This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from Explore Bristol Research, http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk

Author:
Mcglashan, Vivienne M

Title:
The Bacchants are Silent

A Cognitive Approach to Interpreting Ancient Greek Maenadic Ritual Experience

General rights
Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

Take down policy
Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

• Your contact details
• Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
• An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

The Bacchants are Silent:

A Cognitive Approach to Interpreting Ancient Greek Maenadic Ritual Experience

Vivienne McGlashan

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, School of Humanities, May 2021

Word Count: 72431

Abstract

For centuries, small groups of women across the ancient Greek world gathered every two years to celebrate the rites of Dionysos, dancing by torchlight high on the slopes of the mountains. They were, according to the historian Diodorus Siculus, taking the role of, or representing, the mythical maenads, the wild women who accompanied Dionysos on his travels across Greece and Asia.

Mythical maenads, the rapturous devotees that Euripides put on stage in *Bakchai*, are strange and fierce figures. Greek priestesses, on the other hand, were respected and respectable members of Greek society. The question that has frustrated and tantalised scholars for over a century is whether these ritual women would, for a short time, experience the delirious delight of the mythical maenad, or whether their performance was merely symbolic, empty of emotional commitment.

This thesis offers a new perspective on this question, by interpreting the ancient evidence from the perspective of theories drawn from the Cognitive Science of Religion. The twin theories of event segmentation and predictive processing provide a model that describes how cultural knowledge, such as mythical depictions found in vase-painting and poetry, affects how the mind processes sensory information to generate experience.

By analysing the ancient evidence for the sensory effects of maenadic ritual performance, we can establish the external cues that would have been processed by the minds of ritual participants. Through examination of cultural knowledge about what it meant to take the role in the *mimetic* performance of a mythical maenad, we can reconstruct the internal cues that would have informed this processing. Bringing together these external and internal factors, this thesis explores the possibilities offered by maenadic ritual for two profound religious experiences; 'loss of self' and epiphany.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ......Vivienne McGlashan........ DATE:.....29/05/2021....................

Acknowledgements and Dedication

I am extremely grateful to the scholars who have generously offered me their time and attention to discuss aspects of maenadic cult and Dionysian religion at various stages of my research. Members of the AHRC-funded CAARE network, the Embodied Mind cluster at University of Bristol, the New Classicists, and the staff and post-graduate researchers at the University of Nottingham have all enriched my understanding of this subject and provided me with stimulating and always enjoyable debate. I am endebted to discussions with Barbara Goff, Lucy Jackson, Jeppe Sinding Jensen, Fiachra Mac Góráin, Ellie Mackin Roberts, Chris Mowat, Maik Patzelt, Scott Scullion, Richard Seaford, and Yulia Ustinova, for the expert advice, suggestions, and inspiration these scholars have offered me. In particular, I would like to thank Jan Bremmer, for both his conversation and his generosity in sharing works in progress.

My second, third, fourth, and subsequent supervisors, through the long years of this project, have provided support, guidance, and kindness. They are: Emma Cole at the University of Bristol, who got me over the finish line and encouraged me to think about ritual performance from a new angle, and Judith Mossman, Eamonn Fergusson, Katharina Lorenz, Helen Lovatt, and Oliver Thomas at the University of Nottingham. I received funding from the University of Nottingham, to attend the JACT Greek Summer School at Bryanston twice; I am grateful both for the funding and for the opportunity to attend such a wonderful institution. My greatest academic debt of gratitude, however, is reserved for Esther Eidinow, who has been both the inspiration for and the guiding light of this project. Her phenomenal academic record and fearsome work ethic are well known and speak for themselves; she has also been a compassionate and generous mentor.

My thanks are also due to my friends and family who have provided support and entertainment as I have navigated this project. To David Wilson, for getting me through lock-down with discussions of the finer points of epiphany. To Justine Gaubert and Una Markham, for their enthusiasm and amazing proof-reading skills. To my mother, whose endless love, patience, and willingness to get involved in my academic journey never fail to amaze me. Above all and forever, to my husband, without whom, in so many ways, this would never have happened, who has quoted Samuel Beckett at me when my resolve failed, and whose great heart has lifted me each time I stumbled.

Finally, I dedicate this to the memory of my father, who would have loved my subject, enjoyed debating it with me, and, no doubt, would have corrected my Greek.

Table of Contents

Abstract..2
Author's declaration..3
Acknowledgements and Dedication 4
Abbreviations and texts 8
Chapter 1: Harnessing the maenads..9
1. What is a maenad? 11
1.1. Blurred boundaries of myth and ritual 11
1.2. The maenadic state of mind 14
1.3. The Queen of Persia's dream..16
2. A different approach: cognition and cultural knowledge 19
2.1. Brains, minds, and cognition..20
2.2. Predictive processing: the relationship between cultural knowledge and experience....23
2.3. Applying cognitive theory to maenadic ritual..27
3. Cultural knowledge about maenads and *mania*..30
3.1. Defining *mania*..31
3.2. Women in *Bakchai* 34
3.3. Destructive *mania* and the 'punished women'..37
4. Structure of this thesis..40
Chapter 2: Scholarship on maenadic ritual experience 42
1. Integrating visual and poetic depictions; an 'enthusiastic' approach 43
1.1. Erwin Rohde..44
1.2. Jane Ellen Harrison..47
1.3. Eric Robertson Dodds..50
1.4. Positive and destructive forms of maenadism 54
1.5. Themes from the 'enthusiastic' approach 57
2. Responses to the 'enthusiastic' approach 59
2.1. Scepticism, arguments from silence, and source selection..60
2.2. Anthropology, marginalisation, and social status..64
2.3. Embodied mind approaches, neurophysiology, and 'loss of self'..70
3. Chapter summary: approaches and ways forward..74
Chapter 3: Sources for the *oreibasia* 77
1. Introduction 77
2. Approaching the evidence 78
2.1. Identifying evidence for the *oreibasia* 78
2.2. Exclusions of private *thiasoi* and Italian *bacchanalia* 83

3. Evidence for ritual performance 87
3.1. Participants 87
3.2. Male involvement and private *thiasoi* 92
3.3. Location and environment 95
3.4. Costume and props 101
3.5. Explicit evidence: summary 106
4. Reconstructing the *oreibasia* 106
4.1. Convening the *thiasoi* 108
4.2. The procession 110
4.3. The raw-eaten sacrifice 111
4.4. Dancing on the mountain 116
5. Chapter summary: the end of the evidence 118
Chapter 4: Imitation, *mimesis*, and loss of self 120
1. Introduction 120
2. The process of μιμεῖσθαι: creation of the ritual world 121
2.1. μιμεῖσθαι and μίμησις 121
2.2. 'Mimesis' as imitation or representation 123
2.3. Μιμεῖσθαι as performance 125
2.4. Summary: μίμησις and inhabiting a role 129
3. Maenadic ritual as a possession trance 130
3.1. Typologies and mechanisms of trance 131
3.2. The identity of the possessing spirit 135
3.3. Identification with the mythical maenads 140
3.4. Summary: 'possession', music, and possessing spirits 143
4. The experience of μιμεῖσθαι: cognitive effects of music and role play 143
4.1. Role play, music, and cognition 144
4.2. Shared music and group identity 146
4.3. Combination of pipes and drums 148
5. Summary: Authenticity and experience of maenadic ritual *mimesis* 150
Chapter 5: Agency detection and epiphany 152
1. Introduction 152
2. Dionysos as an epiphanic god 153
2.1. Anthropomorphic epiphanies: myths of Dionysos 155
2.2. Sudden epiphanies: images of Dionysos 157
2.3. Controlled epiphanies: rituals and festivals of Dionysos 160
2.4. Discussion of themes from Dionysian epiphanies 162

3. Cognitive mechanisms associated with epiphanic experiences ... 165
3.1. Unexpected sensory information and agency detection ... 167
3.2. Agency detection in the laboratory setting ... 170
3.3. Summary: factors that affect agency detection ... 174
4. Agency detection variables in maenadic ritual ... 175
4.1. Low sensory reliability ... 175
4.2. Threat and fear ... 177
4.3. Priming from pre-existing belief and preparation ... 180
4.4. Priming from ritual activity ... 183
4.5. Summary: factors for agency detection in maenadic ritual ... 184
5. Chapter summary: Maenadic ritual and epiphany ... 184
Chapter 6: Maenadic ritual through the cognitive lens ... 187
1. Process and methods ... 187
2. Performance of maenadic ritual ... 189
3. Experience of maenadic ritual ... 190
4. Maenadic ritual in wider social and religious context ... 192
5. Future directions ... 194
Appendix: Inscriptions, text and translation ... 196
1. *IMilet*. 733: Epitaph of Alkmeonis, priestess of Dionysos ... 196
Text ... 196
Translation ... 196
Comments ... 196
2. *LSAM* 48: List of duties of the priestess of Dionysos ... 197
Text ... 197
Translation ... 197
Comments ... 198
3. *IMagn*. 215: Dionysian rites established in Magnesia-on-the-Meander ... 198
Text ... 199
Translation ... 200
Comments ... 200
Bibliography ... 201

Abbreviations and texts

All ancient texts are referred to by abbreviations in line with the specifications of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

All literary texts, translations, and numbering of fragments, unless otherwise stated, are those found in the most recent editions of the *Loeb Classical Library*; I have indicated where an alternative translation is desirable.

Throughout this thesis, I have tended to use Latinised versions of Greek names where an author is better known by this form, but have transliterated most other Greek names; I therefore refer to Aeschylus and Diodorus, but to Dionysos and Ikarios.

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis:

CGRN	Jan-Mathieu Carbon, Saskia Peels, and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge (eds.) (2016-). *A Collection of Greek Ritual Norms* [Online]. URL: http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/
CVA	*Corpus Vasroum Antiquorum*
DSM-5	American Psychiatric Association (ed.) (2013), *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth edition, Washington DC and London: American Psychiatric Publishing
IG	(1873-) *Inscriptiones Graecae,* Berlin
IMagn.	Otto Kern, (1900), *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maenader*, Berlin: W. Spemann
IMilet.	P. Herrman, (1998), *Inschriften von Milet,* Volume 2: Inschriften n.407-1019. Berlin: De Gruyter
IMilet. VI, 3 -	P. Hermann, W. Günther and N. Ehrhardt, (2006), *Inschriften von Milet*, Volume VI, fasc. 3: Berlin: De Gruyter
LGPN	(1987-), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, Oxford
LSAM	F. Sokolowski, (1955), *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*, Paris: E. de Boccard
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, (1969), *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris: E. de Boccard
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, Jones, *Ancient Greek Lexicon*, accessed via the *Thesausrus Linguae Graecae* [Online]
MDAI(A)	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*
SEG	(1923-), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden
Sitz. Berlin	(1882–1918), *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*

Chapter 1: Harnessing the maenads

αἱ Βάκχαι σιγῶσι

'The bacchants are silent.'

(Diogenianus of Heraklea, *Proverbia* 3.43)

'Es wäre sinnlos darüber nachzudenken, was eine griechische Frau fühlen mochte,

wenn sie mit dem *Thiasos* loszog.'

It would be pointless to ponder what a Greek woman might feel, when she set off with the *thiasos*.

(Albert Henrichs, *Die Manaden von Milet*, 1969: 224)

The delirious women of Dionysos blaze torchlit across the visual and literary art of the ancient Greek world; rushing, head-tossing women, who run barefoot across mountainsides and raise their voices in hymns to Dionysos, goaded by the insistent, maddening beat of the drum and the shrill skirling of the pipes. In the ancient Greek imagination, these exotic figures were sometimes the joyful devotees of Dionysos, who formed part of his *thiasos*, his sacred entourage. In other cases, they were women who had rejected his cult and suffered madness as a punishment. They appeared on the Athenian stage in a wild-eyed, rapturous throng in Euripides' unsettling *Bakchai*, and their torches and ivy wreaths cast flickering shadows across fragments from Alcman, Anacreon, Pratinas, and Aeschylus.[1] Dionysian female figures dressed in fawnskins dance across thousands of vases, as stately silhouetted figures, raising one hand in greeting or warning, or in joyous or savage bands, throwing back their hair, sleeves flying from their white arms. They brandish snakes, aim their ritual wands like javelins, they dismember fawns and, occasionally, human beings.

But there was also a group of real, human women, who, in alternate years, gathered on mountainsides in Delphi, Asia Minor, and Macedonia to dance through the night in honour of Dionysos.[2] The evidence suggests that this ritual, called by scholars the *oreibasia* (literally 'mountain-going') was a ritual re-enactment or role-playing of the mythical maenads, the female

[1] Alcman: frr. 56, 63; Anacreon: fr. 411b, Pratinas: fr. 708, Aeschylus, frr. 23a, 23b.

[2] The key pieces of evidence, to be discussed in Chapter 3, are: *IMagn*. 215, *Lois Sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (*LSAM*) 48 = Collection of Greek Ritual Norms (*CGRN*) 138, and *IMilet*. 733, in Kern 1900, Sokolowski 1955, Herrmann 1998, respectively (all reproduced with translation in the Appendix), and the accounts of ritual practitioners in Diod. Sic. 4.3.3, Plut. *Vit. Alex*. 2.5-6, *De mul. vir*. XIII (*Moralia* 249e-f), *Quaest. Rom.* 112 (*Moralia* 290e-291b), Paus. 10.4.2-4. Also of note is the epitaph for Niko written by Posidippus of Pella (*AB* 44), which will be reproduced and discussed in Chapter 3 section 3.1.

figures that we find in the visual and poetic depictions.[3] The ancient sources tell us that, like the mythical maenads, ritual participants brandished *thyrsoi* (ritual wands topped with ivy) and wore *nebrides* (fawnskins), they gathered on the mountainside in groups, also called *thiasoi,* that were largely or exclusively comprised of women.[4]

But what did it mean, to 'imitate' or 'represent' a maenad in this way? The grammarian Diogenianus of Heraklea, writing in the reign of Hadrian, recorded a proverb: αἱ Βάκχαι σιγῶσι, 'the bacchants are silent'.[5] In terms of surviving sources, this is sadly the truth: we have no first-hand testimony of the experience of maenadic ritual, no eye-witness accounts. The majority of our evidence for historical ritual performance comes from the Hellenistic period and later, in the 'hard evidence' of prose and epigraphic sources.[6] These sources tend to say little about ritual experience and, where they do refer to it, they use terms that we only imperfectly understand.[7] The mythical maenad, on the other hand, is found on vase-paintings from the archaic period, and in literary references as far back as Homer and the Homeric Hymns, and these poetic and painted depictions are vibrant with emotional life.[8]

This introduction outlines both a problem and a potential solution. Notwithstanding the views of Albert Henrichs quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the problem I seek to investigate is how we should understand what it felt like for an ancient Greek woman to perform a maenadic ritual, and whether she might experience anything like the delirious delight of the mythical maenad. This problem has vexed scholars for over a century, and their various approaches to solving the riddle have led to very different, and often conflicting, opinions on both ritual experience and the relationship between mythical and ritual maenads. The first task to be addressed in this chapter is, therefore, to explore the blurred boundaries between ritual and mythical maenads that we find in the ancient sources and explain why these make it difficult to explore maenadic ritual experience.

The solution I offer to the problem is based on research from cognitive science that provides a theory of how experience is generated in our minds, which will be outlined in section 2 of this

---

[3] Diod. Sic. 4.3.3*:* τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας κατὰ συστήματα … βακχεύειν … μιμουμένας τὰς …. μαινάδας, 'the women gather together … to perform bacchic ritual… imitating …the maenads'. This forms part of a longer passage which is reproduced for discussion in Chapter 3 section 2.1.

[4] E.g., *thyrsoi*: Diod. Sic. 4.3.3; *nebrides*: Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 35, Eur. *Phoe.* 1753-7, mountainside: *IMilet*. 733.3, Posidippus *AB* 44. The evidence for maenadic ritual, including the female composition of groups and aspects of costume, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. On male involvement in *thiasoi*, see Henrichs 1978: 133-134, Henrichs 1984b.

[5] Diogenianus *Proverbia* 3.43.

[6] See footnote 2 for these sources.

[7] Such as terms associated with *mania*, which will be discussed below in section 3.

[8] E.g., Hom. *Il*. 6.130-143, 389, 22.460, *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 386. On maenads in vase-painting, see primarily Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Moraw 1998.

chapter. This theory, known as predictive processing or predictive coding, proposes that experience is generated through a combination of external factors, such as those that might be caused by ritual activity and environment, and internal cues, drawn from our mood, intentions, and expectations.

Such internal cues would, I will argue, be influenced by cultural knowledge about maenads that participants would have derived from their immersion in ancient Greek culture. This cultural knowledge would have been strongly influenced by everyday contact with depictions of mythical maenads. The third section of this chapter will begin to unpack what this cultural knowledge might comprise. The final section of this chapter will summarise my approach and outline how I will present my investigation into maenadic ritual experience.

1. What is a maenad?

1.1. Blurred boundaries of myth and ritual

The ancient Greeks have left us no clear way of differentiating between the twin figures of the mythological maenad and the historical participant in the *oreibasia*. In the ancient Greek imagination, the two figures blur together, and attempts to bring them into sharper focus have time and again come up against the problem of understanding what the precise relationship is between them.

Terminology is unhelpful here, as both figures are referred to using the same words, apparently interchangeably. Literary prose sources which mention the mountain dance tend to refer to ritual participants as 'women around Dionysos' (αἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον γυναῖκες), or by a group or college name that appears to be specific to local cult, such as the Delphic Thyiades.[9] But women who are clearly performing ritual activities are also referred to in the prose, epigraphic, and poetic sources as *mainades* or *bakchai*, terms which were used of the mythical women and nymphs of Dionysos' *thiasos*.[10] The overlap was presumably intentional: the most famous ritual group to perform the *oreibasia*, the Thyiades who danced on the slopes of Parnassus, shared their name with a type of Dionysian nymph.[11] The late antique grammarian Hesychius defines a *bakchē* simply as 'a female of those who are bacchic, or of Dionysos' (μια των Βακχων. ἡ του Διονυσου) and his entry for *mainades*

---

[9] 'Women around Dionysos': Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII cf. ibid. XV (*Mor.* 251e) 'αἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ἱεραὶ γυναῖκες', the priestesses of Dionysos at Elis. Thyiades: Plut*. De mul. vir.* XIII, *de primo frigido* 18, Paus. 10.4.2.3, 10.6.4.

[10] Aeschylus and Euripides, for example, refer to the women of myth as *bakchai* (Aesch. *Eum*. 25, Eur. *Bacch.* 62, 690, 1387), but both terms are found in sources describing ritual performance: *mainades* in Eur. *Ion*, 552, *IMagn*. 215.26, 32, and *bakchai*: *IMilet*. 733.1.

[11] Alcman categorised Thyiades as a type of nymph: Alcman fr. 63 (in Campbell 1988: 438-439), also cf. Strabo 10.3.10 who lists Mimallones and Thyiades alongside nymphs and satyrs.

points the reader back to αἱ Βάκχαι. If there was once a lexical distinction between mythical and ritual maenads, it is not to be found in the prose sources.

Modern scholarly practice is also variable, reflecting this ambiguity: some scholars use 'bacchant' for ritual practitioners and 'maenad' for mythical figures, some use 'maenad' for both, some switch between the two terms within the same piece of writing.[12] For the purposes of this study, I will tend to avoid using *bakchai* other than in reference to plays of that name. In this study, I will refer to the ritual as 'the *oreibasia*' or as a 'maenadic ritual', and practitioners as 'ritual maenads' or, where appropriate, by a collegiate name such as Thyiades.

The apparently deliberate blurring between mythical and ritual maenads is also found in the iconography of vase-painting. Female figures bearing the maenadic attributes of *thyrsos* or *nebris*, or both, were popular subjects for vase-painters from the early sixth century BCE well into the Roman period, though the majority of surviving examples come from the fifth century, both in black- and red-figured works.[13] For scholars working with the iconographical corpus, the presence of *thyrsos* or *nebris* makes a maenad relatively easy to identify, and, even where such attributes are absent, a figure may sometimes be identified as a maenad simply by the presence of vines, satyrs, or Dionysos himself.

However, as has been found with the ambivalent terminology, it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish between mythical and ritual maenads in vase-painting. The painters of these images seem to have been perfectly happy to include ritual elements – altars, statues, pouring of libations - alongside mythological elements such as satyrs.[14] Aside from the images where labelled figures show that a scene clearly refers to a specific myth, such as the death of Pentheus,[15] there are no clear indications as to whether we should understand these painted figures to be Dionysian nymphs

---

[12] Respectively, consistent use of 'maenad' for the mythical figure and 'bakchai' for the historical ones: Rapp 1872 (using 'Mänaden' and 'Bakchantin' throughout), Ustinova 2018: 169-216, terminology discussed specifically at 174. Interchangeable use: Rohde 1894, volume 2: 'Mänaden' on pages 5 and 21, but 'Bakchen' on p.32; Harrison uses both terms to describe the women of *Bakchai*: Harrison 1903: 412, 445. Both figures as 'maenads' Dodds 1940, Henrichs 1978, Bremmer 1984.

[13] The most relevant surveys of such imagery are: Lawler 1927, Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Moraw 1998, also the relevant chapters in Carpenter 1997: 52-84 (two chapters), Isler-Kerényi 2015 for discussion of the fifth century images and Henrichs 1987, Hedreen 1994, Peirce 1998, Osborne 2010, Heinemann 2016 for discussion of whether the figures depict ritual participants.

[14] For example, a *stamnos* from the mid-fifth century shows a procession of Dionysian female figures with wine vessels and torches, described in the *CVA* (Goluchow, Musee Czartoryski, 21 pl.26) as 'preparations for a Dionysian festival', which includes a maenad carrying an infant satyr: red-figure Attic *stamnos*, attributed by Beazley to the Phiale painter, in the Warsaw National Museum Inv. 142465, described by Carpenter 1997: 81, Isler-Kerényi 2015: 134-135.

[15] Iconography of the death of Pentheus discussed by Weaver 2009.

or Dionysian human women, or, if they are human, whether they are members of the mythical *thiasos* or depictions of 'real' women conducting a ritual.[16]

For the purposes of this study, such a differentiation is irrelevant. Whether human or nymph, these figures represent the cultural conception of the mythical maenad and therefore are part of the semantic network describing 'maenad' that formed ancient Greek cultural knowledge. But if we are to use them as a source for the 'inner life' of the mythical maenad, we need a way of unlocking the iconography and symbolism. To this end, I will be using a theory that Robin Osborne put forward in his 2018 work *The Transformation of Athens*, arguing that images from the period 520-450 BCE represented a change in painterly intent, from depicting external events and actions, to attempting to depict inner life and emotion.[17] Osborne does not examine maenads in his study, other than through their relationship with satyrs, but his approach is extremely relevant to this investigation. Rather than being interrogated for details of ritual practice, the red-figure images of Dionysian female figures may instead show us how ritual maenads expected - or hoped - to feel when they took on the role of the mythical maenads.

In order to simply enjoy the poetry or the painted image, it may not necessarily matter whether the maenad being depicted was originally intended to evoke a mythological character or the ritual practitioners who so closely resembled them. When the poet of the Homeric Hymns described Demeter running to meet her long-missing daughter 'like a maenad on the shady-forested mountain', it was probably not necessary for their audience to know whether a mythical or ritual maenad was meant in order to visualise the image.[18] The action – running – and location – the mountain - evoked by the maenadic simile are common to both types of maenad. A maenad in a vase-painting who pours out a libation before an altar is clearly performing a ritual activity, so perhaps it is unimportant whether she is supposed to be real or mythical or whether the ritual activity is taking place in the 'real' world or that of myth.

However, the blurring of myth and ritual in depictions of the ambiguous maenadic figure cause difficulties for scholars exploring maenadic ritual, when trying to decide whether a particular activity belongs to myth, ritual, or perhaps to both. Some aspects of maenadic iconography and behaviour are more problematic to reconcile with belonging to a ritual context. The Theban women of Euripides' *Bakchai* not only wave their *thyrsoi* and sing hymns, but also suckle wild animals, carry fire

---

[16] See for example the argument over whether the red-figure maenads are supposed to be nymphs or human. Arguing for their being human: Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Henrichs 1987, Moraw 1998; nymphs: Hedreen 1994, Carpenter 1997, Isler-Kerényi 2001.
[17] Osborne 2018, particularly at 24-25; his study examines satyrs at pp. 188-204.
[18] *Hom. Hymn Dem.* 386: ἠύτε μαινὰς ὄρος κάτα δάσκιον ὕλῃ, translation by West 2003.

in their hair, and perform acts of superhuman strength and horrifying violence.[19] Vase-paintings of maenads not only carry *thyrsoi* and wine vessels, but also brandish torn-off limbs of deer.[20] The difficulty lies in deciding which – if any – of these activities belong solely to the mythical maenad, or whether they might also have been found in ritual practice.

Without a better understanding of the cultural knowledge lying behind these depictions, their differences, similarities and overlapping iconography, we cannot draw any firm conclusions about whether the ancient Greeks ever made a definite distinction between mythical and historical 'women of Dionysos', or whether it was always simply a matter of context.

1.2. The maenadic state of mind

Using the word 'maenad' or 'ritual maenad' to describe the participant in the *oreibasia*, and the terms 'maenadism' and 'maenadic cult', has been commonplace in the scholarship since Eric Dodds named his 1940 study of the evidence for the *oreibasia* 'Maenadism in the *Bacchae*',[21] but the word 'maenad' carries a burden of assumptions which must be, if not jettisoned, then at least acknowledged, and addressed.

The prose sources, from which we glean most of our knowledge about the details of maenadic ritual performance, are generally quiet on the subject of the maenadic state of mind. Where they do mention it, they use terms that are only imperfectly understood now; they speak of ritual maenads being ἐκμανεῖσαι, which has been translated as 'in bacchic frenzy', but we cannot say with any precision what exactly this phrase might mean.[22] For the ancient Greeks, being 'in a state of *mania*' carried a range of meanings depending on the context, the behaviour exhibited, and what or who was supposed to be the cause.[23]

Etymologically, the word *mainades*, from which we get the singular transliterated word 'maenad', belongs to a family of words that derive from the same root as μαίνομαι, a verb which appears to have carried the meanings 'I rage' or 'I am maddened', and μανία*,* a noun used to describe a range of high-intensity emotional conditions which we would describe as 'fury', 'inspiration', 'madness', or

---

[19] Eur. *Bacch*. 699-702, 757-758, 734-739, 1103-1104,

[20] As found on a red-figure *lekythos* c. 470-460 BCE, in the Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi in Syracuse, Inv. 24554, a volute *krater* c. 475-450 BCE in the Shefton Museum in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Inv. T115, and a red-figure amphora attributed to the Achilles painter, c. 460-420 BCE, in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris, Inv. 357.

[21] Dodds 1940, reproduced as an appendix to his 1951 *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Dodds 1951: 270-282. On the impact of Dodds' work on the study of maenadism, see Henrichs 1984a: 227-228.

