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Dionysus

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Introduction

Dionysus/Bacchus is the most widely-studied of the Greco-Roman divinities. For long it was believed that he was a late addition to the Greek pantheon, partly due to his minor role in the Homeric poems, and partly because of the many myths in which the god arrives, often from Thrace or Phrygia. The appearance of his name on Linear B tablets from Crete and Pylos proved his great antiquity.

Nowadays most scholars consider the motif of the god's arrival a structural feature of the god's myth rather than a historical reminiscence: he is "the god who comes" (Hölderlin, "Brod und Wein"), the epiphanic "étrange étranger" (Detienne, *Dionysus at Large*), both native and outsider. Dionysus has been abundantly attested in myth, art, literature, and cult from the archaic age onward. The version which took shape in Athens during the Archaic and Classical periods continues to dominate our picture of Dionysus, god of wine, fertility and nature, theater, and ritual madness. Nonetheless, the god cannot be reduced to this or any single version, and still less to an unchanging essence. There were many local variations, and Dionysus was often identified with or influenced aspects of local deities such as Osiris, Fufuns, or Liber. Since the time of the later Roman Empire, Dionysus has continued to enjoy a rich and varied afterlife (perhaps we should rather say evolution) from Christian discourse through medieval allegory, Renaissance painting, and German philosophy to modern art and aesthetics. Scholars have discussed and interpreted Dionysus in countless ways, using many different theoretical approaches including *Religionsgeschichte*, Jungian psychology, and anthropology. A number of more or less recent studies have analyzed the history of the god's interpretation. Of the rich critical literature on Dionysus the best work is interdisciplinary, combining philological and archaeological methods with an awareness of how the god is being understood and, to some extent, reconstructed. Because Dionysus defies boundaries and categorization, many topics are referred to in more than one section of this bibliography; for example, for maenadism see [Dionysus and Tragedy](#), [Forms of Dionysian Ritual](#), and [Dionysus in Ancient Art](#), as well as the [General Studies](#) and [Collections of Essays](#).

Introduction

General Studies

Collections of Essays

Dionysus and Greek Religion

Dionysus and Mystery Cult

Orphism

Dionysian Associations

Dionysian Festivals

Forms of Dionysian Ritual

Dionysus and Tragedy: General

Dionysus and Tragedy: Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Comedy, Satyr Play, and Dithyramb

Dionysus in other Greek Literature

Dionysus in Roman Literature

Dionysus in Rome, Italy, and the Roman Empire

Local Worship of Dionysus

Dionysus in Ancient Art: Ceramics

Dionysus in Ancient Art: Other Media

Dionysus and Christianity

Reception of Dionysus