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Introduction. Dionysus in Rome: accommodation and resistance

Abstract: This introductory chapter provides a wide-angle history of the presence of Dionysus/Bacchus/Liber on Italian soil from the archaic to the early Christian periods, covering archaeological and literary sources. In parallel, it surveys the main scholarly trends on the Italian versions of Dionysus, and emplots the contributions to this volume in a history of scholarship. The main focus of the chapter, which is programmatic for the volume, is the interface of Greek and Roman cultures, and whether it is possible to identify and define (an) Italian version(s) of Dionysus. It posits two aspects to the Romans' reception of Bacchus, which may be termed 'accommodation' and 'resistance'. The interplay between these two levels of response will inform an analytic narrative that assesses the relationship between the Greek Dionysus and the Roman Liber, embracing *interpretatio* and religious polymorphism, and addressing some of the most important Dionysian manifestations in Roman culture: the founding of the temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera; the Bacchanalia; the Liberalia; Roman leaders' uses of Dionysus; the poets' references to Bacchus; and a brief glance at the Bacchic-Christian interface.

As 'our oldest living symbol',¹ Dionysus/Bacchus has evolved over many different forms. Until relatively recently, scholars believed that he was an import from the East, and a late addition to the Greek pantheon. Rohde, Nilsson, Wilamowitz and Otto all subscribed to different versions of the Nietzschean myth that an ecstatic Dionysus cult was assimilated from Thrace and tamed by the influence of Apollo.² This view was based on the god's slight role in the Homeric poems, coupled with

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¹ Seaford 2006, 3. In this Introduction I develop some material from Mac Góráin 2017.

² Rohde 1950 [1890–94], 282–303, esp. 287–8; Nilsson 1925 [1922], 194 and 208–9; Cumont [1929] 2006, 315–16; Wilamowitz 1931–2, II.74; Otto 1965 [1933], 202–8. Nietzsche popularized this view, but it had been expressed pointedly before him, and in more historical terms; see Creuzer 1820, 3.156.

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the persistent mythical motif of his arrival and reception, which is central to Euripides' *Bacchae*. Not until the decipherment of the god's name on Linear B tablets from Pylos and Chania did it emerge that he belonged to the earliest-attested stratum of Hellenic culture, and so the mythical motif of the god's epiphany was reassessed as a structural feature of his myth, rather than a dim historical reminiscence of his integration.³ This was already implicit in Hölderlin's phrase 'der kommende Gott' ('the god who comes', 'Brod und Wein'), coined around 1800. Indeed, Dionysus was always arriving from elsewhere, Marcel Detienne's 'étrange étranger',⁴ a stranger through-and-through, even when returning to his Theban homeland, victorious from his Eastern conquests.

Though he is the most widely-studied of the Graeco-Roman divinities, the version that dominates popular and scholarly perceptions is the one that became current in Athens in the archaic and classical ages: Dionysus as the god of wine and poetic inspiration, fertility and nature, theatre and ritual madness, rebirth and the afterlife. His Roman and Italian manifestations are often neglected or considered secondary, their local inflections left unappreciated. E.R. Dodds' judgement was not untypical:

It was the Alexandrines, and above all the Romans—with their tidy functionalism and their cheerful obtuseness in all matters of the spirit—who departmentalized Dionysus as 'jolly Bacchus' the wine-god with his riotous crew of nymphs and satyrs. As such he was taken over from the Romans by Renaissance painters and poets; and it was they in turn who shaped the image in which the modern world pictures him.⁵

Studies of the reception of Dionysus, which now themselves make up a small scholarly industry, have shown how much modern perceptions of Dionysus owe to German Romanticism and Nietzsche (who privileged Greek over Roman source materials), as well as to Renaissance painters and poets.⁶ Dodds did, however, concede – albeit in a footnote – the honourable exception of Horace, whose *Odes* 2.19 and 3.25 'show a deeper understanding of the god's true nature'. But how exceptional among the Romans was Horace's understanding of Bacchus?⁷ And what does it mean anyway to speak of a 'god's true nature' in view of an evolving continuum of forms and identities?

³ See Eliade 1978, 359.

⁴ The title of one of the essays in Detienne 1986, not present in the English translation, Detienne 1989. The idea is already in the eastward-looking Cumont [1929] 2006, 317; see also Wyler 2011.

⁵ Dodds 1960, xii.

⁶ McGinty 1978; Frank 1982; Henrichs 1984; Emmerling-Skala 1994; Detienne 2001; Baeumer 2006; Konaris 2011; Mariño Sánchez 2014; Morel 2015; Bohrer 2015.

⁷ On Horace's Bacchic poetics, see Schiesaro 2009.

This volume contributes to the study of what Robert Parker has recently dubbed the ‘divine diaspora’, the Greek gods abroad.⁸ It focuses on Dionysus in Rome and Italy, but draws on a wide range of evidence from the literary and mythical to the epigraphic and visual, but also brings together specialists in different sub-disciplines of classics and ancient history, including art history, ancient reception, history of religions, literary history, and rhetoric and oratory. The contributors attempt to synthesize literary and archaeological sources when and where our evidence allows this. We thus follow in the footsteps of Denis Feeney’s *Religion and Literature at Rome*, a book which is often cited, though rarely equalled in its integration of literature and ritual.⁹ As will emerge, the story told by this ensemble of essays sees a close relationship between myth and ritual in Dionysian media. Literary or rhetorical descriptions of ritual are not simply an epiphenomenon of religious worship, but can profoundly affect and inform a person’s participation in and attitude to ritual.

The ‘Rome’ of our title is broadly defined, encompassing a range of Latin literature and also territories which came under the sway of Rome, including Italy. Far from aiming at comprehensiveness, we offer broad coverage through a series of in-depth case studies from archaic Italy through the Roman republic and empire, and including early Christianity. We give due attention to under-studied treatments of Bacchus, such as those by Cicero, Ovid in the *Tristia*, Statius in the *Thebaid*, Christian writers’ perspectives on Latin Liber, or give a fresh perspective on relatively well-known Dionysian events or media, such as the Bacchanalia, or the epigraphic or pictorial record for Dionysus, or the reception of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. Roman and Italian versions of Dionysus are worthy of attention, not only because of their mediating influence on later ages, but because they serve as a test-case of cultural relations in the ancient Mediterranean, especially along the Greek and Roman cultural continuum.¹⁰ All contributors to the volume reflect on the Greek-Roman interface and on the ways in which Dionysus exhibits local traits in Latin literature or in Roman or Italian media.

A significant and revealing topic which animates our collection and which forms the core argument of this introduction is the Romans’ split-level attitude in their receptions of Dionysus, which may be classified under ‘accommodation’ and ‘resistance’. A large body of evidence attests to organic seepage of Dionysian media from the Greek world to Rome. The material record suggests that Dionysus

8 Parker 2017, 1.

9 Feeney 1998. Following Feeney, see Barchiesi, Rüpke and Stephens 2004; Bendlin and Rüpke 2009; Rüpke and Spickermann 2010, and the essays which follow in that volume of *ARG*.

10 On this general phenomenon see Veyne 2005.

was extensively cultivated in Italy, and that Dionysian artefacts were in high consumer demand. On the other hand, there are strands of hostility in the Roman discourse of the Republican era: Dionysus features in Roman narratives of decline in the face of foreign, especially Greek, influence, of which the Bacchanalian affair of 186 BCE provides the most pointed example. Though each chapter in the volume advances its own argument with its own focus, each of them shows its subjects operating between these two poles of accommodating and resisting Dionysus.

The volume thus adds to the growing body of scholarship on Dionysus and Rome, still a minority interest in Dionysian studies, which tend to focus on Greek media, or sometimes to see the Italian evidence with Greek lenses without adequate attention to local colouring.¹¹ What unites and distinguishes our volume is the sustained focus on the *interface* between Greek and Roman elements, while we still acknowledge that they exist on a continuum. The major monographs on Dionysus have tended to marginalize Italian evidence in favour of Greek.¹² Nonetheless, several monographs have touched on Roman and Italian sources. Shortly before the decipherment of Linear B, Henri Jeanmaire gave relatively brief coverage to the Roman versions of Dionysus in his five-hundred-page history of the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus, and was agnostic as to whether the cult title ‘Pater Liber’ (more often ‘Liber Pater’) indicated identification with an Italic deity or was a translation of an epithet of the Greek god.¹³ Adrien Bruhl devoted a wide-ranging monograph to Liber Pater, which stretched from the archaic period through to the high empire, covering literary and archaeological evidence from Italy and the Roman imperial provinces. He posited a pre-Greek, but irrecoverable, Italic Liber, and attempted to isolate what was distinctively Roman or Italian about the god, but was criticized for his too rigid insistence on a division between ‘Greek’ and ‘Roman’.¹⁴ Martin Nilsson surveyed the Dionysian mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman age, seeing the Roman material alongside the Greek.¹⁵ More recently, following up on his gargantuan study of the Bacchanalia, Jean-Marie

¹¹ For a brief and useful overview of Dionysus/Liber in Rome and Italy see Isler-Kerényi 2010. For some local Italic evidence see Casadio 1994a, organized by region, as are his works on Dionysus in the Greek world, Casadio 1994b and 1999. See also the doctoral dissertations of Niasaf 1998 and Serignolli 2017.