[22] Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII, translated as bacchic frenzy by Babbitt 1931, ad. loc.

[23] On *mania*, see Ustinova 2018, which will be discussed in more detail below.

'passion'.[24] Scholars translating μαινάς in a poetic context, seeking a suitable English substitute, often render it in terms relating to abnormal mental states. When Andromache, rushing with a throbbing heart to see her husband dead before the walls of Troy, is compared to a maenad in *Iliad* 22.460 (μαινάδι ἴση), the word has been variously translated as 'like one beside herself', 'like a raving woman', and, more recently as 'like a crazy woman'.[25] Use of such language is not restricted to translating poetic similes, and is also used sometimes where the context might suggest that a specific religious meaning is intended: when Hecuba calls the prophet and priestess Cassandra μαινάς in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (173), this has been rendered as 'the mad one' and 'crazed and delirious'.[26] Other translators prefer to avoid the issue of translating the term, though this can lead to other, more theological, difficulties: in the 1999 Loeb translation of *Trojan Women*, the 'mad' priestess of Apollo has apparently shifted her loyalties to Dionysos, becoming 'the maenad girl'.[27]

The issue of translation matters because, if we are to call a ritual participant a 'maenad', the tendency to translate this word in poetic works in terms of 'madness' means that such connotations are projected onto the ritual participant. And, while *mainomai*, *mania,* and, by extension, *mainas*, clearly do carry some meaning connected to emotional and mental states, terms like 'crazy' or 'raving' make a statement about the subject's mental state which, to a modern Western reader, is a derogatory one. Using the language of 'madness' to describe the *oreibasia* ritual has encouraged some scholars to view these women as 'hysterical' (in 1940), as provoking 'disgust' (1949), or, more euphemistically, as socially 'marginal' (2003).[28] These words may justifiably be used to describe the worst excesses of the mythical figures who are described as being in a state of *mania*, but the only link between such interpretations and the ancient material describing the ritual participants comes from the way scholars choose to understand *mania* and *mainades*.

We have only one firm reference for how the ritual might have been experienced by participants, which comes from a description by Plutarch in the first century CE.[29] In his account of the bravery shown by the women of the town of Amphissa, Plutarch describes a group of Delphic women called the Thyiades, who experienced *mania* (ἐκμανεῖσαι) while performing a Dionysian ritual. Wandering through enemy-held territory, they arrived in Amphissa 'not yet being in their right mind' (μηδέπω τοῦ φρονεῖν παρόντος αὐταῖς). The women collapsed exhausted in the marketplace, and the

[24] Definitions taken from *LSJ* s.v.; a useful survey of uses of the word *mania* is to be found in Ustinova, ibid. at 2-5., with discussion of the linguistic root of *mainades* at 174 with footnote 64.
[25] Respectively, by Murray and Wyatt 1925 ad loc., Richmond Lattimore 1951, Peter Green 2015.
[26] Lattimore 1958, Shapiro 2009.
[27] Kovacs 1999 ad loc.
[28] As per Dodds 1940: 159, Nilsson 1949: 206, Dillon 2003: 139.
[29] Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII, often called 'The Women of Amphissa'.

women of Amphissa gathered around them to protect them from the hostile soldiers currently occupying the *polis*. Plutarch's use of a *mania*-derived word to describe the Thyiades' state of mind, and his image of ritual participants rushing through the night, unaware of the dangers around them, seems to suggest that ritual participants were expected or at least hoped to experience some sort of *mania.*

Whatever this *mania* might be, Plutarch gives no indication that it was an undesirable or shameful condition. A recent study by Yulia Ustinova of the ancient Greek concept of divinely induced *mania* has shown that, far from being universally considered 'marginal' or 'disgusting', *mania* might encompass a range of experiences, some of which may have been viewed as horrifying and frightening but others of which represented a transcendent delight or apprehension of the divine.[30] It centres, primarily, not on the type of experience but on the sensation that one is moved by a force outside oneself. The question is, whereabouts on the spectrum of joy and terror should we place the *mania* of the ritual maenad? To what degree, if at all, would ritual participants 'become' *mainades*, women experiencing Dionysian *mania*, or was this simply a symbolic re-enactment, devoid of anything more wondrous?

In the ancient sources, the ritual maenad has become lost within the rapturous, dangerous glamour of her mythical sister to form a single, blurred figure of ambiguous reality. For scholars attempting to draw her out into the light, the task is twofold. First, one must decide how to identify elements of ritual performance within the stories about maenads, and second, one must explain the relationship between the mythical maenad and the ritual participant. The apparently deliberate ambiguity that surrounds the figure of the maenad indicates that, for the Greeks, there clearly *was* a relationship of some sort, some way of conceptually tethering the mythical maenad to the ritual participant. But the distinctions and correlations between the figures now eludes us, buried too deep in the web of allusion and metaphor that the Greeks wove around them. Like a sort of optical illusion, the single blurred figure can only come into focus as two separate figures – one mythical, one real – who must then be yoked together in some way to explain why they co-existed so closely in the Greek imagination.

1.3. The Queen of Persia's dream

In her silk-hung bed in the city of Susa, so Aeschylus says, the Queen of Persia was suffering a terrible nightmare.[31] In her dream, two beautiful women circled one another, eyeing one another warily. Their flawless faces were exactly alike, proclaiming their kinship, though one was dressed in

[30] Ustinova 2018, with reference to Dionysian *mania* in Chapter 3, pp.169-216, and particularly her summary of types of *mania* at 370-371.

[31] Adapted by the author from Aesch. *Pers.* 176-199.

the clothes of Asia and the other in those of Greece. In her dream, the queen saw her son, Xerxes, trying to control these women, placing bits in their lovely mouths, and fitting a harness to their shoulders. One woman, stepping obediently into the harness, accepted the yoke on her shoulder; the other however twisted in her bonds, tearing at the straps, and shattered the yoke, sending Xerxes tumbling and torn into the dust.

If we can put aside the historical context of Aeschylus' play and the international tensions that the two women represent in it, then Xerxes' attempts to yoke the women is a good metaphor for the difficulties that scholars have encountered when trying to reconcile the mythical and the ritual maenads. One the one hand, there is the figure of the ancient Greek priestess performing a solemn service for her city, a respectable woman, usually of high status, who at least in theory conformed to ancient Greek ideals of womanhood. On the other side stands the mythical maenad, her *thyrsos* raised threateningly in blood-grimed hands, a figure more suited to the high forests and mountain slopes than to the civic altar.

Scholars who have attempted to yoke the mythical and ritual maenads have not, in general, ended up tumbled ignominiously in the dust as a result of their endeavors, but nor have their efforts resulted in successfully yoking the two figures side by side. One of the yoked figures tends to engulf the other: either the priestess at the height of her rites is transformed into a raging wild woman, or the mythical maenad is swallowed up into her demure sister's shadow, a figment of the ancient Greek imagination.

Scholars who bring the mythical maenad into the centre of focus, including Eric Robertson Dodds, saw the maenadic ritual as an opportunity for participants to temporarily escape the crushing weight of self-awareness.[32] Scholars of the second type, including Albert Henrichs, who cast the mythical maenad back into the shadows, argued instead that maenadic ritual was purely symbolic, and that participants experienced no abnormal mental state.[33] Both strands of scholarship will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, along with studies that have adopted interdisciplinary approaches to interpret the maenadic ritual experience, but a brief summary of the two approaches will illustrate the main difficulties encountered in trying to harness the maenads together.

Both strands of scholarship struggle, in different ways, with the connective yoke between the mythical maenad and the ritual participant. Henrichs, taking the position that the *oreibasia* was merely commemorative, argued that ritual maenadism could not have induced a state of *mania* 'on demand', on fixed occasions in the calendar and, moreover, that the civic *thiasoi* were composed of

[32] E.g. Dodds 1940.
[33] E.g. Henrichs 1982.

women 'who were respectable enough to be honoured by their cities'.[34] These two comments each expose an underlying assumption. The first comment relies on *mania* being something that can only happen spontaneously rather than being purposely induced by the ritual form. The second reveals a belief that *mania* was incompatible with respectability, at least so far as Greek women were concerned. In this strand of scholarship, the priestess is placed ahead of the mythical maenad.

Turning to Dodds and other scholars who accepted that the *oreibasia* could induce something that the Greeks called *mania*, we find an admirable openness to the idea that mental states *could* be changed 'on demand' through ritual behaviours associated with maenadic cult.[35] Dodds proposed that the *oreibasia* provided a purging of anxiety, a way to 'stop being yourself', and used it as an example to support his argument that classical Greek religion was not based entirely on rationalism.[36] However, his use of 'primitive' and 'hysteria' to describe maenadic ritual illustrate a tendency to foreground the dangerous, mythical maenad, neglecting the importance that the Greeks placed on the role of the civic priestess in state religious structures.[37]

Most other scholars have, in general, drawn up on these opposing sides of the argument, claiming that *either* ritual maenads would be considered 'hysterical' and socially 'marginal',[38] *or* that they were simply suffering from exhaustion or 'faking it'.[39] These approaches either downgraded the priestess to a disreputable, marginal figure who would hardly have merited the sort of respect offered to civic priestesses,[40] or denied her the sort of profound religious experience that is described in, for example, the inspiring, joyous words of the mythical worshippers in the *parodos* of *Bakchai.*[41]

The problems and differences of interpretation encountered in the scholarship arise in part because of how each group has fashioned the 'yoke' that they use to link the figures. First, there are differences of opinion about the degree to which depictions found in vase-painting or poetic works can be used as evidence for ritual practice, or whether myth and ritual are too tightly intertwined in these sources for them to be of practical use. One early proponent of the sceptical view, Adolf Rapp, argued against allowing *any* poetic depictions to be included in the evidence, as their purpose was

[34] Henrichs 1978: 144-145, Henrichs 1982: 143-144.
[35] Such as tossing the head back and forth: Dodds 1940: 160-161.
[36] Dodds 1951: 76, 79, 254.
[37] Dodds 1940: 'primitive' at pp. 163, 169, comparison with psychiatric patients at p. 161, 'hysteria' at pp.159-161, discussion of *sparagmos* and *omophagia* at pp. 164-166. On the priestess in civic cult, see Connelly 2007.
[38] 'Hysterical', see footnote 37 above, 'marginal': Dillon 2003: 139.
[39] Henrichs 1982: 146-147, Keuls 1985: 358.
[40] As found in the epitaph of the Dionysian priestess of Miletus: *IMilet*. 744.2.
[41] Eur. *Bacch.* 64-169.

merely 'to entertain'.[42] More recently, Henrichs distinguished between 'Dionysian literature' and 'real cult practices'.[43] But rejecting the use of such depictions to clarify and explain cult practice creates an unnaturally wide gap between the undocumented experience of ritual practitioners and the mysterious, but highly emotional, depictions of maenads in poetry and vase-painting.[44]

Secondly, there are differences of opinion on whether or not the act of ritual performance might have an effect on the mind and, if so, what that effect might be. At one end of the interpretative spectrum, it was enough for Jane Harrison, in her 1903 discussion of maenadic ritual, to remark, without further elaboration, that 'maenad means of course simply "madwoman"'.[45] At the other end, scholars who interpret the *oreibasia* as commemorative or symbolic tend to quote Diodorus Siculus' statement that ritual participants were performing a *mimesis* of the mythical maenads and interpret this as a purely symbolic act with no emotional engagement.[46] The nineteenth century binary model of madness/sanity that influenced Harrison's interpretation still informs much discourse about such topics. This is a particular problem for the study of ancient Greek religions, as so many of the key ideas and theories were first devised at a time when 'madness' was considered dangerous, largely irreversible, and (acutely relevant for this study), particularly prevalent in women.[47] There have been enormous steps forward in understanding what the Greeks meant by *mania*, what it meant to give a *mimetic* performance, and examination of ancient ideas about women's mental health and illness,[48] but the maenadic 'madwoman' has, so far, remained shackled to her stigmatising sobriquet.

2. A different approach: cognition and cultural knowledge

A different way of approaching the 'yoke' that binds together depictions of maenads in vase-painting and poetry with historical ritual experience is to use research from the fields of social sciences and neuroscience to interpret how maenadic ritual performance affects the mind.[49] In Chapters 4 and 5,

---

[42] Rapp 1872: 14.
[43] Henrichs 1978: 147.
[44] These issues will be discussed further in section 3 of this chapter.
[45] Harrison 1903: 388
[46] Diod. Sic. 4.3.3. Henrichs 1978: 144, Keuls 1985: 358. A different interpretation of the cognitive effects of *mimesis* and role play will be offered in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
[47] This attitude is not restricted to nineteenth-century scholars: the Swedish classicist Martin Persson Nilsson wrote that the 'violent epidemic' of the ecstatic Dionysian cult was particularly appealing to women 'since they are specially susceptible to this kind of infection', and concludes that 'it was no wonder that it aroused the disgust of those who were not affected by it': Nilsson 1949: 206. On the pathologization of the female experience in 19th century psychiatry, see St-Amand and LeBlanc 2005, with Busfield and Campling 2017 for balance, particularly Chapter 7.
[48] *Mania*: Ustinova 2018. *Mimesis*: Halliwell 2009Women's health, for example, the work of Helen King on the treatment of women in the Hippocratic corpus: King 1993, King 2007.
[49] The most exciting example of this approach is Bremmer 1984, discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.3.

I will introduce some specific research that look at two particular aspects of ritual experience, loss of self and epiphany, and explore possible cognitive causes for these.

Before these specific areas of research are presented, in order to use cognitive science to interpret maenadic ritual, there are some more general concepts about how the human mind works that need to be defined and explained. This work will not provide either a technical exposition of the neurological processes under discussion, nor an overview of the whole field of Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR). Some basic understanding of psychology is necessary, however, for the discussions which follow, so the following discussion will provide a basic outline of how our brains and minds work, describe a model of how experience is generated, and explain the relevance for the interpretation of ancient minds in a ritual or 'religious' context.

This section will introduce the cognitive theory of predictive processing, which describes a way of 'yoking' cultural knowledge – such as poetic and visual material – to experience. Following this, in section 3, I will look in more detail at what cultural knowledge about maenads and *mania* might have comprised for the ancient Greeks.

2.1. Brains, minds, and cognition

The first issue to address when using an interdisciplinary approach to ancient evidence is: 'is the model appropriate for my subject?' In the case of cognitive science, the question is really 'are modern models of cognition suitable for ancient Greek subjects?'

Physically, ancient Greek brains were like ours. The chronological and geographical differences between the ancient Greeks and ourselves are too insignificant to have produced fundamental changes based on evolution and natural selection. Although minor variations are found between ethnic and cultural groups today, there are some basic characteristics of human cognitive behaviour that can be traced back to our earliest days, and neuropsychologists tend to regard all *homo sapiens* brains as being fundamentally alike.[50]

However, the genes that design our brains continue to function over our life spans, so are also subject to environmental and social factors, which affect how those genes express themselves in an individual depending on their circumstances.[51] Experiences throughout our life, such as training in childhood or a prolonged period of a particular state of mind, can both change the way we use our brains to perform mental tasks and affect how our genetic biology is expressed.[52] Different cultures

[50] See Sherwood, et al. 2008 for a review of the literature.
[51] The following discussion is given at greater detail in Roberts and Jackson 2008. A useful summary of recent pertinent literature on genomics can be found in Ferguson and Lievens 2017: 388-390.
[52] Heejung Kim and Joni Sasaki have reviewed some of the most pertinent research in this area: Kim and Sasaki 2013.

require their human beings to behave in different ways, and research suggests that what holds true for brains that have developed in our Westernised, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) culture may not be applicable to minds from other cultures.[53] The basic building blocks of modern psychology are laboratory-based experiments, which are overwhelmingly performed on the most readily available test subjects; undergraduate student volunteers. These subjects are almost universally WEIRD, and this raises legitimate questions about whether or not findings about their minds can be used to generalise about the mind of a Tibetan Buddhist monk, or, for that matter, a Greek woman living in Hellenistic Miletus.

There are of course many things that our minds do which are shaped by our cultures and display superficial differences. The way we think about and respond to issues of kinship, child-rearing, violence, or death are all shaped by the society in which we have been brought up. But beneath these superficial behavioural differences are underlying conceptual similarities; as Herodotus noted, in some cultures, mourners burn their dead, in some they eat them, but all agree that it is of great importance that dead human bodies should be treated differently to the bodies of other animals.[54]

This differentiation between what is going on 'under the surface', and how those processes are expressed, is also found in studies comparing neural function across different cultures. Heejung Kim and Joni Sasaki have reviewed studies comparing genetic and cultural factors in areas which are subject to strong cultural influence, such as performing mental arithmetic or reading emotions from facial expressions.[55] In the studies examined, though differences in brain activity were noted between people from different cultures when performing the same tasks, these resulted in the same functions of cognition, regardless of where in the brain the activity was occurring. The neurology may vary between cultures, but the cognitive outputs are certainly comparable.

Psychologists Ara Norenzayan and Steven Heine recommend that the best candidates for universal cognitive processes – and therefore for cross-cultural comparison - are those which 'are identified across species or that appear to operate independently of content or context'.[56] These would include things like responses to eye contact, increased attention to evolutionary hazards like snakes and spiders, or the process of assessing quantities comparatively, which are found across all human

[53] This concept and the pleasing acronym for such minds are the work of Henrich, et al. 2010.
[54] Hdt. 3.38. The classic anthropological literature on the subject is reviewed in Palgi and Abramovitch 1984, a range of more recent case studies can be found in Robben 2005.
[55] Kim and Sasaki 2013. Some of the key pieces of research providing examples are: Tang, et al. 2006, Kim, et al. 2010, Sasaki, et al. 2011.
[56] Norenzayan and J Heine 2005, quote from p.773.

cultures.[57] So when looking for aspects of cognition that would operate in ancient Greek minds, we need to look for processes that are observable in several different cultures which show significantly different social factors relevant to the process being studied, or find the processes present in higher primates, or look at processes that can be triggered in a variety of contexts (e.g., observable and replicable under laboratory conditions).[58]

Humanity's propensity for religion is a strong candidate for a universal cognitive process. Putting aside debates on identifying a universal definition of 'religion', it remains the case that religious thought or behaviour exists in some form in every observed human culture. Religion as a human activity has been studied from a range of perspectives, which have each added a new viewpoint on this most peculiar of human behaviours.

Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) offers a way of exploring religious behaviours across cultures by examining the cognitive processes that underlie such behaviours. Broadly speaking, cognition encompasses activities such as information processing, creating and retrieving memories, making predictions about the world, assessing, reasoning and evaluating, and handling language.[59] Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field of research that first appeared in the 1950s in response to the dominant behaviourist paradigm of the time and has gathered momentum since. Rather than simply seeing our actions as instinctive responses to conditioning stimuli, cognitive approaches tend to prioritise how we process these stimuli, draws on research from neuroscience, anthropology, ethology, robotics and computing, linguistics, and psychology. Our interactions with the world are not simply reflex responses to pain and pleasure (though these have of course influenced our evolution), but are the result of complex modelling of how the world works and how we should best respond.

[57] Works citing background studies include the following. Eye contact: Farroni, et al. 2002. Snakes and spiders: LoBue and DeLoache 2008. Comparison of quantities discussed with background in Norenzayan and J Heine 2005: 772.

[58] There is an ongoing discussion on problems around replicability of studies in the social sciences. For an overview, see Camerer, et al. 2018.

[59] The whole field of cognitive science is too broad to provide a full bibliography here and is applied to other intelligences, both animal and artificial. The term was coined by Christopher Longuet-Higgins in his response to the Lighthill report on artificial intelligence, in Lighthill 1973: 30-32, but the principles were in development several decades earlier, for example in Chomsky 1959, and early research on neural networks: McCulloch and Pitts 1943. The *Journal of Cognitive Science*, produced by the Cognitive Science Society, first appeared in 1977, and its archives provide a better example of the range of subjects addressed than I can provide in a condensed footnote.

CSR is a sub-discipline within cognitive science.[60] This field applies the methods of cognitive science to how religious behaviour and concepts can be understood as by-products of the individual human mind, and how those concepts are more or less successfully transmitted through and between societies. In all cases, they seek to explain variations and similarities between religious behaviours across different human populations in terms of naturally occurring mental processes. The key premise of the approach is that religion is an activity that has appeared amongst humans as a by-product of cognitive mechanisms that developed for unrelated, adaptive purposes, and flourished because it provided some sort of evolutionary advantage on a societal or individual level. These underlying cognitive processes that prompt religious thought and behaviour would therefore be classed as universals, as they are found in all humans, and fulfil the same evolutionary purposes.[61]

2.2. Predictive processing: the relationship between cultural knowledge and experience

The brain is an extremely costly piece of hardware for our species to have developed; although it only takes up 2% of our bodily mass, it consumes around 20% of the body's total calorie usage, nearly all of which is spent on processing sensory signals rather than on active mentation.[62] Our marvellous brains are, however, not always terribly efficient, and there are processing 'bottlenecks', neural processes that we simply cannot carry out at the same time without suffering reduced processing ability, called 'cognitive depletion'.[63] The high running cost of our brains and hazards of suffering cognitive depletion have caused various evolutionary adaptations to optimise allocation of cognitive resources; that is, to produce the most accurate predictions about the world to ensure survival in a potentially hostile environment given a finite information processing capacity.[64]

One of these shortcuts is explained by a model called 'predictive processing', which describes how we manage the enormous amounts of sensory data that our brains receive every second.[65] As this data arrives in our brains, it is held briefly in our sensory memory, then is prioritised according to

[60] One of the earliest and most influential works was Stewart Guthrie's 'A cognitive theory of religion': Guthrie 1980. Key works in the development of the subject which have shaped my approach are: Boyer 1994, McCauley and Lawson 2002, Whitehouse 2004.
[61] Norenzayan and J Heine 2005: 772-776. Religion itself is an existential universal (in that at least in its early stages it served a variety of purposes and is present at different levels in different societies), and organised religion could be considered a functional universal (used in all cultures to a greater or lesser degree for the purpose of reinforcing social values and moderate behaviour).
[62] See Laughlin 2001 and Raichle and Gusnard 2002.
[63] Discussion of three of these can be found in Marois and Ivanoff 2005. The theory of how we allocate resources is generally known as cognitive information processing. The model still largely in use was outlined in Atkinson and Shiffrin 1968. On cognitive depletion, see Schjødt and Jensen 2018.
[64] Laughlin 2001, Niven and Laughlin 2008. An example of the way our bodies have evolved to reduce cognitive depletion can be seen in the visual phenomenon of Troxler fading: see Martinez-Conde, et al. 2004.
[65] The fullest recent discussion of the model is found in Hohwy 2013.

where we have focussed our attention, which draws selected data into our working memory.[66] Working memory is where we experience most of our life: it has a relatively small capacity and, unless the information in it is actively attended to, only stores information for a few seconds, hence the need to prioritise data. Information in working memory can be encoded into long-term memory, our mind's main storage facility, and can be retrieved back into working memory as required.[67] All these flows of information from one memory component to another may occur deliberately, as when we actively sniff a rose or memorise a poem, or spontaneously, as when we suddenly remember a face, or hear our name being called.

The flow of information that we know as attention (information moving from sensory memory to working memory) has been of critical importance to our species' development. Without the ability to focus in on a particular task by blurring out the clamour of competing sensory information, our ancestors would have found hunting and tool-use extremely difficult. We have developed a dual mechanism which allows us to maintain peripheral sensitivity to potential threats, but also provides a way to focus our cognitive resources on a specific task. The focussing effect of selective attention, called 'the attention gateway' is usually extremely effective at blurring out awareness of events happening in the periphery of our vision. Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris demonstrated that a subject asked to watch a video and concentrate on counting the number of times a basketball was thrown did not notice a very unusual event occurring away from the focus of their attention: [68]

We can exercise some conscious control over how to direct our attention, but there is also good evidence for some sensory data seeping past our attention gateway and activating information stored in long-term memory. This is known as priming and has been argued to exert considerable influence over how we interpret subsequent events. Most people are familiar with priming from external sources, such as unconsciously viewing subliminal fast-food advertising, or smelling a familiar perfume. These external prompts trigger access to memories of what a burger tastes like or who used to wear that perfume, priming us to pay more attention to messages of hunger from our limbic system, or to look for someone who reminds us of the dimly-remembered perfume-wearer.

---

[66] The term was coined by George Miller 1960: 65; the key papers developing theories on its operation are Baddeley and Hitch 1974, Ericsson and Kintsch 1995. The model does not yet completely explain all the processes within the system, and further development of the theory continues.

[67] Long-term memory includes explicit (or declarative) and implicit (procedural) memory functions. To simplify somewhat, procedural memory comprises instructions on how to use tools (including our bodies), and declarative memory holds information about events and facts. The original model was proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin 1968, with some challenges and refinements, particularly from Marc Howard and Michael Kahana: Howard and Kahana 2002.

[68] Simons and Chabris 1999. The video used in the experiment is available online for sceptical readers.

Though we may not be consciously aware of these prompts, they can affect our behaviour, making us desire junk food or contemplate a romantic tryst. [69]

Equally covertly, our own minds are also priming us on where to focus our attention all the time through a cognitive process called Event Segmentation Theory (EST).[70] This model belongs to a general class of prediction-error models used to understand how the brain processes information and targets attention, and is described in Figure 1 below.[71] EST describes how our minds process the vast amount of sensory data arriving in our brains every second and sort it into discrete chunks that are experienced as individual events. The incoming data is compared against representations made by the brain about what is happening now and what is going to happen in the very near future so we can plan appropriate actions.[72] These predictions are formed constantly in the short-term, working memory, and are informed by schemata. Schemata are the learned patterns about events that have been previously encountered and stored as representations of these events in the long-term memory, derived from cultural knowledge and semantic and procedural memory, and which are used in making predictions. These schemata-informed predictions are compared to the perpetual incoming flow of sensory information, directing the individual's attention to what the model predicts will happen next. The predictions will match incoming sensory data at varying levels of accuracy and, where the data does not match the prediction, an error message is generated. Where the errors are minor, the predictive model is updated to include the new information, or, in the case of significant errors, a new prediction is made. This is how we know that one event has ended, and another begun; this is how we 'segment' experience into manageable chunks.

[69] Priming is a source of some controversy. Experiments looking at priming effects (for example, the desire for a burger after seeing subliminal advertising) have often neglected to consider the huge range of factors that can affect an individual's response to priming at a particular time, and this has led to researchers attempting to compare results from subjects who experienced priming under very different circumstances. Joseph Cesario 2014 outlines the debate and suggests that lack of replicability between experiments is a side-effect of poor methodological hygiene rather than a problem with the concept of priming.

[70] Zacks, et al. 2007.

[71] These models have been used since the 1980s, for example, see Sutton and Barto 1981.

[72] Kurby and Zacks 2008: particularly 77-78 for the benefits of segmenting experience into events.

