centuries BCE.

⁴⁷⁵ Fr. 135 & 136.

⁴⁷⁶ See Burkert (1985) and Kerényi (1976).

The birth from the thigh is a no less enigmatic counterpart to Athena's birth from the head. Whereas the armed virgin is born in a higher way, Dionysos is born from a part of the body with erotic or even homoerotic associations.⁴⁷⁷

According to Burkert here, Athena's birth from Zeus' head offers a parallel to Dionysos' birth from the thigh. Athena is well-known to be considered an active masculine goddess, who is born from her father's head in full armour.⁴⁷⁸ She is the goddess of wisdom and warfare strategy, a protector of heroes and cities and a warrior goddess, all because of the nature of her birth. If these are the attributes of a deity born from Zeus' head, a body part associated with intelligence and wisdom, then one could argue that a deity born from a body part associated with homoeroticism would possess different attributes. Another theory offered by Kerenyi (1976) suggests that the invention of the thigh birth and its function was to "cover over the god's lavish gift at the expense of his own body".⁴⁷⁹ Similarly, Kerenyi also reports that the thigh birth of Dionysus was modelled on the head birth of Athena, which he attributed to the fusion of Theban cult into Attic religion.⁴⁸⁰

5.2.1.1 Active vs Passive

The terms 'active' and 'passive' used throughout the analysis refers to perceived dominant or submissive roles associated with the terms. The use of these terms could be argued as insufficient for these roles, yet if we are to make use of Parker's Teratogenic grid for the understanding of roles regarding sexual agency then these terms will suffice.⁴⁸¹ The term 'active' implies that the agent of the action is a dominant party, in contrast to a 'passive' participant who takes a submissive role. When using the terms 'active' and 'passive' to refer to the god's characterisation, I intend to convey that he is not assertive in his actions as Athena would be. Rather, like the episodes of voyeurism and rape suggest, Dionysos is 'passive' in his nature.

The thigh was a homoerogenous zone in Ancient Greece, particularly for intercrural sex between two males.⁴⁸² This type of sexual intercourse is attested to in ancient literary works

⁴⁷⁷ Burkert 1985: 212.

⁴⁷⁸ Hesiod, *Theog.* 886ff & 924ff; Pindar, *Olymp. Ode. 7; HH to Apollo.*

⁴⁷⁹ Kerenyi 1976: 276.

⁴⁸⁰ 1976: 278.

⁴⁸¹ Parker, 1997: 47.

⁴⁸² Hubbard, 2003: 10.

of Solon⁴⁸³ and Aeschylus.⁴⁸⁴ The birth of Dionysos from this homoerotic zone of Zeus may be connected to his representation as androgynous and passive. In antiquity, Dionysos is often portrayed as an effeminate god, with Euripides' *Bacchae* the *locus classicus* (354; 453-9) depicting the god with long hair (235). Dionysos' androgyny is also attested in his epithets, particularly the epithet '*androgynos*', expressing his sexual ambiguity.⁴⁸⁵ If Athena is a masculine goddess because of her birth, then Dionysos could be effeminate due to his birth as well.

5.2.1.2 The God of Duality

Dionysos' effeminacy also links to his position as a god of dualities.⁴⁸⁶ In physical descriptions of the god, he is described as possessing a feminine form,⁴⁸⁷ which leads to his identification as androgynous and therefore physically ambiguous. This allows the god to experience a fluidity of gender that is not often enjoyed by the other Olympians. This is signified in his ritual worship as well, for he is a god favoured by both genders, particularly women.⁴⁸⁸ He is not only ambiguous in terms of his appearance and nature but also in his spheres of influences. The god's duality is seen in his ability to exert power over sanity and madness, or sobriety and intoxication.

Natural phenomena associated with the god also display duality, particularly the vine and ivy. Another theory of Dionysos' birth from the thigh is linked to the vegetation of the vine, in which the birth of Dionysos may be taken as an allegory for viticultural grafting. This grafting process does not involve the cutting down of the old vine but rather grafting a new vine shoot on to it.⁴⁸⁹ The Dionysos born from Zeus' thigh represents the newly grafted vine shoot, whereas Zeus represents the old vine onto which the shoot was grafted, which according to Leinieks, is supported by representations of this birth in pottery painting,⁴⁹⁰ particularly a krater in Ferrara.⁴⁹¹ The krater shows a young Dionysos, "holding a vine branch and crowned with ivy, is represented on the painting as being born from the thigh of an older,

⁴⁸³ Fr. 25.