¹² Ivanov [1923] 2012; Otto [1933] 1965; Kerényi 1976; Daraki 1985.

¹³ Jeanmaire 1951, 453–82.

¹⁴ Bruhl 1953; Boyd 1955.

¹⁵ Nilsson 1957; see also Matz 1963; for Dionysian mysteries in the Roman era see recently Bremmer 2014, 100–9.

Pailler has contributed a book of essays on Dionysian ritual in Italy.¹⁶ The most recent monograph on Dionysus in Rome is in Polish, by Danuta Musiał; its chapters cover the evidence for Dionysian worship across poetry, historiography, and the history of art.¹⁷

Dionysus' multi-faceted nature lends itself to treatment in multi-authored collections of essays that, like the present volume, aim to offer a rounded picture by combining different specialities. A landmark collection of essays about Dionysian associations edited by Olivier de Cazanove gave considerable coverage to the Italian evidence, with a mostly archaeological focus, including the temple of Mater Matuta at Satricum in Latium and the Torre Nova inscription.¹⁸ An exhibition entitled 'Dionysos. Mito e Mistero' was held at Comacchio in the province of Ferrara in Emilia Romagna in 1989, and focussed on the Dionysian imaginary in the Greek and Etruscan worlds. The exhibition is commemorated by a richly illustrated and documented catalogue, and a collection of essays which contains many chapters on the reception of Dionysus in Italy.¹⁹ A 1993 collection edited by Thomas Carpenter and Christopher Faraone entitled *Masks of Dionysus* gave some coverage to the Italian evidence alongside Greek sources, but for the most part, did not thematize the local inflections of the Italian sources.²⁰ More recently, two prodigious collections of essays have devoted a moderate if still significant amount of space to Italian evidence. The Berlin collection, *Dionysos. A Different God? Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism*, edited by Renate Schlesier, contains some four essays on headline Roman topics, though the book's ample indices allow the reader to trace discussion of sources by textual passage, personal name, or geographical location.²¹ Finally, the Madrid collection, *Redefining Dionysos*, edited by Alberto Bernabé, Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal, and Raquel Martín Hernández contains some five (of thirty) essays on Roman culture, including Nonnus and Christianity.²²

There are also clusters of scholarship on specific local cults. Some evidence for cultic worship points clearly to migration of Greek mystery cult, whether the fifth-century inscription from Cuma that designates a cemetery as reserved for

16 Pailler 1998 and 1995.

17 Musiał 2009, with summary in French at 277–79.

18 Cazanove 1986.

19 Berti and Gasparri 1989; Berti 1991.

20 Carpenter and Faraone 1993; the exception is Bonfante 1993 on Fufluns.

21 Schlesier 2011; see in particular Burkert 2011; Carpenter 2011; Fuhrer 2011; Heinemann 2011; and Sabetai 2011.

22 Bernabé *et al.* 2013; see in particular Alonso Fernández 2013; Cabrera 2013; Hernández de la Fuente 2013; Meilán Jácome 2013; Wyler 2013a.

those who have been initiated into Bacchic cult,²³ or the so called ‘Orphic’ golden leaves, some of which mention ‘bakkhoi’, including the earliest-dated, from about 400 BCE, found at Hipponion in Calabria.²⁴ Earlier epigraphic finds have also been interpreted as evidence for Dionysian worship, though with much less certainty, including a pot dating from around 800 BCE with the earliest Greek inscription in Italy, which may read ‘euoin’, the Dionysian ritual cry, found at a cemetery near Gabii in Latium.²⁵

Foundational studies of early Roman religion, which aimed to assess it in its own right rather than as a poor cousin of Greek religion,²⁶ gave significant attention to Liber Pater, often discussing his ethnic and cultural origins, and there was considerable disagreement between those who posited an Italic origin, those who saw the god as essentially a Greek import, and those who saw Dionysus and the Italic versions as derived from a common source, perhaps in Illyria.²⁷ Ultimately, as John Scheid points out, the attempt to prise apart Greek and Roman elements is misguided, since they were mixed from the beginning.²⁸

In between these possibilities are various gradations of approximation or translation, which we might call *interpretatio romana*, a phrase coined by Tacitus but adopted by historians of religions to denote different kinds of syncretism or equivalence between deities from different cultures.²⁹ As far as ‘interpreting’ Liber as Dionysus is concerned, the debate implicates divine attributes and iconography, nomenclature, spheres of competency, and forms of worship. Unlike the Athenian Dionysus, for example, Italian Liber was not officially a theatre god

23 *SEG* 4.92; see Pailler 1995, 111–26; Casadio 2009.

24 See Graf and Johnston 2013.

25 Osteria dell’Osa, tomb 482; see Peruzzi 1992, 465; Wiseman 2004, 13–14; *contra* Colonna 2004, 481–83; Wilson 2009, 550; see also Boffa 2015. The ‘Ceres inscription’ (*CIE* 8079), from a fragmentary pot found at Civita Castellana in Viterbo, may allude to Dionysus via a mention of wine or the ritual cry (even if the reading ‘Loufir’ is now discredited); see Radke 1965, 180; Joseph and Klein 1981; Cazanove 1991; Bakum 2009, 398. On both these examples see Watkins 1995.

26 See Feeney 1998, 2–8 for scholarly paradigms in the study of Roman as against Greek religion.

27 Fowler 1911, 255; Wissowa 1912, 297–304 (with further literature, on the subject as then constituted; Schur 1926; Altheim 1931, 17–48; Latte 1960, 70, 161–2, 270–72; Radke 1965, 175–83; Dumézil [1966] 1970, 377–78, 512–22.

28 Scheid 1995; Feeney 1998, 4–5, 50–52. See also Fowler 1911, 255–56; Cumont [1929] 2006, 320, and Altheim 1931.

29 On the meaning and history of this phrase in the study of religion see Bettini 2016. See also Ando 2008, 43–58; Miano, and Massa in this volume.

(though Ovid and other authors do recall that there were once games at the Liberalia, which are thought to have merged with the games of the Cerealia).³⁰ Sure enough, ‘jolly Bacchus’ is indeed a wine god, but early Roman religion has Jupiter preside over the Vinalia, which has led some scholars to believe that Liber was a hypostasis of Jupiter;³¹ in any case, here, the Greek paradigm comes to overwrite the indigenous one. And as Francesco Massa has recently pointed out, Liber is worshipped in cultic forms which mark a departure from worship of Dionysus, such as the joint cult with Libera and the enhanced association with the triumph (to which we shall return shortly).³² In the present volume, Daniele Miano considers the relationship between Dionysus and local Italian gods – Liber and Fufluns – with regard to the phenomenon of divine polymorphism, drawing on the theories of Jan Assmann, Homi Bhabha and others about religious and cultural translation.³³

The establishment of the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera has given rise to some notable treatments, which debate, among other things, the god’s political associations and putative connection with the plebs.³⁴ Enrico Montanari and Peter Wiseman have contributed significant studies of the cult of Liber and its political resonances, with particular emphasis on the god’s association with liberty.³⁵ A prodigious body of work has sprung up around the Bacchanalian affair of 186 BCE.³⁶ A recent volume of papers examines the art and archaeology of the sanctuary of Bacchus at Sant’Abbondio outside Pompeii, and includes a contribution by Stéphanie Wyler on the statues of Bacchus/Liber/Loufir and his divine consort on the pediment of the temple.³⁷ There are many scattered treatments of the worship of Dionysus in the provinces of the Roman empire.³⁸

30 *F.* 3.783–5 with Heyworth 2019 *ad loc.* Further attestations to games for Liber in Degraffi 1963, 425–26 on Liberalia (March 17th). See Lipka 2009, 43. For (largely political) connections between Liber and the theatre see Montanari 1998, 148–52.

31 Jupiter, Liber and vinalia: Meuli 1955, 213; Radke 1965, 175–83; Montanari 1984, 250–52; Cazanove 1988; Cazanove 1991; Scheid 2005; Musiał 2013. Liber as ‘Jovian hypostasis’: Lipka 2009, 140.

32 Massa 2016.

33 See also Miano 2018 and Miano and Bispham, Forthcoming.

34 See below on the temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera.

35 Montanari 1984; Montanari 1988, 103–36; Montanari 1998; Wiseman 1998, 35–51; Wiseman 2000; Wiseman 2004, 32–36, 63–86. Petronius’ Trimalchio puns on the *Liber-liber* link at *Sat.* 41; see Housman 1918, 164.

36 See below on the Bacchanalia.

37 Van Andringa 2013; Wyler 2013b; see also De Simone 2011, 301.

38 Cumont [1929] 2006, 325–37; Bruhl 1953, 212–48; Foucher 1981; Hutchinson 1986; Tassignon 1996; Fiedler 2005; Tomas 2015; Jeličić-Radonić 2015; Nikoloska 2015; Mayer-Olivé 2017.