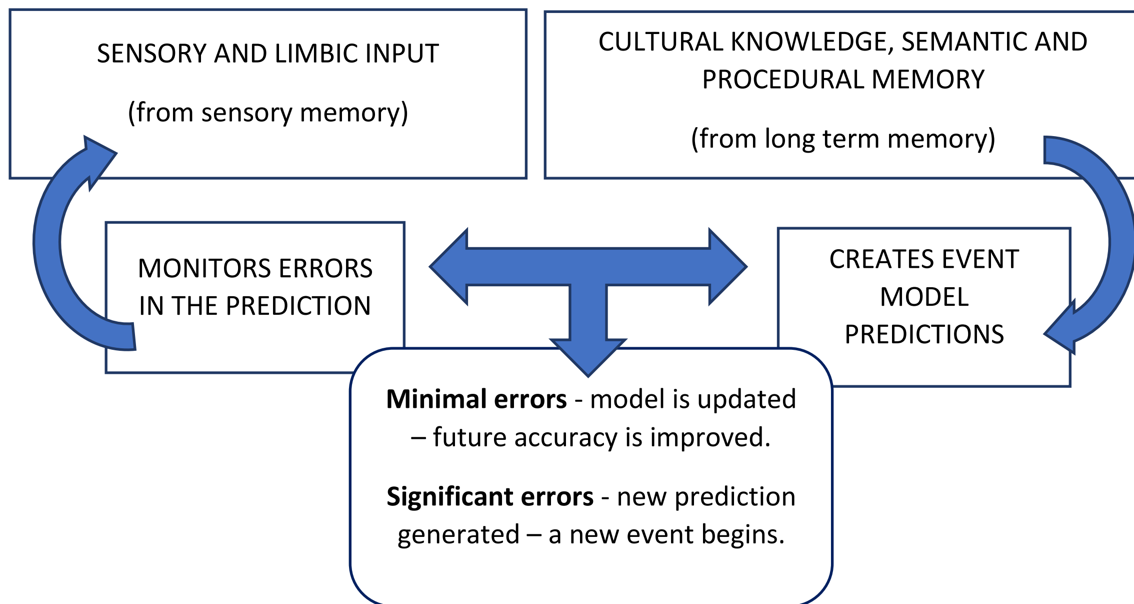

Figure 1: Model of EST in practice

The creation of such predictive models allows the individual to conserve cognitive resources by focussing attention on significant characteristics of the sensory data and error messages from comparison with the schema, rather than attempting to process all the sensory data constantly arriving in the brain. The resultant combination of expectations (based on predictions generated from schemata), focus of attention (directed by the predictions), and ability to react (depending on how well predictions match sensory input) make up our experience of the event. Thus, when making a cup of tea, the overall event may be divided into discrete events such as 'boiling the kettle', and 'adding water to pot'. As the pot is filled, the difference increases between the sensory input about the water level rising to the required level and the prediction about what 'adding water to pot' looks like. When the difference results in a significant error message, a new predictive model for the event 'stop pouring water and find the tea cosy' gets generated. If, however, the pot has a crack in it and the water pours out as fast as it is being poured in, the error messages would generate a new prediction based on memory, warning me of the dangers of scalding water, or accessing a memory that I had dropped the teapot yesterday. I might leap backwards from the scalding water and, once the initial safety-seeking response has been achieved, generate a new prediction about the likely future. The 'tea-making' event as I experience it has ended, and a new one ('dealing with a broken teapot' perhaps) has begun; my attention is prioritised to a new set of sensory data more relevant to the new model.[73]

[73] For a fuller discussion, particularly around the mechanisms, see ibid. at 74.

The process of making such predictions appears to be a powerful strategy that contributes to many cognitive activities.[74] The predictions are made based on experience, training and culturally accepted norms and patterns. For example, I leap away from the boiling water because I have experienced scalding in the past from a clear liquid with steam rising from it, and visually recognise the cause of past pains. I also recall memories of verbal training from my childhood, when my parents shouted at me to stop pulling on the cord of the electric kettle, did I want to get scalded? And I access other long-term memories from stories absorbed from conversations and the media, of people enduring appalling injuries from exposure to boiling water. This last factor, called cultural knowledge or cultural consensus, is a database of information that I have not necessarily directly experienced, but that I have absorbed through living in a societal group of storytelling and information-sharing individuals.[75] Using cultural knowledge as well as personal experience and training allows a higher level of prediction error minimization, optimising our predictions and our ability to avoid harm. As a social animal living in a language-using group, including information from shared cultural knowledge is a definite evolutionary advantage: individuals do not just use their own experience to interpret data, but can also draw on what they have been told by others.

2.3. Applying cognitive theory to maenadic ritual

Anne Taves and Egil Asprem have made a case for religious experiences to be modelled in the same way as other event experiences.[76] A religious experience is, after all, made up of the interaction of sensory data with internal predictions, just like any other event. Where we know something about the type of sensory input that the individual would experience, and the cultural references that make up the schema that shapes the predictions, we should be able to use EST to model the individual's experience. The majority of responders have cautiously welcomed the application of EST to religious experience.[77] Most of the objections raised to Taves and Asprem's model relate to the use of first-hand testimonia, and the task of unpicking experience from the memory of the experience in such accounts, which are not relevant to this study,[78] When it comes to maenadic ritual participants, we have no such surviving testimonia. Although the poetic and visual depictions

[74] Clark 2013 gives a thorough discussion of the process with responses and discussion. See also Andersen 2019 particularly at pp. 71-73 for examples of how predictive coding has been tested.

[75] See response to Clark (op. cit.) by Paton, Skewes, Frith and Hohwy in Clark 2013: at 42, column 2.

[76] The original paper is reprinted with responses and full discussion in Taves and Asprem 2016.

[77] Specific responses to Taves and Asprem from Andersen, Kavanagh, Lang & Kundt and Lindahl, reproduced respectively in ibid. at 20-21, 25, 25-27, 28-29, also 38-45 for Taves and Asprem's discussion of these points.

[78] Being primarily concerned with Taves and Asprem's applying EST to a range of events that is too broad, including internally experienced states like dreams and visions, and concerns that they rely too heavily on the accuracy of narratives of what the participant experienced: ibid. at 20-38 for responses to the original paper.

may have been influenced by reports from participants, they were then subjected to artistic repurposing within generic conventions.

Cognitive theories have already been successfully used to investigate evidence for religious experience from the ancient world. In 2014-2015, an AHRC-funded network called *Cognitive Approaches to Ancient Religious Experiences* ('CAARE') brought together scholars working in a range of fields, including psychology, ancient history, and anthropology, to explore how cognitive theories could be productively applied to ancient material.[79] Being involved in this project in the early part of my doctorate convinced me that ancient Greek maenadic ritual is particularly suitable for applying this model on three counts.[80] First, maenadic ritual happened infrequently, every two years, and involved sensory disruption, held at night in the open air, with drumming, head-shaking and flickering torch-light: such sensory confusion interferes with how well we are able to create long term memories about events and experiences. Participants were, therefore, unlikely to build up an accurate predictive model based on their own past experience. Lacking an accurate model based on their own experiences, participants would be more likely to draw on cultural knowledge when developing their interpretative schemata.

Second, we have information about physical ritual elements that can be analysed for their impact on the embodied mind. The most complete and ambitious study of these elements to date was conducted in 1984 by Jan Bremmer, in which he reviewed the elements of the ritual which could have some measurable effect on the body and identified several aspects that we can use to explore the physical and environmental factors that made up a maenadic experience.[81] Bremmer's analysis provides detailed knowledge about the sensory information that ritual maenads would need to process during ritual performance, and suggests which of these might have affected experience. With the benefits of research published over the intervening decades, we can conclude that not all the factors he identified would have had a significant effect. For example, his suggestion that altitude might have affected mental processes due to oxygen depletion is not borne out when

[79] Led by Esther Eidinow (PI) and Armin W. Geertz (CI). Videos and papers from the proceedings can be found on the project websites from both institutions. University of Nottingham: https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/humanities/departments/classics-and-archaeology/research/research-projects/past-projects/2016-caare.aspx; Aarhus University: https://cas.au.dk/en/about-the-school/departments/the-study-of-religion/caare/. An edited volume from the project is pending: Eidinow, et al. 2021 (forthcoming). A Festschrift for Geertz incorporates contributions from several members of the team: Petersen, et al. 2018.

[80] While I have been working on this thesis, Yulia Ustinova (another member of CAARE) has published an important work on divine *mania* which includes a chapter on bacchic rituals: Ustinova 2018: 169-206. Her study however refers mainly to the activity of private *thiasoi* of the sort described in Chapter 2 section 3.1 participants, while mine centres on the civic *thiasoi*.

[81] Bremmer 1984, reprinted with minor amendments in Bremmer 2019. I am grateful to the author for his generosity in sharing a draft of the revised study with me.

comparing the relative heights of ritual sites to research examining effects of altitude.[82] The basic principle, however, was that that the physiological effects of ritual performance could be demonstrated to affect participants' mental state: this insight was crucial in prompting this current study.

Third, we have a large quantity of information about the cultural knowledge shared by individuals in the ancient world that informed the predictive models. We find maenads in decorative depictions on everyday household objects and public statues, in plays and literature, proverbs and metaphors, and in local legends and landmarks.[83] Intuitively, we feel that exposure to such depictions affects subsequent experiences: though they could not be treated as literal accounts of maenadic practice, they must have enough in common with wider perceptions of ritual practice for the intended audience to recognise the references. The EST model proposes a mechanism for how such cultural knowledge is incorporated into an experience event as a symbolic pattern used to create predictions.

I am making the assumption that the women who performed maenadic ritual would have had access to the artistic products of their culture, such as the vessels on which maenads were painted and the literature in which they are described. Although the myth of the secluded Athenian woman has now been abandoned, doubts are still occasionally raised about the degree to which women came into contact with art and literature.[84] As my methodology requires ritual participants to have absorbed such cultural knowledge so as to inform their interpretation of their experience, it is worth reiterating the channels by which they would have come into contact with this knowledge.

Women would certainly have had access to the poetic sources: they would have heard lyric songs at festivals, probably attended some theatrical performances, and those of elite status were increasingly likely to be literate by the Hellenistic period.[85] Scholars looking for evidence of women's voices and women's experiences in vase-paintings have sometimes protested that these sources were created by men and many, such as sympotic vessels, were primarily used by men.[86] In order

---

[82] Bremmer 1984: 280. On research into effects of altitude, see for example: Gore, et al. 1996, Shukitt-Hale and Lieberman 1996, Gore, et al. 2008, Hewett, et al. 2009, Higgins, et al. 2010. I will discuss the altitude of maenadic ritual sites in Chapter 3, section 3.3. Only Parnassus and Cithaeron would be high enough to induce even the mildest symptoms.

[83] On women's attendance at the theatre see Hughes 2008 with full bibliography. Other examples include local landmarks: Pausanias 2.20.4 on the tomb of Chorea in Argos; jewellery: an early 3rd c BCE carved gem in the Getty Villa collection 81.AN.76.31; proverbs: Pl. *Phd*. 69c-d and Diogenianus *Proverbia* 3.43.

[84] On seclusion, see Cohen 1989. As recently as 1994, Simon Goldhill argued that the evidence we have for female attendance outside specific ritual roles refers only to women of 'lower class or non-citizen' status: Goldhill 1994, quote from 362.

[85] Theatre: Henderson 1991, Hughes 2008: 2-3, Roselli 2011: 158-194. Literacy: Cole 1981, Dillon 2013.

[86] E.g., by Goff 2004: 264-265.

for these sources to reflect female experience, we would need some way of ascertaining which images women chose to have around them and we have no way of knowing which images - if any - might have particularly appealed to women.[87] However, the benefit of my approach is that we are not looking for the expression of female experience in these sources, but instead we are looking for the dominant cultural paradigm that would have influenced their mental schemata. Although very few surviving images of maenads are found on vessels intended for female use,[88] a vessel does not have to be exclusively for female use in order for her to see it.[89] Furthermore, vessels of the shapes primarily for the use of women, such as the *pyxis* or *lekanis*, show few significant differences in maenadic characterisation compared to sympotic vessels; the same motifs are found, the same variations in mood and composition.[90]

On the whole it seems likely that by the late classical and certainly the Hellenistic periods, women were able to see images of maenads on a range of household vessels, attend tragedies and lyric performances, and even perhaps to read the works themselves. These contacts with cultural knowledge would have allowed the transmission of cultural ideas about maenads to the women who performed the maenadic ritual.

3. Cultural knowledge about maenads and *mania*

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to a range of visual and poetic depictions in order to reconstruct cultural knowledge, particularly in Chapter 4 section 3.3, when I discuss the characteristics of the mythical maenads in relation to ritual *mimesis.* Overall, I do not intend to provide a detailed study of the figure of the mythical maenad, which has been discussed in scholarship from a variety of different angles.[91] However, there is an important distinction that needs to be made: in the ancient Greek sources, not all women experiencing Dionysian *mania* behave in the same way, nor does their *mania* come upon them for the same reasons.

I will, therefore, provide a short discussion of the differences between beneficial and destructive *mania* (3.1) and illustrate this difference by reassessing the depictions of Dionysian women in

---

[87] Barbara Goff, whose work will be discussed in Chapter 2, section 3.2, makes this point: ibid. at 265-266., citing Osborne 2010 (originally published in 1997, which version Goff references).

[88] Noted by Moraw 1998: 8-9, 151-152.

[89] On women's attendance at family celebrations, at which sympotic vessels might be used, see Jones 2014, citing Hom. *Od.* 129-148 (the mixed-sex party Odysseus stages to fool the suitors), Menander, fragment 3 from *Synaristosai* in Arnott 2000 (in which a character makes a point of *not* inviting women to a wedding feast). See discussion in Burton 1998, Corner 2012.

[90] The only aspect of maenadic iconography that Moraw identifies as being significantly different on female-use vessels is the relationship with satyrs; aside from this, she finds that female-use vessels adopt the same designs: Moraw 1998: 11-14, 151-152.

[91] Maenads in *Bakchai* and other literature: Dodds 1960, Segal 1982, Henrichs 1984b, Oranje 1984, Schlesier 1993, Seaford 1996, Bremmer 2006, Friesen 2015, Stuttard 2016. Depictions in vase-painting: Lawler 1927, Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Carpenter 1997: 52-69, 70-84, Moraw 1998, Peirce 1998, Heinemann 2016.

Bakchai in light of this distinction (3.2). I will then extend exploration of this distinction to other myths about Dionysian women and show that the most extreme exhibitions of violence, particularly the killing of children, are not found in depictions of mythical maenads, but in the depictions of those being punished with madness (3.3).

3.1. Defining *mania*

An important aspect of cultural knowledge about maenads, and the origin of their name, is their *mania.* The Greeks had a range of words and expressions for what we might loosely describe as 'madness' which seem to have been applied without distinguishing between states attributed to physical illness, the malevolence of evil spirits, or the influence of a god.[92] *Mania* for the Greeks presented with a range of symptoms. The individual experiencing *mania* may behave in an uncontrolled or compulsive way and commit dreadful or ridiculous acts.[93] In the dramatic material, in which *mania* is often caused by divine anger, it can also result in auditory or visual hallucinations, often making the victim imagine themselves or others to be other than they are.[94]

There is only one definite direct reference to participants in maenadic ritual experiencing a change to their mental state, which is found in Plutarch's account of the Thyiades wandering into the enemy-held town of Amphissa during their ritual (*De mul. vir.* XIII). Plutarch makes two statements about the mental state of the women: first that they were ἐκμανεῖσαι, and, later in the narrative, that μηδέπω τοῦ φρονεῖν παρόντος αὐταῖς. These are rendered in the current Loeb translation (of 1931) as, respectively, 'in Bacchic frenzy... unwittingly' and 'sober reason had not yet returned to them'.[95] This translation is clearly employing some poetic licence; there is no mention in the original Greek of the term 'bacchic', for example, and φρονεῖν does not necessarily imply 'reason' in the sense of 'rational thought' as for example σωφρονεῖν might. Sophocles uses φρονεῖν to distinguish Tecmessa's *experience of* her troubles from the Chorus' *thoughts about* them (Soph. *Aj.* 942), and Aeschylus associates it with wisdom that comes through suffering (Aes. *Ag.* 176-178).

There are very few recent attempts to translate what seems to be one of Plutarch's less fashionable works. Jeremy McInerny offers 'still not returned to their senses' for μηδέπω τοῦ φρονεῖν παρόντος αὐταῖς, which works better with the concept of *phronein* as something experienced.[96] Hugh Bowden has rendered ἐκμανεῖσαι as 'disoriented', which is particularly interesting in that, rather than simply

[92] Eidinow 2012. See also definitions in Goldhill 1986: 133-134, 175-176, Padel 1994: 20-24, Ustinova 2018: 5-10. Singer 2018 provides a useful study on the ancient uses of such terms, though he does not examine the appropriateness of the English 'madness' to translate these.
[93] *Mania* as a cause of unreasonable behaviour: Hdt. 1.109, 3.30, Pl. *Sym.* 173e, X. *Mem.* 1.1.14, Isoc. 4.133.
[94] E.g., Aesch. *Ag.* 1050-1071, Soph. *Ajax* 726, Eur. *Her*. 922-1015.
[95] Babbitt 1931 on 249e-f, p.511.
[96] On uses of *phrene* and *phorein*, see Padel 1994: 20-23; McInerney 2003: 337.

making a comment about the mental state, it offers a symptom of being in that state.[97] In her study on the meanings of the word *mania*, Yulia Ustinova has chosen not to try and ascribe any conceptual translation to ἐκμανεῖσαι at all, leaving it simply as 'were in a state of *mania*', which she describes elsewhere as 'any deviation from an ordinary baseline state of consciousness'.[98] We could then understand μηδέπω τοῦ φρονεῖν παρόντος αὐταῖς as 'they were not yet experiencing normal consciousness'.

There is a little more that can be gleaned from Plutarch's description. It is not clear whether the participle ἐκμανεῖσαι should be read as in the middle or passive voice, which means that we cannot tell whether the Thyiades put themselves in a state of *mania* or were put into a state of *mania* by someone else. The word ἐκμανεῖσαι is related to the active verb ἐκμαίνω, which is often used to refer to a loss of judgement or self-control, most commonly used for extremes of emotion such as desire (e.g. Ar. *Eccl.* 966, Soph. *Tr*. 1142) or hatred (Hdt. 3.33, Paus. 1.11.5). The prefix ἐκ- may indicate 'out of' or 'from', but is also used to signify completeness, akin to the English 'utterly'.[99] The women may then be understood to be in a state of complete *mania*, akin to being in the grips of an all-consuming powerful emotion. In the context of Plutarch's narrative, a loss of control or judgement seems appropriate: during their ritual the women have become ἐκμανεῖσαι and, *as a result*, they are unaware of the danger posed by their falling asleep in enemy territory. Bringing this together with the discussion of *phronein* above, we can perhaps understand Plutarch to mean that the state of *mania* the Thyiades experienced was so complete that it resulted in them being insensible or indifferent to the relationship between their selves and their surroundings.

Words associated with *mania* in the ancient sources have sometimes, particularly in the earlier scholarship, been interpreted and translated as correlating to psychiatric clinical diagnoses, but this habit has largely now been abandoned as inappropriate and detrimental both to studies of ancient conceptions of *mania* and to modern clinical practice.[100] Certainly, scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were too quick to associate maenadic *mania* with 'hysteria', which marginalised ritual maenads by placing them among the popular contemporary views of women who were, by virtue of their sex alone, unable to control themselves adequately.[101] Terminology is important, and casual use of words like 'mad' may be considered discriminatory and stigmatizing to

[97] Bowden 2010: 111
[98] Ustinova 2018: 182, with the definition of *mania* at 2, and 7, 29 for further discussion of deviation from norms.
[99] *LSJ* s.v. ἐκ- in composite words.
[100] Eidinow 2012, citing the work of Helen King on hysteria: King 2012 cf. King 1993, King 2007.
[101] As described above in the final paragraph of section 1.3.

those with mental health conditions.[102] In the twenty-first century, as social taboos around discussing and acknowledging mental illness and neurodiversity are slowly being eroded, a more nuanced picture emerges.[103] The application of such terms to ancient societies should also be re-examined.

In a sensitive and illuminating recent study, Yulia Ustinova has assembled evidence for the various forms of divinely-induced *mania* found in the Greek corpus and discussed the way *mania* is presented in diverse genres, including medical and forensic texts, dramatic poetry, and philosophical dialogues.[104] Starting from Plato's discussion of typologies of divine *mania* in *Phaedrus* (244a-245c), she explores the evidence for how *mania* could be viewed as beneficial as well as dangerous. *Mania* of divine origin could, after all, inspire genius in poets, impart divine knowledge through oracles, or could spur warriors and lovers to achieve excellence through their fervour.[105]

Although in Greek myth madness may be induced by many greater or lesser deities,[106] Dionysos is sometimes said to be 'a specialist in madness' and the sort of *mania* expressed by the self-professed maenads in the choral songs of *Bakchai* describes a rapturous or ecstatic experience.[107] Dionysian *mania* could come upon an individual suddenly and require intervention in the form of rituals to make them safe, but it was also possible to approach this surrender to *mania* 'in the right way', finding in the experience a release from present misfortunes.[108]

Ustinova points out that, not only was divinely-induced *mania* not inherently a bad thing, but that some religious rites actively sought to induce it through careful preparation.[109] While the uncontrolled excesses of the enraged warrior or head-over-heels lover (or the Dionysian fanatic) might attract disapproval, the framework of mental or physical preparation that surrounded structured religious events helped the individual manage the experience of divine *mania.*[110] It is no

---

[102] Wahl 1995. For a more recent bibliography and analysis of the use of words such as 'crazy' and 'loony' in children's television programmes, see Wilson, et al. 2018. The emerging field of Mad Studies: LeFrançois, et al. 2013.
[103] On the benefits of an inclusive approach to neurodiversity, see the work of Temple Grandin, beginning with Grandin and Johnson 2005.
[104] Ustinova 2018: particularly her introduction pp.1-16. Other useful studies of the language and types of 'madness' in Greek literature include: Simon 1980, Padel 1994, Harris 2013.
[105] *Mania* due to biological causes was however almost exclusively depicted as detrimental: Ustinova 2018: 8
[106] Most famously, Hera's gadfly that drove Io mad in [Aeschylus] *Prometheus Bound*, Athena's revenge on Ajax in Sophocles' *Ajax*, and Aphrodite maddening Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus.* Lyssa, acting on the instructions of Hera in Euripides' *Herakles* 822-874, and those of Dionysos in Aesch. *Xantriai* fr. 169 in Sommerstein 2008. The Erinyes: Hom. *Od.* 11.271-280, Aesch. *Ag.* 1178-1195, *Eum. passim*. For Maniai as an epithet of the Erinyes: Paus. 8.34.1, as agents of divine revenge: *Theognis* fr. 1231 in Gerber 1999.
[107] Padel 1994: 150. Choral songs of *Bakchai* expressing delight: 64-87, 105-169, 402-433, 902-911.
[108] *Phdr.* 244e-245a: λύσιν τῷ ὀρθῶς μανέντι τε καὶ κατασχομένῳ τῶν παρόντων κακῶν εὑρομένη.
[109] Ustinova 2018: 125, 370.
[110] Ibid. at.55-168 (chapters on prophetic and telestic *mania*).

coincidence that, in the Platonic dialogue with which Ustinova opens her work, Socrates argues that erotic *mania* reaches its highest expression when tempered by 'the better elements of the mind' (*Phdr*. 256a: τὰ βελτίω τῆς διανοίας); that is, by the qualities of discipline and reason that form the basis of the philosophical life. With self-control and preparation, the experience of *mania* need not be an overpowering and destructive one, but one which can bring the greatest joy.

Plato is of course hardly a representative sample of ancient Greek thought, so we should be wary of assuming that his views were widely held. However, when forming his argument that erotic *mania* is perfectly acceptable so long as it is managed appropriately, the character of Socrates first lists four types of divine *mania* that have this characteristic, including Dionysian *mania.* In order to support his argument that erotic *mania* shares this characteristic, these examples would surely need to be obvious and inarguable to his companions. It seems likely that all four examples, including Dionysian *mania*, were considered to be of greater value when conducted in the proper manner.

Plato's description of Dionysian *mania,* as something that involved careful management but that brought considerable benefits, is thrown into sharp contrast by the depictions of divine *mania* that comes as a punishment. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the two forms of Dionysian *mania* exhibited by the two groups of women in *Bakchai*; the Lydian Chorus, who find joy in their connection to Dionysos, and the Theban women, who have been forced, 'compelled', into celebrating his rites (*Bacch.* 34: σκευήν τ᾽ ἔχειν ἠνάγκασ᾽ ὀργίων ἐμῶν).

3.2. Women in *Bakchai*

The most detailed literary account of maenads and maenadic behaviour appears in Euripides' *Bakchai*, first presented at the City Dionysia in Athens in the spring of c. 405 BCE.[111] The play was presented posthumously, Euripides having died in the previous year, as part of a tetralogy that included *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and *Alkmeon at Corinth*.[112] It was awarded first prize, only the fifth time in his career that Euripides had achieved this honour; it remained popular for re-performance well into the Roman period, and its literary influence has been detected in the early Christian writings.[113]

[111] At least two lost plays of Aeschylus also featured choruses of Dionysian women, as did one by Sophocles' heir Iophron: Suda s.v. Ἰοφῶν and Κλεοφῶν; Aesch. Frr. 23a, 23b, cf. Ps.-Eratosthenes *Catasterismi* 24. For reconstruction of Aeschylus' plays, see West 1990: 26-50 with further notes in Sommerstein 2008: 18-19, 60-61, 153, also 48, Wright 2018: 23, 28-29, 45, also p. 48 on *Xantriai.*

[112] Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 67.

[113] On its sustained popularity see, for example, Plut. *Crassus* 33.2-4, Lucian, *Ind.* 19, also West 1992: 376 on reperformance of the music. On its literary influence on Christian writings, see Cover 2018: 68, particularly the further reading in note 7.

The following analysis focuses on the two groups of women in *Bakchai*: the Chorus of Lydian maenads and the Theban women.[114] Euripides presents both groups as worshippers of Dionysos and both are at least once in the play called a *thiasos*.[115] But there are notable differences in their depictions, chiefly the horrific violence enacted by the Theban women.

Focussing just on these two groups, the plot of *Bakchai* can be much simplified. The god Dionysos returns to his birthplace of Thebes with an entourage of rapturous Lydian women followers, who make up the Chorus. But the rash and disrespectful King Pentheus rejects Dionysos' divinity and threatens him and his women with imprisonment. In retaliation, Dionysos drives the respectable women of the city mad, including the king's mother and aunts. In their madness, the Theban women become passionate devotees of the new Dionysian cult, leaving home to dance for him on the mountain above the city. They violently resist all attempts by the Theban men to bring them home and attack nearby villages and cattle in retaliation. Eventually, bewildered, enraged, and yet voyeuristically curious, Pentheus goes to the mountain to spy on the women himself. Dionysos, who has lured him into this folly, alerts the women to the intruder's presence, and they fall on the king and tear him apart.