⁴⁸⁴ *Myrmidons*, fr. 135.

⁴⁸⁵ See *SOL* s.v. *Androgynous*.

⁴⁸⁶ The god's duality is discussed in Otto (1965) & Seaford (2006).

⁴⁸⁷ Eur. *Ba.* 350, 455-60; Ov. *Met.* 4.18.

⁴⁸⁸ Seaford, 2006: 34-35.

⁴⁸⁹ Leinieks, 1996: 193.

⁴⁹⁰ Kerényi, 1976, plates 73-5

⁴⁹¹ Kerényi, 1976, plate 75.

bearded Dionysos holding a thyrsos and seated on a fawnskin".⁴⁹² Leinieks' proposal, then, finds a connection between the birth of Dionysos and viticulture.

Despite the dualities of the god, Nonnos' Dionysos is not represented as a passive figure. The Nonnian Dionysos diverges from the classical tradition of Dionysos' sexual conquests in the subsequent narrative. Although the god does not rape his mortal victims in the supposed 'active' way his father does, Dionysos still engages in a rape which would qualify as an 'active' action if one were to follow the Teratogenic grid.

5.2.2 Zeus and Dionysos: Like Father, Like Son

In this section I will explore the similarities between the father of the gods and his son and offer an analysis of these similarities and episodes to establish the motives of Nonnos for his particular choices in narrating Dionysos' birth. I hypothesise that many of the episodes in the epic in which Zeus and Dionysos perform similar actions are as a result of a Christian influence. Being in a Christian socio-political context it is not difficult to see these influences reflected in the relationship between Zeus and Dionysos, and it is perhaps this influence that motivated Nonnos to create the character of Dionysos as a mirror of Zeus, as the son of 'god', to have Dionysos be worthy as Zeus' successor on Mount Olympus.

5.2.2.1 Metamorphoses

Various similarities between the two figures are discernible. For example, the transformations which each of the gods undergo. Both father and son metamorphose into the same or similar forms. During Zagreus' metamorphoses in Book VI, the first form he assumes is that of a young Zeus bearing an aegis.⁴⁹³ Another important metamorphosis undergone by both Zeus and Dionysos is that of the bull. In various episodes of the narrative, both Zeus and Dionysos will take on the form of a bull for various purposes.

5.2.2.2 Bulls

The significance of bulls has already been well-established in the previous chapter (p.47-50). It would, however, be suitable to reiterate some of those claims in this context. The associations with these gods and the bull are ancient, evidence of which is found in Minoan civilization. Furthermore, throughout the Nonnian narrative the bull is the sacrificial victim of

⁴⁹² Leinieks, 1996: 193.

⁴⁹³ VI.177-8.

choice for both Zeus and Dionysos, as it is in Classical Greek religion as well. Regarding the metamorphoses of the gods, the first metamorphosis undergone by Zeus during his seduction of Semele is that of a bull, while the last metamorphosis of the dying Zagreus is the bull as well. This further enhances the ring composition of the epic and of the similarities in the metamorphoses of the two deities.

5.2.2.3 Caves

Another important element which connects Zeus and Dionysos is the theme of caves. In various birth narratives, Zeus is raised in a cave. Many local cults created their own versions of Zeus' birth narrative for themselves, the most popular of which is Zeus' birth and rearing in a cave on Mount Dicte on Crete. Variations of his birth narrative place his birth and rearing in other areas of Greece, including Ida, Ithome in Messenia, Thebes in Boeotia, Aegion in Achaia, or Olenos in Aetolia.⁴⁹⁴ Yet the common understanding by most ancient authors was that Zeus was raised on Crete. Similarly, in the first birth narrative of Dionysos, he is born to Persephone in a cave. This birth of Dionysos as Zagreus shows Nonnos' familiarity with Zeus' birth narrative and again allows for Dionysos to undergo the same experiences as Zeus to liken the two gods to one another.