Though nearly all of the scholarship detailed in previous paragraphs draws on visual evidence, it is worth pointing out that art historians have produced some of the most significant contributions on Dionysus in Rome and Italy. On the most basic level, the evidence attests to a vogue for Dionysus in decorative art, whether in private or public spaces. As well as depicting mythical scenes, visual and plastic media challenge the modern viewer to reconstruct the social and religious practices in which the artefacts were used, or which they suggest, whether the symposium, or ritual that implies beliefs or hopes, for example for an afterlife. Dionysian images often have a ritual point of reference, but the language of art has its own autonomy, and can mean different things depending on the context. Since pots and iconographic schemes travelled from Greece to Italy, much of the work on Greek ceramics is relevant to our brief, and it ranges from the iconographic to the interpretative.³⁹ There have been many individual discussions of the Etruscan visual evidence, in which Fufluns appears to be identified with the Greek Dionysus, as discussed by Daniele Miano in this volume.⁴⁰ Dionysian subjects are prominent in Roman and Campanian wall painting, the subject of a recent monograph by Marianna Scapini.⁴¹ Stéphanie Wyler, who contributes a chapter on archaic and Augustan images of Dionysus to this volume, has had an influential voice in the debate on the visual imaginary of Bacchus, and her own monograph, *Les images de Liber: perceptions du dionysisme dans la Rome républicaine*, is eagerly awaited.⁴² One of the most intriguing documents for Dionysian cult in Italy is the megalographic frieze at the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii, which has given rise to vigorous scholarly debate as to whether or not it depicts Dionysian mystery ritual.⁴³ Sculptural reliefs deserve a separate mention; apart from the Dionysian motifs on the Ara Pacis Augustae, the imperial sarcophagi which depict banqueting scenes are often read as evidence for belief in Dionysus' connection with a blessed afterlife.⁴⁴

Literary evidence for Italian interest in Dionysus emerges with the earliest Latin literature in the third century BCE. Naevius' *Lycurgus*, insofar as it may be

39 Gasparri 1986a and Gasparri 1986a; Carpenter 1986 and 1997; Moraw 1998; Isler-Kerényi 2007 and 2015.

40 Bomati 1983; Berti/Gasparri 1989; Berti 1991; Bonfante 1993; Werner 2005; Paethodoros 2007; Maras 2009; Riva 2018.

41 Scapini 2016; on Campania see also Zanker 1998.

42 See various items by Wyler in the bibliography.

43 See Seaford 1981; Veyne 1998; Sauron 1988; Henderson 1996; Gazda 2000; Scapini 2016. On Dionysus in the area around Vesuvius see De Simone 2011.

44 On the Ara Pacis see Castriota 1995 and Sauron 2000. On the sarcophagi see Turcan 1966 and Matz 1968–75.

reconstructed from the surviving fragments, dramatizes a clash in which Liber defeats the resistance of the eponymous king. Even though, as noted above, myths of Dionysus' arrival are no longer thought of as historical reminiscences of the god's installation in Greece, nonetheless Latin tragedies on Dionysian subjects continue to be read as thematizing Roman receptions of foreign cults, and Greek and Eastern influences more generally. It has even been suggested that the negative portrayal of Bacchic religion in early Roman drama conditioned the Senate into clamping down on the Bacchanalia.⁴⁵ Predictable though the allegorical interpretation is, it is difficult to completely exclude reading Lycurgus' hostility to Dionysus as a futile struggle before inevitable capitulation. In the event, all of the major Republican Latin tragedians composed plays that encompassed Dionysian themes, from Ennius' *Athamas* through Pacuvius' *Pentheus* to Accius' *Bacchae* and *Stasiastae* (or *Tropaeum Liberi*).⁴⁶ A number of Plautus' comedies give humorous perspectives on the stereotypical motifs of Bacchic cult and its votaries.⁴⁷ It remains, however, difficult to determine how these references should be interpreted in relation to the Bacchanalian affair.

From the archaeological record we can infer a story of the unproblematic integration and incorporation of Dionysus from Magna Graecia and Etruria into Roman culture.⁴⁸ In contrast to these material sources, which are for the most part non-discursive,⁴⁹ literary sources provide us with narratives about how Dionysus was received at Rome. There are several notable cases beyond Naevius' *Lycurgus* in which myths of hospitality – extended or denied – seem to reflect on the god's transition from Greek to Roman (though never quite nativized) divinity. This is perhaps not surprising when we consider that scholars have been apt to read Euripides' *Bacchae* as a meditation on the influx to Athens of foreign deities such as Bendis, Attis, Isodaites, and Sabazios.⁵⁰ The *Bacchae* itself fits into a wider pattern of hospitality stories involving Dionysus' arrival followed by welcome and reward, or rejection and punishment, or a combination of both, sometimes with additional motifs such as the god's disguise or epiphany, and a contrast between

45 Rousselle 1987.

46 One these plays see Pastorino 1955 with Mariotti 1957; Rousselle 1987; Flower 2000, 28; Manuwald 2011, 200–1, 224, and discussion of Accius' *Bacchae* in the next chapter (Perris and Mac Góráin).

47 See Gruen 1990, 50–51; Flower 2000, 25–27; and Schiesaro 2016, 28–30.

48 See Wyler in this volume, and Mura Sommella 2017 for an argument about the earliest evidence for a Dionysian sanctuary in Rome itself.

49 Epigraphic evidence is a significant exception to this, such as the Fufluns Paxies inscriptions which Miano discusses in this volume.

50 Dodds 1960, xx–xxv; Versnel, 1990, 103–23.

those who recognize Dionysus' divinity and would welcome him, and those who wish to exclude him.⁵¹ The persecution of Dionysus by Lycurgus at *Iliad* 6.123–32 fits loosely into this pattern, but more clear-cut examples are the seventh Homeric hymn, and various stories narrated by Hyginus, Nonnus, and in other epic and mythographic sources.⁵²

The incorporation of foreign cults in Rome can easily be thought of as a kind of hospitality, whatever the mechanism of introduction, be it *evocatio*⁵³ (as in the case of Juno Regina from Veii to Rome in 396 BC), or propitiatory importation (as in the case of Aesculapius or the Magna Mater).⁵⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who sees Rome as a Greek city, and who sees all things Roman with Greek eyes,⁵⁵ records a tradition (how historically reliable, it is impossible to know) that Dionysus was embedded into the Roman civic calendar in the 490s, along with Demeter and Koré.⁵⁶ Livy does not record the founding of the temple; at this point in his history he is focussed on narrating the struggle of the orders, and it is apparent that the plebs adopt the temple as their headquarters; he does, however, often mention it, usually with reference to dedications, and calling it either Aedes Cereris or Aedes Cereris Liberi Liberaeque.⁵⁷ Rome was at war with the Etruscans after the expulsion of the Tarquins. During a food shortage before the battle of Lake Regillus the consul Aulus Postumius Albus (soon to be *cognominated* 'Regillensis') ordered the guardians of the Sibylline books to consult their oracles. He learned that he should propitiate these three divinities, and so as he was about to lead out his army, vowed a temple and annual festivities to them, if the food supply should be restored. As Dionysius says, 'these gods, hearing his prayer, caused the land to produce rich crops, not only of grain but also of fruits, and all imported provisions to be more plentiful than before; and when Postumius saw

51 On the arrivals and receptions of Dionysus in myth and literature cf. Dodds 1960, xxv; Kerényi 1976, 122–188, esp. 175–88; Otto 1965, 79–85, and Weaver 2004, 29–63.

52 See Hyg. *Fab.* 129 (Oeneus), 130 (Icarius and Erigone), 131 (Nysus), 132 (Lycurgus), 133 (Ammon), 134 (Tuscan pirates). See also Apoll. *Bibl.* 3.5; Diod. Sic. 3.65.4–6; and the Falernus episode of Sil. *Pun.* 7.162–211. For a reworking of this story-pattern in the *Aeneid* see Mac Góráin 2013.

53 Ando 2008, 128–48.

54 On foreign gods at Rome see Orlin 2010; for a recent perspective on foreign gods at Rome, see Rolle 2017 on Cybele, Isis and Serapis in the works of Varro.

55 On Dionysius' Hellenocentrism see Cornell 1995, 37–41; Schultze 1995; Schultze 2004.

56 DH *Rom. Ant.* 6.17.2, Δήμητρι καὶ Διονύσῳ καὶ Κόρη. On the temple and its cult see Bruhl 1953, 30–45; Le Bonniec 1958; Cazanove 1983; Coarelli 1993; Scheid 1995; Spaeth 1996; Orlin 1997, 100–101; and Mignone 2016, esp. 205–11, who disputes the evidence locating the temple on the Aventine.