The Lydian women are members of Dionysos' travelling entourage: 'θίασος ἐμός', as he calls them in the prologue (56), and 'my companions and fellow-travellers' (56-57: ἃς … ἐκόμισα παρέδρους καὶ ξυνεμπόρους ἐμοί). They have left their homes to serve in his retinue, his devoted worshippers and adoring companions. They represent the ideal of the female Dionysian devotee, the archetypal maenad: when they dance, they tell us in the *parodos,* Dionysos is described as physically present among them (135-169).

This emotional and physical closeness brings the maenad intense joy. The air is full of perfume and the sound of drums and flutes (142-143, 156, 160). Their dance is 'a toil that is sweet and a weariness that wearies happily' (66-67) that is performed with delight 'in joy, like a colt with its grazing mother' (164-165). These are not serene priestesses – their lyrics are in the excited and passionate dochmiac meter, and their short, repeated shouts of 'on, bakchai!' and 'to the mountain!' provide a driving rhythm for what must have been a spectacular entrance song.[116]

---

[114] Rather than examining, for example, the interrogation scene between Pentheus and Dionysos, which has prompted much speculation about initiation into the Dionysian Mysteries: see for example Seaford 1981, Seaford 1987.

[115] E.g., Theban women as *thiasos*: lines 221, 680. As worshippers: 34, 723-727. Chorus as *thiasos*: 56, 379, 584. Chorus as worshippers: 64-68. References to trieteric rituals, dancing on mountains, wearing *nebrides* and carrying *thyrsoi* are found at 23-42, 64-169, 677-727, 912-944.

[116] For the emotional impact of the dochmiac meter, see West 1982: 62, 108–15, D'Angour 2014: 196-197. On the appearance of the Chorus, see Carey 2016, Wyles 2016.

By contrast with the Chorus, the Theban women behave in different ways at different points in the play. By examining these different behaviours and the circumstances under which they are expressed, we can shed some light not only on what it meant to be a 'good' or 'proper' maenad but also on another common Dionysian female figure - the women punished by madness.

There are three narrative descriptions of the Theban women.[117] We first hear about them from Dionysos himself. In the prologue (20-33), he explains that he has driven the Theban princesses and all the other women of Thebes from their homes in a state of *mania* (32-33: αὐτὰς ἐκ δόμων ᾤστρησ᾽ ἐγὼ μανίαις). The form their *mania* takes is to go to live on the slopes of Mount Cithaeron, wearing the costume of ritual maenads (34-42). Dionysos ends the prologue by stating that he will 'set matters right' in Thebes but that, should Pentheus resist, he will 'lead an army of maenads' against him (48-52).

This speech sets up a differentiation that continues in the speeches of the two Messengers. First, Dionysos says, he has forcibly made the women of Thebes worship him but, should the conflict between him and Pentheus not be resolved, he will transform them into his army and unleash their destructive capabilities. In the account provided by the first messenger, a Herdsman who observed the Theban women while grazing his cattle, and that of the second messenger, a Herald who accompanied Pentheus to the mountain, this pattern is repeated. Both accounts agree: the women are in *thiasoi*, each one under the leadership of one of the princesses, they are dressed in *nebrides*, sing bacchic songs, and are equipped with *thyrsoi* (683, 696, 704, 1056-1057). They are also focussed on their ritual responsibilities, spending time ensuring they are properly attired and beginning their ritual dance 'at the appointed hour' (695-698, 703-704, 723-726, 1048-1055).

The Herdsman says that these women are 'a marvel of orderliness to behold' (693), peaceful and calmly industrious (684-685, 1053). They seem comfortable in the magical Dionysian world, displaying affectionate relationships with wild animals (698-702), and conjuring springs of water, wine, and milk from the earth (704-711). As the narrative continues, it is clear that they are now closely aligned with the god they so recently denied: the Herdsman recognises the hand of Dionysos in the miracles and he comments that the sight would make even a nonbeliever like Pentheus pray (707-713). When the women begin their dance, the whole of nature moves with them, the mountain itself and all the animals, and 'nothing was left unmoved by their running' (723-727).

These are truly wondrous miracles, characteristic of the beneficial form of Dionysian *mania* described above in relation to the Chorus. However, as foreshadowed by Dionysos' warning, events

[117] Speeches: the first delivered by Dionysos (1-63), the second (677-774) and third (1043-1152) by Messengers.

in both speeches suddenly take a turn for the worse when men attempt to interfere with the women. In the first speech, the Herdsman and his friends plan to extract the king's mother Agaue from the *thiasos* (714-723); in the second, Dionysos alerts the women to the spy in their midst (1063-1083). In both cases, the women become instantly aggressive: the Herdsman and his friends flee (735-747), but Pentheus has no chance of escape. Though he pleads with his mother, Agaue, she does not recognise him and leads the onslaught of women who tear him apart (1114-1136).

In both messenger speeches, the mood abruptly changes from a peaceful, magical Dionysian idyll to a frenzy of violence, described in the most frightful and graphic detail. If these last elements were a part of maenadic ritual as practiced, then the opinion that the ritual might be viewed with horror may well be correct.[118] Eric Dodds and Albert Henrichs recognised the essential difference between the behaviour of the Lydian Chorus and that of the Theban women, but both scholars termed both behaviours 'maenadic'.[119] This, I shall argue below, is an error. There is no corresponding propensity for violence found in Euripides' depiction of the Lydian Chorus. Though they call upon 'the hounds of Lyssa' to take revenge on Pentheus' impiety and greet his death with delight, at no point is there any suggestion that they might perform such acts themselves.[120] The violent behaviour only occurs when the Theban women are interfered with, just as Dionysos intended all along (50-52). When the condition he specified in the prologue is met, the Theban women abandon their ritual activity and instead behave according to a different mythical trope: the murderous avatars of Dionysos' wrath.

3.3. Destructive *mania* and the 'punished women'

The Theban women in *Bakchai* are experiencing their *mania* through divine displeasure for blasphemy but only some of the Theban women are being punished for this crime. The blasphemers in this case are the Theban princesses and Pentheus himself, and it is they who suffer as a result of Dionysos' anger. Pentheus is first mentally and then physically torn apart for his impiety; his mother and aunts are stained with the horrid guilt of kin-killing. By contrast, Euripides makes no mention of any guilt attached to the ordinary women of Thebes who had participated in Pentheus' murder. In the final scene of *Bakchai*, when the king's mother Agaue is finally released from her *mania* (1264-1289), she differentiates between the princesses and the other women, bitterly acknowledging that she and her sisters will leave Cithaeron and the *thyrsos* to 'the other bakchai' (1381-1387).

Kin-killing, and particularly the killing of children, is the most unforgivable act that Dionysian women perform. In their raid on the villages, the Theban women of *Bakchai* steal children, which must

---

[118] See footnote 37 for examples of such views.
[119] Dodds 1940: 159, Henrichs 1978: 144, using the terms 'black' and 'white' maenadism.
[120] Eur. *Bacch.* 977-996, 1029-1034, contrasted with, for example, the Furies in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* who threaten to take an active role in the destruction of their enemy (254-275).

surely have been intended to evoke the audience's recollection of other Dionysian women, who are said to kill and even eat children.[121] However, this trope is found only among the women who are being punished with madness, not the maenads; the child-killing women are suffering as a result of offending Dionysos, just as Pentheus and the daughters of Cadmus had denied his divinity in *Bakchai*.[122]

Furthermore, Dionysos is not the only god to afflict his enemies with this type of madness; the Argive women's madness was in some sources not attributed to Dionysos at all but to Hera, and Euripides' *Herakles* kills his children under the same goddess' baleful influence.[123] The children that these offenders kill are always their *own* children; they have not developed an indiscriminate taste for human flesh, but for that of their own kin. [124] Nor is child-killing madness restricted to women; Dionysian punitive madness in men also results in murdered children or other forms of destruction of their households.[125] Child-killing is not then something peculiar to women suffering Dionysian *mania*, and this particular trope never appears in connection with the maenads who follow Dionysos willingly.[126] Destroying one's own family is simply what people do in Greek stories when they are being punished with madness for impiety.

Even if such violence were accepted as typical of Dionysian women, it would still be unfounded to identify the women who do this as the companions of Dionysos, the role models whom the ritual maenads were representing. The daughters of Proitos are described as being made to wander (πλανάω), running in no kind of order through the wilderness (μετ᾽ ἀκοσμίας ἁπάσης διὰ τῆς ἐρημίας ἐτρόχαζον).[127] There is no suggestion that they are either in the company of Dionysos, or that they are serving him. Divine *mania* is inflicted on the blasphemer and causes them to do

---

[121] Eur. *Bacch.* 753-754: ἐπεσπεσοῦσαι πάντ᾽ ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω διέφερον. There is no further reference to the children or the metalware that they lay hands upon, noted by MacLeod 2006: 579. On eating children: E.g., Plut. *QG* 38.

[122] According to Ovid, the Minyades also spurned Dionysos' rites (*Met.* 4.1-54) though he does not recount the version in which they wish to eat their children, see also Ps-Apollod. 2.2.2 on the Proetids. Rejection of Dionysian rites is also given as a reason for Dionysos' quarrels with men: Hom. *Il.* 6.130-143, Ps-Apollod. 3.5.1, Ovid, *Met.* 4.605, Paus. 1.20.2, 2.23.7-8; Ps-Plut. *Parallel Stories* 19.

[123] Bacchylides *Victory Odes* 11.53-8, 92-112, Pseudo-Apollodorus 2.2.2.

[124] What may appear to us to be an apparently random element introduced to the selection of the child to be eaten, like the drawing of lots in Plutarch's account of the origins of the Agrionia, would have been understood by the Greeks to allowing the divine a hand in making the decision. Eidinow 2011: 25-52 discusses divine influence on chance.

[125] Seaford 1993. The Thracian king Lycurgus and Theban prince Athamas kill their sons whilst in the grips of punitive madness (Aesch. Frr. 28, 56, Ps-Apollod. 3.5.1, 3.26-29, Paus., 1.20.2), and the Roman Aruntius and Syracusan Cyanippos both raped their daughters, and were subsequently killed, while under Dionysos' angry influence (Ps-Plut. *Parallel Stories* 19).

[126] Moraw 1998: 149 points out that no surviving vases show maenads killing infants, despite other scenes of literary child-killing, such as the deaths of Astyanax or Dryas, being a relatively common theme.

[127] Ps.-Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.2.2.

something awful. This almost always involves kin-killing and is therefore representative of other destructive divine *mania* and not a specifically Dionysian form.

This is not to say that maenads in the grip of beneficial *mania* are never violent, but that their violence is part of their devoted service to Dionysos. In other myth narratives, maenads form part of his army, fighting and dying alongside him in India and in Argos.[128] They also enact his vengeance: aside from Pentheus, Dionysos also sets his maenads on the musician Orpheus, who has angered him by rejecting or interfering with his rites.[129] While these murders are horrible, they do not carry the dishonour of kin-killing.

The women who kill Orpheus have been weaponised by Dionysos to punish wrongdoers, a fundamentally different situation to those women and men who destroy their own households because they have done wrong. Where maenads are responsible for such non-kin murders as those of Orpheus or Pentheus, they are acting as agents of divine retribution in inflicting punishment on an offender: the unnamed speaker in a fragment of Aeschylus' *Bassarai* (fr. 23a) describes Dionysos attacking Orpheus himself, and, in *Bakchai*, the Chorus call on Dike to avenge the insult to Dionysos through the actions of the Theban women (1111-1116).

But how, then, should we understand the horrific description of the attack on the villages in *Bakchai* 728-774 that occurs after the failed ambush? The women's dreadful response, which filled the Herdsman with pious awe, merely infuriates Pentheus (778-786), building on his already dangerous temper (537-555), goading him ever further towards his death. This escalation – and the intervention that prompts it - is necessary for Dionysos' revenge to be enacted, just as an intervention is required later for the Theban women to attack Pentheus himself (1076-1081). This event marks the turning point for the plot and for Pentheus' fate.

The mysterious 'wanderer from the city' who instigates the disastrous ambush is never heard from again, but his identity may be deduced from the context. Euripides takes pains to separate him from the confused herders of livestock, both by his origin 'from the city' and through marking his abilities

[128] E.g., Aesch. *Eum.* 20-25. Paus. 2.20.4, 2.22.1, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 14.203-227. See MacLeod 2006 for discussion of military language in *Bakchai.*

[129] There are several accounts of the reasons for and manner of Orpheus' death. The version which includes maenads seems to find its earliest iteration in Aeschylus' fragmentary *Bassarids*: Sommerstein 2008: 18-19. Hyginus (writing around the turn of the Common Era, *Astronomia* 2.6) attributes the story to the third-century BCE polymath Eratosthenes; a first-century CE version of his *Catasterismi* survives which cites Aeschylus' version, though it is of dubious authorship (Ps-Eratosthenes, *Catasterismi* 24). Guthrie 1935: 31-35 gives sources for at least three accounts of Orpheus' death, only one version of which is due to maenadic violence (he mentions a version from Pausanias but fails to give the reference: it is 9.30), also noted by Kefalidou 2009: 94.

as a practiced speaker.[130] This character is surely intended to be Dionysos himself, once more in disguise. Dionysos is a wanderer who is nonetheless from the city of Thebes, he has recently been on the slopes of Cithaeron, and, as the subsequent interrogation scene shows, he is nothing if not persuasive. The Theban women's violence is caused by Dionysos' direct intervention to further his plan, just as he said from the start.

This discussion, though brief, has shown that *Bakchai* presents us with a nuanced portrayal of different types of divine-induced *mania*. The blissful, beneficial form of *mania* can be found in the songs of the Chorus and the behaviour of the Theban women before they are interrupted. In terms of proper maenadic behaviour, the subsequent outpourings of violence are brought about by impious and blasphemous behaviour and form no part of correctly performed ritual *mania*. Ritual maenads might imagine themselves as becoming correspondingly fierce if the worst should happen and their rites be disturbed, but this aggression would be justified in terms of protecting the integrity of the ritual. In terms of cultural knowledge about maenads that ritual participants would be imagining as they embarked on their performance, it is the behaviour of the peaceful but joyous mythical maenads that they would be imagining, not the kin-killing *mania* of Agaue and her sisters, and not the enactment of Dionysos' vengeance. It would, after all, be devoutly hoped that no such provocation would interrupt a real ritual performance.

4. Structure of this thesis

This concludes my assessment of the problem of understanding maenadic ritual experience, my proposed solution, and some parameters for defining what I mean when I talk about maenads and *mania*.

In what follows, I will first, in Chapter 2, return to the scholarship, with particular focus on the different ways that scholars have tried to harness the maenads together to explore maenadic ritual experience, particularly in regards to 'loss of self' and 'epiphany'. The resulting difficulties and conflicting opinions, which have been touched on in section 1.3 above, will be examined in greater detail. This chapter will also look at the productive and inventive use of interdisciplinary theories to interpret maenadic experience and show how my work builds on these approaches.

Chapter 3 will re-examine the evidence for the performance of the *oreibasia* in ancient Greece. This analysis will introduce the main epigraphic and prose sources, and also incorporate material from drama and vase-painting. In contrast with Ustinova's chapter on bacchic *mania*, the study will exclude private *thiasoi*, and also Italian cult, and the reasons for this will be explained. This chapter

[130] *Bacch.* 717: τρίβων λόγων, compared to the Messenger himself who doubt his ability to influence Pentheus (664-671).

will end with a reconstruction of the events around and leading up to the dance on the mountain, the *oreibasia* itself.

Having established the ritual activity and environment that provide the sensory data for maenadic ritual experience, Chapters 4 and 5 will move on to looking at two aspects of the maenadic ritual from the perspective of cognitive theories. Chapter 4 will draw on insights from psychology, anthropology, and performance studies to explore how 'imitating' a maenad might induce a sense of 'loss of self', and Chapter 5 will examine how the cognitive effects of maenadic ritual activity and environment could induce an epiphanic experience.

Finally, Chapter 6 will reflect on how helpful a cognitive approach has been in interpreting maenadic ritual experience and show how the insights it offers help us understand both the experience of individual participants and the place of maenadic ritual in the wider socio-religious landscape.

Chapter 2: Scholarship on maenadic ritual experience

'It may possibly be objected that Maenads are not the same as either Thyiades or Phoibades. My point is that they are.'

(Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena,* 1903, p.395)

'aber eine solche Handlung nach Vorschrift alle zwei Jahre an einem bestimmten Tag wieder vorgenommen werden muss, so ist die Vorschrift und die Tradition die Veranlassung zu der ekstatisch scheinenden Handlung nicht die eigene Seelenbewegung'.

('if such an act has to be carried out every two years, on a particular day, according to regulations, then the requirement and the tradition is the inspiration for the apparently ecstatic act, not the soul's own movement'

Adolf Rapp, *Die Mänade im griechischen Cultus*, 1872, p.12)

This chapter will examine some of the approaches that scholars have used to explore how the maenadic ritual would be experienced by participants. In order to do this, I will provide a brief history of the scholarship on maenadic ritual, starting with Erwin Rohde's 1894 work *Psyche*, showing how Jane Ellen Harrison and Eric Dodds developed Rohde's conception of maenadic ritual as something that served a psychological function for participants.[1] To return to the metaphor of the Queen of Persia's dream, all three of these scholars yoked their maenads extremely closely together, seeing the mythical maenad as both representing what maenadic ritual felt like for participants and reflecting actual ritual practice. This strand of scholarship has had a huge influence not only on subsequent scholarship but also, in large part thanks to the immense popularity of Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational*, on the representation of the maenad in popular culture.

Having examined this strand of scholarship, which I refer to as the 'enthusiastic' approach, I will present three alternative approaches that have been offered, each of which interprets the ancient material in a different way, with significantly different conclusions. The main approaches which will be discussed here are those of Adolf Rapp, Albert Henrichs, Barbara Goff, and Jan Bremmer.[2] Adolf Rapp represents an extreme of the 'sceptical' viewpoint, arguing that there is no evidence at all for any changes to mental state in maenadic ritual.[3] After publishing several papers in the earlier, more

[1] Rohde 1894, translated into English in 1925 by W.B. Hillis (Rohde 1925), Harrison 1903: particularly 388-400, Harrison 1912: 39-42, 132-134, 423-424, Dodds 1940, Dodds 1951, Dodds 1960.
[2] The main works, respectively, are: Rapp 1872, Henrichs 1969, Henrichs 1978, Henrichs 1982, Henrichs 1984a, Goff 2004, Bremmer 1984, reprinted with minor changes as Bremmer 2019.
[3] Rapp 1872.

‘sceptical’ vein (which will be discussed in section 2.1), Albert Henrichs became interested in a structuralist reading of the figure of Dionysos which led him to suggest that Dionysian religion might, ‘at least temporarily’ induce some change to ‘self-perception’.[4] Barbara Goff offers an anthropological reading of maenadic ritual as a cultural resource through which women could engage with and even rearticulate their relationship to the society that oppressed them.[5] Finally, Jan Bremmer and Yulia Ustinova explore (respectively) physiological factors and cognitive functions that might be found in maenadic ritual and that could account for aspects of the depictions of maenads in poetry and vase-painting.[6] This chapter will then conclude with a summary of the most promising findings from these approaches and how my cognitive approach complements and builds on them.

1. Integrating visual and poetic depictions; an ‘enthusiastic’ approach

Writing in the late nineteenth century, Erwin Rohde (1845-1898) provided the first important analysis of maenadic ritual, examining its role in the context of both Dionysian cult and what he saw as the development of ancient Greek religious ideology, in his hugely influential *Psyche*.[7] Rohde’s work was influenced by the contemporary theory of religious evolutionism, most famously formulated by the anthropologist E.B. Tylor, which held that human religion and spirituality show the same signs of evolution and development as do human bodies.[8] In this theory, changes in religious beliefs are driven by the development of humanity’s reasoning faculty and follow a general progression from animism through polytheism to finally monotheism. Rohde’s work on Dionysian religion reflects these assumptions that elements of religious thought that appear to have survived or flourished must contain some fundamental truth about the human psyche, analogous to successful genetic traits.

Among the scholars who developed Rohde’s ideas in the first half of the twentieth century, two scholars stand out for both their vivid descriptions of the ecstasy and violence of maenadic ritual, and their interest in religion from both an anthropological and a psychological perspective. They were Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928), and Eric Robertson Dodds (1893-1979).

These writers were pioneers in the use of interdisciplinary methods to explore the lived experience of ancient religion more deeply. Neither doubted that ritual performance could induce a truly

[4] Quote taken from Henrichs 1984a: 234-236. His earlier works on maenadic ritual are Henrichs 1969, Henrichs 1978, Henrichs 1982, Henrichs 1984b.
[5] Goff 2004: 213-217, 271-279.
[6] Bremmer 1984, Ustinova 2018: 169-216.
[7] Rohde 1894.
[8] Tylor 1871, particularly in Chapter 9, from p.377. On Tylor’s influence on Rohde: Henrichs 1984a: 225, Kippenberg 2002: 102-105.

profound effect; the only question was the extent to which this could have survived the strictures of control by the machinery of civic cult. Both writers have their flaws, symptomatic of their own social and scholarly contexts, but these difficulties have resulted in some intriguing and creative propositions about Dionysos and maenadic ritual's places in Greek society.

1.1. Erwin Rohde

Through the three chapters that he devoted to Dionysian religion, Rohde presented his vision of the evolution of maenadic ritual from a 'primitive', highly emotional cult practice originating in Thrace, through a gradual process of structural evolution as it became established in Greece, and finally to its laying the foundations for mysticism and asceticism, as found in the Orphic tradition.[9] Maenadism, for Rohde, was essentially something foreign to the Greeks: according to his theory, the cult of Dionysos – known in his homeland of Thrace as Sabos or Sabazios - had arrived in Greece sometime during the eighth to sixth centuries BCE and had initially been met with suspicion and resistance.[10]

Rodhe believed that the Thracian cult had been viewed by Greek men with a 'deep-rooted distaste' but that it had been more appealing to women, who took to it with an enthusiasm that Rohde describes in terms of a 'malady' or 'epidemic'.[11] He described the spread of the Thracian cult into Greece in the language of disease and medicine: it burned through Greece like 'an epidemic', the worshipper was a 'sufferer', who was treated with purification rituals administered by a 'physician-priesthood'.[12] This early contact with Thracian ecstatic ritual left the Greeks particularly susceptible to enthusiastic adoption of ecstatic cult whenever they happened to come into contact with one.[13] The women's eagerness and the initial opposition from men, according to Rohde's theory, gave rise to the so-called 'resistance myths', in which Dionysos arrives in a new city to be faced with hostility from the local rulers, whose female relations Dionysos drives mad as a punishment.[14] But, over time,

---

[9] In chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Volume 2 respectively: Rohde 1894: 1-37, 38-102, 103-127

[10] On Rohde's identification of Sabazios with Dionysos, see ibid. at 7, note 3. Discussed further in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

[11] Ibid. at 42-43., repeated by Martin P. Nilsson 1949: 206: 'The movement spread in the form of a violent psychical epidemic…more particularly among women, since they are specially susceptible to this kind of infection' (Nilsson's translation). On the nineteenth-century perception that women were particularly susceptible to music, see Kennaway 2019: 340 with further references.

[12] 'Epidemie', 'der Leidende', and 'eine priesterlich-ärztliche': Rohde 1894: 47-49.

[13] 'dem griechischen Naturell eine morbide Anlage' described as an 'aftereffect' (Nachwirkung): ibid. at 43, 47.

[14] As in the myths of the daughters of Proitos and other Argive women (found in for example Bacchylides *Victory Odes* 11.53-58, 92-112, Apollod. 2.2.2), the Minyades (Plut. *QG* 38), and most famously the story of Pentheus as told in Euripides' *Bakchai.* The resistance myths are summarised by Burkert 1985: 164-166, and I will discuss them in detail in Chapter 5, 2.1.

the wild Thracian god and his practices gradually became 'Hellenized and humanised' as they were absorbed into Greek religious structures under the control of Delphi.[15]

Though he did not afford much attention to non-literary sources, Rohde illustrated his account of the earliest form of maenadic ritual with quotes from Euripides' *Bakchai* and Aeschylus' fragmentary *Edonians*, arguing that the plays both provided an accurate portrayal of ritual activity in the early days of the cult's development and described how participants would have experienced the ritual.[16] Rohde's vision of the ritual was intense and even frightening: through violent dancing and 'madness-inducing' music, participants would experience 'sacred frenzy', culminating in their falling on a live animal and tearing it apart.[17] By dressing and acting as members of the mythical *thiasos* and performing a 'religious drama', ritual participants would feel that they *were* mythical maenads in the presence of their god, evoking in them a sense that they had experienced a communion with the divine.[18]

Rohde interpreted the experience of ecstatic Thracian religion as one in which the participant would feel an exaltation which overwhelmed the senses, in which 'everything appeared changed for him, he finds himself changed'.[19] The nature of this change was a sort of unity with the god and identification with his *thiasos*: worshippers in the midst of their ecstasy experience Dionysos-Sabazios with them, the 'strive towards him, towards union with him, … becoming as the spirits of the throng who rage around the god … they share in the life of the god himself'.[20] But when he came to describe the Greek ritual, Rohde did not describe a yearning *towards* the god or a desire for union *with* him, but a sudden seizure *by* him, that the worshipper felt possessed and driven by a 'compulsion of spirit, which emanates from the presence of the god'.[21] This, he argued, fulfilled some necessary psychological release from rationality, experienced by participants as a purification of the soul, a 'holy madness', a frenzy of extreme religious excitement which in the Thracians had culminated in tearing an animal apart but in Greece was purgative and cleansing.[22]

[15] The quote 'hellenisirt und humanisirt' is from Rohde 1894: 44.
[16] Ibid. at 46-47. For a reconstruction of the plot of *Edonians*, see Sommerstein 2008: 60-61.
[17] 'zum Wahnsinn lockende Einklang' and 'Heiligen Wahnsinn', citing Aesch. *Edonians* fr. 57; Rohde 1894: 8-22, quotes from pp. 9, 10.
[18] Ibid. at 15-18.
[19] 'Störungen des normalen Vermögens der Wahrnehmung und Empfindung' and 'Alles verwandelt sich ihm, er selbst scheint sich verwandelt'; ibid. at 47. Although Rohde uses masculine pronouns throughout, his argument is also applied to female worshippers (e.g., at p.50).
[20] Ibid. at 11-12, 14. Hillis' 1925 English translation glosses 'als Geister' as 'they seem to *become* those spiritual beings' [italics in the translation]: Rohde 1925: 258.
[21] Rohde 1894: 47: 'Wie ein wüthender Wirbel im Strome den Schwimmenden, wie die räthselhafte Eigenmacht des Traumes den Schlafenden, so packt ihn der Geisterzwang, der von der Gegenwart des Gottes ausgeht, und treibt ihn wie er will.
[22] Ibid. at 10, 50-51, 55-56., particularly in footnote 1 on p.55.