5.2.2.4 Rape

Much like Homeric epic, the *Dionysiaca* has a ring composition of narrative in which many events may often repeat themselves in different forms throughout the epic. One such example is found in Book I of the epic, the myth of Europa by Zeus. This episode precedes the conception and birth of Dionysos. In the episode, Zeus takes the form of a bull (I.46) and lifts Europa onto his back and abducts her to a cave. Once in the cave, Zeus takes the form of a young man and impregnates the maiden Europa (I.344-352). In Nonnos' epic, the poet states that "soon her womb swelled, quick with twin progeny" (I.352). Yet the poet does not indicate who these twins are who were born to Europa. It is possible that Nonnos is referring to Minos and Rhadamanthys, as these are the sons born of Zeus and Europa in the *Iliad*.⁴⁹⁵ In other versions of the myth, Europa would bear Zeus three sons, Minos, Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Aeschyl. *Suppl.* 901.

⁴⁹⁵ *Il.* 14.320.

⁴⁹⁶ Apollodorus. *Bib.* 3.1.1.

The significance of this episode is the birth of twins to Zeus from a mortal woman. This event recurs later in the epic when Dionysos himself rapes and impregnates two mortal nymphs. The most significant example of this occurs in Book XLVIII, the last book of the epic. In Book XLVIII, Aura, a virgin huntress and devotee of Artemis, is raped by Dionysos and from this encounter she bears him twin sons (XLVIII.749-50). The two scenes share many similarities, for both deities rape maiden women and both women give birth to twin sons. Yet a striking difference between the two episodes is in the reaction of the women after their rape. Europa accepts her position as Zeus' consort and gives birth to the twins, yet Aura has a drastically different reaction.

In Book XLVIII, Aura contemplates abortion and suicide once she discovers that she is pregnant with twins. She gives birth to twins and offers them to a lioness to be eaten, however the lioness refuses. Aura then cannibalises the one child, while the other one, Iacchos, is saved by Artemis. The intertextual references that can be inferred by this episode indicate that Nonnos modelled many of these narrative events on earlier mythology. The Aura episode bears a resemblance to Euripides' *Medea*, with which Nonnos would undoubtedly have been familiar. After these events, Aura commits suicide by drowning herself in a river. Both episodes of rape result in the birth of twin sons, "which has a mythological precedent only in the case of Aura, meaning that Nonnus shaped the story of Europa already with Aura in mind".⁴⁹⁷

5.2.2.5 Theogamy and Voyeurism

A key plot pattern in the narrative of the *Dionysiaca* is the succession of so-called theogamies or 'divine weddings', typically a euphemism for sexual congress.⁴⁹⁸ In the plot of the *Dionysiaca*, Zeus has three affairs "which are narrated extensively (Europa, Persephone, and Semele)" and a further three which are briefly mentioned (Plouto, Danae, and Aegina). Dionysos has "four 'successful' unions (Nicaea, Ariadne, Pallene, and Aura) and one failed seduction (Beroe)".⁴⁹⁹ Key themes which are included in this plot pattern include "infatuation, voyeurism, erotic pursuit, seduction, and deception".⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Hadjittofi, 2016: 127.

⁴⁹⁸ Vian, 1994: 86.

⁴⁹⁹ Hadjittofi, 2016: 143.

⁵⁰⁰ Hadjittofi, 2016: 143.

The theme of voyeurism is shared by Zeus and Dionysos. The voyeurism of Dionysos in Nonnos' narrative could be modelled on the voyeurism of Zeus. These scenes are included to realize the ring composition of the epic narrative and a further attempt by Nonnos to liken Dionysos to his father. These scenes of voyeurism are often accompanied by an aquatic element, and Hadjittofi suggests that these aquatic elements "could have something to do with pornographic aquatic spectacles popular in Late Antiquity".⁵⁰¹ The theme of voyeurism is prevalent in Book I in which Europa is repeatedly objectified by various male characters, such as Boreas. Zeus is also a voyeur of Europa during his deflowering of the maiden, when he runs around her and touches her limbs, loosens her bodice, and touches her breasts (I. 344-351).

