



POETRY AND MYSTERIES: EURIPIDES' *BACCHAE* AND THE DIONYSIAC RITES

Jens Holzhausen, Free University of Berlin

jens.holzhausen@fen-net.de

The mysteries of Dionysus have been discussed so much that nobody will expect from me either striking novelties or a complete knowledge of what has been written about them. In this paper I shall therefore restrict myself to examining the limited question of whether the *Bacchae*, the tragedy written by Euripides in his Macedonian exile in about 407 B.C., can be considered as evidence for these mysteries. The clearest support for this point of view has been given by the most recent commentator on the play, Richard Seaford: "Of the fifth-century evidence for the Dionysiac mysteries the most important is the *Bacchae* itself" and "In his *Bacchae* Euripides dramatized the aition of the Dionysiac mysteries at Thebes."¹

Plutarch would have interpreted the *Bacchae* in the same way as Seaford. He refers to a source which explains the partiality of Alexander the Great's mother for snakes (*vit. Alex.* 2):

¹ Seaford 1981· 253, 268; 1994; 1996a (the most important review is by Friedrich 2000). cf. Bron 1987, 145: "Il fait également allusion à des rites d'initiation et à des cérémonies mystérieques ..."

Leinieks 1996, 152 represents the opposite position: "To sum up, there is no evidence in the play that Euripides wanted Dionysiac religion in the *Bacchae* to be understood as a mystery cult."

ἕτεροςχδὲ περὶ τούτωνχἔστι λόγος. ὡς πᾶσαιχμὲν ἀχ
 τῆδε γυναιῖκες ἔνοχοι τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς οὔσαι καὶ τοῖς περὶ
 τὸνχ Διόνθσονχ ὄργιασμοῖςχ ἔκχ τοῦ πάνυχ παλαιοῦ.
 Κλώδωνέσχ τεχ καὶ Μιμαλλόνεςχ ἔπωνθμίανχ ἔχοθσαι,
 πολλὰ ταῖςχ Ἡδωνίσιχ καὶ ταῖςχ περὶ τὸν Αἶμον Ὑρήχσαιςχ
 ὁμοιαχδρῶσιν·χἄφ' ὠνχδοκεῖ καὶ τὸ υρησκεύεινχ ὄνομαχ
 ταῖςχ κατακόροιςχ γενέθθαιχ καὶ περιέργοιςχ ἐρουργίαις·χῆ
 δ' Ὀλυμπιάς μᾶλλονχ ἑτέρωνχ ἡλώσασαχ τᾶςχ κατοχάς.
 καὶ τοὺςχ ἔνθουσιασμοῦςχ ἑχάγουσαχ βραβρικώτερον.
 ὄφειςχ μεγάλουςχ εἰροχθειςχ ἑφείλκετοχ τοῖςχ θιάσοις. οχ
 πολλάκιςχ ἔκχ τοῦ κιττοῦ καὶ τῶνχ μθστικῶνχ λίκνωνχ
 παραναδύμενοιχ καὶ περιελιπτόμενοιχ τοῖςχ θύρσοιςχ τῶνχ
 γυναικῶν καὶ τοῖς στεφάνοις. ἔξέπληττον τοὺς ἄνδρας.

But concerning these matters there is another story to this effect: all the women of these parts were addicted to the Orphic rites and the orgies of Dionysus from very ancient times (being called Klodones and Mimallones), and imitated in many ways the practices of the Edonian women and the Thracian women about Mount Haemus, from whom, as it would seem, the word “threskeuein” came to be applied to the celebration of extravagant and superstitious ceremonies. Now Olympias, who affected these divine possessions more zealously than other women, and carried out these divine inspirations in wilder fashion, used to provide the revelling companies with great tame serpents, which would often lift their heads from out the ivy and the mystic winnowing-baskets, or coil themselves about the wands and garlands of the women, thus terrifying the men.

There is obviously a relationship between Olympias' ὄργιασμός and the ὄργια (*Ba.* 34, 262, 470, 471, 476, 482, 1080, cf. 416) of Euripides' Theban women. Snakes, ivy, thyrsos and wreaths are also found there; the Theban women are also organised in three Thiasoi and they also terrify the men, though in a different way. At one point, Orpheus' name is even mentioned, but there is an important difference: Euripides' chorus mentions the lyreplayer who brings trees and wild animals together on Mount Olympus (*Ba.* 561–2), but there is no reason to think that the festival bore his name. The rest of the key words are not found in Euripides: he knows nothing of either

Kludones or Mimallones,² “divine inspiration” (ἐνθουσιασμοί) or “divine possession” (κατοχαί); also the technical term θρησκευεῖν is unknown to him. The most important difference is clearly the lack of the “mystic winnowing baskets:” not only does he not mention these baskets which played an important role in the mysteries, but there is no mention of any of the words with the root *mu-*: μυστήρια, μύησις, μύστις, μυστικός. Instead, Euripides uses the term τελεταί in five places (*Ba.* 22, 74, 238, 260, 465).³ In the plural form the word occurs in Euripides only in the *Bacchae*, in the singular it occurs once in *Iphigenia Taurica* (958–60):

κλύωέ Ἷ Ἀθηναίοισιέτάμᾶ υστυχέ
τελετηήνέ εν έσθαι. κᾶτιέτὸνᾶνόμονᾶένειν.
χοέ ρεξέᾶγγοςέΠαλλάδοςέτιμ νέλεών.

Now are my woes to Athens made,
I hear, a festival, and yet the custom lives
that Pallas' people keep the Feast of Cups.

Orestes is referring here to the non-mystical festival of the Choes, at which everyone had his own jug, from which he drank wine. The term τελεταί can be used in both a mystical and non-mystical context,⁴ so the context is decisive. In the Parodos of the *Bacchae*, the word has the clearest echoes of the language of the mysteries (*Ba.* 73–82):

² Cf. Callixenus *FGrHist* 627 F 2 line 149 (ed. Jacoby): Μακέταιέ αίέ καλούμεναιέΜιμαλλόνεξέjoin the Great Procession at Alexandria in 275 B.C.

³ Cf. Eur. *Ba.* 40 εἷ γὰρ έπόλινέτήνδέ κμαθεἷνέώέάτέλεστονεοῦσανέτωνέ μῶνέβακχευμάτωνέand 485

τάέ Ἷ ιεράνέκτωρέἡέμεθ' ήμέρανέτελεἷς; disputed are the lines *Ba.* 859–61 νώσεταιέ δέέτὸνέΔιόξέΔιόνυσον, ὄξέ(Diggle 1994: 327 after Jacobs: ...ώς) πέφυκεν ενέτέλειέ(Diggle 1994: 327: μέρει) θεόςέ εινότατος, άνθρωποισέ Ἷ ήπιώτατος. I translate the transmitted text (*pace* Seaford 1996a: 217, see note 65): “He will recognise Dionysos as son of Zeus, who at last turns out to be for mankind a most terrible, but also a most gentle god.”

⁴ Cf. Graf 1974: 32 (and n. 48): “Freilich bezeichnet τελετή nicht den eigentlichen Mysterienkult, sondern (mindestens noch in klassischer Zeit) jede kultische Feier;” cf. Leinieks 1996: 131.

μάκαρ. ὅστις εὐδαίμων τελετῶν θεῶν εἰδῶς
βίῳ τὴν ἁγιστεύει καὶ θιασεύεται ψυχὴν
ἐν ὄρεσσι ἀκχεύων ὅσίοις καθαρμοῖσιν.
τά τε ματρὸς μεγάλας ὄργια Κυβέλας θεμιτεύων
ἄν θύρσον τε τινάσσων κισσῶν τε στεφανωθεὶς
Διόνυσον θεραπεύει.

O blessed is he who, truly happy, knowing the initiations of the gods, is pure in life and joins his soul to the thiasos in the mountains performing Bacchic ritual with holy purifications, and correctly celebrating the Orgia (ecstatic feasts) of the great mother Kybele, and shaking the thyrsos up and down and crowned with ivy, serves Dionysus.

The *macarismus*, the emphasis on knowledge, pure conduct and holy cleansing, point to the context of the mysteries.⁵ The connection to the Orgia of Kybele is conspicuous. According to this, the worship of Dionysus consists of celebrating the Great Mother. Here, the poet seems to see both rituals as a unity. In a similar way, the initiation (τελετή) and the Bacchic cult in the mountains (ἐν ὄρεσσι ἀκχεύειν)⁶ are connected. The question arises whether this relationship between the τελετή and Βακχεία only occurs on the literary level, or whether the women's cult can really be seen as a mystical initiation.

Before this question can be answered, we must examine whether the dramatist intended his depiction to have any relation to the rites as really practised. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the myth which is the basis of the play tells how the god introduced his cult into a Greek city for the first time and what opposition he had to overcome. It is difficult to decide whether this myth contains an historical kernel and recalls the original, or even ever-present opposition to the worship of the god, or whether it rather describes the form and character of the cult, through telling the story of its introduction. How old the myth is, is unknown. The oldest pictorial

⁵ Cf. Schlesier 1998: 56–67.

⁶ ἀκχεύειν in four places (*Ba.* 251, 313, 343, 807), once ἀκχιάζειν (*Ba.* 931). As nouns Euripides uses βακχεία (in sing. *Ba.* 126, 232, in pl. *Ba.* 218, 1293), ἀκχευμα (in sing. *Ba.* 608, in pl. *Ba.* 40, 317, 567, 720, 724) and βάκχευσις (in sing. *Ba.* 357).

representation of the dismemberment of Pentheus comes from the last quarter of the 6th century (520–510 B.C.);⁷ the first mention in literature in Hekataios (*FGrH* 1 F 31) and the tragedy *Pentheus*, attributed to Thespis,⁸ also date from this time. In the picture on the vase, one of the women tearing Pentheus to pieces has a name; ironically, she is called “Galene,” “windless calm.” This seems to foreshadow already the Euripidean paradox that basically peaceful and friendly women become violent killers under the god’s influence and as a reaction to an attack. One may assume that at the end of the play Dionysus, now in divine form, described the future form of his worship after the removal of his opponents.⁹ Unfortunately this section, which would have contained the clearest connection to the reality of the cult, has not come down to us. This loss is compensated on the one hand by the song of the Chorus of the Parodos, in which Dionysus’ followers, the Lydian women, sing of the cult (*Ba.* 64–166), and on the other hand through the fact that in Euripides’ portrayal, the opposition to the god and his cult are related to one another in a special way. For the god forces first the Theban women and then Pentheus too, in the state of madness he causes, to do the very thing they reject. The punishment for refusing to worship the god consists paradoxically in the enforced practice of the cult. So the women don’t worship the god voluntarily, and the unholy compulsion reaches its peak in the murder of their own son and king: the myth dramatised by Euripides demonstrates a perverted form of the cult. This negative omen, as it were, must be taken into consideration in the reconstruction of the Bacchic cult. It is reflected, for example, in the fact that the Asian women of the chorus are at no point described as “raving” (μαίνεσθαι) and that they are only referred to as Maenads (μαινάδες) once in the entire play (*Ba.* 601). This corresponds to what is found elsewhere in Attic drama which,

⁷ Boston *MFA* 10, 221a-f, Euphronios attributed (*ARV* 16,14), cf. *LIMC* 312 (Nr. 39).