The basic assumptions that underlaid Rohde's developmental theory, including his chronology of the arrival of Dionysian cult into Greece, are now known to be fundamentally flawed, as the decipherment of Linear B proved beyond doubt that Dionysos had been part of the ancient Greek pantheon from at least the twelfth century BCE.[23] This undermined his interpretation of the resistance myths as essentially a cultural memory of the arrival of Dionysian cult in Greece, but Rohde's vision of the effects of the original *oreibasia* does not rely on his chronology being accurate. For him, the ritual induced epiphanic experiences when performed by Thracians, because he viewed them as being at a primitive stage of their religious development and therefore susceptible to such experiences, but he argued that they might also sometimes occur when it was performed by Greeks of the classical period and later.[24] These occurrences of genuine ecstatic feelings were rarer than in the early days of the cult, when dancing might break out spontaneously and uncontrollably, but Rohde claimed that even the Hellenic ritual, performed on dates specified by the festival calendar, might occasionally still induce such effects, which he called 'real ecstasy and self-forgetfulness'.[25]

Rohde did not make the claim that the Greek ritual could also induce such effects in the main body of his text, but instead buried it discretely in a footnote. His delicacy in this matter may have been in part a response to the argument that was simmering at the time between Rohde's friend Friedrich Nietzsche and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff.[26] In 1872, Nietzsche had published his florid and controversial thesis *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (usually Anglicized to *The Birth of Tragedy*), in which he presented his vision of the chaotic, irresistible energy of the creative power he called 'the Dionysiac'.[27] For Nietzsche, 'the Dionysiac' was one of the two great driving forces of human creativity, an intoxicating force that brings terror as well as beauty. Nietzsche associated the Dionysiac with 'the imageless art of music' and argued that it is characterised by 'self-forgetting' and association with the generative forces of nature rather than reason, causing the individual under its influence to experience the world as a 'mysterious primordial unity'.[28] Although Nietzsche did not discuss the *oreibasia* in detail in this work, under this interpretation the mountain dance ritual would be a way for participants to commune with this primal force and experience a

---

[23] Disproved by the discovery of a Bronze Age inscription from Pylos identifying a Dionysian shrine: Ventris and Chadwick 1956: 127, Melena 2000-2001: 357-360. A review of the Linear B evidence for Dionysian cult is found at Bernabé 2013: 24-25. The significance of the resistance myths, if not recording a cultural memory of the arrival of Dionysian cult, will be discussed in Chapter 5 section 2.1, 2.4.
[24] Rohde 1894: 55-56, footnote 1. On his views of the Thracians, whose 'minds never fully awakened from their semi-torpor' (aus halber Dumpfheit des Geistes niemals ganz erwachten) see pp.35-36.
[25] '[W]irkliche Ekstase und Selbstvergessenheit', p. 55-56 note 1.
[26] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1872-73: 7-9, 14. For discussion of the controversy's aftermath: McGinty 1978b: particularly at 4-5, Silk and Stern 1981: 108-148.
[27] Nietzsche 1872.
[28] Ibid. at 4-6. The translation of Nietzsche's terms is from Geuss and Speirs 1999: 17.

release from the pressures of self-awareness. Despite Wilamowitz's scathing criticism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's concept of 'the Dionysiac' remains a highly influential concept in the serious study of Dionysian religion and permeates Rohde's work.[29] The Thracian ritual appealed, Rohde argued, to a universal human religious impulse towards such a feeling of closeness to the divine, the huge and powerful force comparable to Nietzsche's 'Dionysiac', which also had the power to dissolve the boundaries of one's own personality.[30]

In summary, then, Rohde's interpretation of Dionysian religion, including maenadic ritual, assumed that the wild and violent depictions, such as those found in tragedy, at least partly reflected the Greek experience of Dionysian religion. This led him to believe that such rituals were both ecstatic – in that they allowed participants to lose their sense of self-awareness – and epiphanic – in that they gave them a feeling of being close to divinity. He further argued that it was precisely these emotional or psychological effects that secured Dionysian religion's popularity and widespread transmission throughout Greece, as it appealed to a universal human desire for these feelings, shared by both the Thracians and the Greeks. For Rohde then the *oreibasia* was - at least originally - a way for participants to have an encounter with divinity, and a release from the burden of the self.

1.2. Jane Ellen Harrison

The work of the Cambridge Ritualist Jane Ellen Harrison took Rohde's work to probably the most extreme lengths, and her depiction of Greek maenadic cult is among the bloodiest and most emotionally intense. Harrison embraced Rohde's description of the *oreibasia*'s epiphanic power, its ability to grant to participants, even the respectable women of the Thyiades, an 'absolute communion, even identity with the divinity worshipped'.[31] Her fullest treatment of maenads both real and mythical – though for Harrison there is little distinction between these – is found in her 1903 work *Prolegomena to the study of Ancient Greek Religion*, in which she used *Bakchai* and vase-painting liberally to build her interpretation of the ritual maenad.[32]

Rohde and Harrison's works have three significant points of divergence. First, Harrison's interpretation of the experience of the Greek Thyiades differed from Rohde's description of the Thracian 'holy madness' in that, under her interpretation, worshippers achieved a feeling of group unity with one another, as well as feeling an association with Dionysos and the mythical maenads.[33]

[29] For the lasting impact of Nietzsche's concepts, particularly in scholarship which utilises anthropological and psychological approaches, see Henrichs 1984a.
[30] Nietzsche 1872: 6.
[31] On Harrison's response to Rohde's *Psyche*, see her review of volume 2: Harrison 1894, quote from p. 165.
[32] Harrison 1903; chapters 8 and 10 deal with Dionysian religion, with her discussion of maenads at pp. 388-400. See also Harrison 1912: 39, 132, 422-423.
[33] Harrison 1912: 125-127.

Ritual maenads were imagining themselves to be the mythical *thiasos*, and, in doing so, stopped thinking of themselves as individuals at all but as part of a group: in this way, she proposed, the ritual group developed a collective self-identity that was 'continuous' with that of the mythical *thiasos*.[34] By imagining themselves to 'be' a group of mythical maenads, ritual participants' individual sense of self was suppressed or lost in favour of the role they were playing.

A second difference is that Rohde consigned the most extreme behaviour found in the mythological sources, *sparagmos* (tearing apart of an animal or human being) and *omophagia* (eating raw flesh), to the original Thracian ritual only, while Harrison strongly implied that it had continued through the classical period.[35] Harrison viewed the ritual as predating the myth, meaning that all the wilder elements found in myth, including maenads dismembering animals and eating raw meat, had grown out of real cultic practice: 'An integral part of this terrible ritual was the tearing asunder of the slain beast, in order, no doubt, to get the flesh as raw as might be'.[36] She argued that *omophagia* was a sacramental meal, in which worshippers symbolically consumed Dionysos in the form of the raw sacrificial meat in order to achieve a greater unity with their god, a practice she also associated with the Orphic Mysteries.[37] She claimed that the worshippers of Dionysos were 'possessed, maddened or, as the ancients would say, inspired by [Dionysos]', arguing that the classical practitioners experienced 'the same mad revelry' as images of maenads in vase-painting.[38] She believed these 'frenzied' elements still to be present in classical times, though she allowed that they may have been tamed to make it more acceptable to Greek (and particularly Athenian) palates.[39]

A final point of divergence is the question of the continued appeal of ecstatic cult for the ancient Greeks through the classical and Hellenistic periods. Both Rohde and Harrison saw the *oreibasia* as something inherently primitive that survived into the more 'enlightened' period of classical Athens. This posed a problem for the Rohde, as, according to the evolutionist Tylorean model, the Greeks should have evolved past this 'primitive' expression of religious feeling. Rohde explained it by arguing that due to their early contact with such an activity in the form of the Thracian cult, they were ever afterwards more susceptible to it, a sort of post-infection sequalae as one finds with

[34] Based on anthropological theories of totemism: ibid. at 126.
[35] See e.g. Henrichs 1978: 144, 147-152, Bremmer 1984: 274-275. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 section 4.3 it now seems unlikely based on our understanding of Dionysian sacrifice that *omophagia* formed part of maenadic ritual.
[36] Harrison 1903: 395-6, 482.
[37] Ibid. at 452-453 describing the oreibasia as a communion meal and associating the 'sacramental meal' with raw flesh at 482-5. See also discussion of *omophagia* in Chapter 5 of her 1912 work *Themis*: Harrison 1912: 118-156, particularly at 132-133, though her focus is on raw-eating in Orphism.
[38] Harrison 1903: 388, 393.
[39] Ibid. at 391, 395-396, 401.

malaria.[40] Harrison on the other hand, a self-confessed disciple of Nietzsche and his 'Dionysiac',[41] saw these 'primitive' aspects of the ritual and their resultant feeling of divinity as having a universal emotional appeal to humanity: 'each of us has a fragment of [Dionysos] within us, and by virtue of this divine spark or atom each of us is a potential Bacchus'.[42]

Harrison has been accused of manipulating the evidence, sometimes to the point of misrepresentation, to fit her model of Dionysian religion being essentially chthonic and 'primitive'.[43] Her handling of literary sources does sometimes suffer in the service of supporting her argument: for example, she cites Plutarch's account of the religious reforms of Epimenides as evidence for maenadic cult being suppressed, though Plutarch says that these reforms related to funereal customs, not bacchic ritual.[44] This tendency to use the ancient evidence to illustrate her theories, rather than using the theories to illuminate the evidence, is also found in her wide-ranging and stimulating use of poetic and visual depictions. In her 1912 work *Themis*, for example, she presented her theory that maenadic ritual in Greece was essentially totemistic, in which ritual participants would identify with deer which in turn represented Dionysos.[45] To support this theory, she cited a lyric passage from *Bakchai* in which the Chorus compare themselves to a fawn (866-867), and a single vase painting showing the death of Orpheus on which one of the women depicted has a deer tattoo.[46] However, the Chorus of *Bakchai* also compare themselves to horses (165-167) and the Theban women are compared to hunting dogs (731), so the fawn comparison seems unlikely to have the sort of particular cultic significance that Harrison wishes it to have. With regard to the vase: the woman in the vase painting bears no maenadic attributes, and as there are versions of the Orpheus myth in which his assailants are not maenads but ordinary Thracian women and as Thracian women are often depicted as being tattooed, the identification of this particular figure as a maenad is uncertain.[47]

---

[40] Rohde 1894: 47.
[41] In the preface to the second edition of *Themis*: Harrison 1927: viii, see discussion in Lecznar 2020: 34-67.
[42] Harrison 1894: 36.
[43] McGinty 1978b: 44-49, 82-84, 90-91 Prins 1999: 67. For Harrison's work in her Ritualist and social context, including the challenges she faced as a female scholar in the early years of the twentieth century, see Segal 1980, Arlen 1996, Prins 1999, Barnard-Cogno 2006, Macintosh 2010, which last cites a scathing assessment from 1978 of Harrison and her male contemporary Gilbert Murray's work as 'irrational' and 'rapturous rubbish' (quoted on p.193).
[44] Harrison 1903: 400, discussing Plut. *Vit. Sol.* xii and xxi.
[45] Harrison 1912: 132-133.
[46] Eur. *Bacch.* 866-867; the image is found on a fragment of a white-ground cup attributed by Beazley to the Pistoxenos Painter, c. 480-470 BCE, currently in the National Museum of Athens, Inv. 15190.
[47] For versions of the Orpheus myth, see Chapter 1, section 3.3 footnote 129. On Thracian women and tattoos, see e.g. Tsiafakis 2000, Lee 2015: 84-86.

These weaknesses aside, Harrison's work still provides much interesting material. More even than Rodhe, she was prepared to see ritual as serving a psychological purpose for its practitioners beyond simply having an unusual religious experience. Where Rohde was cautious in making his claims for the Greek ritual being able to induce powerful mental and emotional effects, Harrison made it the central theme of her work on Dionysian religion. Drawing on both the social functionalist aspects of the work of Émile Durkheim and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown,[48] and her own interpretation of maenadic ritual as a survival from an early matriarchal religious system, she saw the ritual as a way for Greek women to temporarily escape their everyday seclusion in a potentially dangerous or subversive manner.[49] The maenadic experience was, for her, primarily one in which the individual's emotions were amplified by being part of a group;[50] in this group unity, participants felt themselves able to escape the limitations of their social roles and even, through communion with divinity, to transcend the limits of their humanity.[51]

1.3. Eric Robertson Dodds

The interpretation of the *oreibasia* as something that offered a feeling of communion with the divine was reignited in the middle of the twentieth century by Eric Robertson Dodds.[52] Dodds' interest, most fully articulated in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, was in exploding the nineteenth-century ideal of classical Athens as a haven of rationality. He argued instead that the rationality found in the works of the ancient Greek philosophers was absent from many aspects of religious belief and behaviours, including the world-view expressed by the dramatists, particularly Euripides.[53] He saw the purpose of studying ancient literature as a way of better illuminating both ancient civilizations and our own, and he utilised what were, at the time, new theories from social anthropology and psychology to aid his exploration.[54] His work both built on and corrected some of the faults that hindsight identifies in that of Rohde and Harrison, including the erroneous chronology of Rohde and the over-emphasis on the primacy of ritual found in Harrison.

Like Rohde and Harrison, Dodds tried to understand the Greeks through explorations of their rituals and myths, but he rejected the idea that the 'rationality' of the classical period had replaced irrational 'primitive' beliefs.[55] Unlike Rohde and Harrison, who each in their own way saw Dionysian

---

[48] E.g. Durkheim 1915, Radcliffe-Brown 1922.
[49] Harrison 1903: 397. This theme will be discussed further in section 2.2.
[50] What Durkheim calls 'group effervescence': Durkheim 1915: 214, with 'collective effervescence' at 226.
[51] Harrison 1912: ix, 36-42, 48-49.
[52] Dodds 1940, reprinted in Dodds 1951. His commentary on *Bakchai* also deals with the historical ritual: Dodds 1960.
[53] Parker 2019: 123-125. Dodds' description of Euripides as an 'irrationalist': Dodds 1951: 186-188.
[54] Parker 2019: 118-119.
[55] Dodds 1951: i-v. For Dodds' debt to Rohde and Harrison, see Henrichs 1984a, particularly at 227-230.

cult as a late and foreign addition to classical Greek religious thought, Dodds saw it as an integral part of Greek culture that performed a necessary psychological function.[56] The function of Dionysian religion, as Dodds saw it, was to provide *catharsis*, a difficult word to translate but one which Dodds defined as 'ritual purification', a 'universal craving' among humanity to counter a similarly universal fear of pollution.[57] In Dionysian cult, this *catharsis* was achieved through temporarily forgetting oneself, whether through alcohol intoxication, changing identity through putting on a theatrical mask, or participation in ecstatic ritual.[58]

Writing in response to scholars like Rohde who were apparently reluctant to ascribe what they saw as 'savage' or 'primitive' beliefs to the enlightened Greeks, Dodds sought instead to show how irrational beliefs can be held alongside a high degree of civilization, just as is true for many Western cultures.[59] In relation to the *oreibasia*, this allowed him to extend the scope of anthropological comparators for maenadic ritual beyond the well-worn example of Sufism.[60] In an appendix to *The Greeks and the Irrational,* Dodds included a paper, originally published in 1940, entitled 'Maenadism in the Bacchae', an examination of the relationship between Euripides' portrayal of maenadic activity in *Bakchai* and the historicity of the *oreibasia*.[61] In this work, Dodds compared poetic and visual depictions from the classical period with early twentieth-century descriptions of psychiatric patients and outbreaks of 'dancing fever' in medieval Europe.[62] He explored the use of elements such as head-tossing and drum music in such contexts, both ritual and clinical, and concluded that maenadic ritual was an example of a well-known and universal technique for achieving a change in mental state.[63]

The connection Dodds made between the maenadic ritual dance and the action of shaking or tossing the head seems reasonably secure. Maenads on vases are often shown with their heads thrown back or deeply bowed, and several poetic sources describe maenads tossing or shaking their heads.[64]

---

[56] Dodds 1951: 68-80, see also McGinty 1978a.
[57] Dodds 1951: 36-38.
[58] Ibid. at 76-78 with n. 82. On *catharsis* experienced by the *audience* of theatrical performance, see Arist. *Poet*. 1449b, discussed in Halliwell 2009 chapter 6, with further reading suggested at p.206 n70. We will return to the effects of performance on performers in Chapter 4.
[59] On Dodds' development of Rohde's ideas see Henrichs 1984a: 227.
[60] As in Rohde 1894: 22-27, Harrison 1903: 485-487.
[61] Dodds 1940, reprinted in Dodds 1951: 270-282 as 'Maenadism' with minimal alterations. All subsequent citations refer to the original 1940 paper.
[62] Dodds 1940: 158-163. On the 'dancing plagues' see Hecker 1888, Waller 2009. Rohde had made the connection with these outbreaks, but only in relation to the initial arrival of the cult in Greece: Rohde 1894: 42-43.
[63] Dodds 1940: 159-160.
[64] For example, *Bacch.* 150, 241, 930-931. Dioscorides' epitaph for Aleximenes also mentions Thyiades whirling their hair (no. 485 in Paton 1917= Gow-Page no. 25). Examples of the extended neck pose in vase-painting include cups by Douris and the Brygos and Briseis Painters; respectively, Naples Museo Archeologico

Dodds describes a range of examples of head-shaking being observed in various instances in which the head-shaker is, he says, in the grip of 'religious hysteria'.[65] This comparison is not totally original, Rohde and Harrison having already made the connection between religious trance and rocking or tossing the head,[66] but Dodds' interest in contemporary psychiatry and psychoanalysis prompted him to see this behaviour and the corresponding mental state in terms of clinically-defined mental disorders.[67] Dodds drew comparisons between maenadism and behaviour he called 'hysterical', including participants in curative dance rituals and the psychiatric reports of what was at the time termed 'possessive hysteria'.[68]

However, Dodds went no further in exploring how these spontaneous displays of behaviour found in ritual techniques were experienced or described by participants, relying solely on the documentation of observers rather than first-hand accounts of the subjects. In terms of understanding what exactly the change in mental state or 'religious hysteria' might be, Dodds admitted that the nature of the change is unclear, through his comparators suggest to him that symptoms might include compulsive dancing and desensitization to pain.[69] Turning to the relatively modern fields of clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, Dodds described the experience of maenadic ritual as one of 'mass hysteria'.[70] Under the influence of this 'hysteria', the ritual participants would feel that their 'human personality had been temporarily replaced by another', which, he said, could mean a variety of things: 'anything from "letting yourself go" to becoming "possessed"…. from "taking you out of yourself" to a profound alteration of personality'.[71] Dodds did however seem to feel that the experience of maenadic ritual would fall towards the more extreme end of this spectrum. Like Harrison, he saw this alteration of mental state as one in which participants were 'merged' into a group consciousness, becoming increasingly agitated until they tore an animal apart and ate it, symbolically consuming the god.[72] Also like Harrison, Dodds saw this tendency towards excessive behaviour as an inevitable consequence of giving oneself up to the

Nazionale, Inv. 128333; Fort Worth, Kimbell Art Museum, Inv. AP2000.02, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. 576; London, British Museum 1843.11-3.54 and Oxford Ashmolean Museum 1944.87. On incidence of the pose in vase-painting, see Lawler 1927, Edwards 1960, Moraw 1998: passim. On interpretations of its meaning see also Carpenter 1997: 83-84, Kefalidou 2009. Discussed in further in Chapter 3 section 4.4.

[65] Dodds 1940: 160-161 cf. Henrichs 1982: 145.

[66] Rohde 1894: 11, 27, Harrison 1894: 165-166.

[67] On Dodds' use of psychological interpretations in analysing Greek drama, see Scullion 2019

[68] Dodds 1940: 159-161.

[69] Ibid. at 157-161.

[70] Ibid. at 159., see also Dodds 1951: 76 where he describes it as 'collective hysteria'.

[71] Dodds 1940: 157, Dodds 1951: 77.

[72] Dodds 1960: xx.

mind-altering powers of ritual performance, warning that 'The Power of the Dance is a dangerous power. Like other forms of self-surrender, it is easier to begin than to stop'.[73]

For Dodds, as for Harrison, maenadic self-surrender inevitably ended in blood and violence: they both argued that the climax of the ritual was a sacramental meal in which ritual participants would tear apart and consume the flesh of an animal that represented Dionysos.[74] By the time Dodds was writing, a Milesian inscription which mentioned the 'throwing in' of 'the raw-eaten thing' had been discovered, and Dodds connected this to the description of 'a raw-eaten offering' in the *parados* of *Bakchai*, claiming that this proved that *omophagia* was a part of maenadic cult.[75] He assumed that this raw morsel would have been obtained through *sparagmos*, as described in the narrative of the Theban women's attack on the cattle grazing on the slopes of Cithaeron, and, following Harrison's lead, he believed that originally the victim of the *sparagmos* sacrifice had been human, though this practice had been consigned to the distant past by the classical period.[76] This interpretation is in contrast to Rohde, who thought that *sparagmos* was a Thracian custom which had largely died out when the ritual was adopted in Greece and, in any case, did not associate it with a sacrament.[77]

Dodds' determination to make maenadism blood-soaked somewhat undermines his otherwise insightful use of interdisciplinary research. For example, he focused on rituals which involved high levels of violence, consumption of raw meat, and even cannibalism, ignoring the examples of ecstatic rituals provided by Rohde which did not involve such elements.[78] He supported his choice of comparisons by seizing on a specific detail in a small selection of vase-paintings or poetry while ignoring notable differences. To support his claim that *sparagmos* formed part of the *oreibasia*, he drew a comparison with a Kwakiutl dance ritual from British Columbia in which a human might be torn to pieces, on the somewhat tenuous basis that the ritual participants handle coals and the Theban women of *Bakchai* are described as carrying fire in their hair.[79] But, according to the full account of the ritual by the anthropologist whom Dodds cites, there are as many points of difference as of similarity between the Kwakiutl dance and maenadic ritual. The Kwakiutl ritual was performed by men dressed as bears, who endured a prolonged period of social seclusion and fasting within a

---

[73] Dodds 1940: 157.
[74] Ibid. at 166.
[75] *LSAM* 48, reproduced in Appendix. Cf. *Bacch.* 139 'ὠμοφάγον χάριν'. Henrichs' refutation of this claim will be discussed in Chapter 3 section 4.3.
[76] Dodds 1940: 166. Harrison's discussion of human sacrifice is found at Harrison 1903: 484.
[77] Rohde 1894: 46. On the *omophagia* as a sacrament in Thracian maenadism or Orphic practice, Harrison 1903: 482-491, Dodds 1940: 164-166. Dodds explicitly distances maenadic ritual from Orphism at pp168-169.
[78] Dodds 1940: 160-161, 164. Henrichs 1982: 145 calls this tendency 'the most amazing demonstration of blind comparatist faith'. Rohde also compared Dionysian cult to the dances of Sufi mysticism in Islam, a comparison that Dodds ignored: Rohde 1894: 36-37.
[79] Dodds 1940: 160-161, 164, citing *Bacch.* 757-758.

particular building prior to the final ceremony, and the tearing apart of a human was not the climax of the Kwakiutl ritual but a punishment if a dancer failed in their performance.[80]

Dodds was aware however that the evidence for his interpretation was, at least for the classical period, 'very slender',[81] and, by 1951, he seemed to have conceded at least in part to the sceptical position, claiming that the psychological release offered by maenadic ritual was lost by the time of its incorporation into civic cult, and that this function had been subsumed into other, newly-arrived, ecstatic cults and into the Dionysian Mysteries.[82]

1.4. Positive and destructive forms of maenadism

Rohde thought that Greek maenadism was more 'humanised' than the Thracian original simply by virtue of being performed by the 'enlightened' Greeks; this evolution, he argued, made the ritual both less violent and less ecstatic, declining through the classical period to a shadow of its former power.[83] By contrast, Dodds argued that this was a mistake and that the Greeks were just as 'irrational' and prone to violent emotion as any other humans.[84] But, he argued, by channelling the spontaneous outbreaks of ecstatic behaviour - the necessary expression of such 'hysteria' - into calendrical ritual performance, what he called 'hysteria in the raw, the dangerous bacchism' was bound to the service of religion.[85] This controlled expression is what he called 'white maenadism' – its positive form - as opposed to the 'black maenadism' – its destructive form - described by Euripides in the behaviour of the Theban women in *Bakchai*.[86]

The distinction that Dodds made, between the behaviour of the Theban women on the one hand and the Lydian Chorus on the other, reflects his interest in psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Carl Gustav Jung, whose concept of 'the shadow' hovers behind Dodds' classification of destructive maenadism.[87] In 1938, Jung wrote: '[e]veryone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is… if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected [and is] liable to burst forth in a moment of unawareness'.[88]

---

[80] Benedict 1934: 175-180.
[81] Dodds 1940: 157.
[82] Dodds 1951: 76-78.
[83] Rohde 1894: 44, 55.
[84] Discussing the 'new rationalism' of the classical period, he says that it 'did not *enable* men to behave like beasts – men have always been able to do that': Dodds 1951: 191.
[85] Dodds 1940: 158-159, citing Hecker's observation that the recurrent and apparently spontaneous medieval outbreaks of St Vitus' dance apparently gradually dwindled to annual outbreaks around St John's Day: Hecker 1888: 153.
[86] The distinction is picked up without further analysis by Henrichs 1978: 144. I will refer to Dodds' 'white' and 'black' maenadism as 'positive' and 'destructive' respectively for the rest of this discussion.
[87] On Dodds' interest in psychoanalysis, see Gagné and Henrichs 2019, Scullion 2019: 130-134 and, in his own words, Dodds 1960: 172-173.
[88] Jung 1938: 93

Compare this to Dodds' description of 'the elemental': '[t]o resist Dionysus is to repress the elemental in one's own nature; the punishment is the sudden complete collapse of the inward dykes when the elemental breaks through perforce and civilization vanishes'.[89]

Though Dodds consciously distanced himself from Nietzsche's opposing Dionysiac and Apollonian forces, his interpretation of 'the elemental' is a very Nietzschean idea.[90] Two years before publishing *the Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had described the uncontrolled Dionysiac as 'the crudest unleashing of the lower drives' which had to coexist with Apollonian clear mindedness in order to achieve its highest form; the participant or artist had to be in 'a state of intoxication and at the same time he must lie in ambush, observing himself from behind'.[91] This uncontrolled Dionysiac force is the sort of 'hysteria' that Dodds saw as a psychological aberration, the result of repression or resistance to acknowledging the irrational side of human nature: he thought that the trieteric occurrence of the ritual during the classical and Hellenistic periods was, on the other hand, a way of allowing this 'elemental' to be released in a safe manner, with the ritual form taking the job of maintaining Nietzsche's 'Apollonian clear mindedness'.