57 3.55.7; 41.28.2 etc.

this, he himself caused a vote to be passed for the building of these temples.⁵⁸ The temple was dedicated by the consul Cassius in 493. Dionysius seems to be using the memoirs of Aulus Postumius Albinus (consul in 151), written in Greek.⁵⁹ The trio of gods is recognizable as a version of the Eleusinian gods, even though there is no Triptolemus equivalent, and even though it is not certain what role Iacchus had in the Eleusinian ritual as early as the 490s.⁶⁰ In all likelihood worship of the three gods was already common in Rome, having spread from Sicily and southern Italy.⁶¹ The incorporation may well have involved a taming or sanitization of the cult's ecstatic elements to accommodate it to Roman religious norms. Nonetheless, Cicero tells us (*Balb.* 55) that the ritual was Greek in form and language, and that the priestesses were of Campanian-Greek origin.⁶²

The temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera itself is among the evidence discussed by Stéphanie Wyler in this volume, though with slightly different emphases to the present paragraph. Vitruvius (*Arch.* 3.3.5) tells us that its pediments were ornamented in the Etruscan fashion with statues of terracotta or gilt bronze; and Pliny the Elder (*NH* 35.45.154) reports (on the authority of Varro) that everything was Etruscan in the temples *until* the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera was built, and he tells us of the signatures of two Greek craftsmen, Damophilos and Gorgasos, who provided the temple with statues and paintings. We hear also of a painting of Liber and possibly Ariadne, a renowned work by Aristides, which was brought to Rome by Lucius Mummius after the sack of Corinth, and which was placed in this temple and survived there until the temple burned down in 31 BCE, to be restored later, and dedicated by Tiberius in 17 CE.⁶³ Interestingly Pliny the Elder considers this the first Greek painting to have been exhibited at Rome, though in his day they had become common in the forum.⁶⁴ The combination of Greek and native elements in the temple suggest Dionysus as a fitting emblem of cultural fusion.

We might have expected this temple to be the cult site of the Liberalia, but in fact none of our sources confirm this, and the celebration there of the Cerealia in

58 6.17, tr. Cary.

59 Wiseman 1998, 35.

60 On Iacchus at Eleusis see Clinton 1992, 64–71.

61 See Cornell 1995, 263–64 and Beard-North-Price 1998, I, 64–66.

62 *Balb.* 55; see Lipka 2009, 67.

63 Plin. *NH* 35.24; Strabo 8.6.23; for the fire and restoration, see Dio. 50.10 (fire), Strabo 8.341 (painting and fire), and Tac. *Ann.* 2.49 (restoration); Tacitus tells us that Augustus had begun the restoration. See further Miller, pp. 177–78, in this volume.

64 35.24 *quam primam arbitror picturam externam Romae publicatam, deinde video et in foro positas volgo.*

April may even rule it out.⁶⁵ Danuta Musiał has argued that the worship of Ceres at Rome eclipsed that of Liber, and that this facilitated the coalescence of Liber with Dionysus.⁶⁶ Sources for the Liberalia suggest rural agrarian rites that combine Greek and indigenous elements, but also urban rites. Ovid records that young men assumed the *toga libera* on this day, and puns on the connection between Liber and *libertas*, an etymology which looks to Dionysus' Athenian cult title 'Eleuthereus', and to parallel etymological links between Dionysus Lysios/Lyaeus and Greek λυεῖν.⁶⁷ A fragment of Naevius from an unknown context suggests that free speech was enjoyed at the Liberalia: 'Libera lingua loquemur ludis Liberalibus' ('We will speak with a free tongue at the games of the Liberalia', Naev. *com.* 112 Ribbeck².) Varro records that priestesses of Liber garlanded their heads with ivy and roasted cakes (*liba*) for celebrants.⁶⁸ Augustine gives a slanted version of Varro's account, from the *Divine Antiquities*, of phallic processions that took place in Italian villages. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Inter cetera, quae praetermittere, quoniam multa sunt, cogor, in Italiae compitis quaedam dicit sacra Liberi celebrata cum tanta licentia turpitudinis, ut in eius honorem pudenda virilia colerentur, non saltem aliquantum verecundiore secreto, sed in propatulo exultante nequitia. Nam hoc turpe membrum per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno postellus inpositum prius rure in compitis et usque in urbem postea vectabatur. In oppido autem Lavinio unus Libero totus mensis tribuebatur, cuius diebus omnes verbis flagitiosissimis uterentur, donec illud membrum per forum transvectum esset atque in loco suo quiesceret. Cui membro inhonesto matrem familias honestissimam palam coronam necesse erat inponere. Sic videlicet Liber deus placandus fuerat pro eventibus seminum, sic ab agris fascinatio repellenda...

Among other rites which I am compelled to pass over due to their sheer number, there are certain rites of Liber that [Varro] says are celebrated at Italian crossroads with such shameful abandon that the private parts of the male are worshipped in the god's honour, and not even in secret, out of some deference to modesty, but openly and with wantonness running riot. Yes indeed, during Liber's festal days this disgusting member would be exhibited on a waggon with great honour, and carried first around the crossroads in the countryside, and then brought all the way into the city. In the town of Lavinium they even dedicated a whole month to Liber, and during these days they all used such disgraceful language until that member had been carried through the forum and come to rest in its own place. Then the

⁶⁵ On the festival see Musiał 2013; see Miller 2002; Kovács 2015; and Heyworth 2019 on Ovid's *Liberalia*.

⁶⁶ Musiał 2007.

⁶⁷ *Fasti* 3.771–78; see Hor. *Ep.* 9.38 *Lyaeo soluere*; and Sen. *Tranq. An.* 9.17.8 (with Giusti 2017); parallels in Leinieks 1996, 302–25 and Seaford 1996, 190.

⁶⁸ Varro, *LL* 6.14; cf. Ov. *F.* 3.726–36.

most respectable woman, a mother of a family, had to place a garland on said dishonourable member. In this way, supposedly, the god Liber was to be propitiated so that all would turn out well with the seeds; in this way the hex needed to be warded off the fields... (*City of God* 7.21.2–4; Varro *ARD* 262 [42] Cardauns)

The satiric tone in describing Pagan religious ritual is something that Augustine inherits from his Church Father predecessors, who are discussed in Francesco Massa's contribution on Christian Latin authors in the final chapter of this volume. Despite Augustine's polemical rhetoric, which makes it difficult to extract what Varro actually said, it does seem that this rite may have been both urban and rural: there is mention of a procession into the city (*usque in urbem*), which may be Rome, and also Lavinium. In addition, the Italian phallophoria resembles the phallic procession of the Athenian Dionysia, which celebrates fertility and plenitude.⁶⁹ For Augustine, the phallic rite exemplifies Liber's dominion over the liquid seeds, which he mentions several times beyond the passage quoted (*civ.* 6.9, 7.2, 7.21). It is easy to connect this with Greek sources which see Dionysus as god of liquid life, especially in nature,⁷⁰ a motif which in Statius' *Thebaid* is repurposed to metapoetic ends as Bacchus, god of poetic inspiration, presides over the provision or withholding of water, as discussed by Alessandro Schiesaro in this volume.

Whatever the origins of, and Romans' attitudes to, the Liberalia, if our sources for the temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera suggest a hospitable incorporation, this view is counterbalanced by the evidence for the senate's repression of the Bacchanalia in 186 BCE.⁷¹ An inscription found at Tiriolo in 1640 gives an account of the senate's decision to restrict and regulate group worship of the Bacchanalia, and we have a lurid account of the affair in Livy's history.⁷² The severe clampdown, which reportedly detained both consuls at Rome, and involved the

⁶⁹ On the Athenian ritual see Csapo 2013.

⁷⁰ See Tiresias' speech at Eur. *Ba.* 278–85. Plutarch is most explicit; see *De Iside et Osiride* 365A. ὅτι δ' οὐ μόνον τοῦ οἴνου Διόνυσον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης ὑγρᾶς φύσεως Ἕλληνες ἡγοῦνται κύριον καὶ ἀρχηγόν, ἀρκεῖ Πίνδαρος μάρτυς εἶναι λέγων (fr. 153) ἄδενδρέων δὲ νομόν Διόνυσος πολυγαθῆς αὐξάνοι, ἀγνὸν φέγγος ὀπώρας· διὸ καὶ τοῖς τὸν Ὅσιριν σεβομένοις ἀπαγορεύεται δένδρον ἡμερον ἀπολλύναι καὶ πηγὴν ὕδατος ἐμφράττειν. On Dionysus and moisture see Otto 1965, 160–170.

⁷¹ On the episode see especially North 1979; Pailler 1988; Gruen 1990; Granet 1990 (a response to Pailler 1988); Cancik-Lindemaier 1996; Turcan 1996, 300–306; Beard-North-Price 1998, I, 90–96; Pailler 1998; Takács 2000; Davies 2004, 79–81; Pagán 2004, 50–67; Rüpke 2007, 31–33; Wyler 2008; Briscoe 2008, esp, 330; Nousek 2010; Riedl 2012.