⁸ *TrGF* I 1 T 1 and F 1c (ed. Snell); cf. Diog. L. 6.92: Aristoxenus accused Heracleides Ponticus of forging tragedies under the name of Thespis; if so he would have kept the titles.

⁹ The text after Eur. *Ba.* 1324 is missing; cf. the Hypothesis (lines 16–17): Διόνυσος δὲ ἐπιφανεῖς (ὧ) μὲν πᾶσι παρήγγειλεν κτλ. Diggle 1994: 289 suggests <τελετάς>, see Friedrich 2000: 139–41, who is very sceptical.

other than Homer,¹⁰ is almost the only source for the name up to the 5th century: apart from the Erinyes (Aeschyl. *Eum.* 500) and Cassandra (Eur. *Tr.* 172, 307, 349, 415, El. 1032), who are compared to Maenads, there are only six places where the god's followers are called Maenads. With one exception only (Eur. *Ion* 552), in each case the reference is to non-human creatures.¹¹ Consistent with this is the fact that Dionysus' female followers on the vases are never referred to as Maenads.¹² Similarly, Dionysus' own madness is already mentioned by Euripides himself as being caused by a hostile attack from Hera.¹³ Perhaps even Dionysus' raving in Homer, when he was driven from Lykurgus into the sea with his nurses, can also be understood in this sense.

We know from Plutarch of a similar case – the daughters of Minyas and the rite connected with them in Orchomenos (*Aet. Gr.* 38, 299E-F). The myth is witnessed by Antonius Liberalis (*Met.* 10) for Nikander and Corinna. The Minyads refused to participate in the worship of Dionysus (τελεταὶ ἢ μυστήρια τοῦ θεοῦ). Here, too, the god finally compels them to do so, and in their madness they cast lots to decide which of their sons they should sacrifice. They then tore the chosen one limb from limb. Plutarch reports that now, at the annual feast of the “Agrionia,” their female descendants flee and are pursued by Dionysus with a sword. A priest would take on the role of Dionysus and in Plutarch's time, he even killed a woman. If

¹⁰ *Il.* 22.460 about Andromache: μαινάδι ἴση (cf. *Il.* 6.389 Andromache: μαινομένη ἠϊκίῃ) and *Hymn. in Cer.* 386 about Demeter: εὐτεῖ μαιναῖσι ὄρος ἰκάτα ἰδὰ σκιον ἰύλης. Μαινάσι is here not a name but means, as in *Il.* 6.389: “like a raving woman/nymph.”

¹¹ Aeschyl. fr. 382 πάτερ Ἰθίοινε, μαινάδων ἰζευκτῆριε, Soph. *OT* 212 οἰνῶπα ἰβάρκχον ἰεῦιον, Μαινάδων ἰόμοστολον, Achaicus *TrGF* I 20 F 16 (ed. Snell) ἔναστροσι ὤστε ἰμινάδας, [Eur.] *Phoen.* 1752 ἴθ' ἀλλά ἰβρόμοσι ἴνα ἰτεῖση κός ἰβάρκχιοσι ὄμματα ἰδαίεται, cf. Timoth. fr. 2b (= Plut. *de superst.* 170A) about Artemis (!): θηιάδα ἰφοῖβάρκχιοσι ἰμινάδα ἰλυσσάδα.

¹² Cf. Callixenus *FGrHist* 627 F 2 (ed. Jacoby), who mentions neither “maenads” nor “Bacchantes” in connection with the Great Procession (see note 2), but Μιμαλλόνες, Βασσάρα (after Aeschylus' tragedy?) and Λυδαῖ (after Eur. *Ba.*).

¹³ Eur. *Cycl.* 3–4 πρῶτον ἰμηνήνικ' ἔμμανῆσι Ἰηρασι ἴππο / Νύμφασι ὄρεῖασι ἔκλιπῶν ἰώχου ἰτροφούς.

Achaicus *TrGF* I 20 F 20 (ed. Snell) (= Philod. *de piet.* 36), Plat. *Nom.* 672b, Euphorion fr. 14, Apollod. 3.5.1, Nonn. *Dion.* 32,98–150.

Plutarch's description of the events of this feast is accurate, the rite consists of a repeated performance of the myth. The women are playing the madness of their predecessors, and their state of mind is not genuine. How far this can be applied to the cult of the Theban women can only be a matter of conjecture here. However, it is clear to see the problems that arise out of the relationship between a myth describing a perverted form of a cult, and its reality.

In reconstructing the cult of the Bacchantes from Euripides' play, scholars have generally made it easier for themselves. The complete poetic picture is taken as evidence for the reality, apart from all the elements which are completely incompatible with rational, enlightened thinking. This includes a large number of details. Euripides surrounds the god with a multitude of miracles: the collapse of the palace; the rivers of milk, honey and wine, which the Bacchantes cause to spring from the earth; the snakes, which lick the blood from their cheeks; the women's dealings with wild animals which they even suckle; and their ability to put armed men to flight, to attack and plunder villages. If one explains away the collapse of the palace by saying that the Bacchantes imagined it, the other details must either be ignored or attributed to the myth, because there could be no equivalent for them in historical reality. It is clear that the criterion for the decision is simply the interpreter's readiness to accept the possibility of the supernatural phenomena. There are some elements for which there is no unified opinion as to whether they belong solely in the myth or also in the cult's reality; among these is the tearing to pieces of animals and eating the raw flesh, the so-called Omophagia. Here, many prefer the helpful explanation that these customs stem from an earlier period or an uncivilised area. Gradually, in Greece, these cruel practices of the cult paled, and Apollonian civilisation took the place of Dionysiac madness. This selection procedure, in which the only criterion is the commentator's rationalism, is methodologically not convincing. If the dramatist wanted to portray reality in his play, it is inexplicable that he should include unreal elements which cannot be separated in the text. The author's intention, at least, thus makes it problematic to connect the myth to the reality of the cult.

This problem can be further illuminated by the study of a single detail. In the Parodos, the chorus of Asian women call on Thebes, Dionysus' mother's city, to crown itself with wreaths, to put

on the skin of a young deer, to take the narthex wand and to follow Dionysus into the mountains (*Ba.* 115–19):

Βρόμιος εὖτ' ἄ η θιάσους εἰς ὄρος εἰς ὄρος, ἔνθαφίενειό
θηλυγενῆς ὄχλος ἄφ' ἰστῶνὸ παρὸ κερκίδωνὸ τ'
οἴστρηθεις Διονύσῳ.

... whenever Bromios leads the thiasoi to the mountain, to
the mountain, where there waits
the female throng stung to frenzy from their looms and
shuttles by Dionysus.

The text differentiates clearly between the women of Thebes who, as Dionysus emphasises, are all already in the Kithairon (*Ba.* 35–6), and the other Thiasoi, in which Dionysus leads the men of Thebes to the women in the mountains. Only two men follow this summons: Teiresias and Cadmus, who take the Bacchic utensils and set off into the mountains. They seem to have actually met the women, for Cadmus says later that he and Teiresias have returned “from the Bacchantes” (*Ba.* 1224 βακχῶνὸπάρᾱ).¹⁴ If we take this detail as cultic reality, we must conclude that the women went into the mountains, that the men followed them, and that both groups worshipped the god together in the mountains. A reference from another tragedy, *Ion*, can be added here.¹⁵ When Xuthos wants to explain to Ion that he is his son, he reconstructs the moment of his conception. Xuthos was in the Thiasos of the Maenads of Bakchios (*Ion* 552 ἐθιάσευσ' Μαινάσινὸγεῖβακχίου); drunk with wine, he fathered his son.¹⁶ This image of a joint Bacchic cult of men and women is contrary to everything one can read on the subject. I quote Henrichs: “In Greece proper, ritual maenadism was restricted to

¹⁴ *pace* Henrichs 1984: 69: “Nor do Cadmus and Teiresias ... ever join in the rites of the real maenads on the mountain.”

¹⁵ See some pictures on vases in Bérard and Bron 1989: 130 fig. 179, 140 fig. 190.