Rohde had thought that this elemental, destructive maenadism had gradually disappeared from Greek cult as it evolved from its Thracian origins, and had associated it with maenadism's gradual decline in power, the last dregs of a 'primitive' but emotionally appealing practice withering under the benevolent light of Hellenic rationalism.[92] Though Dodds concurred that, at least in Athens, maenadism as practiced did not involve the sort of full-scale frenzy (or release of 'the shadow', to put it in Jungian terms) described by Euripides, he argued that, even at its most controlled, the historical ritual culminated in *sparagmos* and *omophagia*.[93] In Dodds' interpretation of maenadism, the Apollonian is always in danger of dissolving before the force of the 'elemental' or 'irrational', with the result that his vision of maenadic ritual, even during the classical period, is drenched in gore.

This is the point at which Dodds' differentiation between destructive and positive maenadism becomes harder to follow. Beyond stating that 'what happened on Cithaeron' represents the destructive form of maenadism and the *parodos* describes the positive form, at no point does he expand on this distinction.[94] He does not explain why he has lifted *omophagia* from the *parodos*

[89] Dodds 1940: 159.
[90] For example at Dodds 1951: 68, but see also p.76, the contradiction noted by Henrichs 1984a: 228.
[91] Translation from Geuss and Speirs 1999: 121.
[92] A decline 'zu einer ritualen Herkömmlichkeit abgedämpfte', Rohde 1894: 44-55, quote from p.55, translated by Hillis as 'a vague ritual traditionalism' in Rohde 1925: 289.
[93] Dodds 1940: 164-166.
[94] Ibid. at 159.

(*Bacch.* 138-139) and attached it to the *sparagmos* on Cithaeron, which Euripides never explicitly links to raw-eating. Nor, for that matter, does he explain why he takes *sparagmos*, which is performed only by the destructive, out-of-control maenads on Cithaeron, and presents it as the climax of his controlled ritual performance. If we are to understand Dodd's distinction as meaning that the Theban women are destructive maenads, because their 'hysteria' is uncontrolled, and the Chorus as representing 'positive' maenads as their 'hysteria' is in the service of Dionysos, then animal *sparagmos* - the basis of his sacramental meal - cannot be the central part of positive maenadism that he claims. Animal *sparagmos* is not attributed to the Chorus, nor described in any of their lyric passages. The only possible connection is the comment that Dionysos pursues 'the raw-eaten offering' which Dodds – mistakenly, as Henrichs has shown – thought related to ritual *omophagia* and therefore (by his understanding) to *sparagmos*, but this connection is not supported by the evidence Dodds provides.[95] Equally, although the Chorus – the positive presentation of maenadism – do not perform animal *sparagmos*, they are not as clearly opposed to human *sparagmos* as Dodds' differentiation would suggest. When they call on Dike to slay Pentheus, they first describe her doing so in sacrificial language, cutting his throat with her sword, but in the antistrophe, they then describe Pentheus 'falling beneath the onrushing swarm of maenads', suggesting by this juxtaposition that Dike's vengeance will be enacted on the physical plane by this dismemberment.[96]

While Dodds' differentiation between destructive and positive maenadism seems to be a helpful way of thinking about how Euripides contrasts different types of maenadic behaviour, his distinction between the Theban women and the Chorus as representatives of the two types is not so convincing. Despite his enthusiasm for allowing the irrational a place in Greek and even Athenian mental life, Dodds was ultimately thwarted in bringing his wild maenadism into the religious structures of the classical period. He admitted that there was scant evidence for genuine mental state changes from either positive or destructive maenadism in the classical period, and, in his 1960 commentary on *Bakchai*, conceded that 'there was little or nothing in the *official* [his italics] Athenian cult' that could have inspired either Euripides' *parodos* or the sad fate of Pentheus.[97] Like Rohde, he concluded that, by the fifth century, centralised control had robbed maenadic ritual of its truly irrational effects.

---

[95] Eur. *Bacch.* 138-139, ὠμοφάγον χάριν, translation author's own. On *charis* as a gift-offering see for example Scott 1983, Gagne 2016: 81-83, Thomas 2020: 36-63. For Henrichs' refutation of Dodds' claim and scholarship on unburnt offerings for Dionysos, see Chapter 3, section 4.3.
[96] Eur. *Bacch.* 1022-1023: ὑπ᾽ ἀγέλαν πεσόντι τὰν μαινάδων (translation by the author).
[97] Dodds 1940: 157, Dodds 1960: xxii.

1.5. Themes from the 'enthusiastic' approach

The scholars discussed above collectively put forward what I will refer to as the 'enthusiastic' approach to understanding maenadic ritual experience. They offered one way of integrating the wilder depictions of maenads into our evidence base for the historical performance of maenadic ritual, which is to consider all sources that depict Dionysian women to be valuable accounts of how maenadic ritual was performed. Under this interpretation, a vase-painting showing female figures with Dionysian attributes was considered an illustration of actual ritual performance just as accurate as Diodorus Siculus' description of Greek women meeting on a trieteric basis to brandish their *thyrsoi*. The description of *sparagmos* in the First Messenger speech of *Bakchai* was likewise taken to be evidence that maenadic ritual also included this frightening display of female violence.

Beyond aspects of ritual *performance*, these approaches use the poetic and visual depictions of maenads as sources for the *experience* of participation in ecstatic Dionysian cult. Through comparing the activities found in these depictions of maenadic behaviour, such as head-tossing and whirling dances, with similar activities found in rituals observed and documented by anthropologists, all three concluded that maenadic ritual used these techniques to induce such effects. These depictions were understood to accurately represent what participation in the historical ritual felt like for the women involved. The hallucinations, joy, and epiphanic visions described by Euripides' maenads are understood to be a product of the historical ritual form.[98] For Dodds and Harrison, as for Rohde, this 'ecstatic' experience was something universally appealing to humanity that might break out spontaneously at any time, inducing what Dodds called 'a true disturbance of personality' and Rohde 'movement of the soul'.[99] All three saw maenadic ritual's ultimate appeal as its ability to induce this sense of communion with divinity which, according to Harrison and Dodds, would take place in the eating of raw meat, symbolising Dionysos himself. The descriptions found in all three writers' works relate to some degree to concepts of 'group unity', 'loss of self', and 'divine epiphany', and, though these concepts are never defined in detail, the ritual act of performing the role of the mythical *thiasos* is treated as being fundamental in generating these feelings.

Though her work still inspires great admiration,[100] Harrison has received the most criticism from modern scholars in relation to her tendency to fit the evidence to theories which have now fallen out of favour. However, Rohde and Dodds also show this weakness, particularly in their uncritical

[98] Though both Rohde and, to a lesser degree, Dodds claimed that the centralisation and cyclical occurrence of civic maenadic ritual would have restricted these effects somewhat by the classical period: Rohde 1894: 55-56, footnote 1, Dodds 1940: 157.
[99] 'Seelenbewegung', Rohde 1894: 55, Dodds 1940: 157.
[100] Robert Parker calls her 'the most brilliant of the Cambridge ritualists': Parker 2019: 117, and her work garnered positive reviews from her contemporaries; see e.g. Rouse 1904.

treatment of sources that support their theories. Both cite Plutarch's comment that the Delphic Thyiades were experiencing *mania* (ἐκμανεῖσαι) as firm evidence for the ritual inducing significant mental state changes in the Hellenistic period.[101] Neither writer comments on the veracity of Plutarch's account, or on the significance of there being five centuries between the event Plutarch described and Plutarch's own time, and neither explores what exactly Plutarch might have meant by ἐκμανεῖσαι.[102]

This last point regarding lack of definitions is particularly relevant to this study and leads to the second main weakness – as seen from a modern perspective - in all three treatments discussed above. All three of the writers discussed described the mythical maenad in terms which suggest a negative opinion of their mental state and behaviour: 'mad', 'crazy', 'primitive', or 'savage'. By bringing the mythical maenad into the discussion of historical ritual, they had to reconcile their own cultural understanding of 'madness' with the context of respectable Greek religion. This was problematic because they all to a degree associated 'mad' with 'primitive', a state in which the individual lost all veneer of civilization or self-awareness, which to twenty-first century eyes seems a very reductive and unconvincing definition. For Harrison this was less of a problem as she saw all humans as having essentially 'primitive' urges, so such behaviours were equally likely to be present in both the Thracian and the Greek rituals, but Rohde was left with a paradox that he could only explain by claiming that early contact with foreign ecstatic cults left a sort of psychic scar on the otherwise enlightened Greek consciousness.[103]

The work of these writers – particularly that of Eric Dodds – has strongly influenced popular perceptions of the female worshippers of Dionysos. Writing in 2019, Scott Scullion paid tribute to the legacy and wide appeal of *The Greeks and the Irrational*, saying that 'few works of classical scholarship have established themselves in general culture as firmly'. The online Encyclopaedia Britannica's entry on dance in Classical Greece includes the statement that maenadic rituals 'were manifestations of demoniacal possession characteristic of many primitive dances.'[104] Wikipedia's entry on 'maenad' offers clear (though unreferenced) allusion to Dodds' influence, stating that 'participants assumed the strength and character of the god by symbolically eating the raw flesh and

[101] Rohde 1894: 55, Dodds 1940: 157.
[102] This methodological limitation is not confined to Dodds' discussion of maenadism: Robert Parker points out that *The Greeks and the Irrational* does not actually include a definition of 'irrational': Parker 2019: 123-125.
[103] Pointed out and labelled 'farfetched' by Otto 1995: 124-125.
[104] https://www.britannica.com/art/Western-dance/Dance-in-Classical-Greece#ref384761 [accessed 21/03/2021 11:32].

drinking the blood of his symbolic incarnation. Having symbolically eaten his body and drunk his blood, the celebrants became possessed by Dionysus.'[105]

But this scholarship represents only one version of how maenadic ritual was practiced and experienced in the ancient world, a version that is undermined by its tendency to yoke the mythical and ritual maenads so closely together that neither figure has any characteristics that are not shared by her sister. The (laudable) early adoption of interdisciplinary approaches from the relatively new fields of anthropology and psychiatry has also led to these works now feeling somewhat dated, as shown by the use of terms like 'hysterical' and 'primitive'. These flaws should not undermine the tremendous scholarship represented by all three writers, but they have prompted a range of different approaches from scholars who are not convinced by either the sacramental theory, or the emphasis on ecstatic experience.

2. Responses to the 'enthusiastic' approach

The scholars working in this 'enthusiastic' strain of scholarship used depictions of maenads from poetry and vase-painting in their reconstruction of the maenadic ritual in two ways: first, they used them as direct evidence for how the ritual was conducted, and, secondly, they used them as evidence for how the ritual was experienced by participants. There are three alternative approaches which overall complement the enthusiastic approach though they have sometimes significant points of disagreement. I term these approaches the 'sceptical', the anthropological, and the 'embodied mind'.

The first response to the enthusiastic approach to be discussed below (in section 2.1), the 'sceptical', challenges the first point, arguing that poetic depictions are not as reliable as prose sources in providing details of exactly how the ritual was performed, as they blend myth and imagination into their narratives for the purposes of entertainment. According to this argument, if an element such as *sparagmos* does not appear in the prose sources, then it did not occur in the ritual performance.[106] On the subject of ritual *experience*, however, the scepticism took a slightly different stance: ritual was thought to re-enact myth and, as a result, the re-enactment was thought to be an essentially symbolic performance, lacking any profound emotional impact or *mania* for performers.[107]

A second branch of scholarship developed the use of anthropological comparators pioneered by Rohde and Dodds. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the anthropologist Max Gluckman's theory of 'rites of rebellion' was adopted by scholars working on maenadic ritual, particularly those

[105] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maenad#Cult_worship [accessed 21/03/2021 10:47].
[106] E.g. Rapp 1872.
[107] See e.g. Henrichs 1978: 144, Henrichs 1982: 145-146.

with an interest in examining maenadic ritual from a feminist perspective.[108] However, in the early twenty-first century, the interpretative value of the 'rites of rebellion' theory has been called into question both from within anthropology and also, in relation to its use in interpreting maenadic ritual, from ancient historians such as Barbara Goff.[109] The application of 'rites of rebellion' theory to maenadic cult serves as a useful case study on the hazards of adopting a theoretical approach, particularly one from a different discipline, and section 2.2 describes the history of the scholarship in detail, before presenting Goff's alternative interpretation of maenadic ritual as an opportunity for women to explore their own agency and role within society.

The third section below steps back from both the sceptical and anthropological approaches, which primarily focussed on the role of ritual within society, to return to the lived experience of ritual performance. These approaches are more varied in the interpretative framework they employ, seeking to place the experience of the *oreibasia* within the context of an individual 'embodied mind', which is affected by physiology, shaped by cultural conceptions of the meaning of Dionysian religion, and the functions of which can be manipulated by certain activities. The work discussed in this section returns to the themes of epiphany and ecstasy as originally described in the 'enthusiastic' approach, but each seeks some explanation for how these feelings might be achieved. Firstly, Jan Bremmer considers the physiological effects of ritual performance on mental processes. A second body of work, based on the structuralist school and developed further by Albert Henrichs, considers Dionysian religion as one which centred on crossing boundaries between humanity and divinity. A third, offered by Yulia Ustinova, re-examines how 'ecstasy' might be experienced from a cognitive perspective.

2.1. Scepticism, arguments from silence, and source selection

In 1872, two decades before Rohde published *Psyche,* a professor at the Karls-Gymnasium in Stuttgart named Adolph Rapp unequivocally distanced the *oreibasia* ritual from the depictions of mythical maenads as found in the sources and vase-painting.[110] Rapp advocated for differentiating between 'poetic' and 'prosaic' sources, counting *Bakchai* and other myths among the former and only prose writers of history and geography like Plutarch and Pausanias among the latter: only from these sources, he said, can we discover what the Dionysian rites were like and how they were

[108] Such as Ross Shephard Kraemer and Eva Keuls: Kraemer 1979, Keuls 1985: 357-379, Kraemer 1992. On rites of rebellion, see Gluckman 1954. The connection with Dionysian female worshipers was made by Lewis 1971, 100-126, with reference to Dionysian cult at 101, though he does not cite Gluckman's influence.

[109] See discussion in Sanders 2003 for the anthropological perspective, and Goff 2004 e.g. at 1244-125 for its relevance to ancient Greek women's rituals.

[110] Rapp 1872.

practiced.[111] Though he acknowledged that the poetic depictions of mythical maenads might have some points of similarity with ritual performance, he cautioned against their use to fill out the incomplete details available from the prose sources, as these sources were primarily created for entertainment.

Rapp's interpretation of the *oreibasia* offers a far more sedate affair than that found in the work of Rohde or Harrison. He was not concerned with the archaic origins of the ritual, with whether Dionysian cult was a foreign 'virus' or whether, once upon a time, women tore animals apart. His prose accounts are from the first century BCE to the second century CE and deal primarily with the civic *oreibasia* as performed by colleges of priestesses on a trieteric basis, such as the Delphic and Athenian Thyiades.[112] But, other than stating that a ritual took place, these sources contain scant description of what actually occurred, and Rapp chose to fill in this gap not by using the poetic depictions but by comparing accounts of other Dionysian cult practices described in prose sources.[113] He concluded that the *oreibasia* was a structured choral dance, accompanied by hymns, representing the wild dance of the mythical maenads in a highly choreographed manner.[114] In contrast to Rohde's vision of women building a sacred frenzy through whirling dance and wordless shouting, Rapp's *oreibasia* was a very restrictive performance: there was no room in this re-enactment for a participant to improvise, to cry out to god, or adapt her dance-steps as her spirit moved her.

Rapp took what he saw as an absence of evidence for evidence of absence. This is an example of the 'argument from silence', which, at its core, supposes that, if something were known about, it would have been documented. This sort of argument has been criticised by (among others) John Lange, who broke down the necessary conditions for evidence of an event to be available to modern scholars into four points: (1) It would have had to have happened, (2) it would have had to be noticed by one of our sources, (3) it would have had to have been documented, (4) the document would have to have survived.[115] Survival of sources (condition 4) is a perennial issue in the study of ancient history, and therefore it only needs to be pointed out that Dionysian religion in general seems to have been particularly abhorrent to some of the early Christian writers and this aversion

[111] 'Aus dieser [historischen und archäologischen Literatur] erfahren wir, wie die Dionysosfeier in Griechenland wirklich war und geübt wurde'; ibid. at 14.
[112] His main sources were passages from Pausanias' description of Delphi in book 10 (e.g., 10.4.3, 10.6.4, 10.32.7); Plut. *de primo frigido* 18 (*Moralia* 953d), *Mulierum virtutes* 13 (*Mor.* 249e-f), *Vit. Alex*. 2.5, *Quaestiones Graecae* 12 (*Mor.* 293b-f) and *de Is. et Os*. 35.
[113] Particularly the Herois and Charilla festivals, also celebrated by the Thyiades in Delphi, according to Plutarch *QG* 12.
[114] Rapp 1872: 9-10.
[115] Lange 1966. For more recent deconstructions of such arguments, see e.g. McGrew 2014, Milstead 2018.

may have influenced textual survival.[116] Examining Rapp's argument in light of the remaining conditions, his position is that, because condition 4 is not met, *therefore* condition 1 was never met and *mania* never occurred. But, if it can be demonstrated that the 'chain of evidence' could have broken at conditions 2 or 3, then the argument from silence cannot be considered valid.

It is, perhaps, possible that ritual maenads occasionally or routinely experienced *mania* (condition 1) but that none of the prose writers were ever aware of this (condition 2). It could be argued that the Thyiades would not have discussed their experience with an outsider: ritual maenads, like Eleusinian initiates, may have been under instructions not to reveal what they had experienced.[117] But the sources do not mention *any* sort of emotional experience, so, by Rapp's own argument, the writers must have been unaware that any sort of emotional experience could be induced, not just *mania.* But both Plato and Aristotle described the music used in bacchic ritual as inducing high levels of agitation or emotional arousal.[118] It seems unlikely that educated men like Plutarch and Pausanias would have been unaware of such views. Both also apparently had the opportunity to gain the information, as both claim to have spoken directly to Thyiades about their ritual activity, and both chose to describe them as being in a state of *mania*.[119] Even if their comments were intended only as a respectful or poetic courtesy, they indicate an awareness in the prose literature of some sort of association between *mania* and maenadic ritual performance.

And this of course is the biggest difficulty for Rapp's argument that there is no documented evidence for *mania* (condition 3). Contrary to his claim, there *is* ancient evidence that Dionysian rites were associated with emotional or psychological effects, including *mania,* the most relevant being of course the testimony of the serious prose writers, Plutarch and Pausanias, that the Thyiades experienced *mania*.[120] Aside from these sources and the discussions about bacchic music in Plato and Aristotle cited above, Plato refers to bacchic ritual as both a catalyst for and appropriate treatment of *mania* in *Phaedrus* (244d-245a, 265a) and *Laws* (672b). It could be argued that these comments relate to Dionysian cult activity other than maenadism, but, even if they were to explicitly exclude maenadic ritual, they still provide evidence from prose sources for Dionysian rites inducing unusual mental states. Rapp could have used these, had he chosen to do so, as context for the comments by Plutarch and Pausanias on maenadic ritual in particular. Instead, he explicitly excluded

---

[116] Se for example the attack on Dionysian religion by Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.* books 1-2, cf. discussion in Friesen 2015: 120-128.
[117] E.g., Paus. 1.38.6.
[118] See e.g., Pl. *Ion* 536b, *Laws* 790d-791b, *Rep.* 399a, cf. Arist. *Pol.* 8.1340a-1342b. The role of music in trance rituals will be discussed in Chapter 4 sections 3 and 4.
[119] On Plutarch's relationship with Klea, see Bowersock 1965: 267-268, on Pausanias speaking to the Athenian Thyiades, 10.4.3.
[120] The words related to *mania* are *ekmaneisai* in Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII and *mainontai* in Paus. 10.32.7.

such evidence, dismissing Plato's comment that bacchic worshippers are seized by Dionysos, as described in *Ion* 534a, as an example of 'how easily the Greeks imagined the mythological as being real in such matters'.[121] Even if we were to accept Rapp's exclusion of these valid sources, there are two further possibilities that could break the chain of evidence: writers might not document that *mania* could be induced by ritual performance because it was taken for granted that it *would* occur and was therefore unremarkable, or because of the sort of respectful secrecy that surrounded the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Rapp was left with no evidence for any emotional or psychological engagement on the part of the participants, for the simple reason that the sources that he chose to include did not mention anything about the experiential aspects of ritual performance. Where prose sources *did* include such opinions – reference to what he called 'mythological attributes and actions' - he concluded that this was simply the tendency of Greek writers to blur the boundaries between myth and ritual, and excluded the evidence they contained.[122] The assumption that Greek writers did not differentiate between myth and reality when providing narratives about ritual maenads allowed Rapp to neglect exactly the sort of evidence he claimed to prioritise. It is hard therefore to imagine what sort of evidence would have convinced him that *mania* could have been induced during the *oreibasia*.

Rapp's work is a rather extreme example of the 'sceptical' position on maenadic ritual experience, which stands as a counterpoint to the 'enthusiastic' interpretation offered by the scholars discussed in section 1. His insistence that poetic depictions should be handled carefully and not used in the same way as prose sources has some merit, but some details of ritual practice can be gleaned from poetic sources.[123] Furthermore, the concern that myth and ritual are too closely blended in the poetic sources also applies to the prose accounts. Scholarship on Rapp's favoured prose writers has of course moved on since 1872 and scholars today are far more critical of any tendency to take such writers at their word: like any other writer, prose or poetic, Plutarch has an authorial voice, his own concepts about historicity, and an argument he wishes to put forward.[124] Prose writers were by no means immune to incorporating mythical elements into their histories. Pausanias describes a tomb he saw in Argos as being that of a (presumably mythical) maenad who fought alongside Dionysos in his war against the Argives, and Plutarch uses myths to illustrate and develop his arguments.[125]

---

[121] 'Wie leicht überhaupt in solchen Dingen der Grieche das Mythologische sich als wirklich vorstellte': Rapp 1872: 22.

[122] '[Ü]berhaupt ist die Unterscheidung beider Gebiete, die für die Alterthumswissenschaft eine Nothwendigkeit ist, dem Griechen wohl gar nicht so scharf zum Bewusstsein gekommen.' ibid. at 20.

[123] As will be discussed in Chapter 3 section 2.1.

[124] For a more nuanced approach to reading Plutarch: Stadter 1965, Hershbell 1997, Mossman 1997, Duff 2011.

[125] Paus. 2.20.4. For examples of Plutarch's use of myth in his narratives see note 124 above, with Deuse 2010.

Information about ritual practice may be found in any genre, as may a considerable amount of creative licence and blending of myth narratives, and the prose writers must be handled with as much care as the poetic depictions and vase-paintings.

A more nuanced and convincing version of this sceptical position is found in the work of Albert Henrichs (1942-2017), who wrote extensively on Dionysian religion in general and provided the current entry on Dionysos in the Oxford Classical Dictionary.[126] Henrichs was respectful of the artistic conventions of painting and poetry and was deeply suspicious of attempts to bring the bloodthirstiness of *Bakchai* into Greek cult, attacking those writers that he thought made Dionysos simply a symbol of violence and destruction.[127] Nonetheless, he understood that depictions of maenads in these genres had something to say about cultural opinions of Dionysian women: his 1978 paper on Greek and Roman maenadism is a harmonious balance between Rapp's positivism and Dodds' imaginative connections between genres of source.[128] He drew out the similarities between *Bakchai* and the inscriptions from Asia Minor that Rapp never saw or purposely disregarded, and carefully examined and rejected the evidence for contentious issues such as *sparagmos* and *omophagia*.[129] Likewise, he dealt with the thorny question of male involvement which had misled Dodds into imagining a male priest present among the maenads.[130]

But as far as the maenadic experience is concerned, Henrichs was less optimistic that such mysteries could be solved by mining depictions in poetry and vase-painting for clues. He described trying to discern what maenadic ritual felt like as 'pointless', and bluntly stated that '[w]e shall never disentangle the intricate web of maenadic myth and cult which the Greeks wove.[131] In 1984 he had concluded that the 'peculiar religious identity of the maenads had more to do with sweat and exhaustion than with an abnormal state of mind'.[132]

2.2. Anthropology, marginalisation, and social status

The second response to the 'enthusiastic' interpretation presented above is the question of whether or not maenadic ritual was seen as being a respectable part of ancient Greek religion, or whether, as

[126] Henrichs 1969, Henrichs 1978, Henrichs 1982, Henrichs 1984a, Henrichs 1984b, Henrichs 2012.
[127] See for example his treatment of Marcel Detienne: Henrichs 1984a: 210-212.
[128] Henrichs 1978.
[129] See Henrichs 1969 and, for excluding *omophagia* and *sparagmos*: Henrichs 1978: 147-151.
[130] By pointing out an error in Dodds' 1960 translation of *Bakchai* 115 and 135, excluding men: Henrichs 1984b, though a forthcoming paper by Scott Scullion [publication pending] will re-examine the case that men took part.
[131] Respectively, from Henrichs 1969: 224, Henrichs 1978: 122.
[132] Henrichs 1984b: 146-147.

a recent commentator has suggested, it belonged on the margins.[133] This has elicited an interesting interdisciplinary discussion.

The arguments that maenadic ritual was not quite acceptable go back to the late nineteenth century. In 1872, Adolf Rapp, whose objections to using *Bakchai* as a source for the *oreibasia* were discussed in section 2.1 above, argued that, under Solon's reforms, women would have been banned from taking part in a ritual that involved 'disorder and impropriety'.[134] A few years later, in the introduction to his 1885 commentary on *Bakchai*, John Sandys insisted that maenadic ritual could not have occurred in the classical period as such 'wild states of enthusiasm' would have been 'alien to the spirit of seclusion which pervaded the life of womankind in Greece'.[135] As there was undeniable evidence, even at that date, that the ritual had in fact taken place, the only option available to scholars holding this opinion was that the ritual form could not have involved such 'improper' elements.

Anthropological studies can provide insights into rituals that offered marginalised or disenfranchised members of society permission to act in ways that would otherwise be condemned. The idea of maenadic ritual being in some way a challenge to social norms has invited comparisons with rituals of status inversion and rebellion found in other cultures. In turn, this has led to an interesting theory on the social function and possible origins of maenadism, based on anthropological work on 'rituals of rebellion', a term coined by the anthropologist Max Gluckman in 1954.[136] This theory has fallen from favour in recent years, but its application to maenadic ritual is worth examining in detail as it underpins much of the scholarly discourse around maenadic ritual as an act of female defiance against social oppression.