⁷² *CIL*12, 581 = *ILLRP* 511 = *ILS* 18; Livy 39.8–18.

execution of thousands of Bacchants, is often thought of as an atypical intervention on the part of the Roman authorities, who were usually very hospitable to foreign gods, and so the episode calls for explanation. One is that the senate's real target was not Bacchus himself – indeed the god is not mentioned in the inscription, which only mentions Bacchanals and Bacchants – but rather the organizational structures of the cult, which had drawn to itself quasi-civic functions such as witnessing seals and oaths, and keeping a common fund, and therefore came close to threatening the authority of the state.⁷³ One of the main themes in the episode is the (regulation of the) role of women in cult and indeed in society, including their relations with young men, and the senatorial clamp-down may be read as an expression of patriarchal norms.⁷⁴ Julietta Steinhauer revisits the question of the structures and social makeup of worship in her contribution to the present volume, reading Livy's history and the *Senatus consultum de bacchanalibus* against one another, and emphasizing how much latitude the senatorial legislation appears to concede to female participants. Another explanation is that the senate wished to tighten its legal and administrative grip on territories in southern Italy, especially after losses incurred during the Hannibalic war.⁷⁵ One may agree that the remit of the senate's decision was more limited than might at first appear to have been the case,⁷⁶ and also with the argument that rather than expressing xenophobic conservatism, the senate wished to define traditional Roman modes of worship in a way that had not been done before.⁷⁷

Though Aulus Postumius P. f. Albus Regillensis (consul 496) had been responsible for welcoming Liber to Rome, according to Livy, it was his descendant Spurius Postumius L. f. A. n. Albinus (consul 186) who presided over the investigation, and persuaded the senate to legislate in favour of dismantling the cult of the Bacchanalia and prosecuting its votaries with capital punishment. Livy's account is stranger than fiction, and scholars have often detected in it a dramatic substrate, whether comedy or *fabula praetexta*.⁷⁸ Euripides' *Bacchae* has been suggested as background and/or illuminating comparand.⁷⁹ The repression of the

73 North 1979; Turcan 1996, 303.

74 Montanari 1984, 249, 257; Pailler 1988, 523–96; Scheid 1991; Pailler 1995, 171–82; Cancik-Lindemaier 1996; Flower 2002; Schultz 2006, 82–92; Panoussi 2019, 120–39.

75 Gruen 1990.

76 Cazanove 2000a (with Rüpke 2007, 261, n. 64), and Cazanove 2000b.

77 Orlin 2010, 163–75.

78 Comedy: Scafuro 1989; Walsh 1996; *fabula praetexta*: Wiseman 1998.

79 Cazanove 1983, 106–13 (but mainly Lycurgus tragedies); Heslin 2005, 247–54; Riedl 2012; Schiesaro 2016, 31.

Bacchanalia is a moralizing re-run of Euripides' play. This claim of *Bacchae* intertextuality helps us to see the 'affair' against the background of the mythical pattern of the god's arrival followed by welcome or rejection. In this case, as Alessandro Schiesaro has pointed out, the 'sacrificulus et uates' who peddles Bacchic rites recalls the Lydian stranger whom Pentheus derides as a γόης ἐπωδός (*Ba.* 234). Similarly, the rhetoric of the consul Postumius echoes that of Euripides' Pentheus in its obsession with sexual decorum: Pentheus accuses the Theban women of preferring Aphrodite to Dionysus (*Ba.* 225), while Postumius asks the senators whether these effeminized males (*simillimi feminis mares*) can be made into soldiers (39.15). Livy's description of the ἀρχὴ κακῶν echoes a few more details from the play:

Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum uenit nulla cum arte earum, quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens inuexit, sacrificulus et uates; nec is qui aperta religione, propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo, animos errore imbueret, sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum. (39.8.3)

A low-born Greek went into Etruria first of all, but did not bring with him any of the numerous arts which that most accomplished of all nations has introduced amongst us for the cultivation of mind and body. He was a hedge-priest and wizard, not one of those who imbue men's minds with error by professing to teach their superstitions openly for money, but a hierophant of secret nocturnal mysteries. (tr. Roberts)

The mention of money echoes Pentheus' taunts to Tiresias that he wishes to profit from the new cult (*Ba.* 257), while the charge of nocturnal license, closely followed by accusations of sexual depravity (39.8.6), echoes Pentheus' exchange with the Lydian stranger in which the two disagree as to whether darkness invests the rites with reverence or lechery (*Ba.* 485–88). Tellingly, however, Livy refers to this Greek's arrival, via Etruria, as a beginning of things (*primum uenit*), but he can hardly have been anywhere near the first, given the prevalence of Bacchic religion, which the consul Postumius acknowledges all of Italy has known about for a long time, even if not everyone understood its true nature (39.15.6). The emphasis on Hellenic origins is sustained in the second ἀρχὴ κακῶν in Livy's narrative in that Paculla Annia, a priestess from Campania in Magna Graecia, instituted reforms that led to the growth of the cult and its descent into scandal: she allowed men to be initiated, increased the number of initiation ceremonies from three per year to five per month, and changed it from a diurnal to a nocturnal rite.⁸⁰ But she seems not to have lacked for popular interest.

⁸⁰ Cf. Liv. 39.13.8, *tum Hispala originem sacrorum expromit. primo sacrarium id feminarum fuisse, nec quemquam eo uirum admitti solitum. tres in anno statos dies habuisse, quibus interdium*

How can we account for the apparent inconsistency between the Romans' embrace of the cult of Liber and their clampdown on the Bacchanalia, or how can we make sense of their schizophrenic rejection-of-cum-fascination-with Dionysus, discernible also in the Bacchanalian affair? One clue may be found in Livy's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' Greeks, which may suggest an alignment between on the one hand, good and bad Greeks, and on the other, good and bad Bacchism. It is hard not to see parallels between the Romans' complex attitudes to Greek culture,⁸¹ and their attitude to Dionysus, which, in the Bacchanalian affair, at least, involves surface-level regulation or disapproval that is undermined by continuing pervasive interest.⁸² Beyond this, should we pursue comparisons with the Romans' complex attitudes to other foreign deities, such as the Magna Mater, who is often found in close proximity to Dionysus, including in the *Bacchae* itself (*Ba.* 78–82)? Indeed, scholars have argued that the Magna Mater also enjoyed a 'double cult', one more 'Roman' and domesticated, the other Phrygian and ecstatic.⁸³ Mary Beard has written that 'there was a constant tension between, on the one hand, Roman rejection of the cult of Magna Mater as something dangerously foreign and, on the other, the incorporation of the cult in the symbolic forms of state power.'⁸⁴ On one level, it would be easy to claim that there is no contradiction at all, in that Liberalia and Bacchanalia are simply two different cults.⁸⁵ Sure enough, Livy mentions the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera several times in fairly close proximity to his Bacchanalian narrative without appearing to feel

Bacchis initiarentur; sacerdotes in uicem matronas creari solitas. Pacullam Anniam Campanam sacerdotem omnia, tamquam deum monitu, immutasse: nam et uiros eam primam filios suos initiasset, Minium et Herennium Cerrinius; et nocturnum sacrum ex diurno, et pro tribus in anno diebus quinos singulis mensibus dies initiorum fecisse.

81 Gruen 1992 is fundamental for the second century BCE. In later times, Juvenal's Umbricius embodies the Romans' paradoxical attitude to the Greeks. For overviews see Henrichs 1995; and Wallace-Hadrill 1998. On Bacchus in Italy amid the 'second Hellenization of Rome' in the second and first centuries BCE, see also Wyler in this volume.

82 For 'good' and 'bad' Greeks in Roman receptions of Dionysus, see Wyler 2011, 194.

83 See Graillot 1912, esp. 70–107; Borgeaud 1996, 95–104. 2004, 66.

84 Beard 1994, 166; she continues. 'By emphasizing the unresolved tension between the incorporation of the cult and its rejection, I am distancing myself from the conventional scholarly approach to this material —which either stresses the flagrant incompatibility of the Eastern rituals of Magna Mater with Roman tradition or constructs a linear narrative history in which a "tamed" version of the cult is gradually incorporated into the mainstream of Roman state religion.' For a similar argument about the Magna Mater / Cybele across the oeuvre of Varro, see Rolle 2017, esp. 117–22.

85 Montanari 1988, 119–22.

any contradiction.⁸⁶ And it is notable that both the inscribed letter about the *SC de Bacchanalibus* and Livy's narrative make allowance for continued worship of ancestral religion, which raises a clear distinction between old and new forms of worship, even of gods that can in other circumstances be aligned or identified with one another. The *senatus consultum* prescribes procedure for continuing worship, with which Livy's account largely agrees.⁸⁷ Legislation of cultic form partly *creates* the distinction between legitimate and illicit worship. Livy's Postumius distinguishes twice between established (legitimate) and new (illicit) religion.⁸⁸ When the consuls are tasked with destroying the places of worship ('Bacchanalia' denotes shrines as well as the rites),⁸⁹ they are supposed to destroy all 'Bacchanalia', first at Rome, then throughout all of Italy, *except* where there is an old altar or consecrated statue,⁹⁰ pointing once again to a distinction between old and new Bacchism. But on another level clearly in some sense the god of the Bacchanalia is to be identified with the god of the Liberalia and the different forms of Dionysus/Bacchus/Liber that were worshipped throughout Italy. Here we are in the realm of religious polymorphism: as Henk Versnel has asked, is Dionysus one god or many? The question may be asked of other gods too, but does not appear to have troubled the ancients in the way that it troubles us, even on the relatively rare occasions that they acknowledged it.⁹¹

There is a close parallel in Cicero's *Laws* for the apparent contradiction, that reflects and indeed perhaps resolves the accommodation/resistance tension. The following exchange occurs while Cicero and Atticus are legislating for the nocturnal rites of Ceres (2.35–36):

Marcus: But if we suppress the nocturnal sacrifices, what will become of the august mysteries of Iacchus, and the Eumolpidae? For we are constructing laws, not for the Romans only, but for all just and valiant nations.