¹⁶ Cf. Eur. *Phoen.* 21–2 about Laios: ἠδονῆ ἕδουζᾶςτέῖβακχίανὸ (codd. βακχεῖον, s. *POxy* 3321 βακχίον) πεσῶνᾶσπειρενὸἡμῖνὸπαῖᾶ. The transmitted text is perhaps right, cf. Mastronarde 1994: 147: βακχεῖονὸ “a group devoted to Bacchic activity, a thiasos.” So Laios met Iokaste in her “thiasos” and fathered Oidipus.

women, at least down to the end of the Hellenistic period.”¹⁷ But this image also derives ultimately from Euripides. For as Pentheus finally decides to go to the Bacchants, the stranger/Dionysus persuades him to disguise himself as a woman, since the Maenads would kill him if he were discovered as a man (*Ba.* 823 ἦν ἄν ρωφθῆς ἄκεῖ).¹⁸ In order to resolve the inconsistency, it has been assumed that Teiresias and Cadmus also dressed up as women.¹⁹ However, there is not the slightest indication of such ritual transvestism in the text. Pentheus would hardly have failed to comment if the two old men had confronted him dressed as women. So Euripides’ text remains contradictory. On the one hand there is the summons to the men of Thebes, to follow the Bacchants into the mountains, which is really followed by two of them, and on the other hand the deadly danger of approaching the Maenads as a man. One solution to the problem could be that Euripides has combined different forms of Dionysus-worship: the Bacchic cult of the women and the male followers of the god, who took part in processions and parades at other festivals.²⁰ Thus he alludes to the festival of the “Return” of Dionysus (Καταγώγιω), for which there is evidence in Miletus and Priene and which was also celebrated in the streets of Athens as the return of Dionysus in the ship-cart,²¹ but which had nothing to do with the Bacchic cult of the women in the mountains (*Ba.* 83–7):

Ἰτεωβάκχαι, Ἰτεωβάκχαι, Βρόμιονωπαῖδαθεδὼνωθεοῦ
 Διόνυσον κατάγουσαι
 Φρυγῶναξέξωρ ὠνῶν Ἑλλάδος αἰεὶ εὐρυχόρους ἀγυιάς.
 τὸν Βρόμιον·ω

¹⁷ Henrichs 1978: 133; about the thiasus of οἱ Καταιβάται in Magnesia, he argues “The thiasus must have included male members, if so it cannot have been genuinely maenadic.”

¹⁸ Cf. Eur. *Ba.* 732 θηρώμεθ’ ἀνδρῶν τῶνδ’ ὑπ’·ω

¹⁹ *pace* Versnel 1990: 120 n. 94: “... in order to join the Bacchic thiasoi men had to undergo transvestism, as Pentheus, Kadmos and Teiresias did.”

²⁰ Cf. the Iacchus-Procession in Aristoph. *Ran.* 156–7 θίασους εὐδαίμωνας ἄνδρῶν ὠγυνηαῖων. Cf. Heraclit. B 15 about men and women at the Phallos-Procession: εἰ μὴ ἄρα Διονύσῳ πομπὴν ἄποιοντο καὶ ὠμνεον ἄσμ ἰδοίοισιν, ἀναιδέστατα καὶ ἔργαστ’ ἄν·ὠυτὸς ὠδὲ ὠΑἰδης καὶ ὠ Διόνυσος, ὅτε ὠ μαίνονται καὶ ληναίζουσιν.

²¹ *LSAM* 48, 21 (Miletus), *LSAM* 37 = Sylloge³ 1003 (Priene), *IG* II² 1368, 114 = Sylloge³ 1109 (Athens, 178 A.D.).

“Onward bacchant, onward bacchant, bringing back Bromios, a god and a son of a god, Dionysus, from the Phrygian mountains to the streets of Greece, broad for dancing, Bromios.”

So Euripides combined female and male forms of the Dionysus-worship. The reason behind the combination is, of course, integral to the dramaturgy of the play: the summons to the male inhabitants to follow the women into the mountains serves to prepare for the entrance of the two Bacchantes Cadmus and Teiresias. Euripides is first and foremost a dramatist, not a religious historian.

Despite this rather banal perception, scholars have used Euripides again and again as a source of information about the cult of Dionysus.²² There is good reason for this: there are almost no non-literary sources from the 5th century for the female Bacchic cult. We do indeed have a large number of pictorial representations from the 6th century onwards, showing females among Dionysus' followers; the problems which arise from the literary representations are simply repeated, however, in this medium. The transference of the mythical pictures on the vases into cultic reality is fraught with problems; the consensus is that the pictures are neither an illustration of literary sources, nor an accurate depiction of cultic reality, but that their iconography speaks a language complete in itself, which is no longer clearly legible for us. One need only recall the controversial “Lenaen-vases,” whose connection to the Athenian festivals has been in dispute since Nilsson and Deubner; Peirce has recently stated that they cannot be associated with any specific festival at all.²³

In light of the state of the sources, we must use the evidence of later times in order to reconstruct the cult which is the basis of the play and to decide whether there is any relationship with the mysteries. However, even this evidence is sparse. The most comprehensive report is that of Diodorus in the second half of the first century B.C. He reports what the Greeks say about the Bacchic women's cult in Greece (τά ἀρ ἃ τοῖς Ἑλλησι λεγόμενα), so he is not describing his own views (4.3.3):

²² Cf. [Versnel 1990](#): “Euripides' *Bacchae* offers the most complete description of what we believe we must understand by bacchic orgia.”

²³ Cf. [Peirce 1998](#), [Frontisi-Ducroux 1991](#).

διὸ καὶ παρὺ πολλὰς τῶν Ἑλληνίδων πόλεων διὺ
 τριῶν ἐτῶν κχεῖ ἰά τε γυναικῶν ἀθροίζεσθαι, καὶ παῖς
 παρθένους νόμιμον εἶναι θυρσοφορεῖν καὶ
 συνενθουσιάζειν ἑαζούσας καὶ τιμώσας ἵπτον θεόν· ὑπὸ δὲ
 γυναικῶν κατὰ συστήματα θυσιάζειν τῶν θεῶν καὶ
 βακχεύειν καὶ καθόλου τῆν παρουσίαν μνεῖν τοῦ
 Διονύσου. μιμουμένας τὴν ἱστορουμένας τὸ παλαιὸν
 παρεδρεύειν τῶν θεῶν Μαινάδας.

(The Greeks tell, that) consequently in many Greek cities every other year Bacchic bands of women gather, and it is lawful for the maidens to carry the thyrsus and to join in the frenzied revelry, crying out: “Euai!” and honoring the god; while the matrons, forming thiasoi to the god, celebrate the Bacchic rites and in general extol with hymns the presence of Dionysus, in this manner acting the part of the Maenads, who, as history records, were of old the companions of the god.

In the Parodos, Euripides speaks of a Trieteris, a festival which takes place every two years (*Ba.* 133),²⁴ though the reason for the biennial rhythm is not clear.²⁵ The distinction between the unmarried women, who carry the Thyrsos and take part in the enthusiastic action with their cries of εὐή, and the married women who form the Thiasos and practise the Bacchic cult, is not found in Euripides, who depicts all the women of Thebes as being driven into the mountains together (*Ba.* 35–6). Diodorus’ description recalls the sentence quoted by Plato: νάρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τεύπαυροι (*Phaid.* 69c). It is also interesting that the cult is interpreted as an imitation of the mythic Maenads who accompany the god: Diodorus is certainly thinking of Euripides’ representation. For the god dances with his worshippers in Euripides (*Ba.* 62–3 ἐγὼ δὲ βάκχαις, ἔσὺ Κιθαιρῶνος, πτυχὺν ἐλθὼν εἰςί, συμμετασχῆσω χορῶν). As

²⁴ Cf. *LSAM* 48, 20 (Miletus, see page), *IG* II² 1368, 43. 69. 113. 153 (Athens, 178 A.D.): ἀμφιετέριδες; cf. Orphic hymn. 52.10 and 53.1.

²⁵ Diodorus 4.3.2 connects it with the god’s journey to India; after two years he returned.

Henrichs has indicated, we must assume that Euripides' play influenced the later cult.

One would love to know to which cities Diodorus referred. Thebes was certainly one of them. In the case of this “mother-city of the Bacchants” (ματρόπολις Βακχῶν), as the Chorus in *Antigone* sings (*Ant.* 1122), it becomes clear how inadequate our sources are: there is not a single non-literary document for Thebes.²⁶ An inscription from Magnesia at Maeander was taken for one. The Archimystes Apollonios Mokolles had a marble plaque erected there in the 2nd century A.D., which reproduces an old oracle of the god at Delphi (ἄρχαῖος χρησμός) (*IMagn.* 215, 24–36):²⁷

ἐλθέτε δὲ ἐς Θήβης ἱερὸν πέδον, ὄφρα λάβητεω
 Μαινώδας αἰ γεινήσιν Εἰνοῦς ἄπο Καδμείηςω
 αἰ δ' μείν δώσουσιν καὶ ὄργια καὶ νόμιμα ἐσθλω
 καὶ θιάσους Βάκχοιο καθειδρῦσουσιν ἐν ἄστει.
 κατω τὸν ἀχρησμὸν διω τῶν θεοπρόπων ἀδόθησαν ἕκω
 Θηβῶν Μαινάδες τρεῖς Κοσκῶ, Βαυβῶ, Θετταλήω καὶ ἡ
 μὲν Κοσκῶ συνήγαγεν ἄσπονδον Πλατανιστηνῶν, ἡ
 δὲ Βαυβῶ τὸν ἀπὸ πόλεως, ἡ δὲ Θετταλή τὸν τῶν
 Καταιβατῶν.

Go to the holy plain of Thebes to fetch Maenads from the race of Cadmeian Ino. They will bring you maenadic rites and noble customs and will establish thiasoi of Bacchus in your city. In accordance with the oracle, and through the agency of the envoys, three Maenads were brought from Thebes: Kosko, Baubo, and Thettale. And Kosko organized the thiasus named after the plane tree, Baubo the thiasus outside the city, and Thettale the thiasus named after Kataibates.

²⁶ There is some evidence in literature; so the first named “human” maenad from Theben is Antigone, cf. [Eur.] *Phoen.* 1754–6: Καδμείαν ᾧ νεβρίδαω στολιδωσαμένα ποτ' ἐγὼ Σεμέλας θίασον ἱερὸν ὄρεισιν ἀνεχόρευσα. cf. Timagoras *FGrH* 381 F1: the Niobides come to Mt. Kithairon, Verg. *Georg.* 3.43 and *Aen.* 4.300–3, Stat. *Theb.* 2.79–80 and 4.371, Lact. *Inst.* 1.22.15.

²⁷ Cf. Kern 1900: 139–40, cf. Henrichs 1978: 123–34.

Apollonios' source is unclear; a reference to the Celtic invasion in the years 279/8 indicates the first half of the 3rd century.²⁸ The authenticity of the oracle is disputed, as is the question of whether the three Theban Maenads are historical persons. The title Maenad, which is rare in non-literary texts, the significant names and the reference to Ino seem to point to the sphere of myth. Even if the oracle is not genuine, it shows that the introduction of Dionysiac Thiasoi was seen as the adoption of a Theban cult; whether it really refers to an actual cult, rather than the mythical cult as represented by Euripides, remains an open question.