In contrast to other myths of voyeurism, such as Actaeon spying on the bathing Artemis, "most other voyeurs of bathing maidens are gods, and not only do they go unpunished, but they also end up having sex with the girls they spied upon".⁵⁰² In book 5 of the *Dionysiaca*, the same book in which Actaeon spies on Artemis and is punished for this act, Zeus spies on Persephone in a similar way. Zeus watches Persephone bathe in a stream, "[Zeus] gazed at the whole body of Persephone, uncovered in her bath" (V. 610). Again this voyeuristic act includes an aquatic element, like the voyeuristic scenes in previous episodes. In Book VII, Zeus once again is a voyeur, watching Semele bathe in the river after her sacrifices to himself (VII. 190-7). These voyeuristic scenes often precede successful seduction of the women he watches and in two of these episodes, the result of these seductions lead to the birth of Zagreus/Dionysos.

Like his father, the adult Dionysos also partakes in acts of voyeurism, which serves once again to emphasize the similarities between the two gods. In Classical Greek mythologies, Dionysos has a modest number of lovers, most of whom are willing participants in the seduction. The most well-known lover of Dionysos is Ariadne, who would become Dionysos' immortal wife, a consensual partner of the god. Dionysos is also a more passive god in his nature, he is not a masculine figure in the mould of Ares or Apollo, who both make use of 'masculine' and 'active' weapons in their use and categorisation. Dionysos' weapon is as 'passive' in nature, using wine and delusion rather than a physical weapon. As a 'passive' character, this is how he defeats those who stand in his way. It is, therefore, notable that the

⁵⁰¹ Hadjittofi, 2016: 148.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.* 148.

Dionysos of Nonnian epic would actively take part in such scenes of abduction and rape in the way that Zeus usually would.

Despite this, the way he pursues and rapes women in the narrative do allude to his passive nature, for he participates in voyeuristic acts and drugs the women with whom he wants to have sexual intercourse. This is seen in the rapes of Nicaia (in Book 16) and Aura (in Book 48), in which the manner of the rape of Nicaia itself, although less violent than Aura's, is still done in "quasi-necrophiliac fashion by Dionysos after they are drugged with wine, and in the latter case, bound as well."⁵⁰³ In Book 16, Dionysos watches Nicaia bathe before he drugs her while in pursuit and rapes her (XVI.5–13). Furthermore, in his encounter with Beroe, the god is once again a voyeur. Although there is not explicit voyeurism by Dionysos in his encounter with Aura, Aura herself is a voyeur by watching Artemis bathe and mocking and touching the goddess' breasts. It is this action that leads to Dionysos raping her as punishment for this hubris (XLVIII.350-358).

The abovementioned examples are a few of the instances in which Nonnos has likened Dionysos to Zeus. The events of the narrative in which Dionysos undergoes similar experiences to Zeus function to establish Dionysos as a worthy successor to his father who will ultimately succeed Zeus as king of the Olympians. This wish to establish Dionysos as the successor of his father is an Orphic notion.⁵⁰⁴

3.3 Conclusion

The over-arching relationship of Zeus and Dionysos which underpins the narrative reaches its climax in the final birth of Dionysos from the thigh of Zeus. The thigh being a signifier of homoeroticism in ancient sexuality, the final birthplace of Dionysos characterises the god's own nature throughout his life and exploits. His 'passivity' and femininity are a widely discussed topic for modern scholars of Dionysos,⁵⁰⁵ for the god does not fit into gender-normative roles but rather has a fluid presence and an ability to move between boundaries of gender and sexuality as the ancients would have understood them. It is this gender fluidity that allows Dionysos the ability to challenge and liberate his followers from their own gender roles, as in seen in depictions of his relationship with women in Greek tragedy.

⁵⁰³ Newbold, 2016: 205.

⁵⁰⁴ Kerenyi, 1976: 263.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Otto, 1965.

Nonnos has deliberately attempted to make Dionysos the mirror of Zeus throughout the narrative and this is evidenced in the similarities shared by the two gods. Both gods undergo similar metamorphoses, and both have similar birth narratives in which they must be hidden from the view of the immortals who aim to harm them in their infancy. Both gods also pursue their objects of lust and affection in a similar way, through voyeuristic acts and rape, to ensure the succession of their theogamy. Dionysos is being forged by Nonnos into the ideal successor for his father. Just as Nonnos models his work on previous accounts and aims to offer an exhaustive and terminal version of Dionysus, so his Dionysus is offered as the god who echoes and then usurps the place of the father on whom he is modelled.