Atticus: I think it is but courteous to except these mysteries likewise, especially as we ourselves happen to have been initiated in them.

Marcus: With all my heart, let us except them. For it seems to me that among the many admirable and divine things your Athenians have established to the advantage of human

86 Temple of Ceres at 40.2; Temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera at 41.28.

87 39.18.8–9.

88 39.15.2–3 and 39.16.8–11.

89 Pailler 1995, 159–68.

90 39.18.7, *datum deinde consulibus negotium est, ut omnia Bacchanalia Romae primum, deinde per totam Italiam diruerent, extra quam si qua ibi uetusta ara aut signum consecratum esset*. It used to be believed that a shrine at Bolsena had been destroyed, but Olivier de Cazanove (2000c) has argued, persuasively in my view, that this structure was a cistern rather than a Bacchanal.

91 On Dionysus see Versnel 2011b, 23; in general see also Versnel 2011a, 239–308.

society, there is nothing better than the mysteries by which we are polished and softened into politeness, from the rude austerities of barbarism. Justly indeed are they called initiations, for by them we especially learn the grand principles of philosophic life, and gain, not only the art of living agreeably, but of dying with a better hope. But what displeases me in the nocturnal mysteries, is what the comic poets hold up to ridicule. If such licence was allowed at Rome, what abominations might be committed by the man who should carry premeditated debauchery into the mysteries, in which even a stolen glance was in ancient times a crime? (tr. Barham)⁹²

Just a few lines later (2.37), Cicero cites with apparent approbation the *severitas* of the senate in repressing the Bacchanalia,⁹³ and the result of their discussion will be restrictive legislation that outlaws women's nocturnal rites except in limited circumstances. The passage contains a number of significant features that bear on the apparent inconsistency at issue.⁹⁴ First, the different attitudes that can be had in relation to the nocturnal mysteries – Cicero and Atticus enthusiastically approve of them, but Cicero acknowledges, citing the comic poets, that one could equally disapprove of them on the grounds of the potential for debauchery under cover of darkness. The split-level attitude is entirely reminiscent of the different attitudes to Dionysian cult in Euripides' *Bacchae*: the chorus lyrically embrace the beatific experience of Dionysian ecstasy; Tiresias acknowledges the god's greatness on philosophical and theological grounds, and Cadmus on politically pragmatic ones; opposed to these is Pentheus' suspicious prurience.⁹⁵ So Cicero can channel his inner Tiresias in one breath and his inner Pentheus in the next.

92 Latin from de Plinval (1968): {MARCVS} *Quid ergo aget Iacchus Eumolpidaeque uostri et augusta illa mysteria, si quidem sacra nocturna tollimus? Non enim populo Romano, sed omnibus bonis firmisque populis leges damus.* {ATTICVS} *Excipis credo illa, quibus ipsi initiati sumus.* {MARCVS} *Ego uero excipiam. Nam mihi cum multa eximia diuinaque uide<a>ntur Athenae tuae peperisse atque in uitam hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius illis mysteriis, quibus ex agresti immanique uita exculti ad humanitatem et mitigati sumus, initiaque, ut appellantur, ita re uera principia uitae cognouimus, neque solum cum laetitia uiuendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi. Quid autem mihi displiceat in noct<ur>n<is>, poetae indicant comici. Qua licentia Romae data quidnam egisset ille qui in sacrificium cogitatum libidinem intulit, quo ne inprudentiam quidem oculorum adici <f>as fuit?*

93 2.37.5, *Quo in genere seueritatem maiorum senatus uetus auctoritas de Bacchanalibus et consulum exercitu adhibito quaestio animaduersio<que> declarat.*

94 On this section of the *Laws* see Bendlin 2002, 67–68; Dyck 2004 *ad loc.*; and Rolle 2017, 129–39 (a discussion of nocturnal initiatory rites at Rome).

95 Pentheus: 215–47; Chorus: e.g. 72–167; Tiresias: 266–327; Cadmus: 330–42.

Secondly, hidden within Cicero's qualification and citation of the comic poets⁹⁶ is an acknowledgement of the power or relevance of poetic expression to inform one's attitude to religious ritual: it is not that comedy is probative – rather, even though it is a stylized literary genre, Cicero does not dismiss it as trivial or consider it extraneous to religious experience, but uses it to form and express his attitude to the realities of the nocturnal mysteries; indeed the restrictive legislation responds to the attitude expressed by an allusion to the comic poets. This should hardly surprise us, since Cicero frequently uses quotation of or reference to drama to support all kinds of arguments.

The third issue is the possible contradiction between (on the one hand) praise of Iacchus and the mysteries and (on the other hand) endorsement of the senate's clampdown on the Bacchanalia, which seems to be a local version of the contradiction that we see writ large in the Romans' complex attitude to Dionysus. The contradiction would depend, of course, on some degree of identification or identifiability between Iacchus and Bacchus. There are indeed many contexts in which Iacchus and Bacchus are aligned or straightforwardly identified with one another.⁹⁷ In other contexts, even at Eleusis, the distinction between Iacchus and Dionysus is clear-cut.⁹⁸ In her discussion of these adjacent passages in Ch. 6 of the present volume, Gesine Manuwald expresses caution as to whether Cicero is implying an identification of the Iacchus of the Eleusinian mysteries and the Bacchus of the Bacchanalia, and it is indeed obvious that Cicero is thinking of two different cults. On the other hand, twice in *De natura deorum*, Cicero formulates the polymorphism of Dionysus, in passages which Manuwald also discusses. The Stoic Balbus distinguishes between Liber the son of Semele and Liber the son of Ceres, 'whom our ancestors solemnly and piously deified with Ceres and Libera, the nature of whose worship can be gathered from the mysteries'.⁹⁹ As Francesco Massa has pointed out recently, the distinction here is not one between a Latin Liber and a Greek Dionysus, but one between a god of Greek myth and ancestral Roman ritual practice.¹⁰⁰

96 See Dyck 2004, 353: 'Here Cic. alludes to the comic plot in which a young man has impregnated a woman at an all-night festival, with complications upon the birth of the child; cf. Pl. *Aul* 35–36; *adulescentis illius ... qui illam stupravit noctu Cereris vigiliis* [and other sources].'

97 Soph. *Ant.* 1152; Virg. *Ecl.* 6.15, and see further Kern 1916, 619.

98 Clinton 1992, 66 on the possible distinction between the two gods in an Eleusinian setting.

99 Cic. *ND* 2.62, *hunc dico Liberum Semela natum, non eum quem nostri maiores auguste sancteque Liberum cum Cerere et Libera consecraverunt, quod quale sit ex mysteriis intellegi potest.*

100 Massa 2016, 120–21. See also Manuwald, pp. 160–61, and Massa 2016, 120 on Cic. *ND* 3.35, where Cotta enumerates five different Dionysi on the basis of genealogy.

In the event, Aristides' painting of Bacchus, brought to Rome after the sack of Corinth in 146 BCE, was a harbinger of the flood of Greek wealth that was to engulf Rome after the conquest of Greece. Of course, 'Greek culture leaves its mark on Roman at every moment we can document,'¹⁰¹ but there is a pervasive narrative of 'Hellenization' in the late republic, summed up by Horace's quip *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit* (*Ep.* 2.1.156), that conquered Greece Greekified Rome. From this point on, there was no question of clampdown or even resistance: Dionysus became the poster-boy for Hellenism. This itself seems ironic, given the god's 'Eastern' credentials and supposed Egyptian origins, which could still be activated in Roman contexts.¹⁰² His increasingly pervasive presence is expressed in several overlapping registers that we might term politics, art, and literature, though of course the divisions between these three are artificial.¹⁰³ The Alexander historians have it that the king of kings imitated Dionysus' triumph in the East; and whether or not the relationship with Dionysus actually goes back to the time of Alexander himself, certainly Dionysus featured very heavily in the religious propaganda of the Hellenistic kingdoms, with a number of rulers taking the title 'Dionysos' or 'Neos Dionysos'.¹⁰⁴ He seems to have been a symbol for charismatic power based on a combination of military might and his sponsorship of fertility. He featured also in Roman politics at least from the Social War onwards.¹⁰⁵ There was a tradition that Dionysus had invented the triumph.¹⁰⁶ Several Roman generals (and later, emperors) came to imitate Dionysus, which was not

101 Wallace-Hadrill 1998, 79.

102 Said (1977, 170 = 2005, 77) called Euripides' *Bacchae* 'perhaps the most Asiatic of all the Attic dramas'; see further Perris 2016, 126. Diodorus Siculus (3.74) writes of a Dionysus born in Egypt. Herodotus (2.42) and Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride* 364e) record traditions that identify Dionysus with Osiris; the connection recurs in Tibullus 1.7, and also in the Egyptianizing paintings at the Villa della Farnesina; see Wyler 2005. Dionysus' eastern roots are the target of xenophobic comedy in Lucian's *Concilium Deorum*.