Rituals of rebellion are those in which individuals of low or precarious social status are granted temporary license in a specific ritual context to behave in ways that would otherwise be denied to them, abusing or mimicking those further up the social scale.[137] By allowing this behaviour as a sort of pressure-release valve, normal social rules about appropriate behaviour and social status are strengthened and reinforced. In many societies, it is women who perform these rituals, particularly those who are anxious about their social position due to widowhood or childlessness. Some 'rites of rebellion' comprise gender-role inversions: Gluckman described a Zulu ritual in which women,

---

[133] Matthew Dillon 2003 places maenadism alongside prostitutes and – somewhat confusingly - midwives in his chapter entitled 'Women at the margins of Greek religion' (p.139-182), despite having a chapter on 'Women-only festivals'.
[134] Rapp 1872: 2-3, quoting Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 21: *to atakton kai akolaston*.
[135] Sandys 1885: ciii
[136] Lewis 1971, Kraemer 1979.
[137] Gluckman 1954: 3. See also discussion in Lewis 1971.

apprehensively awaiting the harvest resulting from their agricultural labour, dress as men and tend cattle while the men stay within the house.[138] Others challenge social norms more directly. I.M. Lewis explored a phenomenon in two African traditional religions in which women who fear they are losing their status through age or lack of affection from their husbands become 'possessed' by a spirit which makes them act in an anti-social manner, often insulting and humiliating their husbands.[139] A shaman conducts a ritual allowing the spirit and sufferer to coexist and mitigate the symptoms, and the sufferer's occasional outburst or repossessions are tolerated by the rest of society.

The prevalence of women, claims of 'possession', and inversion of social gender roles found in such examples led scholars in the second half of the twentieth century to consider maenadism as having been originally a ritual of rebellion.[140] Ross Shephard Kraemer found elements of the anthropological discussion of rituals of rebellion in the poetic depictions of maenads, including abandonment of the female sphere and participants being described using the vocabulary of the male activity of hunting.[141] She proposed that the great disparity in freedoms between men and women in ancient Greece led to social tensions great enough to have 'threatened the entire social fabric of ancient Greece' and that maenadic ritual provided both a vital temporary escape from - and a way of expressing discontent with - these tensions.[142] Building on this theory, Eva Keuls associated these tensions with a decline in maenadic cult after the classical period, arguing that the social changes of the Hellenistic period made rites of rebellion less necessary and paved the way for men to have a more prominent role in maenadic cult.[143]

However, a challenge to the idea of 'rites of rebellion' has come from within the discipline of anthropology itself. Gluckman had interpreted these rites as a way for disenfranchised women to express discontent with their repressed role within society, rebelling against a patriarchal system that denied them freedoms. As anthropologists have pointed out in the intervening decades, the societies within which Gluckman observed these rites were not actually as repressive towards women as he had claimed.[144] The way that members of a society describe how gender should dictate an individual's behaviour (gender ideals) and how that individual actually behaves in practice

[138] Gluckman 1954: 9-10. It is the uncertainty over the success of the harvest that makes Gluckman consider these women marginalised.
[139] Lewis 1971: 68-92.
[140] Jeanmaire 1951 described the phenomenon, though did not use the term 'rites of rebellion'. Also discussed, with some caution, by Lewis 1971: e.g. at 91.
[141] Kraemer 1979: 66-68.
[142] Ibid. at 73-77.
[143] Keuls 1985: 357-379.
[144] See discussion and references in Sanders 2003.

(gender practices) are often very different, a phenomenon also noted in studies on women's freedoms in ancient Greece.[145] Moreover, even in apparently repressive societies in which men hold the vast majority of political authority, women exert control over other, less visible areas that are essential to social stability, such as childbirth and childcare, control of grain stores, and household management.[146]

This poses a problem for interpretations of maenadic ritual as a release valve for women to express dissatisfaction with social injustice. Most of our firmest evidence for ritual performance comes from the Hellenistic and subsequent periods and relates to women of high social status.[147] These women would almost certainly have enjoyed more freedom than the women of classical Athens, and it has been demonstrated that even in Athens religious life in particular allowed women agency within the public sphere. Could they still be described as marginal or deprived members of society?[148] Keuls thought not: 'These latter-day raving madwomen', she says, 'were faking it'.[149]

Equally, scholarship on women's freedom of religious activity has moved on since the nineteenth century, and it is no longer surprising that women were allowed to behave in what Rapp would have seen as an indecorous manner in the name of religious worship.[150] Even in repressive Athens we find evidence that Greek women were permitted to attend night-time rituals or those that included 'improper' elements, such as *aischrologia* at the Thesmophoria and extravagant public mourning at the Adonia.[151] These activities were not automatically considered improper when they took place in the appropriate ritual context, though ritual activity placed women's behaviour in the public eye for scrutiny and sometimes condemnation.[152] This is supported by the literary evidence: Aristophanes mentions rituals involving women drumming and crying out as a possible source of male annoyance or disapproval, in the words of his magistrate in *Lysistrata* (387-398), but this is irritation rather than

---

[145] See e.g. Cohen 1989, particularly at 4-9.
[146] Sanders 2003, with examples at 474-476.
[147] The two Milesian inscriptions relating to the priestess of Dionysos suggest a member of the elite, as does the Magnesian inscription and Plutarch's accounts of the Delphic priestess Klea: *IMilet.* 733, *LSAM* 48, *IMagn*. 215, Plut. *de Is et Os*. 364e. See Bowersock 1965, Kapetanopoulos 1966 on Klea, and Connelly 2007: 27-56, 223-258 with Alkmeonis and the Magnesian inscription discussed at 253-255.
[148] Doubted by Bremmer 1984: 285-6, though he does not doubt that maenadic ritual offered an emotional release for participants.
[149] Keuls 1985: 358. A possible response is offered by Synnøve des Bouvrie, who points out that during the early twentieth century it was higher-status women, rather than the poorest in society, who drove the European women's suffrage movements, and that elite Hellenistic women may still have been acutely aware of the gross disparity between their freedoms and those of men: des Bouvrie 1997: 91-92 with note 56.
[150] Again, the literature on women in the ancient Greek world is huge. The reader is directed in the first instance to some works relating directly to social freedoms and/or religious practice: Cohen 1989, Blundell 1995, Hawley and Levick 1995, van Bremen 1996, Dillon 2003, Goff 2004, Connelly 2007, Eidinow 2016.
[151] See the summaries in Burkert 1985: Arrhephoria 228-230, Adonia 258, Eleusis 268-290, Thesmophoria 242-246, Dillon 2003: Adonia 162-169, Arrhephoria 57-60, Eleusis s.v., Thesmophoria 110-120.
[152] Eidinow 2016.

condemnation of an activity offered to the gods. Though contemporary commentators may have disapproved of such behaviour, Diodorus assured his readers that there was a valid aetiology for such coarseness.[153] Harrison suggested that maenadic ritual, while not approved of by men, would have been tolerated rather than banned, as Rapp had suggested.[154] As Walter Burkert put it, the eyes of ancient Greek society, particularly male society, look upon such religious events 'not without suspicion, but [they] cannot impede the sacred'.[155]

The gender reversals found in maenadic ritual may have provided participants with a more empowering experience than simply a release valve for social frustration. As the anthropologist Todd Sanders points out, the Inhazu rain-making ritual that Gluckman originally declared a 'rite of rebellion' does not actually involve women swapping their female gender identity for a male identity, but instead they 'embody both genders simultaneously', taking on aspects of male identity in addition to their own female gender in order to create 'a relationship of perfect and equal union within themselves'. [156] This perfect, superhuman wholeness in themselves is intended to coax an equally perfect balance in the world around them, proving the much-needed rain. Rather than crossing gender boundaries, the women are instead crossing the boundaries of normal human experience.

Barbara Goff has applied this principle to her study of the experience of possession in maenadic cult. She describes women-only rituals, including maenadism, as setting up a temporary 'city of women', from which men were excluded, offering participants the freedom to examine the social structures that constrained their lives and allowing them to develop their own personal authority.[157] Earlier feminist readings of maenadism, comparing it to possession rituals through the lens of 'rites of rebellion', cast the ritual maenad in the role of the powerless woman oppressed by her society, rebelling in the only way open to her and taking the opportunity to run amok and abuse her defective husband. Goff, on the other hand, uses more recent anthropological studies of women's possession rituals to envision ritual maenads as using the ritual space to look back at themselves from the outside, exploring their own identity and agency within a society that restricted their freedoms.[158] This intellectual distance is achieved through the 'demanding, laborious experience' of entering the possession trance, combined with the separation from her normal domestic

[153] Diod. Sic. 5.4.7. The Stoic Cleomedes said that women at the Thesmophoria talked like prostitutes: cited by Dillon 2003: 113.
[154] Rapp 1872: 2-3, Harrison 1903: 397-398.
[155] Burkert 1985: 258
[156] Sanders 2003: 482.
[157] Goff 2004: 213-216.
[158] Ibid. at 271-287.

environment which opens up her horizons to look beyond her daily life.[159] In this way, Goff argues, maenadic ritual represented a 'cultural resource for women' that could be 'intellectual and creative', allowing a woman to reflect on her perception of herself within society and granting her a greater authority based on her ritual participation.[160]

This is an appealing concept that recognizes that ritual participants were thinking, feeling, women who would, like any modern woman, both be aware that their society restricted some aspects of their lives but still be able and desire to take what opportunities were available to them to exercise an 'unaccustomed power of agency'.[161] It is a cerebral interpretation of the social function of maenadic possession, which rescues maenadic ritual from the marginalized fringes of ancient Greek society, placing it firmly back in the mainstream of civic cult, and offers a valuable insight into how women may have reflected on their experience after the event. In terms of Atossa's yoke, however, it firmly foregrounds the priestess, and distances maenadic ritual from Dodds' conception of the wild and irrational experience of epiphany and ecstasy.

It is also perhaps worth pointing out here that Goff does not offer a solution to the problem of integrating poetic and visual depictions of maenads into her interpretation of ritual maenadism. She declines to take a position on whether or not ritual maenads ever practiced *omophagia*, only mentions *sparagmos* in relation to *Bakchai*, and analyses maenads in vase-paintings primarily in relation to identification of the (male) viewer with the satyr, noting that 'the figure of the maenad is overdetermined by various anxieties in Greek culture'.[162] The anxieties to which she refers are of course male anxieties, about the inclusion of 'otherness' both in themselves (as she describes in relation to vase-paintings of satyrs) and as projected onto women as wild and uncontrollable figures. It is undeniable that most if not all of our sources that describe the mythological maenad were created by men and appear in media which would be primarily consumed by men. This makes them less important for Goff's interpretation, as she is primarily concerned with what such sources can tell us about women's experience.

Goff's treatment of maenadic ritual is enlightening and a welcome development for the burgeoning area of research on women's use of ritual to engage with their society and enhance their status.[163] But, valuable though this insight from social anthropology has proved in rehabilitating maenadic ritual from the excesses of the 'enthusiastic' approach, it skims over both the difficulties around

---

[159] Ibid. at 276. 277.
[160] Ibid. at 277-278.
[161] Ibid. at 6.
[162] Ibid. at.264-270 (iconography) and 271-272 (*Bakchai*), quote from 279.
[163] For further developments in this field, see Dillon, et al. 2016.

integrating the figure of the mythical maenad into ritual experience and the challenges in understanding what maenadic ritual felt like for the participant while the ritual was being performed. Lacking any discussion of the physicality of maenadic ritual, the reader is left wondering why it should be any different to any other all-female rites such as the Adonia, which is never associated so explicitly with *mania*. To delve deeper into this subject, the theoretical account of Goff must be complemented with an examination of the physiology of ritual performance.

2.3. Embodied mind approaches, neurophysiology, and 'loss of self'

So far we have examined three approaches to exploring maenadic ritual experience, which I have called the enthusiastic (Rohde, Harrison, Dodds), the sceptical (Rapp, Henrichs), and the anthropological (Kraemer, Goff). Now we will move on to what I will term an 'embodied mind' approach. Rather than focusing on the explicit evidence of the prose sources or the social function of women's rituals, these approaches centre on examining experience from inside the mind of the individual participant. The scholars discussed here have each looked at one particular aspect of experience: what ritual participants might think of as the 'meaning' of Dionysian religion, how the physicality of the ritual might affect participants, and the cognitive processes associated with inducing *mania*. These approaches complement one another, coming to remarkably similar conclusions, and all three will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5, when I discuss my own findings.

To begin with the 'meaning' of Dionysian religion, we will first return to the claim of Albert Henrichs, last seen at the end of section 2.1, somewhat pessimistically concluding that the 'peculiar religious identity of the maenads had more to do with sweat and exhaustion than with an abnormal state of mind'.[164] Henrichs' enormous body of work on the subject of Dionysian religion in general, and maenadic ritual in particular, is the most complete, detailed, and nuanced rebuttal of the 'enthusiastic' position on maenadic ritual experience. His later interest in the structuralist approach of the so-called 'Paris School' re-energised his enthusiasm for understanding the experience of 'the Dionysian', which will be discussed further below. But there is one distinct flaw in his earlier, sceptical work that was highlighted by Jan Bremmer in his 1984 paper 'Greek Maenadism Reconsidered'.[165] Before discussing Bremmer's work, which also breathed new life into the use of poetic depictions to explore the maenadic experience, this error needs to be identified and its influence in the scholarship to be traced.

[164] Henrichs 1984b: 146-147.
[165] Bremmer 1984.

It begins with Adolf Rapp. Rapp had argued that a controlled dance, performed according to the strict timetable of the civic ritual calendar, gave no room for the individual 'movement of the soul' that would be necessary for a genuine altered state of consciousness.[166] A century later, Albert Henrichs restated the error, claiming that 'spontaneous, unmitigated wantonness' such as Dodds described could not be induced and would not have been possible (or permitted) in the controlled context of the civic *oreibasia.*[167] He allowed that the ritual might be exhausting, even somewhat exhilarating, but, at least in 1982, was adamant that it was a stylised and 'studious re-enactment… rather than a personal expression of inner feelings'.[168] Ritual participants were 'pretend[ing] to be ecstatic' or, as Eva Keuls even more bluntly interpreted it, 'faking it'.[169]

The objection that mental state changes cannot be purposely induced in a religious context is demonstrably incorrect. There are numerous well-documented methods of religious practices inducing what are loosely termed 'ecstatic' or 'trance' states. These include many features found in maenadic ritual, such as music (particularly drumming), flickering light, and extravagant dancing.[170] This may be 'new' knowledge that Rapp might be forgiven for not knowing, but the connection between the ritual activity and environment and mental effects was certainly known to Rohde twenty years later, who cited the ritual's 'multiple stimulating influences' as causing 'true ecstasy and self-forgetfulness'.[171]

Bremmer dismissed the argument that ritual maenads were simulating their ecstasy by examining common themes found in prose, poetic, and visual depictions of maenadic ritual and looking at their physiological effects on the body and mind.[172] Bremmer proposed that elements such as altitude, flickering lights, hypoglycaemia and disruption to circadian rhythms could induce euphoria, hallucinations, and dizziness. These, he argued, might have led to some of the more 'miraculous' elements found in the poetic descriptions, such as insensitivity to pain or an altered state of consciousness. The sound of drums might, for example, make them feel 'possessed' as their bodies

[166] Rapp 1872: 9-12 His insistence that the necessary 'movement of the soul' (Seelenbewegung) could not be elicited through this is found on p.12.
[167] Henrichs 1982: 143-144. On Henrich's objections to the interpretation of Dionysian religion as inherently violent, see Henrichs 1984a: 232-234.
[168] Henrichs 1982: 144, 146-147.
[169] 'Faking it' from Keuls 1985: 358, 'pretending' attributed to Henrichs 1978: 144 by Ustinova 2018: 181 with 201 n 147, though Henrichs does not use this term himself. Ustinova herself argues against this position.
[170] The literature on such techniques is vast and specific factors will be discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5. For a general grounding in such techniques, readers are directed to Lewis 1971 and for specifically Dionysian religious practices to Jeanmaire 1951. On the relationship between music and trance in ancient Greek ritual, see Rouget 1985: 187-226.
[171] Rohde 1894: footnote 1 on pp.55-56.
[172] Bremmer 1984, revised in Bremmer 2019.

fell into synchronised rhythms.[173] This is in some ways similar to the conclusion that Henrichs came to the same year, that the physical effects of the ritual were the primary cause of the maenadic religious identity,[174] but while Henrichs interpreted these effects as exhaustion and some post-exercise exhilaration, Bremmer made a connection between the physical effects and a more profound ensuing mental state. Though he does not go into the precise mechanisms which might effect these changes, Bremmer's paper is extremely thought-provoking and his argument for the ritual environment and activity being able to explain some of the cognitive changes associated with mythical maenads forms the basis of the present study.

Bremmer's premise was that the physical actions and environment of maenadic ritual performance caused physiological symptoms that interfered with the participants' brain functions, and these interferences were experienced as euphoria and delirium. Bremmer's work tied into two other important developments in the early 1980s. In 1980, the ethnomusicologist Gilbert Rouget had published his *Le musique et le trance*, examining the use of music in rituals to induce feelings of possession, and devoted a chapter to Greek ritual with a detailed discussion of maenadism as a possession ritual.[175] The other important development in the early 1980s was the emergence of the structuralist readings of ancient Greek religion which inspired Albert Henrichs into exploring the concept of 'loss of self' in Dionysian worship.[176] 'Loss of self' as a concept is described by Henrichs as participants losing 'their individual identity by being incorporated in a larger religious group and by identifying themselves with the god [Dionysos]' and that 'the individual consciousness of the worshipers of Dionysus became totally submerged in the group consciousness'.[177] Arguing that Dionysos was a god who both magnified and decreased divisions between various aspects of identity, such as male/female, old/young and so on, he came to see Dionysian worship as a practice in which individuals are caught between these binary polarities and that, as a result, their 'identity or self-perception is affected, at least temporarily'.[178]

Henrichs is dealing with the whole vast span of Dionysian religion here, not simply maenadic ritual. Some of the polarities which he lists as being dissolved in Dionysian cult do seem to be relevant to maenadic ritual: male/female and young/old could be applied to the ambivalent gender identity of

---

[173] Bremmer 1984: 272. Bremmer's explanation of how this works does not go into a great deal of clinical detail, and I will return to the effects of drumming in Chapter 4 sections 3 and 4.
[174] See reference in footnote 168 above.
[175] Published in 1985 in English translation as 'Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession' (Rouget 1985) Rouget's work will be discussed further in Chapter 4 section 3.
[176] Henrichs 1984a: 234-240, citing particularly Segal 1982, Burkert 1985 (originally published in 1977 under the German title *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*).
[177] Henrichs 1984a: 207.
[178] Ibid. at 236.

ritual maenads and the differentiation of roles by age group (or at least, by marital status) described by Diodorus, and perhaps wild/mild could be considered a concession to the representation of the mythical maenad by a respectable Greek matron.[179] It is hard to see how war/peace, day/night, and life/death have their place in maenadic ritual, though the related Orphic Mysteries do seem to have had a particular interest in such polarities.[180] But this is to misunderstand Henrichs' point; it is not exactly that Dionysian ritual encompasses these polarities, but that the figure of Dionysos in the ancient Greek imagination dissolves the boundaries between such human divisions.

One such polarity that Henrichs does not mention, but which is found in the work of, for example, the structuralist Jean-Pierre Vernant, is that of human/divine or, perhaps, mythical/ritual. Vernant understood that blurring of this boundary would represent recognition of the divine within oneself, an early form of mysticism and an alternative to mainstream Greek religion.[181] For Vernant, blurring the human/divine polarity meant an escape from 'self' into 'other', but an 'other' that is an expansion of one's self rather than a 'possession' by a potentially dangerous entity.[182] The idea of Dionysian cult reducing the division of the human/divine polarity might seem to grant credence to the idea found in the work of the 'enthusiastic' scholars that ritual participants might feel themselves to be possessed by or in union with Dionysos himself. It also dovetails neatly with Goff's anthropological discussion of rituals in which a participant is enhanced to superhuman position by taking on aspects of the opposite gender.

The interaction of the human with the divine in a ritual context brings us to the work of Yulia Ustinova on divine *mania*, discussed in Chapter 1, section 3. Ustinova has examined the experience of divine *mania* and being 'seized' by the god, and her study includes a short analysis of some of the cognitive effects that could be induced by the bacchic ritual form, particularly focussing on how the physical exertion of ritual performance could bring about an altered state of consciousness.[183] This change to consciousness would be experienced, she argues, as hallucinations, a sense of euphoria, and a sort of self-hypnosis that would result in increased endurance and higher tolerance to pain. These findings tally remarkably well with Bremmer's suggestions about the effects of ritual

---

[179] See discussion in Chapter 3, section 3.4.2 on age group distinctions in maenadic cult.
[180] See for example the bone plaques from Olbia that are inscribed with the words 'life death' and 'truth lie': discussed in Graf and Johnston 2007: 64-65, reproduced at 185-187.
[181] However, as Vernant pointed out, Dionysian cult was *not* an alternative to mainstream religion and in the fifth century texts such as *Bakchai* there is none of the eschatological context found that one might expect if this were the case. See discussion in Vernant 1988: 384-392, discussing Rohde 1894 in particular at p.384-385.
[182] Vernant does somewhat muddy his own waters by rejecting 'possession' by a spirit but also allowing for maenads to be 'submissive within herself to the power that possesses her': Vernant 1988: 392.
[183] Ustinova 2018: 169-217, with discussion of the effects at 194-197.

performance, but the virtue of Ustinova's approach is that she offers scientific studies as evidence for these effects.

Ustinova raises two further areas of experience which merit further examination, and which are, once again, found in the 'enthusiastic' approach of Erwin Rodhe. She offers some suggestions for a cognitive basis for participants to merge their consciousness with that of the group; mirrors neurons, which prompt us to 'mirror' the physical behaviour and emotional expression of others, and the 'nocebo' effect, in which the power of suggestion can cause whole groups to share ill-effects for which there is no physiological cause.[184] These are interesting suggestions, and certainly mirroring systems in the brain are implicated in how we make predictions about what another person is thinking or feeling.[185] Ustinova provides such suggestions without a detailed analysis of how such cognitive systems might be triggered during maenadic ritual, but her ideas provide a basis for exploring such effects further.

So, by the turn of the twenty-first century, maenadic possession had been reinterpreted as a 'loss of self' and scholarship on maenadic ritual experience could be said to have come full circle and returned to a modified version of the 'enthusiastic' approach first proposed by Rohde in 1894. But the new position shows some marked improvements. Scholars working with anthropological comparators have forced a re-examination of the social status of women's ritual activity and the degree to which they could use ritual to express their own agency. Albert Henrich's healthy scepticism about *omophagia* has cleaned up most of the bloodier stains left by Harrison and Dodds. Bremmer's study of the neurophysiology of ritual performance helps place maenadic ritual within a wider human tradition of using such techniques to achieve a religious experience, and Ustinova's examination of some cognitive effects of ritual performance suggests that the mental state of participants would also affect how they experienced their ritual. The work of Henrichs, Vernant, and Goff open up the potential for Dionysian ritual performance to bring participants in contact with what they conceive of as the divine.

3. Chapter summary: approaches and ways forward

This chapter has examined how some writers have explored the performance and experience of the *oreibasia* using depictions of mythical maenads, and some of the problems and objections these attempts have raised. Clearly, the mix of historical and mythical elements in the poetic and visual

[184] Ibid. at 195.

[185] On the interaction of mirroring systems and mentalising (the act of imagining the mind of another) see Hari, et al. 2015.

depictions is complex and cannot be easily unwoven, and a justifiable wariness against the excesses of the most liberal blending of myth and cult is reasonable.

The first two arguments presented, the 'enthusiastic' and the 'sceptical', represent relatively extreme positions on the question of how poetic depictions should be used to understand experience. But neither approach is satisfactory. By ignoring the social role of maenadism and placing too much emphasis on the poetic depictions, the enthusiastic approach effectively marginalised a recognised civic cult activity, while, by over-prioritising the prose sources, the sceptical approach robbed maenadic cult of any effects on the mind that the physical act of ritual performance might have induced. Though these arguments have become more nuanced and modified in recent years, the earlier, stronger, rejections of maenadic ritual being able to induce *mania* remain highly influential.

The problem with both approaches is the lack of direct, explicit evidence for ritual experience in either the prose or the poetic sources. Where the subject of ritual experience is described in the prose discussions, they tend to use language which we understand only incompletely, such as *ekmainesthai*, while the poetic and visual sources blend myth with ritual to a degree that makes them difficult to unpick. This gap in the evidence provided by our sources on the subject of ritual experience illustrates why this ritual subject is a suitable one for an approach which explores experience by looking at the existing evidence through an interpretative lens borrowed from a different discipline.

The problems encountered by these approaches have, over time, given rise to the 'embodied' approaches discussed in section 2.3. Each of the scholars discussed offers a different insight into maenadic ritual, including its function within society, the mechanics of ritual experience, and how it fits into the wider religious landscape. But, despite all these adventurous approaches, we are not much closer to understanding what it felt like to dance for Dionysos. There are still two issues that remain largely unaddressed. The first is that there is still no established framework for explaining how depictions found in poetry and vase-painting can be used to explore maenadic ritual experience, and the second is that the mechanics of exactly how 'loss of self', 'epiphany, or 'possession' might be achieved have not been adequately explored, nor how these states might be experienced.

There is however reason to be optimistic about the search for answers to both issues, through the use of an interpretative lens borrowed from cognitive science, which uses theories about how our brains perceive and respond to the world to explain how experience is generated by the mind. Cultural knowledge – which includes artistic products– is used to create schemata which inform how

we interpret, make sense of, and prioritise the flood of sensory data that would otherwise use up all our cognitive processing capacity: it affects how we experience what is going on. This interpretation fits well with the recent theory from Robin Osborne that changes in the iconography of Athenian vase-painting in the middle of the fifth century BCE reflect a growing interest in depictions of the inner life and experiences of the figures shown.[186] Taking both aspects together, this would suggest that changes to the visual depictions of maenads from the middle of the fifth century onwards are particularly significant, as the cultural knowledge they transmitted to ritual participants is more likely to relate to emotional and psychological aspects of experience, thereby affecting their expectations of ritual performance.

I intend to build on Bremmer's work by incorporating new research that was not available to him in 1984. New developments in neuropsychology and laboratory testing of cognitive science theories offer insights into how our minds function. These insights allow us access to the underlying mechanisms which trigger particular cognitive effects under particular circumstances. In the chapters which follow, I will be building on the work of all the scholars discussed above, drawing on research that examines elements found in maenadic ritual and seeking scientific explanations for how sensations that could have been experienced as 'possession' or 'loss of self' could have been induced by the ritual form.

According to the predictive processing model, in order to reconstruct an experience, we need to know what internal and external cues were present. Chapter 3 will explore the external cues, while the internal cues – mood, intention, expectation – and their interactions with sensory effects will be examined in detail in Chapters 4 and 5. The exploration presented in this next chapter will introduce our main sources for the *oreibasia*, establishing where and when it took place, and who took part. It will draw together evidence from prose sources, poetry, and vase-painting to build up a picture of the events surrounding the ritual and suggest a programme of events surrounding the mountain dance.