The findings for Athens are similarly inadequate; there are five feasts of Dionysus, but there is no evidence for any of them that the women left their houses in an ecstatic state and stormed into the mountains. The "Lenaea" indicate the Maenadic cult by the name λῆναι, but there is no historical evidence. In connection with the Anthesteria, we hear of a Dionysiac women's assembly in the context of the so-called Holy Wedding of Basilinna with Dionysus.²⁹ This assembly performs unspeakable holy sacrifices for the city (ἔθνεφτὰ ἄρρηταφέρὰ πῆρ τῆσφπόλεως) in the holy place ἐνφ Λίμναις.³⁰ Before this, the Basilinna had to accept an oath from her assistants, the 14 "revered women" (γεγαίραί): the words are as follows (Ps. Dem. *Or.* 59 *contra Neair.* 78):

Ἄγιστεύωφκαὶ εἰμὶ καθαρὰ καὶ ἀγνή ἀπόφ(τε)φτῶνφ
ἄλλωνφ τῶνφ οφ καθαρευόντωνφ καὶ ἀπ' ἀνδρωςφ

²⁸ The time of the cult-transfer is dated in the inscription through the name "Akrodemus," who was prytanus (unfortunately he is unknown to us). If Apollonios' source was written in the first half of the 3rd century, its author may have dated the oracle and cult-transfer much earlier. Cf. the fragment from the Μαγνητικάφφ Possis *FGrHist* 480 F 1 (ed. Jacoby) (= Athen. 12, 533D/E): Πόσσιςφδ' ἐνφφρίτωφφΜαγνητικῶνφτὸνφΘεμιστοκλῆς φησίνφώφ Διονυσφφ οοπότηφ θυσιάσανταφ καίφ τήνφ Χοῶνφ ἐορτήνφ αὐτόθιφ καταδείξαι.

²⁹ Cf. Plut. *mul. virt.* 251E about Elis: αἰφπεριφτὸνφΔιόνυσονφφιεραίφ γυναῖκες, ἄσφέκκαἰδεκαφκαλοῦσιν; Pausanias 6.26.1, they celebrate the Θυῖα with a wine-miracle and call Dionysos a bull; *Oreibasia* is not mentioned. Pausanias 3.13.7 mentions for Sparta an assembly of 11 Διονυσιάδες; cf. Hesych. s.v.

Δύσμαιναι· αἰ ἐνφ πάρτη χορίτιδες βάκχαι.

³⁰ This holy place is perhaps named in Aristoph. *Lys.* 1 Βακχεῖον.

συνουσίας, καὶ τὰ θεοίνια καὶ τὰ ἰοβάκχαια γεραρῶ τῶς
Διονύσωσ κατὰ τὰ πάτρια καὶ ἐνς τοῖ καθήκουσις
χρόνοις.

I live a holy life and am pure and unstained by all else that
pollutes and by commerce with man, and I will celebrate the
Theoinia and Iobaccheia in Honour of Dionysus in
accordance with custom and at the established times.

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the cult call "Io Bacchos" occurs in a
different form: Dionysus calls ἰὼ βάκχαι, ἰὼ βάκχαισ to the Asian
women (*Ba.* 577). It is not clear what is behind the θεοίνια καὶ
ἰοβάκχαια: the rituals performed by the women remain secret. They
operate in the oldest Dionysus-temple in the centre of the city (south
of the Acropolis); there is no mention of Maenadic activity in the
mountains. We only hear about such things from Pausanias in the 2nd
century A.D. (10.4.3); a group of Athenian women (unfortunately he
does not mention how many) went to Delphi,³¹ to Mt. Parnassus,
every second year in winter (in the months of
Dadaphorios/Maimakterion) to celebrate the Orgia of Dionysus with
the women of Delphi, the Thyiades.³² Euripides mentions this
Delphic cult in the *Bacchae* (*Ba.* 306–9),³³ but not the name
Thyiades.³⁴ We have Plutarch to thank for further information.³⁵ He

³¹ Does he mean the 14 "revered women"?

³² Cf. Paus. 10.32.7 ἀπὸς δὲ τοῦσ Κωρυκίους χαλεπὸνσ ἦδησ καίσ ἀνδρίσ
εὐζῶνωσ πρὸσ τὰσ ἀκρὰσ ἀφικέσθαισ τοῦσ Παρνασσούσ τὰσ δὲσ νεφῶνσ τῆσ
ἀνωτέρωσ τὰσ ἀκρὰσ καίσ αἰσ Θυιάδεσ ἐπίσ τοῦτοίσ τῶσ Διονύσωσ καίσ τῶσ
Ἀπόλλωνιαισ αἰνόνται.

³³ Eur. *Ba.* 306–9 ἔτ' αὐτόνσ ὄψησ καὶ πίοσ Δελφίσισ πέτραισ / πηδῶντασ ὄνσ
πεύκαίσισ δικόρυφοσ πλάκα. / πάλλοντασ καίσ σείοντασ βακχείονσ κλάδον,
/ μέγανσ τ' ἀν' Ἑλλάδ'. Cf. Soph. *Ant.* 1126–30 σὲσ δ' ὑπὲρσ διλόφουσ
πέτρασ / στέροψσ ὄπωπε / λιγυύσ, ἐνθασ Κωρύκiai / στείχουσισ Νύμφαισ
Βακχίδεσ / Κασταλίασ τεσ ἄμα.

³⁴ In *Ion* Euripides calls the participants in the "Torch Festival" (φάναισ
Βακχίου) "the Maenads of Bacchios" (*Ion* 550–2) and Aristophanes in the
Clouds "Delphic Bacchae" (*Nub.* 603–6). Paus. 10.6.4 says that Thyia, the
daughter of Kastalios, has given Apollo a son, named Delphus. Thyiades
are mentioned by Aeschyl. *Th.* 498 and 836 (both a comparison), *Supp.* 564
(Ἰοσασ θυιάσ "Ἡρασ) and Soph. *Ant.* 1149–51 Ζηνὸσ γένεθλον, προφάνηθ',
ῶνασ, σάισ ἄμασ περιπόλοισ Θυιάσισ; cf. Alkm. fr. 63 (= *Schol. min. Hom.*
Il. 6,21) named the γένησ Νυμφῶνσ(!): Ναίδεσ τεσ α μπάδεσ τεσ Θυιάδεσ τε.

provides the earliest non-poetic evidence for a female Bacchic cult from the year 354/3 B.C. It is important to realise that more than 400 years lie between the testimony and the facts reported. Plutarch tells the attractive story that the women of Amphissa protected the Thyiades from Delphi, who had got lost in the hostile city and had fallen asleep from exhaustion in the market-place, giving them food and accompanying them home (*mulier. virt.* 249E/F).

The evidence examined so far leads to the conclusion that a biennial rite took place, in which a certain group of women set off into the mountains, to worship the god there in a natural setting, undoubtedly accompanied by ritual dance and music. There is definite evidence for this rite in Delphi; one may assume that it applies to Thebes as well. The number of women who took part, their precise activities and their state of mind, are not clear from the texts. Above all, it is not clear whether this form of the cult was preceded by an initiation or whether the ritual itself is to be understood as the initiation. Two further inscriptions, both from Miletus, could suggest this. One is the gravestone of the Milesian Priestess Alkmeionis from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. (W. Peek, *Versinschriften* Nr. 1344)³⁶:

τὴν σίην χαίρειμ, πολιήτιδες ε πατε Βάκχαιδ
 ἰρείην· χρηστῆ τοῦτο γυναικὶ θέμις.
 ὕμᾱς κείς ὄρος ἦγε καὶ ὄργια πάντα καὶ ἰρᾶό
 ἦνικεμ πάσης ἐρχομένη πρὸ πόλεως.
 τοῦνομα ἔτις ξεῖνος ἀωείρεται, Ἀλκμειωνίδ
 ἢ Ῥοδίῳθ, καλῶμ μοῖραν ἐπισταμνένη.

Bacchantes of the city, say “Farewell you holy priestess.”
 This is what a good woman deserves. She led you to the
 mountain and carried all the sacred objects and implements,
 marching in procession before the whole city. Should some
 stranger ask for her name: Alkmeonis, daughter of Rhodios,
 who knew her share of the blessings.

³⁵ Cf. Plut. *Is. Os.* 364E: Klea is the ἀρχηῖς of the Delphic Thyiades; *de prom. frig.* 953D: Thyiades are in danger on Mt. Parnassus because of a snowstorm.

³⁶ Translation from [Henrichs 1978: 148](#), cf. [Merkelbach 1972](#).

The text provides clear evidence of ritual *Oreibasia*, the going into the mountains, in the 3rd century B.C. The obvious distinction between public (πολιτήτιες) and private Bacchants is interesting. A procession is also referred to, in front of which the priestess carries the sacred implements. One would very much like to know what exactly is meant by this. The last verse is decisive; it has been compared to the Mystery formula “I fled from the evil and I found salvation” (Ἐφυγον κακόν, εὔρον ἄμεινον).³⁷ From this, one could conclude that the priestess was initiated in the Dionysus-mysteries or performed them herself; however, a connection to *Oreibasia* is not definite; the inscription gives no support to the suggestion that the female maenadism belongs to the mysteries.

The same goes for the important cult law from Miletus in 276/5 B.C. The surviving text regulates various duties and rights of the priesthood of Dionysus, which could be bought. The most important passage in our context reads (F. Sokolowski *LSAM* Nr. 48, lines 18–20)

κα ἔάν τις υν ἡ βούληται τελεῖν τῷ Διονύσῳ τῷ
 Βακχίῳ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἢ ἐν τοῖς νήσοις,
 [ἀπο]ιδότω τῇ ἱερείᾳ στατρά κατ' ἑκάστην
 τριετηρίαν.

And when a woman wishes to perform the initiation in the cult of Dionysus Bacchius in the city or in the country or on the islands, she should give the priestess a Stater (a sum of money) in each two-year festival period.