103 For Apollo operating on and across the same three levels in Augustan poetry, politics and art, see Miller 2009.

104 For Alexander and Dionysus see Nock 1928; Goukowsky 1981; Bosworth 1988a, 1988b, 1996; Koulakiotis 2017. For Dionysus and the Hellenistic kingdoms see Rice 1983; Dunand 1986; Fuhrer 2011; Isler-Kerényi 2011. On the guilds of the 'artists of Dionysus' see Le Guen 2001 and Aneziri 2003.

105 Mannsperger 1973; Castriota 1995, 91–94.

106 Versnel 1970, 235–252; Rutherford 2013, 419–20. On the visual and literary sources for Dionysus triumphant see Buccino 2013; Catania 2014; and Catania 2015.

always well received at Rome.¹⁰⁷ Pliny the Elder tells us in neutral terms that Marius used to drink from a *cantharus* in imitation of Dionysus, but Valerius Maximus puts the same story in more censorious terms, implying *hybris* on the part of Marius.¹⁰⁸ The most famous case of Dionysus-*imitatio* backfiring¹⁰⁹ is the career of Mark Antony. No doubt it was to curry favour in the East that he adopted the persona – though the beginnings of it are already visible if implicit in Antony’s fondness for wine, often mentioned in Cicero’s *Philippics* – but even upon his entry into Ephesus in 41 BCE, Plutarch reports, styled as a ‘Neos Dionysos’ and accompanied by a Bacchic entourage, some of the Ephesians hailed him as Dionysus the Giver of Joy and the Gentle (Χαριδότην καὶ Μελίχιον), while to most, victims of his corrupt governance, he was Dionysus the Raw-Eater and the Savage (Ὠμηστής καὶ Ἀγριώνιος).¹¹⁰ He even seems to have attempted a defence of his own drunkenness: at any rate Pliny the Elder records that he ‘vomited up’ a pamphlet *De sua ebrietate*.¹¹¹ Cassius Dio reports that Octavian exhorted his troops before the Battle of Actium by denouncing Antony’s Dionysian persona.¹¹² Again it is Plutarch who records a tradition of rumours that on the night before the battle of Actium a Bacchic thiasos was heard tumultuously leaving Alexandria, and that this was interpreted as a sign that the god was deserting Antony (*Ant.* 75.3). Nonetheless, it was probably because of Antony’s close association with Bacchus that Augustus was hesitant in embracing the god too overtly; for example, he neglected to restore the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera promptly, despite his claim in the *Res gestae* that he had restored eighty-two temples, and omitted none that was in need of repair. It seems a remarkable omission; and yet, recent scholars have renewed efforts to expose the rehabilitation of Bacchus and his reappropriation by Augustus from Antony, often with reference to the poetry of Virgil and Horace, and to Roman wall painting and some numismatic evidence.¹¹³

107 Turcan 1977; Wacht/Rickert 2010, 76–78; Fuhrer 2011; Kopij 2014; Scapini 2016, 54–56. The motif was to have a fertile afterlife after the imperial period; see Gesing 1988; and Emmerling-Skala 1994, esp. 148–77.

108 Plin. *HN* 33, 150; cf. Val. Max. 3.6.6 *iam C. Marii paene insolens factum: nam post Iugurthinum Cimbricumque et Teutonicum triumphum cantharo semper potavit, quod Liber pater Indicum ex Asia deducens triumphum hoc usus poculi genere ferebatur, <ut> inter ipsum haustum uini uictoriae eius suas uictorias compararet.*

109 See Emmerling-Skala 1994, 115–32.

110 Plut. *Ant.* 24.4–5.

111 Plin. *HN* 14.148; see esp. Scott 1929; Marasco 1992; and Freyburger-Galland 2009.

112 50.25.4.

113 *RG* 20. On Octavian/Augustus and Bacchus see Mannsperger 1973; Becher 1976; Castriota 1995; Batinski 1990–91; Schiesaro 2009; Cucchiarelli 2011a and 2011b; Mac Góráin 2014; Kovács 2015; Miller 2002 is circumspect, and see his contribution to this volume.

Nestled among these historical events between Marius-as-Dionysus and Antony-as-Dionysus we find Cicero, himself a polymorph whose *obiter dicta* on the god are very revealing, precisely because we encounter Cicero operating in so many different modes. His references to the god look backwards to poetic and intellectual traditions – Cicero is our source for some of the major scenes of Dionysian madness in early Roman tragedy, for example – as well as giving a contemporary perspective on attitudes to the god and indeed on many other matters from rhetoric to politics, precisely by invoking Dionysus. Gesine Manuwald’s chapter in this volume explores these resonances, which occur in a wide range of texts across his philosophical, oratorical, rhetorical and epistolographic works. As Manuwald discusses, this same figure can disapprove of statues of maenads as unbefitting for his library, while still punning on the link between *Liber* and *libertas* in a letter to Atticus in the aftermath of Julius Caesar’s assassination.¹¹⁴

In what seems like another iteration of the accommodation-and-resistance pattern, despite Roman castigations of Marius’ or Antony’s Dionysian pretensions, and despite Cicero’s disapproval of the maenad statues, it would be difficult to overestimate the proliferation of Dionysian imagery in the visual and plastic arts of the period: wall painting, sculpture, campana plaques, gems, silverware, and ceramics, in which Dionysus appears (alongside other divinities) as a god of luxury, *tryphe*, ritual, and Hellenism itself.¹¹⁵ As Stéphanie Wyler discusses in this volume, there are parallels between the poetry and the painting, notably in the sacro-idyllic landscapes of painting and relief sculpture that allude to the world to which Dionysian ritual gives access, and the pastoral and rural poetry of Virgil, Tibullus and Horace.¹¹⁶

Alongside this aesthetic, Bacchus was also a god of inspiration for the poets, itself a legacy of classical Greek and Hellenistic traditions. Even Lucretius the rationalist experienced poetic inspiration as Dionysian ecstasy: the god came to stand as a figure for the irrational, as explored recently by several contributions in a collection of essays on Augustan poetry and the irrational.¹¹⁷ But poetic pos-

114 *Fam.* 7.23; *Att.* 14.14.

115 See Castriota 1995; Zanker 1998; Wyler 2005; Wyler 2006a; Wyler 2008; Wyler 2013a; Scapini 2016.

116 See Wyler 2006a and Wyler 2006b.

117 Hardie 2016, esp. 14–22; see especially Gowers 2016. See also Schiesaro 2009 and Giusti 2016.

tures can themselves be politically charged. Dionysus could be an attractive figure for a drop-out elegist to dally with,¹¹⁸ but for the same elegist, several revolutions later, he could assist Apollo in hymning Augustus' victory at the Battle of Actium.¹¹⁹ Likewise for Horace, Bacchus is the god of the symposium and thus of civilization, of the whole atmosphere of the lighter genres of poetry and even of the *recusatio*; but he also comes to inspire the poet to sing the glories of Augustus, guarantor of peace and leisure after generations of civil war.¹²⁰ Virgil draws on different aspects of Bacchus: as god of poetry and landscape in the *Eclogues*, of fertility and mystery-cult in the *Georgics*, and of tragedy, madness, resistance to Fate, but also of triumph, in the *Aeneid*.¹²¹ It is notable that the Augustan poets do their best to tame Bacchus, to accommodate him to the needs of the regime. Alden Smith has written about the 'rehabilitation' of Bacchus in the *Georgics*, though I believe that a sense of danger subsists under the cheerful exterior.¹²² Aspects of the Dionysian are divided between different characters in the *Aeneid*: it is the women opposed to Fate, Dido and Amata, who experience Dionysian madness and rave as maenads; while Dionysus' triumphal aspect devolves to Augustus in Anchises' Parade of Heroes.¹²³ And yet, Aeneas too is a Dionysus-figure, as Clifford Weber so convincingly demonstrated.¹²⁴

It is against this pervasive presence of Dionysus in politics and the literary and visual arts that several of the more literary contributions to this volume may be positioned. As we have seen from the example of Livy, literary texts can have their own rhetoric of the Dionysian, which may point to a cultic experience either through derision and distortion, or precisely by taking flight from reality in a way that serves a distinct literary function. The following chapter (by Simon Perris and Fiachra Mac Góráin) offers a reception history of Euripides' *Bacchae* from its early classic status through to Christianizing Byzantine reworkings in John Malalas' *Chronography* and the *Christus Patiens*. Its temporal span, from the classical

118 Propertius 1.3.14, *hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus*; cf. Propertius 3.17 with Miller 1991; Heyworth and Morwood 2011 *ad loc.*; and Wallis 2018, 131–63.