6. Conclusion

The various contexts in which Nonnos composed his epic of Dionysos prove to be vital for understanding poet's motivations. Not only are we able to better put ourselves in his metaphorical 'shoes' by reviewing the long history of Alexandria, but we are also able to better understand the intricacies of his writing a pagan epic in a time when antipagan sentiment was rife. The political context revealed the long history of imperialism which Egypt endured and the establishment of the city of Alexandria. The social context illuminated the various social and ethnic groups which had come to the thriving city and from whom many ideas and beliefs had been able to permeate into the broader Alexandrian community. Nonnos, being a Hellenized Egyptian and a part of the intelligentsia of Alexandria, would have lived a more sheltered life away from the social conflict experienced in other parts of the city. Yet these conflicts would have been known to him. The religious context is perhaps the most important for this project as it underpins the entire Nonnian narrative. Although he was most likely a Christian, already having produced a Christian work, his choice to compose a pagan epic is what most interests me. I can only posit, from the religious context, that it was a work of academic interest. It was not unheard of for late antique scholars to record pagan mythology and perhaps this was Nonnos' intention. Yet one cannot help but consider that the connection between Dionysos and Christ was also a motivating factor for the poet, who saw much of his own God in the gods of the Greek pantheon.

Regarding Dionysos, despite the theories posited by 20th century scholarship, Dionysos' antiquity goes even further back than originally believed. He was a god more Greek than foreigner, yet his foreignness attributed to his characterisation in antiquity. From archaeology and linguistics, we are aware of cult practices from the Bronze Age with recognizably Dionysiac elements. Through the ages and centuries, we can observe the iconographic changes the god undergoes and how these changes underpin key transitions in society. From the bearded figure of Archaic and Classical Greece to the youthful figure of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, Dionysos' appearance was often subject to the on-going fashions of the time. Much like his changing appearance, so too his mythology developed and morphed into elaborate narratives, added into a bricolage of myths and stories of the god's deeds and vengeance. The Dionysos of the Romans was not the Dionysos of the Archaic Greeks. The Dionysos of Nonnos was even less so. The duality of the god is important to take into consideration. As his mythologies were expanded, so too did his functions and roles. Dionysos transitioned from a deity of public cult worship, communal festivals, and dramatic

contests to a more private, votive figure of mystery cult and solitary ritual practice. As the religious needs of the community changed, so too did the god.

The first birth of Dionysos in the Nonnian narrative bears resemblance to the Orphic narrative of the god's birth to Persephone. Yet Nonnos steers away from a simple retelling of an Orphic narrative. By incorporating elements from other classical Dionysiac myths and omitted aspects which may serve to make the first birth of Dionysos too Orphic, such as the consumption of the god by the Titans, Nonnos is able to weave a narrative which is still traditionally Greek, but unique to the poet. The first most interesting addition by the poet is the name of Demeter in his narrative. She is not named Demeter but Deo, a lesser-known cult term for the goddess. The inclusion of this lesser-known name for Demeter allows Nonnos to show that his knowledge of Greek religion is not only Dionysiac in nature. By including cave symbolism in the first birth narrative, Nonnos keeps with the traditional mythological tropes found in so many birth narratives of Olympian gods. The serpent symbolism incorporated by poet indicates that he was aware of the chthonic characterisation of the animal and further, the association of Dionysos with serpents. Nonnos indicates through the series of metamorphoses undergone by the infant Zagreus, that he is aware of the sacred animals of the god. These metamorphoses also reveal characterisations of the Dionysos, whilst concealing his form from the Titans. The punishment of the Titans by Zeus and the subsequent firestorm and deluge is another Nonnian addition to the birth narrative. I suggested that the poet used this deluge as a divergence into another traditionally Greek narrative, that of Deucalion and the Great Flood. As such, the poet continues to add more elements of his own invention to his Dionysiac narrative which allow for a more complete story in his compendium of Dionysos' mythology.