This concerns private forms of the cult, which are subordinated to the state priestess through payments of money. It only mentions a woman who undertakes the initiation. Whether the two-year rhythm includes the dates of the initiation, or merely regulates the times of the payments, cannot be decided. The number of initiated women does not seem to correlate with the sum to be paid. The greatest difficulty arising from the text is whether there is a connection between this initiation and the Thiasoi mentioned at the beginning of the text (lines 1–3):

³⁷ Ps. Dem. 18.259 in the context of the Dionysus-Sabazius-mysteries; cf. Paus. *atticista* e 87 in connection with a wedding in Athens.

τανδὲ ἡ ἱέρεια ἐπι[τελέσ]ησὶ ἱερὰ πᾶσι τῆς πόλεως
[πάσης] μὴ ἐξεῖναι ὠμοφάγιον ἐμ αλεῖνὸ μηθενὶ
πρότερον [ἢ ἢ ἱε]ρειαὶ πᾶσι τῆς πόλεως ὅμοιοι μὴ
ἐξεῖναι δὲ μηδὲ [συν]αγαγεῖν τὸν θίασον μηθενὶ
πρότερον τοῦ δημοσίου.

When the priestess performs the sacred rites for the whole city, no-one is permitted to throw the Omophagion before the priestess does this for the city, and no-one is permitted to gather his Thiasos before the public one has been gathered.

Apart from the cryptic reference to the Omophagia, it is clear that this passage deals with the rivalry between the private and public forms of the cult. Unlike the information about Magnesia, there only seems to have been a single public Thiasos in Miletus, as well as several private ones, which drew members away from the public one. The public cult is apparently an all-female Thiasos, since it is led by a priestess; whether this also applies to the private ones is not indicated. It is not clear what form the activity of these Thiasoi took; there is no mention of Oreibasias. Only if the two passages are combined - and they are twelve lines apart - can one claim that the gathering of the Thiasoi (συναγαγεῖν) consists of the act of initiation (τελεῖν). The text does not indicate that, and the difficulties of the Euripides' play cannot be solved; they are simply repeated within this document from Miletus.

To solve our problem, we must look now from the other side, exploring more closely the Dionysus-mysteries, confining ourselves to evidence from the 5th century³⁸. The most important text is in Herodotus and reports the initiation of the king of the Scythians, Scyles, in Olbia, a Milesian colony north of the Black Sea on the River Borysthenes, in the middle of the 5th century (4.79):

Ἐπεθύμησε Ὀδίωνος ὠκυπέτεος βακχεῖω τελεσθῆναι ἄμελλοντι δὲ
οἱ ἐσχέρας ἄγεσθαι τὴν τελετὴν ἐνετοόφασμα
μέγιστον. ἦν οἱ ἐνόβουρσθενεῖ τῶν πόλιος οἰκίης

³⁸ Cf. Heraclit. B 14: νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βákχοις, λήναις, μύσαις· ὁ τούτοις ἀπειλεῖ ὁ ἀμέταθ' ἀνάτατον, τούτοις ἄμιν τεύεται ἰσθ' ἀπὸ ὅσ' ἀπό νομιζόμενα κατ' ἀνθρώπους φημιστήρια ἀνιερωστί φημιεῦνται.

μεγάλης καὶ ἰσχυρῆς πολυτελείας περιβολῆς καὶ ἕως αὐτῆς ἰσχυρῆς
 ἐνέσκηψε βέλος καὶ ἠϋμένον κατακέρασε, Σκυλῆς δὲ οὐδὲν
 οὐδὲν τοῦτου χεῖνε κακῆσσαν ἐπέτελεσεν τῆς τελετῆς.
 Σκύθαι δὲ οὗτοι βακχεύειν πέριχ' Ἑλλησι χόνοι διζουσι· οὐδὲ
 γάρ φασι χοῖκος εἶναι θεὸν χεῖνε εὐρίσκουσαν τοῦτον ὅστις
 μαίνεσθαι χεῖνε ἀνθρώπους. Ἐπί τε δὲ ἐτελέσθη τῶν
 Βακχείων οὐ Σκύλης διεπρήστευσεν τῶν τῆς
 Βορυσθενείτων χροῦς τοῦ Σκύθας γλέγων· “Ἡμῖν γάρ
 καταγελάτε, ὦ Σκύθαι, ὅτι βακχεύομεν καὶ ἡμέας ὁ θεὸς
 λαμβάνει· νῦν οὗτος οὐδαίμων καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον
 βασιλέα χεῖνε λάβηκε, καὶ Βακχεύει τε καὶ ὑπό τὸν θεόν
 μαίνεται. εἰ δὲ ὑμοὶ ἀπιστέετε, ἔπεσθε, καὶ ὑμῖν χεῖνε
 δείξω.” εἶπον τοῦτων Σκυθέων προεστεῶτες, καὶ
 αὐτοῦ χεῖνε ἀναγώνος Βορυσθενείτης λάθρη χεῖνε ἐπὶ ὑργον
 κατεῖσε. Ἐπί τε δὲ ὑπαρήχον τῶν χεῖνε ἀσφῶν Σκύλης καὶ
 εἶδόν χεῖνε βακχεύοντα οὐ Σκύθαι, κάρτα συμφορῆν
 μεγάλην χεῖνε ποιήσαντο, ἐξελθόντες δὲ ἐσήκωνον πάση τῇ
 στρατιῇ τὰ ὕδοιεν.

Scyles conceived a desire to be initiated into the rites of the Bacchic Dionysus; and when he was about to begin the sacred mysteries, he saw a wondrous vision. He had in the city of the Borysthenites a spacious house great and costly ... this house was smitten by a thunderbolt and wholly destroyed by fire. But despite this Scyles performed the rite to the end. Now the Scythians make this Bacchic revelling a reproach against the Greeks, saying that it is not reasonable to set up a god who leads men on to madness. So when Scyles had been initiated into the Bacchic rite, some one of the Borysthenites scoffed at the Scythians: “Why,” said he, “you Scythians mock us for revelling and being possessed by the god; but now this deity has taken possession of your own king, so that he is revelling and is maddened by the god. If you will not believe me, follow me now and I will show him to you.” The chief men among the Scythians followed him, and the Borysthenite brought them up secretly and set them on a tower; whence presently, when Scyles passed by with his company of worshippers, they saw him among the

revellers; being greatly moved at this, they left the city and told the whole army what they had seen.

If one compares this text with Diodorus' description of the Bacchic women's cult, a certain closeness is evident: both texts speak of βακχεύειν, both mention a Thiasos, both refer to the ecstatic state or possession by the god. But there are also differences: Herodotus describes the unique initiation of one man and his procession through the city, Diodorus a biennial festival of women which takes place in natural surroundings. If one interprets Euripides' play as the ἑρς ὄγος of the Dionysus-mysteries, one must assume that the dramatist would have united the two forms of the cult in the character of Pentheus. When Pentheus takes the form of a female Bacchant and wants to partake of the cult, he would symbolise the path of the one to be initiated. The dismemberment by the women would be not only the punishment for the rejection of the cult, but would at the same time point to the completion of the initiation into the mysteries which would have consisted of a ritual death by dismemberment. Seaford and others see the religious-historical background of the play in this way: "Of contemporary ritual the *Bacchae* reflects two seemingly different kinds: on the one hand the ὄρειβασία and σπαργμός performed by the female thiasos, and on the other hand the mystic initiation of the male Pentheus."³⁹ The expression "two seemingly different kinds" shows the same problem once again: does Pentheus' fate really reflect the ritual act of initiation and is the participation in the Bacchic activity of the women really bound to such a ritual initiation?

Since the spectacular find of the "golden plates," above all in Southern Italy, the image of the Dionysus-mysteries in the 5th century has changed. The most important evidence in our context comes from Hipponion at the end of the 5th century and speaks of the path the initiated should take in the underworld (*SEG* 26, 1139, 15–16 = *SEG* 40, 824 = B^H Zuntz = I A 1 Pugliese)

α δὴ α συχνᾶν ὁδ ν ἔρχεαι ἄν τε α ἄ οιλ
 μύσται α βᾶκχοι ἑρᾶν στείχουσι εεινοί .

³⁹ Seaford 1981: 265; cf. Bron 1987: 145: "Le culte n'est pas réservé aux femmes; chacun peut devenir bacchant, homme ou femme, mais il faut être initié."

And so go the long way, the sacred way, which the other
Mystics and Bacchants, the blessed ones, also take.

Another text tells the dead man to say to Persephone in the
underworld (Pelinna 1–2 = II B 3–4, 2 Pugliese):

εἶπε ν Φερσεφόνα σ' ὅτι Βάχχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.

Tell Persephone that Bacchus himself has released you.

The inscription from a burial place in Cumae from the middle of the
5th century B.C. is also famous (F. Solokowski, *LSCG* Suppl. 120):

οὐ θέμις ἐνταῦθα κεῖσθαι εἰ μὴ τὸν βεβαχχευμένονω

No-one may be buried here, apart from he who is initiated in
the cult of Bacchus.