119 Propertius 4.6.76, *Bacche, soles Phoebos fertilis esse tuo*. A comprehensive treatment of Bacchus in the lighter genres of Latin poetry would be desirable; see Serignolli 2017. See Tib. 1.7 and 2.1. On the poets see also Bruhl 1953, 133–44; Hunter 2006, 40–82; Fabre-Serris 2009; and Freyburger 2013.

120 Batinski 1990–91; Schiesaro 2009; Serignolli 2019.

121 Mac Góráin 2013; Mac Góráin 2013–14; Mac Góráin 2014.

122 Smith 2007; Mac Góráin 2014.

123 Krummen 2004; Bocciolini Palagi 2007; Giusti 2018, esp. 88–147. On Roman maenads see Alonso Fernández 2013 and Bremmer 2017.

124 Weber 2002; see also Mac Góráin 2013.

period to the Christian era, is also programmatic for the scope of the volume. For completeness and comparison we consider both Greek and Latin receptions, and so (for example) among ‘narratives’ we include Theocritus and ps-Oppian as well as Ovid and Nonnus, and our contention is that receptions of the *Bacchae* often reveal cultural or religious attitudes to Dionysus that are typical of their time and place; that in limited cases, *Bacchae* receptions suggests a discourse about ritual, and that the contrast and interplay between Greek and Roman receptions is itself illuminating.

John Miller analyzes an elegiac hymn to Bacchus written from exile (*Tr.* 5.3), composed on the occasion of the Liberalia, when poets have gathered in Ovid’s absence to worship Bacchus at a shrine. The poem looks to other Bacchic movements in Ovid’s oeuvre, notably the Theban history of *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4, and the Liberalia of *Fasti* 3. At a basic level Bacchus stands as a god of poetic inspiration and patronage. We might have expected Ovid to link Bacchus with Augustus as Virgil did in the *Aeneid*, but instead he pursues analogies between Bacchus and himself: the god’s eastern sojourn is refigured from triumph to exile narrative, and on this basis Ovid appeals to him to intercede with his fellow-god Augustus on the poet’s behalf. By preventing Ovid from worshipping Liber, Augustus is cast in the role of Pentheus. Will he meet a fate like that of Pentheus? And will Bacchus get to return to his city? Interwoven in this poem are references to Augustus’ patron-god Apollo, which expose the interplay of Apollo and Bacchus in the discourse of the age.¹²⁵ Ovid seems to make it quite clear that Augustus is trying to appropriate Bacchus, while also marginalizing him.

Bacchus in Statius’ *Thebaid* is the subject of the next paper, by Alessandro Schiesaro. By the time Statius comes to write this epic, there have already been so many refigurations of Bacchus in Roman literature, including the adaptations and reworkings of Euripides’ *Bacchae*.¹²⁶ How was Statius supposed to find an untrodden path between Virgil’s great tragic scenes of Dionysian madness, Ovid’s grotesquely comic rewriting of the death of Pentheus, the sublime *furor* of Lucan, the machinations of Atreus in Seneca, not to mention the lighter versions of Bacchus in lyric and elegy? It is perhaps not surprising, though entirely in line with his reinvention of the epic’s godscape, that he demotes Bacchus to an inef-

¹²⁵ See Cucchiarelli 2011a and Cucchiarelli 2011b; Mac Góráin 2012–13.

¹²⁶ On Bacchic ritual in Latin literature see Panoussi 2009, esp. 115–44 and Panoussi 2019, 117–67. On Statius’ *Achilleid* see Heslin 2005, esp. 193–256; Panoussi 2019, 203–17. Massa and Nelis (forthcoming) will examine the representation of the mysteries in Latin literature.

fectual ephebe, no longer in the confidence of Jupiter, who had ordained the pitiless dénouement of the *Bacchae*,¹²⁷ but has now fallen foul of *Thebes*, engulfed in civil war. As if to confirm Pentheus' suspicions that bacchic women are more interested in Aphrodite than Dionysus,¹²⁸ Venus stages a Bacchanal on Lemnos to punish the women who neglected her rites. A sense of Dionysian danger subsists, however, when Statius' *matrona* channels Lucan's Sibyl in a maenadic frenzy to utter a dire prophecy of civil war. Clearly Statius' construct is built on so many layers of literary treatment that it has moved far away from real Dionysian ritual, and yet it retains political bite in view of its convergence on the poetics of civil war, which had been a feature of Virgil's and Ovid's Dionysian dynamics.

We might diagnose Statius' mannered and hyper-literary construction of Dionysus as symptomatic of an absolute divergence between literary myth and 'real' ritual, and sure enough for the imperial period it can sometimes be difficult to see links between the two bodies of evidence. It is difficult, for example, to see Juvenal's 'Bacchanalia' – a byword for debauchery – corresponding to any contemporary cultic reality, though we might not expect any more of satire.¹²⁹ On the other hand, inscriptions and sarcophagi (and some literary texts) from the imperial period give us every reason to believe that Dionysian cultic worship continued unabated.¹³⁰ One of the most remarkable features of the epigraphic record for maenadism and Dionysian associations is the perfusion of cultic terminology from the mythical to the ritual sphere.¹³¹ Equally striking is the *gulf* between colourful literary rhetoric and epigraphically attested cultic forms: the notion of Dionysus as a god of transgression turns out to be a myth when tested against a body of epigraphic data.¹³²

Ultimately Dionysian myth and cult came to coexist alongside and compete and even conflict with Christianity.¹³³ One register of opposition is allusion and

127 Eur. *Ba.* 1349.

128 Eur. *Ba.* 225.

129 Juv. Sat. 2.1–3 *Ultra Sauromatas fugere hinc libet et glaciale | Oceanum, quotiens aliquid de moribus audent | qui Curios simulant et Bacchanalia uiuunt*, with Pailler 1988, 757–58.

130 For the epigraphic evidence, Jaccottet 2003 is fundamental; see also Turcan 2003. On the sarcophagi see Turcan 1966 and Matz 1968–75.

131 See Henrichs 1978, 122 on maenadism; Jaccottet 2003, I, 17–30 on the thiasos; and in general Massa 2014, 69–70. For analytic discussion of historical versus mythical maenadism see Bremner 1984. We return to this point in the next chapter.

132 Jaccottet 2003, I, 66–100 on the Bacchant and the evidence for the gender of participants and gender mixing in Dionysian worship.

133 See Wacht/Rickert 2010, esp. 91–95, 'Adaption und Abgrenzung' and 'Koexistenz und Konflikt.'

reference to the Bacchanalia in Christian discourse.¹³⁴ Another is reception of Euripides' *Bacchae* in Christian texts, such as Clement of Alexandria's *Protrepticus*. Our concluding chapter, by Francesco Massa, builds on his large body of work about Dionysus and Christianity, and Christianity and pagan religions more generally.¹³⁵ Much of Massa's previously published work shows how Greek Christian sources appropriated the motifs of Dionysian cult – from recognition and denial of similarities between Christianity and the Dionysian religion through the influence of Dionysian motifs on the construction of the literary and visual Christian imaginary, to Christianizing interpretations of Dionysian texts. Here he selects case studies from Christian authors writing in Latin: Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius and Firmicus Maternus, who are engaging in similar debates. A prominent motif in the Christian discourse is the resurgence of the rhetoric of resistance, to the extent that we may draw a line from Euripides' Pentheus through Livy's Postumius to these Latin authors. Since all Christian authors operate mainly with the received *koine* of the Dionysian imaginary, only occasionally is it possible to discern a distinction in their point of view between the Greek Dionysus and the Latin Liber. Not the least fascinating of Massa's findings is Firmicus Maternus' use of Dionysian motifs to describe the Devil.

Beyond the scope of our volume is the phenomenon of Dionysian Christianity, whose beginnings may already be apparent in the earliest Christian texts, which grow out of different sources, from the Jewish to the Graeco-Roman.¹³⁶ Dionysian motifs and Christianity remain intertwined in literary and visual media throughout late antiquity,¹³⁷ and often, if sporadically thereafter: in medieval Christian allegorical interpretation,¹³⁸ in Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*,¹³⁹ and in Renaissance painting.¹⁴⁰ Not the least fascinating chapter in the afterlife of Dionysus would tell more fully than has been done how Nietzsche, a founding father of modern Dionysian studies, himself substituted Dionysus for Christ as a guiding light and object of veneration, concluding his *Ecce Homo* with 'Dionysus versus the Crucified'.¹⁴¹

134 Pailler 1988, 759–76.

135 See, esp. Massa 2014.

136 See pp. 61–62 (ch. 2) on the gospels.

137 See Hernández de la Fuente 2013; Massa 2014; and Friesen 2015. For critique of the alignment between Christ and Dionysus see Edwards 2004, 39–40.

138 Emmerling-Skala 1994.

139 Weinberg 1972.

140 Morel 2015.

141 This figure, which overwrites the Apollo-Dionysus polarity of *The Birth of Tragedy* (see Smith 2000, xxv) occurs also in *The Will to Power*, §1052; for the figure in Nietzsche's thought see

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