In the *Dionysiaca*, the second birth of Dionysos recounts the myth most familiar to the modern audience, the birth of the god from his mortal mother Semele. Yet Nonnos adapts and enhances this narrative to create his own unique version of events. The most important adaptation to the original narrative is the inclusion of the ritual acts performed by Semele. Within the Nonnian narrative she is portrayed as a priestess of Zeus and participates in sacrifices to the god in his temple. The choice of sacrificial victims, the vine ravaging boar and the bull, are significant animals for the son she will bear to the god. The act of drenching herself in the blood of the bull is also symbolic ritual behaviour, further cementing her position as priestess. This inclusion, I argue, is a further attempt by the poet to conflagrate the

two deities as it fits into the ring composition of the epic narrative. Semele begins as a priestess to Zeus but soon her position will change upon her apotheosis when she becomes Thyone, the goddess of Bacchic frenzy.

The final birth of Dionysos from the thigh of his father is arguably the most important for the god's characterisation. The Nonnian narrative does not divert from traditional accounts in this version, yet as the epic progresses the Nonnian Dionysos transforms from the traditionally androgynous character of Classical myth to a more active participant in his sexual conquests, mimicking his father. I suggest that the similarities between Zeus and Dionysos are deliberately included by Nonnos to make Dionysos a mirror of his father. In doing this, Nonnos establishes Dionysos' right to rule a new age of Olympians and to be Zeus' successor. To accomplish this, Nonnos implies that Dionysos is an extension of Zeus in his character and actions. This can be seen in the scenes of voyeurism, rape, the metamorphoses, and the birth narratives. By including references to Zeus' own narrative and having Dionysos imitate Zeus' actions, Nonnos allows his audience, a majority of which was Christian, to accept Dionysos as a parallel to Jesus in the contemporary Christian society in which he was writing.

Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* served as an educational source and a bricolage of the mythology of Dionysos. The similarities of Dionysos and Jesus Christ, although not discussed in this project, have already been well-established in modern scholarship, and considering Nonnos' own religious beliefs, it is possible that the poet chose Dionysos due to his similarities with Jesus Christ. In keeping with academic convention and his wish to produce an epic on a par with that of Homer, the pagan subject matter does not need to be over-analysed for its significance and this answers the question as to the poet's motivations for writing a pagan epic when he himself was Christian.

7. Bibliography

Abbreviations:

BAPD – Beazley Archive Pottery Database. URL:

<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/pottery/default.htm>.

LIMC - Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae. URL: <https://weblimc.org/>.

SOL – Suda Online. URL: <https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-html/index.html>.

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Appendix A: Images

Fig. 1: The Francois Vase, an Attic Black Figure Volute Krater by Kleitias, 6th century BCE, Museo Archaeologico, Florence.

<https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/media/viewImage/3866>. Accessed: 03/02/2021.

Fig.2: An Attic Red-Figure psykter by Euphronios, c.520–510 BCE, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. URL: <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/153856/wine-cooler-psykter-with-the-death-of-pentheus?ctx=70e14758-a9e5-4ff4-a5fa-5766d7bf29e5&idx=1>.

Accessed on: 03/02/2021.

Fig. 3: A Roman Statue of Dionysos, Antikenmuseum, Basel. URL:

[https://arachne.uni-koeln.de/arachne/index.php?view\[layout\]=objekt_item&search\[constraints\]\[objekt\]\[searchSeriennummer\]=204838](https://arachne.uni-koeln.de/arachne/index.php?view[layout]=objekt_item&search[constraints][objekt][searchSeriennummer]=204838).

Fig. 4: An Attic red-figure bell krater. Attributed to the Painter of Montesarchio T.121, c. 4th Century BCE, via Bonhams.

<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/16639/lot/8/>. Accessed on: 03/02/2021.

*Fig. 5: Augustus as Pontifex Maximus, from the Via Labicana, Rome, c. 12 BCE. Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome. Marble, 6 ft 9 in (2.06 m). Photo courtesy Steven L. Tuck. Tuck, S. (2015). *A History of Roman Art*. Pp. 115. Wiley-Blackwell: Malden.*

*Fig. 6: Mysteries frieze, Villa of the Mysteries., c. 1st century BCE. Pompeii. Hales, S. 'Dionysos at Pompeii'. *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 15, BUILDING COMMUNITIES: House, Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond (2007), pp. 335-341. British School at Athens.*

Fig. 7: A Bifrontic Roman Marble Herm of Liber, Palatine Museum, Rome.
<https://images.robertharding.com/zoom/RM/RH/HORIZONTAL/832-169925.jpg>.
Accessed on: 03/02/2021.