Here, an initiation in a secret cult society, which claimed a special
burial ground, is related to Dionysus-Bacchus. It is possible that
Euripides, particularly in Thessaly, where golden plates have also
been found, had this form of Dionysus-cult in mind and that he
conceived his play in light of this.⁴⁰ For Dionysus-Bacchus played an
important part in the imaginative world of the initiations revealed by
the golden plates. The highly controversial question arises whether
there is a relationship between these cults and the phenomenon
known as Orphism. “Orphic” is the term for the myth of the chthonic
Dionysus, son of Zeus and Persephone, who was dismembered by
the Titans, boiled and roasted, whereupon Zeus struck the murderers

⁴⁰ It is an open question whether Dionysus-mysteries existed in Athens the
5th century B.C. alongside the mysteries of Eleusis, s. Obbink 1993: 78:
“Initiation into Dionysiac mysteries possibly did not take place in
Attica.” But it is obvious that there was knowledge of them: see Aristoph.
Ran. 357 in comic transference: ὅστις ὦ μηδὲ Κρατίνου τοῦ ταυροφάγου
γλώττης βακχεῖ ἐτελέσθη. cf. Plat. *Leg.* 815c ὅση μὲν βακχεία τ' ἐστίνω
καὶ τῶν ταύταις ἐπομένων, ἅς Νύμφας τε καὶ Πᾶνας καὶ Σειληνοὺς καὶ
Σατύρους ἀπονομάζοντες, ὡς ἄσασιν, μιμοῦνται ἀκατωνωμένους, περίω
καθαροὺς ἀκατελετάς ἀνασῶποτελούντων, σύμπαν αὐτοῦ τοῦ αἵματος
ὀρχήσεως τὸ γένος οὐθ' ὡς εἰρηνικὸν οὐθ' ὡς πολεμικὸν οὐθ' ὅτι ποτέω
βούλεται ῥάδιον ἀφορίσασθαι.

with a bolt of lightning. Opinions differ as to the age of this myth; when Plato speaks of the “age-old titanic nature” of mankind (παλαιὰ Τιτανικὴ φύσις) he may testify to the myth (*Leg.* 701b/c):⁴¹ possibly it was to be found in the “Theogonia” which was quoted by the Peripatetic Eudemos (frg. 150,2–3: ἡ παρὰ ὤ Περιπατητικῶν Εὐδήμω τῶν ἀναγεγραμμένων νηπιῶς τοῦ Ὀρφῶτος οὕσα θεολογία). According to later sources, this myth embodies the ἱερὸς λόγος of the Dionysus-mysteries.⁴² If this myth already played a part in the Orphic or Dionysus-mysteries in the 5th or even the 6th century, this would increase the probability that the dismemberment of Pentheus reflects the mystic fate of the god and of those initiated in his cult, and that Euripides at least hints at this ἱερὸς λόγος in his drama.

There is important epigraphic evidence from the 5th century for a connection between the Orphic movement and the Dionysus-mysteries.⁴³ Olbia, of all places, the scene of Scyles’ initiation, was the site where “bone tablets” were found in 1951, though they were published much later: on one of them has been scratched: Dio (meaning Διόνυσος) Ὀρφικί(τ(ορ Ὀρφικῶν / Ὀρφικῶν)).⁴⁴ The

⁴¹ Cf. Pind. fr. 133 (= Plat. *Men.* 81b): οἷσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιούτ πενθεοστδέξεται. It is far from clear that this means the murder of Dionysus. Paus. 8.37.5 (OF Test. 194) mentions Onomakritos as author of the myth. Unfortunately the Derveni Papyrus ends before Dionysus can appear.

⁴² Cf. Plut. *Is. Os.* 360F τὰ γὰρ Τιτανικὰ καὶ Τιτανικὰ παρ’ Ἑλλησιντ ἀδόμηνα ... φυγαί τετ Διονύσουτ καὶτ πλάναιτ Δήμητροσ οὐδὲντ ἀπολείπουσι τῶντ Ὀσιριακῶν καὶτ Τυφωρικῶντ ἄλλωντθ’ ὧντ πᾶσιντ ἔξεσιντ ἀνέδηντ μυθολογουμένωντ ἀκούειντ ὅσα τετ μυστικοῖστ ἱεροῖστ περικαλυπτόμενα καὶ τελεταῖστ ἄρρητα διασώτξετα καὶτ ἀθέατα πρὸσ τοῖστ πολλοῖσ, ὅμοιοντ ἔχειτ λόγοντ and 365A Ὀμολογεῖτ δὲτ καὶτ τὰτ Τιτανικὰ καὶτ Νυκτέλια τοῖστ λεγομένωντ Ὀσίριδοσ διασπασμοῖσ καὶτ ταστ ἀναβιώσει καὶτ παλιγγενεσίαισ: Cf. Plut. *esu carn.* 996c τὰ γὰρ δὴ περὶ τὸντ Διόνυσοντ μεμυθενμένατ πάθη τοῦτ διαμελισμοῦτ καὶτ τὰτ Τιτάνωντ ἐπ’ αὐτόντ τολμήματατ γευσασμένωντ τε τοῦτ φόνουτ κολάσεισ [τε τούτων] καὶτ κεραυνώσεισ, ἠνιγμένοσ τεστίμῦθοσ τεισ τὴντ παλιγγενεσίαν. Cf. Clem. *protr.* 17,2–18,2 with the most detailed description of the Dionysus-mysteries against the background of the Titanic myth.

⁴³ Later evidence: Damagetos (3./2. cent. B.C.) in *AP* 7.9.5 (Ὀρφεύσ), ὅστ ποτε καὶτ τελετὰσ μυστηρίδασ τεύρετοτ Βάκχου. Diod. 3.65.6, Ps. *Apoll. Bibl.* 1.15, OF test. 94–101 (ed. Kern).

⁴⁴ Cf. West 1982: 17–19.

exact meaning of these words is, however, uncertain. Apart from a controversial passage in Herodotus,⁴⁵ it is once again Euripides who links Orpheus and the Bacchic cult (Eur. *Hipp.* 952–5):

ἤδη νυν αὖχει καὶ δι' ἀψύχου βορᾶςφ
σίτοις καπήλευ' Ὀρφέα τ' ἄνακτ' ἔχωνφ
βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούςφ

Now you may plume yourself, now by a vegetable diet
play the showman with your food, and with Orpheus for
your lord hold your covens and honour all the vaporous
screeds.

It is not clear how far the term βακχεύειν here simply refers generally to ostentatious religious behaviour, since Hippolytos is not a follower of Dionysus but of Artemis. Vegetarianism and initiation are connected, however, in a fragment from Euripides' tragedy *Cretans*. Probably first performed before 425 B.C., it is perhaps the most important evidence from the 5th century for the Orphic dismemberment myth of Dionysus. The Chorus of the initiates in the mysteries of Zeus Idaeos sing in the Parodos (frg. 471):

ἄγνὸν δὲ βίονφτείνομενφἔξ' ὄφΔιδὸςφ'Ιδαίουφμύστηςφ
γενόμενηφ
καὶ νυκτιπόλουφΖαγρέωςφβροντᾶςφτοῦς τ' ὠμοφάγουςφ
δαίτας τελέσαςφ
Μητρί τ' ρεῖωφδᾶδαςφἀνασχῶνφκαὶ Κουρήτωνφ(ῶ)
βάκχος ἐκλήθηφ σιωθεῖς.
πάλλευκα δ' ἔχων εἶματα φεύγω γένεσίν τε βροτῶν καὶ
νεκροθήκηςφ
οὐ χριμπτόμενοςφτήνηφτ' ἔμψύχωνφβρωσινφἔδεστῶνφ
πεφύλαγμαι.

⁴⁵ Hdt. 2.81 about the prohibition of wool in Aegyptian burials: ὁμολογέουσιφδὲφταῦταφτοῖσιφἌφΟρφικοῖσιφκαλεομένοιισιφκαὶφΒακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσι δὲ Αἰγυπτίοισι, καὶφ υθαγορείοισι (in the short version of the text καὶφβακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσιφδὲφΑἰγυπτίοισιφis missing). If the long version is authentic, Herodotus mentions three groups: the Orphics, the Bacchic Initiates, and the Pythagoreans, but he doesn't identify them as one and the same group.

I lead a pure life, since I became a mystic of Zeus of Ida and since I performed the thunder of Zagreus, who roams at night, and the meal of raw meat and since I waved for the mother of the mountains the torches and the Kouretes <...> and I am called “Bacchus” as one of the sanctified. I wear all-white clothing, I avoid human reproduction, do not touch graves and deny myself the consumption of living creatures.

The name of Zagreus, in particular, has led scholars to think of the Orphic myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus, although the name does not occur at all in the preserved Orphic texts, where Persephone’s son is called Dionysus.⁴⁶ The Hellenistic poet Callimachus provides the first evidence for the name Dionysus Zagreus for the son of Persephone and Zeus (frg. 43.117: *υἱὸν Διόνυσου Ζαγρεάω γεινόμενον*).⁴⁷ Callimachus is also the first witness of the dismemberment myth, although he does not use the name of Zagreus in this context (frg. 517 and 643). Plutarch is the first to use the name.⁴⁸ Apart from the name Zagreus, the mention of thunder (*ρονταῖ*) could also recall the myth of the Titans. There is no mention, however, of lightning sent by Zeus or striking the Titans: it is linked with Zagreus instead. The expression *Ζαγρέωσώ ρονταῖ ὡς τελέσας* is very difficult linguistically, so it is generally changed to *Ζαγρέωσώ ούτης* (the following *τε* being omitted).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Cf. West 1983: 153: “The name was probably not used in the Orphic narrative, for there is no trace of it in the fragments, the Orphic hymns, or the many references to the myth in the Neoplatonists.”

⁴⁷ Arrian. *An.* 2.16.3: the chthonic Dionysus connected with the Eleusinian Iacchus, cf. Luk. *Salt.* 39: Iacchus is dismembered by the Titans. Later evidence for the Orphic Dionysos: Diod. 3.64.1, 4.4.1, 5.75.4, Ovid *Met.* 6.114, Hyg. *Fab.* 155, Athenag. *pro Christ.* 20 und 32 (OF 58–9), Tatian. *Adv. Graec.* 8, Orph. hym. 30.7, Philostr. *Ep.* 30.

⁴⁸ Plut. *de E apud Delph.* 389A: τῆς δ’ εἰς πνεύματα αἰὲς ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν καὶ βῶτα καὶ φυτόν τε γενέσεις τροπῆς ὡς τοῦ καὶ διακοσμήσεως βῶτα τὸ μὲν πάθην καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν διασπασμόν τινας καὶ διαμειλιμόν ἰνίπτονται Διόνυσον δὲ καὶ Ζαγρέα καὶ Νυκτέλιον καὶ Ἄσοδαίτην ὡς αὐτὸν ὀνομάζουσι καὶ φθοράς τινας καὶ ἀφανισμοὺς εἶτα δ’ ἀναβιώσεις καὶ καταλιγγενεσίως αἰετῶν αἰρημέναις μεταβολαῖς ἀνιγματοῦ καὶ μυθεύματα ἀπεραίνουσι. The best evidence for Zagreus is to be found in Nonnos.

⁴⁹ Diels: Βούτας, Wilamowitz: ούτης cf. Eur. fr. 203 N.²: ούκολοι in Dionysus’ service, cf. Lukian *Salt.* 79; Dionysos as bull cf. Eur. *Ba.* 100,

Zagreus' conjectural bull-form has led scholars to propose a link to the Orphic myth, according to which the subterranean Dionysus appears in the form of a bull, first in Hellenistic times in Euphorion (frg. 14 Powell).⁵⁰ But conjecture is hardly an adequate basis. The text does not provide convincing proof of Euripides' knowledge of the Orphic myth. The mention of the Omophagia is, rather, contrary to the Orphic myth: the dismembered Dionysus is boiled and roasted by the Titans, not eaten raw. It is equally unlikely that Rhea, the mother of the gods, is meant in place of Persephone as the mother of Dionysus-Zagreus.⁵¹

I propose another interpretation of the fragment. All of its textual elements can also be found in the *Bacchae*: the name "Bacchus," the Omophagia (Eur. *Ba.* 139), the emphasis on the "holy, pure life" (ἄγνῶν δὲ βίον) (*Ba.* 74 βιοτὰν ἄγιστεύει). The mother of the gods and the Kuretes figure in the chorus' song in the Parodos of the *Bacchae* (*Ba.* 120–9):

θαλάμευμ κουρήτων ζάθεοί τε Κρήταςβᾶ
 Διογενέτορες ἔναυλοι, ἔνθα ἀρικόρυθες ἄντροιςβᾶ
 βυρσότονον κύκλωμ τόδε μοι Κορύβαντες ἠΰρον·βᾶ
 κχείαι δ' ἄμ συντόνωι κέρασαν ἠδυβόαι Φρυγίωνᾶ
 αὐλῶνᾶ πνεύματιᾶ Μάτρὸςᾶ τεᾶ ῥέ ζᾶ ἔς χέρα θῆκαν,
 κτύπον εὐάσμ σιᾶ κχᾶν.

Oh lair of the Kouretes and sacred Zeus-begetting haunts of Crete, where the triple-helmeted Korybantes in the cave invented for me this hide-streched circle. And in the intense bacchic dance they mixed it with the sweet-shouting breath of Phrygian pipes, and put it in the hand of mother Rhea, a beat for the bacchants' cries of joy.

918–22, 1017, Plut. *Mor.* 299b, 364e/f, Aristot. *Ath. pol.* 3 (the "Boukoleion" as place for the Holy Wedding).

⁵⁰ Cf. Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2,16: ταῦρος ἄδράκοντος ἀκαὶ ἀπατήρ ἄταύρου ἄ δράκων, *Dion.* 6, 165. 205–9.

⁵¹ Cf. Philodemus *de piet.* 44 (OF 36): Rhea collects the limbs of the dismembered Dionysus (cf. Cornut. 31, Diod. 3.62.6–7: Demeter); but for Philodemus, Dionysus is the son of Semele who is born trice: first of Semele, then of Zeus' thigh, and then of Rhea again (ἀνεβίω). Cf. Cic. *Nat. deor.* 3.58 Selene is Dionysus' mother (Nonn. *Dion.* 44.191–5 identifies Selene with Persephone).

The torches at the night-time ravings are also mentioned (*Ba.* 146, 306–9). The Bacchantes are similarly referred to in Euripides’ *Ion* as roaming in the night (*Ion* 718 νυκτιπόλοισιν ἄμασὺν Βάκχαις).⁵² And the Chorus says ὁ γὰρ ἄναξ ἄγρεύς (*Ba.* 1192) about Dionysus, which is undoubtedly a reference to the hunter Zagreus.⁵³ Perhaps there is even a connection between “the thunder of Zagreus” (Ζαγρέως βρονταί) and the son of Semele (*Ba.* 88–93):⁵⁴

νυποτ’ ἔχουσ’ ἐνώδινων λοχίαισι ἀνάγκαισι πταμένασιν
 Διὸς βροντᾶσιν
 νηδύος ἔκβλον μὲν τήρυξ τεκεν. λιποῦσ’ αἰὼνα κεραυνίῳ
 πλαγαίῳ

Whom once his mother had within her in the inescapable pains of childbirth, when the thunder of Zeus flew and she thrust him premature from her womb, and she left her life at the stroke of the thunder and lightning.

And in another passage (*Ba.* 597–9):

ο δ’ αὐγάζη (τόνδε) ὑμέλας ἰερὸν ἀμφὶ τάφον αὐ
 ἄνυπο τε κεραυνοβόλος ἔλιπε φλόγα Διὸς βροντᾶν

... around the sacred tomb of Semele
 the flame which once Zeus’s thunderbolt whirled thunder
 left.

Euripides already hints at this in *Hippolytos* (*Hipp.* 558–62):

βροντᾶν ἀο ἀμφιπέρι

⁵² Cf. Soph. *Ant.* 1150–1 περιπόλοισιν Θυίαισιν: cf. Heraclit. B 14: νυκτιπόλοισι, μάγοισι, βάκχοισι, λήναισι, μύσταισι κτλ. Cf. AP 9.524.14 and Plut. *Mor.* 389A (see n. 48): Dionysus Νυκτέλιος.

⁵³ Dionysus as hunter cf. Eur. *Ba.* 434, 1020, 1189, 1204, 1237 und 1271; cf. Aeschyl. *Eum.* 26: λαγῶν δίκην ἵπενθεῖκα τὰρ ῥά ψασμιόρον.

⁵⁴ There seems to be no difference of singular and plural, cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 294 ἦσθου φωνῆσιν ἄμα καὶ βροντῆσιν μυκησαμένησιν θεοσέπτου; καὶ σέβομαι ἴγ’, ὦ πολυτίμητοι, καὶ βούλομαι ἀνὰ ταῖσιν παρδείν ὑπὸς ὑτᾶσιν βροντάς.

τοκάδα τὰ διγόνοιο βάκχου υμφευσάμεα πότμῳ
φονίῳκατηύνασεν.

To the flame-girt thunder
did she (Aphrodite) give as a bride her who brought forth
twice-born Bacchus,
and in a bloody doom did she lay her to rest.

Euripides, then, has equated the possibly Cretan god with the Theban son of Semele.⁵⁵ And when he says, in *Cretans*, that the initiates ritually performed the thunder, that could be intended as a representation of this violent birth. This could also be indicated by the “zig-zag symbols” on the above-mentioned tablets from Olbia, which have been interpreted as lightning.⁵⁶ Another possible parallel can be found on a golden plate from Thurioi, from about 350 B.C., where the dead man says to Persephone (A 1,4 Zuntz):⁵⁷

ἀλλάίμειμοῖραῖέμασεικαὶἀστεροβλήταῖκεραυνῶϊ

But fate has conquered me, and the Lightning-thrower with
his lightning.

This also seems to mean the beginning of a man’s earthly life, through which his former divine existence is ended. If this beginning is linked to lightning, an analogy to Dionysus’ fate could be intended. Finally, one recalls the lightning which struck Scyles’ house, as he went through his initiation. Does this also have a deeper meaning?

⁵⁵ The point of comparison was probably the hunting in the night; before Euripides Zagreus is a subterranean deity, cf. Aeschyl. fr. 228 Ζαγρεῖῖτεῖ νῦνῖμοῖκαὶἵπολυξένωῖ(πατρι)ῖχαίρεινῖand Alcmaeon fr. 3 πότνιαῖΓῆ, Ζαγρεῖῖτεῖθεῶνῖπανυπέρτατεῖπάντων.

⁵⁶ Cf. West 1982: 19: “Or it might represent lightning (though this is usually represented in Greek art as stylized bundle of flames, with prongs at both ends);” cf. Heraclit. B 64 τὰῖδεῖπάνταῖοἰακίζειῖκεραυνός.

⁵⁷ Instead of ἀστεροβλήταῖperhaps ἀστεροπήτα (cf. στεροπηγερῖταῖin Il. 16,298); cf. Il. 15,117 εἰ πέρῖμοῖκαὶῖμοῖραῖΔιὸςῖπληγέντιῖκεραυνῶῖκεῖσθαι. Zuntz 1971: 316 gives a literal interpretation: “Those buried with these particular tablets had been killed by lightning.”

Even without this very doubtful interpretation of a difficult passage, it is obvious that Euripides links the mysteries of the Cretan Zeus with the Dionysiac mysteries. From these Cretan rites we find out no more than the names of the gods: Zeus of Ida, Zagreus, Rhea and the Kouretes. It seems to me impossible to conclude *a posteriori* that there was a mystery cult on Crete, which is described by Firmicius Maternus nearly 900 years later (*Err. prof. rel.* 6,1–5). We can only see that Euripides presents the Cretan cult in the style of the Dionysus-mysteries. It is possible that this literary syncretism is the dramatist's own work. The Orphic atmosphere of vegetarianism and ritual purity which are connected with this cult-transfer could, however, indicate that Euripides is here following a source attributed to Orpheus,⁵⁸ in which the Cretan cult was represented as a Dionysiac initiation, although without any mention of a dismemberment myth.⁵⁹

The observations about the *Cretans* fragment can also be applied to the *Bacchae*. Just as the poet there represented the Cretan cult as a Dionysiac initiation, so here he shows the Bacchic cult of the women as an initiation, into which he imports Cretan elements, at least in the form of Zeus of Ida, Rhea and the Kouretes. To describe the Bacchic Oreibasia as a mystery-cult was much easier, because both were intended for the same god. However, if one seeks to find out about the actual cult, there are not simply two “seemingly” different forms of the cult, which the poet links. The Bacchic *Oreibasia* of the women and the initiation into the mysteries of Dionysus are two different forms of worship of the god. The dramatist has linked them both superficially on the literary level, without intending thereby to give an exact picture of the reality of the cultic ritual. He has described the cult of the women as an initiation in the Parodos, he has stylised it as a secret cult, whose rites are performed in the dark of night, and he has presented the stranger into whom Dionysus transforms himself in the course of the play as a priest, who travels around, performing initiations and

⁵⁸ Perhaps Onomacritus of Athens (at the beginning of 5th c. B.C.): he wrote about Τελεταί (Suid s.v. = OF Test. 186).