Fig. 8: Late Classical Red-Figure Vase Louvre K240, c. 370-360 BCE, via Louvre Museum, Paris. <https://www.theoi.com/Gallery/K12.2.html>. Accessed on 04/02/2021.

Fig. 9: Maenad carrying a thyrsus and a leopard with a snake rolled up over her head. Tondo of an ancient Greek Attic white-ground kylix 490–480 BC from Vulci. Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maenad#/media/File:Mainade_Staatliche_Antikensamm_lungen_2645.jpg. Accessed on 04/02/2021.

Fig. 10: Attic Black-Figure Oinochoe with Dionysiac elements, 6th century BCE, via BAPD.
<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/xdp/ASP/recordDetails.asp?recordCount=1&start=0>.
Accessed on: 05/02/2021.

Fig. 11: bull-god with two nymphs and Eros attributed to the Danaid Painter. c. 340 BCE, via the British Museum, London.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1867-0508-1311. Accessed on: 08/02/2021.

Fig. 12: Black-figure oinochoe depicting satyrs and a bull. c. 5th century BCE. via BAPD.
<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/xdp/ASP/recordDetails.asp?returnPage=&noResults=&search=&databaseID=&start=0&recordCount=15>. Accessed on: 08/02/2021.



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Fig. 7: A Bifrontic Roman Marble Herm of Liber, Palatine Museum, Rome.

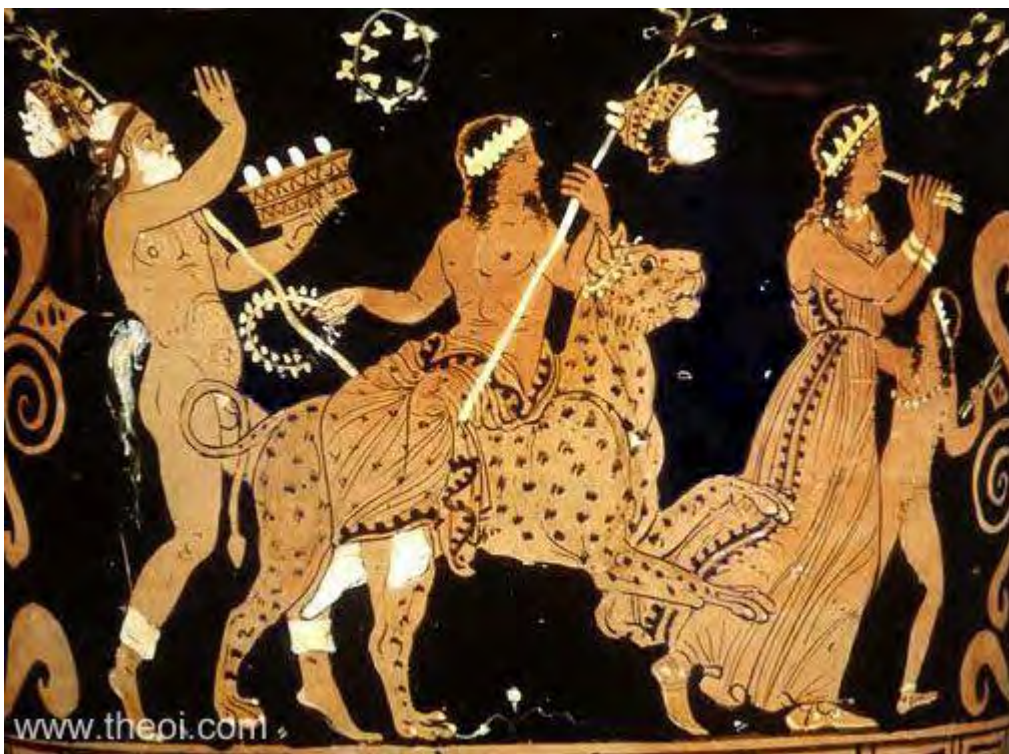


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