⁵⁹ Cf. Diod. 5.77.3: Crete is regarded as a very ancient homeland of initiations and mysteries, so it could be important to show that the Dionysus-mysteries are Cretan; cf. Diod. 5.64.4: Orpheus is initiated by the Daktyloi of Ida.

purifications.⁶⁰ No other character in the play demonstrates Euripides' syncretism so clearly as this one: such a priest belongs to the world of the mysteries (τελεταί), but not to the cult of the women who go into the mountains. However, the poet has only adopted isolated elements from the mysteries into his depiction of the women's cult. There are other elements which he has omitted. Thus, it is certain that the main purpose of the Dionysus mysteries consisted of giving hope of a better life to come.⁶¹ This aspect of the mysteries has absolutely no place in Euripides' play. There is not a single passage that offers even the slightest comfort which this hope could have given rise to in view of the murder of Pentheus and the further fate of Cadmus and Agaue. For this reason alone, it seems pointless to link Pentheus' fate to a mystic initiation.⁶² It is impossible to prove that his dismemberment has any connection to the initiation that was performed in classical times. For it is questionable whether the Orphic myth of the dismemberment of the god already played a part in his mysteries in the 5th c. B.C., and whether Euripides was familiar with the myth at all. Pentheus' disguise as a Bacchant is adequately explained by the god's cynicism, which forces his opponent into exactly the cult which he

⁶⁰ Cf. Plato *Resp.* 365a with the description of the Orphic begging priests, cf. Theoph. *Char.* 16,11 καὶ τελεσθησόμενος ἄπρὸς ἄποὺς Ὀρφεοτελεστῶν κατὰ ἤμην ἄπορεύεσθαι μετὰ ἡσυχναικὸς - ἐὰν ἔ μὴ σχολάζῃ ἡ γυνή, μετὰ ἡσυχίτης - καὶ τῶν παιδίων; the name "Orpheotelestes" also in Plut. *Apophtheg. Lac.* 244E (see note 61).

⁶¹ This is clear from the evidence of the Golden plates. Cf. Plut. *Cons. ad ux.* 10, 611D: καὶ μὴν ἄλλων ἀκούεις, οἷα πείθουσι πολλοὺς λέγοντες ὥσ' οὐδὲν οὐδαμῆ ἀπὸ διαλυθέντι κακὸν οὐδέ λυπηρόν ἐστιν, οἷδ' ὅτι κωλύει ὅσ' ἐπιστεῦνεν ὅτι πατριος ἀλόγος καὶ ἀμιστικὰ σύμβολα τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμῶν, ἃ σύμισμεν ἀλλήλοισι οἷα κοινωνοῦντες and Plut. *Apophtheg. Lac.* 244E about the Orpheotelestes Philippos who promises ὅτι ὡς παρ' αὐτῶν μνηθέντες μετὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ βίον τελευτήν ἕδαμονοῦσιν.

⁶² It is not convincing to interpretate the scene inside the palace (*Ba.* 615–37) as “negation of the desired ritual process,” as Seaford 1981: 256–8: he reads in 630 the transmitted text φῶς (Diggle 1994: 318 after Jacobs: φάσμι): but why should Pentheus make an attack on the light with his sword?

rejects.⁶³ It is not necessary to see in this a reference to ritual cross-dressing, especially as the evidence is insufficient.⁶⁴ And the dismemberment reflects, as a perverted act, the actual rite of the dismemberment of wild animals by the Bacchantes, at least on the mythic level, but not a ritual re-enactment of the death and resurrection of the god.⁶⁵

My initial question cannot be answered with a clear yes or no. Euripides has combined different cult forms on a literary level; the ritual *Oreibasia* of the women, which can be historically proved, at least for Thebes and Delphi, is at the center of his depiction. He has linked this cult with other forms of Dionysus worship, including, in a prominent position, the mystery cult of the god. Therefore the *Bacchae* can only be read as evidence of religious history to a very limited extent; for it is not the dramatist's intention to give an accurate picture of contemporary cults and rites. A final comparison may serve to convey clearly how difficult such a reading is: anyone trying to reconstruct the reality of the Christian Eucharist from Wagner's *Parsifal* would hardly believe his eyes and ears if he then experienced a Protestant church service on a Sunday morning. R. Seaford and many others would be equally astonished, if they were really to see the mystical activities of the women on Kithairon.

⁶³ *pace* Seaford 1981: 258: "Dionysos' insistence on the disguise is only fleetingly motivated," and 259: "This elaborate attention is, no less than the disguise itself, undemanded by the story."

⁶⁴ It is doubtful that ritual transvestism took place in the Dionysus-mysteries; the term *νεβρίζειν* in Ps. Dem. 18.259 (s. Harpokration s.v.) does not provide convincing proof, especially since Glaukothea seems to perform the initiation in the cult of Dionysus-Sabazius for women only.

⁶⁵ Cf. Seaford 1981: 261 with interpretation of *Ba.* 860–1 Διόνυσσον, ὃς πέφυκεν ἐν τέλει θεὸς δεινότητος, ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἠπιώτατος "Dionysos is for mankind in general ἠπιώτατος, but for the initiands in the ritual of initiation (ἐν τέλει) δεινότητος, because they will undergo the terrors of a ritual death." (cf. Seaford 1996: 217; see my interpretation of the verses in note 3); and Seaford 1981: 267: "And yet there is a pathetic hint of joyful rebirth, not only in the mother's recomposition of the body, but in the passage in which Dionysos predicts Pentheus' triumphal return 963-70)."

WORKS CITED

- Boardman, J. et al., eds. 1981-. *Lexicon Iconographicum mythologiae classicae* (=LIMC).
- Bérard, C., and C. Bron, eds. 1984. *La cité des images. Religion et société en Grèce antique*, Paris. (trans. by D. Lyons, 1989. *A city of image: iconography and society in Ancient Greece*) Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bron, C. 1987. "Porteurs de thyrses ou bacchants." In C. Bérard et al. ed.s, *Images et sociétés en Grèce ancienne*. Paris. pp. 145-53.
- Diggle, J., ed. 1994. *Euripidis fabulae*. Vol. 3. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Friedrich, R. 1996. "Everything to do with Dionysos? Ritualism, the Dionysiac, and the tragic." In M.S. Silk, ed., *Tragedy and the tragic. Greek theatre and beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 257-83.
- _____, 2000. "Dionysos among the dons. The new ritualism in R. Seaford's commentary on the Bacchae." *Arion* 7:115-52.
- Frontisi-Ducroux, F. 1991. "Le dieu-masque. Une figure du Dionysos d'Athènes." Paris & Rome: La Découverte & Ecole française de Rome.
- Graf, F. 1974. *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*. Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 23. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Henrichs, A. 1969. "Die Mänaden von Milet." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 4:223-41.
- _____, 1978. "Greek maenadism from Olympias to Messalina." *Harvard studies in classical philology* 82:121-60.
- _____, 1979. "Greek and Roman glimpses of Dionysos." In C. Houser, ed., *Dionysos and his circle. Ancient through modern*. Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum. pp. 1-11.
- _____, 1982. "Changing Dionysiac identities." In B.F. Meyer and E.P. Sanders, ed.s. *Jewish and Christian self-definition*. Vol. 3. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. pp. 137-60.
- _____, 1984. "Male intruders among the maenads. The so-called male celebrants." In H.D. Evjen, ed., *Mnema: Classical studies in memory of Karl K. Hulley*. Chico: Scholar's Press. pp. 69-91.

- _____, 1990. "Between country and city. Cultic dimensions of Dionysos in Athens and Attica." In M. Griffith and D.J. Mastronarde, ed.s, *Cabinet of the Muses: essays on Classical and comparative literature in honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*. Atlanta: Scholar's Press. pp. 255–77.
- _____, 1994. "Der rasende Gott. Zur Psychologie des Dionysos und des Dionysischen in Mythos und Literatur." *Antike und Abendland* 40:31–58.
- Holzhausen, J. 2003 *Euripides Politikos. Recht und Rache in 'Orestes' und 'Bakchen'*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 185, München, Leipzig: Saur.
- Jacoby, F., ed. 1961–9. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (= FrGH), Berlin, Leiden.
- Kern, O., ed. 1900. *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*. Berlin: W. Spemann.
- Leinieks, V. 1996. *The city of Dionysos. A study of Euripides' Bakchai*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 88. Stuttgart & Leipzig: Teubner.
- Mastronarde, D.J., ed. 1994. *Euripides, Phoenissae*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merkelbach R. 1972. "Milesische Bakchen." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 9:77–83.
- _____, 1988. *Die Hirten des Dionysos*. Stuttgart: Teubner.
- Obbink, D. 1993. "Dionysos poured out. Ancient and modern theories of sacrifice and culture formation." In T.H. Carpenter and C. Faraone, ed.s, *Masks of Dionysus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 65–86.
- Peirce, S. 1998. "Visual language and concepts of cult on the 'Lenaia vases'." *Classical Antiquity* 17:59–95.
- Schlesier, R. 1998. "Die Seele im Thiasos. Zu Euripides, Bacchae 75." In J. Holzhausen, ed., *ψυχή - Seele - anima. Festschrift für K. Alt*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 109. Stuttgart: Teubner. pp. 37–72.
- Seaford, R. 1981. "Dionysiac drama and the dionysiac mysteries." *Classical Quarterly* 31:252–75.
- _____, 1994. *Reciprocity and ritual. Homer and tragedy in the developing city-state*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- _____, ed. 1996a. *Euripides' Bacchae*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

- _____, 1996b. "Something to do with Dionysos. Tragedy and the Dionysiac." In M.S. Silk, ed., *Tragedy and the tragic. Greek theatre and beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 284–94.
- Snell, B., ed. 1986. *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta (=TrGF)*. Vol. 1. 2d ed. Edited by R. Kannicht. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Sokolowski, F., ed. 1955. *Lois sacrées de l'Asie mineure (=LSAM)*. Paris: E. de Boccard.
- _____, ed. 1969. *Lois sacrées des cités grecques (=LSCG)*. Paris: E. de Boccard.
- Versnel, H.S. 1990. *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion. Vol. 1: Ter Unus. Isis. Dionysos. Hermes. Three studies in henotheism*. Leiden: Brill.
- West, M.L. 1982. "The Orphics of Olbia" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 45:17–29.
- _____, 1983. *The Orphic poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zuntz, G. 1971. *Persephone*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.