[186] Osborne 2018, also described in chapter 1 section 1.1.

Chapter 3: Sources for the *oreibasia*

‘Will I resemble a bacchant more if I hold the *thyrsos* in my right hand, or in my left?’

‘You must hold it in your right hand, and at the same time raise your right foot’

(Dionysos instructs Pentheus in bacchic deportment, Euripides’ *Bakchai* 941-942)

‘Go to the holy land of Thebes, that you might fetch maenads from the race of Cadmean Ino.

They will provide you with rites and noble customs and establish *thiasoi* of Bacchus in the city.’

(Oracle received by the people of Magnesia-on-the-Meander)[1]

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the evidence for performance of the *oreibasia* and the practicalities of how the ritual was staged. I will not, at this point, examine its effects on participants: as noted in Chapter 1 section 1.2, the majority of the evidence we have for ritual performance does not discuss such effects. In the last chapter, I examined the various approaches that scholars have used to elicit information about maenadic ritual experience from this silence in the sources and in Chapters 4 and 5 I will present the findings of two case studies investigating how we can investigate this silence further, not by looking for explicit descriptions of experience in the ancient sources but by examining the mental effects of ritual performance.

As described in Chapter 1 section 2 the interpretative model that I am using, based on the theory of predictive processing, allows a place for poetic and visual depictions in understanding how ritual *experience* is processed by the brain. This does not mean, however, that these depictions can be used without restriction as evidence for ritual *practice*, as was the case in some of the earlier scholarship (Chapter 2 section 1). It would certainly be irresponsible to take every detail found in a complete poetic product like *Bakchai* as evidence for ritual practice. But nor is it sensible to exclude all information available in these sources from a description of ritual practice, as the most sceptical scholars have suggested.[2] Without the information from Old Comedy, for example, our understanding of the political, domestic, and religious landscapes of classical Athens would much poorer than it is today. The *parodos* of *Bakchai* contains a host of detail for ritual costume and

[1] *IMagn.* 215.24-29, translation adapted from discussion in Henrichs 1978: 123-134. See Appendix for full text.
[2] Such as Adolf Rapp 1872, whose work was presented in Chapter 2 section 2.1.

activity, much of which is corroborated by other sources and which will, therefore, be included in my discussion of these aspects (3.3 below).

We should also be wary of assuming that prose sources provide the whole and complete 'truth': the boundaries of myth and history are rarely clear in writers like Pausanias or Herodotus, particularly in subjects pertaining to religious matters.[3] Pausanias in particular makes this explicit when he says that religious traditions are measured against a standard of truth which is not the same as that applied to stories of the deeds of humans (8.3.3). Statements by Plutarch, for example, about the state of mind of the Thyiades during the ritual should be considered separately from the evidence provided in the passage about where and when they were performing their ritual. In the following analysis of the sources for ritual practice, if I draw primarily on the prose sources, this is because these sources tend to be more explicit about the details of how, when, and where, maenadic ritual was practiced in the ancient world.

Section 2 of this chapter will introduce my approach in assessing evidence taken from prose, poetic, and visual depictions of maenads and lay out a few parameters for the evidence being included. Section 3 will present this evidence, and section 4 will propose an outline of the events surrounding the ritual as part of a religious event in the wider scope of ancient Greek religious practice. In doing so, the analysis will address some of the challenging questions that have arisen in the scholarship historically, including the participation of men (section 3.2) and the consumption of raw meat, (section 4.3).

2. Approaching the evidence

This section will provide some basic information about the ancient sources. I will first provide an explanation of how I have identified references to the *oreibasia* in the prose sources and justify the inclusion of poetic sources like *Bakchai*. I will then explain why I have excluded material relating to the Dionysian Mysteries and Italian Dionysian cult.

2.1. Identifying evidence for the *oreibasia*

We have explicit evidence from prose writers directly referring to the performance of a maenadic ritual in particular times and places: in the first century BCE, for example, Diodorus Siculus tells us that in many Greek cities women conducted a trieteric ritual for Dionysos in which they 'imitated' or 'represented' maenads.[4]

[3] See for example, discussions in Veyne 1988, Pirenne-Delforge 2009.

[4] Translations of this and subsequent passages are taken from the most recent Loeb volumes unless specified in the text.

διὸ καὶ παρὰ πολλαῖς τῶν Ἑλληνίδων πόλεων διὰ τριῶν ἐτῶν βακχεῖά τε γυναικῶν ἀθροίζεσθαι, καὶ ταῖς παρθένοις νόμιμον εἶναι θυρσοφορεῖν καὶ συνενθουσιάζειν εὐαζούσαις καὶ τιμώσαις τὸν θεόν· τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας κατὰ συστήματα θυσιάζειν τῷ θεῷ καὶ βακχεύειν καὶ καθόλου τὴν παρουσίαν ὑμνεῖν τοῦ Διονύσου, μιμουμένας τὰς ἱστορουμένας τὸ παλαιὸν παρεδρεύειν τῷ θεῷ μαινάδας.

Consequently, in many Greek cities in alternate years, bacchic groups of women gather together, and it is lawful for *parthenoi* to carry *thyrsoi* and join together in *enthusiasmos,* crying '*euai*' and honouring the god. The married women, forming into groups, make sacrifice to the god and conduct bacchic rites and in general praise with hymns the presence of Dionysos, in this way acting the role of those who, as history relates, were of old the companions of the god, the maenads.

(Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History,* 4.3.3, my translation)

This is direct evidence for the ritual being held when Diodorus was writing and gives us some basic information about the form the ritual took at that time: it was held in alternate years; it was held in honour of Dionysos; it was conducted by women; some participants carried a *thyrsos*; participants acted the role of the mythical maenads. Having these features established allows us to look for other evidence, from earlier periods, which shows sufficient points of comparison with Diodorus' description to suggest that it refers to the same event.

When we search for these points of comparison, we find explicit references to the ritual across a wide range of dates and genres, which originate from Ionia and Macedonia as well as the Greek mainland. This could – and should - raise a concern about whether or not there was any significant continuity of practice over this wide scope of time and place, as should the question of authorial intent and context of specific works. As far as context is concerned, this would be more pressing if I were looking for evidence for either social attitudes towards maenadic ritual or personal opinions about ritual experience, which might vary according to a writer's particular viewpoint or intent.[5] This chapter is not looking at the evidence for ritual experience, which will be interpreted later as a product of ritual practice, rather than gleaned directly from the sources. As far as time is concerned, I am specifically looking for aspects of cult that are found in a range of times and places, as these are likely to have been retained precisely because they were considered to be significant to the ritual. If

[5] Albert Henrichs, for example, considered that epigraphy was 'the ultimate test of authenticity' and was sceptical about the use of poetic and visual depictions as sources for maenadic ritual as practiced, stating that 'to look for authentic portrayal of ritual in vase painters is methodologically as questionable as to read Euripides as if he were a historian of religion': Henrichs 1978: 122, 154.

a particular detail appears in multiple sources, it is likely to be a consistent part of maenadic ritual as practiced.

Several features appear across most, if not all, of the prose sources. Pausanias tells us, for example, that a trieteric festival was held in Delphi for Dionysos by women called Thyiades in the first century CE, when Pausanias was active (10.4.3)

> τὸ ἕτερον δὲ οὐκ ἐδυνήθην συμβαλέσθαι πρότερον, ἐφ᾽ ὅτῳ καλλίχορον τὸν Πανοπέα εἴρηκε, πρὶν ἢ ἐδιδάχθην ὑπὸ τῶν παρ᾽ Ἀθηναίοις καλουμένων Θυιάδων. αἱ δὲ Θυιάδες γυναῖκες μέν εἰσιν Ἀττικαί, φοιτῶσαι δὲ ἐς τὸν Παρνασσὸν παρὰ ἔτος αὐταί τε καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες Δελφῶν ἄγουσιν ὄργια Διονύσῳ. ταύταις ταῖς Θυιάσι κατὰ τὴν ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν ὁδὸν καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ χοροὺς ἱστάναι καὶ παρὰ τοῖς Πανοπεῦσι καθέστηκε˙ καὶ ἡ ἐπίκλησις ἡ ἐς τὸν Πανοπέα Ὁμήρου ὑποσημαίνειν τῶν Θυιάδων δοκεῖ τὸν χορόν.
>
> The former passage, in which Homer speaks of the beautiful dancing-floors of Panopeus, I could not understand until I was taught by the women whom the Athenians call Thyiads. The Thyiads are Attic women, who with the Delphian women go to Parnassus every other year and celebrate orgies in honour of Dionysus. It is the custom for these Thyiads to hold dances at places, including Panopeus, along the road from Athens. The epithet Homer applies to Panopeus is thought to refer to the dance of the Thyiads.
>
> (Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 10.4.3, translation adapted from W.H.S. Jones)[6]

Pausanias makes no mention of any association with mythical maenads, but three points of comparison can be made with the evidence in Diodorus' statement: the trieteric occurrence, the predominance of women, the connection with Dionysos. Although we cannot be certain that these two accounts refer to the same ritual conducted in the same manner a century apart, we can be secure in identifying them as being very similar events. We can add a specific location – Delphi - and the name of a group of ritual performers – Thyiades - to our knowledge base.

Other references are found in poetic sources that some scholars considered too inextricably intertwined with myth and therefore excluded.[7] These references, however, also share notable similarities with the accounts in the prose sources and can be assumed therefore to display knowledge in the classical period of a very similar ritual. Euripides' play *Ion*, presented around 414-412 BCE, refers to a festival celebrated by 'maenads of Bacchus' in Delphi.

---

[6] Jones 1935. I have changed Jones' translation of ὄργια from 'orgies' to 'rites', due to the incompatible modern connotations.

[7] Rapp 1872: 12-14, Henrichs 1978: 154 whose 'sceptical' approach was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.

ΙΩΝ: Πυθίαν δ᾽ ἦλθες πέτραν πρίν;

ΞΟΥΘΟΣ: ἐς φανάς γε Βακχίου.

ΙΩΝ: προξένων δ᾽ ἔν του κατέσχες;

ΞΟΥΘΟΣ: ὅς με Δελφίσιν κόραις . . .

ΙΩΝ: ἐθιάσευσ᾽, ἢ πῶς τάδ᾽ αὐδᾷς;

ΞΟΥΘΟΣ: Μαινάσιν γε Βακχίου.

Ion: Have you ever come to the Pythian rock before?

Xuthus: Yes, for the torches of Bacchus.

Ion: You stayed in the house of a *proxenos*?

Xuthus: Yes, he who brought me to the Delphian girls . . .

Ion: What do you mean? Into the *thiasos*?

Xuthus: Yes, among the maenads of Bacchus.

(Eur. *Ion*, 544-546, translation my own)

Taken alone, we cannot be sure whether or not Euripides is referring to a real festival. But by drawing on the evidence of Diodorus Siculus, who explicitly associates his trieteric ritual with maenads, and that of Pausanias, who places such a trieteric festival in Delphi, we can be reasonably sure that Euripides is referring to a very similar event. The passage from *Ion* adds other details that help build an impression of the circumstances of the *oreibasia* ritual: there was a torch-lit procession, suggesting that it took place at night, and eminent visitors might remain in Delphi at least overnight, staying at the house of a civically appointed host called a *proxenos*.[8]

In the passage from *Ion*, Euripides states that the ‘maenads of Bacchus’ were in groups called *thiasoi* (sing. *thiasos*). The word *thiasos* may refer to a family-based subdivision of a *phratry*, a group brought together for religious purposes, or the mythical entourage of Dionysos.[9] It does not specifically mean a group undertaking maenadic ritual, although the epigraphic evidence certainly

[8] On the role of the *proxenos* in such situations, see Dillon 1997: 154-155, with Rutherford 2004, Rutherford 2007, Rutherford 2018 on state delegations to festivals (called *theoria*) more widely.
[9] Jaccottet 2003a: 18-19, 21.

suggests that it was used for this purpose.[10] An early third-century BCE inscription from Miletus lists one of the duties of the Dionysian priestess to be convening the θίασος δημοσίος, that is, the civic *thiasos*.[11] Further north in Ionia and around the same time, in Magnesia-on-the-Meander, no less than three *thiasoi* were in place, each convened by a woman referred to as a maenad.[12] One of these was called the *thiasos* πρὸ πόλεως, which is usually translated as meaning 'outside' or 'in front of' the city, but may also have carried the meaning 'on behalf of the city'.[13] The use of the term '*thiasos'*, in the context of women performing a Dionysian ritual, should therefore alert us to the possibility that a maenadic ritual is being discussed.

In addition to the details from *Ion*, Euripides' more famous play *Bakchai* refers to a trieteric dance ritual (132-133: χορεύματα … τριετηρίδων), describes the behaviour of a *thiasos* (73-169), and apparently provides evidence for ritual costume (lines 821-835, 912-944). The degree to which Euripides was accurately representing maenadic ritual behaviour as practiced in Greece in his day is uncertain.[14] However, taken with the explicit evidence from Diodorus and Pausanias and applying the same test of seeking points of comparison, the ritual referred to in the play appears very similar to the *oreibasia*: it shares the mountainside location, the connection to 'maenads', trieteric occurrence, and seems to depict a ritual that was predominantly performed by women. There are sufficient similarities to treat *Bakchai* seriously as a potential source of information for ritual performance.

There are still considerable gaps in our knowledge. We know even less about maenadic ritual than we do about other women's festivals like the Thesmophoria or Adonia, and the majority of our accounts refer to the ritual at Delphi, which may or may not have been representative of rituals in other locations. Robert Parker expresses the typical obscurity of the details of maenadic ritual: 'How many cities hosted such rituals, how many women and of what condition went to the mountains, what happened when they got there: precise details on all these points unfortunately escape us'.[15]

[10] For example, Hdt. 4.79, Eur. *Bacch.* 115, 680.
[11] *LSAM* 48.3-4. The lines quoted are part of a longer passage, provided in the Appendix along with the other significant inscriptions: *IMilet*. 733 and *IMagn*. 215.
[12] *IMagn*. 215.35.
[13] *LSJ* s.v πρό + genitive A.I.3 and A.III.2. The translation 'on behalf of the city' was favoured by Lewis Farnell, and Martin Nilsson but rejected by Albert Henrichs without stating a reason: Farnell 1909: 331, Nilsson 1957: 6, Henrichs 1969: 225 footnote 6.
[14] See e.g. Seaford 1981, Seaford 1987 for connections to the Mysteries. On Macedonian cult: Sandys 1885: xxxiii-xlii, Dodds 1940: 169-175.
[15] Parker 2011: 243. By comparison, we know the dates on which the Thesmophoria was held and the name for each day, we know what equipment a woman needed to participate, and several of the activities and events of the programme: Farnell 1907: 85-91, Versnel 1994: 235-260. For the Adonia, we know less detail, but still enough to give a broad outline of events over several days, and to describe the mood of the festival: Parker 2005: 283-288 with further references in the notes.

Despite this obscurity, however, we can glean a reasonable amount of information about where, when, and by whom the *oreibasia* was performed. Before describing these details, however, there are some exclusions that need to be made.

2.2. Exclusions of private *thiasoi* and Italian *bacchanalia*

The inscription from Miletus detailing the duties and responsibilities of the Dionysian priestess states that private *thiasoi* may not be convened until the priestess has convened the public *thiasos*, and also refers to initiations that seem to have been carried out by private individuals.[16] The inscription is damaged, and it is not clear how, or even whether, these two lines are connected, but it seems at least possible that these private *thiasoi* were primarily made up of initiates of the Dionysian Mystery cult, and that they also attended the *polis* ritual.[17]

As explained in chapter 1 section 2, this study uses an interpretative framework based on predictive processing to explore the experience of the *oreibasia*, and this means that I will be making predictions about participants' experience based on their cultural knowledge. This has led to my restricting this study to the groups of women who conducted the *oreibasia* as part of a 'public' group, as opposed to these private groups.

When considering how a participant experienced the ritual from a cognitive perspective, we have to make certain assumptions and generalisations about the individual's mental state and cultural background, both of which influence how the brain perceives and interprets events.[18] The more varied the individuals involved, the more varied those factors are between members of the group, and the more varied the effects on their cognitive function and therefore their experience. It would be difficult to generalise about the experience of the initiates of the Dionysian Mysteries because the evidence suggests that there could have been a high level of variation between them.

The Dionysian Mysteries appear to have had at least the potential for a high degree of geographic variation. There are no extant standardised codes of practice or belief to draw on, and the cult seems to have been transmitted by wandering practitioners without regulation from a central sanctuary.[19] The third century BCE decree of Ptolemy Philopater, ordering all practitioners of Dionysian cult to submit a copy of their 'sacred text' (ἱερὸς λόγος) and provide an account of the person from whom they received their initiation, suggests that there was a degree of variation

---

[16] *LSAM* 48.1-7, full text in Appendix.
[17] Kraemer 1992: 36-49, Bowden 2010: 121, Ustinova 2018: 115, 122-126. The role of private *thiasoi* in the *oreibasia* will be discussed in section 3.1 below.
[18] As discussed in Chapter 1, section 2. Some general points about the effects of culture on cognition can be found in Lillard 1998, Geertz 2010.
[19] Cole 1980, Henrichs 1982: 152-154, Burkert 1987: 33-35.

between practices and teachings within the cult.[20] We cannot therefore generalise about the central tenets or practices of the cult in different parts of Greece at different times.

Initiates might also have imbued their ritual performance with a range of personal expectations and hopes. Initiation into a mystery cult offered a range of benefits, from enhanced social networking opportunities to eschatological hopes for the afterlife.[21] Such hopes and expectations for personal development make for a complex brew of motivations for participants. The Dionysian Mysteries appear to have had an eschatological element, which could potentially affect the mood or expectations of participants.[22] Without knowing whether or not hopes for afterlife benefits were a part of the teaching of a particular local variation of the cult, we do not know whether an initiate would be contemplating their own inevitable death, or looking ahead to a fine afterlife, while engaging in their ritual.

There is no comparable evidence of such a range of motivations for participation in the civic ritual: the purpose of civic cult activity is most commonly associated with bringing benefits to the city as a whole rather than for an individual.[23] Although participation in civic cult may have provided advancements for the individuals who took part, the prime beneficiary of the activity was the city. We have two epitaphs for practitioners and an account of the burial of three others, none of which mention an enhanced position for them in the afterlife, though they dwell on the higher status that ritual participation bestowed on them and on their memories. Niko and Alkmeonis are mourned by their city and their ritual companions (Posidippus *AB* 44, *IMilet.* 733), Kosko, Baubo, and Thettale were given state burials in conspicuous civic locations by the city of Magnesia (*IMagn.* 215.37-41). A single reference to the priestess Alkmeonis as 'knowing her allotted portion of the fine things' (*IMilet*. 733.4: καλῶμ μοῖραν ἐπισταμένη) may suggest some hope for a share of good fortune in the afterlife, but this is by no means a certain interpretation and may relate to benefits or good fortune experienced during life.

---

[20] *BGU* 1211 = no. 208 in Hunt and Edgar 1934; variation in practice discussed in Burkert 1993. For a possible slightly earlier date of the decree, see Scott 2008.

[21] For a study of the pragmatic benefits of initiation, see for example Blakely 2007. On the eschatology of the Dionysian Mysteries, see Graf and Johnston 2007. A solid overview of the range of Mystery cults can be found in Bowden 2010.

[22] On the eschatology of Mystery cults as expressed in the bacchic gold lamellae: Graf and Johnston 2007, Robertson 2003.

[23] Ustinova 2013: 110-111 distinguishes between the experience of private and public performance of bacchic rituals associated with *mania.* On civic religion as a discourse between the gods and the state, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1990, Sourvinou-Inwood 2000. Sourvinou-Inwood's model of *polis* religion as the overarching and all-encompassing expression of Greek religious feelings and behaviour is almost certainly over-simplified (see for example Kindt 2009), but her description of its functions within the state is still valid.

It is easier to generalise about cultural knowledge when all the participants belong to a similar social group. In order to make any assumptions about how the initiates of the Dionysian Mysteries experienced their mountain dance, we would also need to be able to generalise about their life experiences. But we know very little about the entry criteria for the Mysteries, and what we do know suggests that they were reasonably inclusive and varied. Certainly, tablets made of bone or gold leaf inscribed with texts associated with the Dionysian Mysteries have been found in the graves of both men and women across a wide area of Magna Graecia, and a recent prosopographic study of the names of *thiasos*-members from Hellenistic Athens notes names associated with foreigners as well as those of women.[24] We cannot generalise about the gender or cultural background of initiates.

We cannot generalise about economic or civic status either. If (as seems likely), the organisation of the Dionysian Mysteries was broadly aligned with those of Eleusis, then membership may have also been open to people of lower status, possibly even slaves.[25] Based on Herodotus' account of King Skyles being initiated, and the presence of inscribed tablets bearing bacchic texts among grave goods, Fritz Graf has proposed that initiation was reserved for those of high social class.[26] Certainly, some of the graves in which gold tablets were found seem to have held wealthy individuals, but nearly half of the tablets were found in graves that did not contain such evidence of status.[27] We cannot assume that the presence of writing on grave goods indicates that the deceased was literate, and the story of Skyles only shows that high status individuals *could* be initiated, not that it was a requirement.[28] Indeed, the presence in lists of members of Attic *thiasoi* of names common among freedmen points to individuals from a wide range of social situations.[29] We can only conclude that initiates of the Dionysian Mysteries might be male or female, Greek or foreign, rich or poor; we cannot narrow participation down to a more homogenous group. This admirable inclusivity poses a problem for any attempt to generalise about the social circumstances of participants.

By contrast, the women who took part in the civic *oreibasia* were almost certainly all of reasonably wealthy and privileged status, as only the wives and daughters of citizen men would be wealthy

---

[24] On the gold tablets (or *lamellae*), see Graf and Johnston 2007, on names of *thiasos* members: Arnaoutoglou 2003. Robertson 2003 summarises the evidence from grave sites for membership of the Dionysian Mysteries.
[25] Economic and social inclusivity in the Eleusinian Mysteries: Ar. *Pax* 374-5, Theoph. *Fragment* 1, *IG II²* 1672.207, *IG II²* 1673 l.24, Clinton 2003. On similarities between the Dionysian and Eleusinian Mysteries: Segal 1961, Seaford 1981, Bowden 2010: 107-109, particularly at 253-254.
[26] Graf and Johnston 2007, Bremmer 2014: 72. The sad story of Skyles is found in Hdt. 4.79; on the historicity of the story, see Hornblower 2010: 102-105, Braund 2019.
[27] Graf 1993: 255-258.
[28] The story also shows signs of having been somewhat mythologized and should not be read simply as an historical account: Braund 2019.
[29] Recorded by Arnaoutoglou 2003.

enough to buy or be elected to a civic religious office.[30] The priestess Klea, friend of Plutarch, has been fairly securely identified as a member of an elite family whose members had held official roles at Delphi over several generations.[31] We can generalise with a little more confidence about the life experiences and cultural knowledge of these women than we can about the individuals who made up the diverse membership of the Mysteries.

Focusing on the civic ritual means that we should also exclude evidence from Roman Italy. Despite significant Roman use of maenadic imagery and myth in literature and visual art, there is little evidence for civic maenadic ritual ever taking place in Italy.[32] The *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 186 BCE, outlawing certain Dionysian rituals in Rome, does not explicitly refer to an *oreibasia* and, if Livy is to be trusted, seems to refer to specifically Italian developments of an imported Greek cult, which may itself have been some form of the Dionysian Mysteries.[33] While Livy specifies that the original Greek cult was restricted to women, he also states that the uncorrupted rituals were held annually in daylight.[34] The Greek sources stress a night-time ritual held every two years, so it seems unlikely that even an 'uncorrupted' version of the cult as it was celebrated in Italy had the same ritual form as the Greek civic *oreibasia*.

Even if the Roman bacchanalia were comparable in form to the Greek *oreibasia*, there may be other cultural forces affecting how participants experienced their rite. When Dionysos-cult was brought to Italy, the Etruscans already had a wine god, Fufluns Pacha, whose worship was merged with that of Dionysos.[35] Perhaps due to both the merging of local and imported gods, and the Roman state's tendency to exert control over religious freedom, Dionysian ecstatic worship in Italy seems to have varied considerably and has been described by a recent commentator as 'fractured'.[36] When it re-emerged, centuries after being outlawed, it appears to have been much more orderly and closely regulated; 'less bacchic and more bureaucratic'.[37]

I have therefore excluded the Italian Roman material from this study. Material from the Roman period has been selected specifically where it purports to describe historic events from an earlier period in Greece. Where images from vase-paintings are discussed, the surviving vessels almost all

[30] Bremmer 1984: 284-285, Connelly 2007: 44-55.
[31] Bowersock 1965, Kapetanopoulos 1966: 128-130 with notes.
[32] For an overview of the cult of Dionysos in Rome, see Mac Góráin 2019.
[33] *CIL* i2 2, 581, Livy, 39.8-18.
[34] Livy 39.13 ('primo sacrarium id feminarum fuisse, nec quemquam eo virum admitti solitum; tres in anno statos dies habuisse, quibus interdiu Bacchis initiarentur, sacerdotes in vicem matronas creari solitas'). A full discussion of the affair can be found in Gruen 1990: 34-78. Against Livy's depiction of a day-time ritual, see Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.300-303.
[35] Bonfante 1993.
[36] Miano 2019.
[37] Alonso Fernández 2013: 188-189.

come from find-spots in Italy. Though the tastes of the export market may have shaped what was painted on vases, the imagery used is generally assumed by scholarship to be Athenian in origin.[38] Female figures identified as Dionysian found in native Etruscan art differ generally from those found on the Attic-made vessels as they usually lack the iconographic paraphernalia, including *nebris*, *thyrsos*, and snakes.[39] This suggests that these particular elements belong to the Attic lexicon of maenadism.

In narrowing the focus of this study, I do not mean to suggest that my findings are not applicable to private performance of the ritual. Much of what will be discussed in the chapters on cognitive effects are equally applicable to all neurologically intact humans and it is quite possible they would have been experienced by anyone who performed the *oreibasia.* But by limiting the evidence to the smaller and less diverse group of individuals who performed the civic ritual we are better able to ensure we are making appropriate comparisons when using evidence from social and cognitive science.

3. Evidence for ritual performance

These caveats aside, the following examination presents the evidence for where and when the ritual took place, the identity of participants, and details of the costume and objects that were used. Section 4 will focus on the components of ritual activity, including convening the participants, the sacrifices and procession.

3.1. Participants

At certain locations, the *oreibasia* was performed by a group sanctioned by the local state to conduct the ritual, and these groups are the primary subject of this study. Tracing the names of these groups and references to a Dionysian ritual performed by women at these locations provides the basis for recognising references in other accounts, along with the points noted in section 2.1 above: a trieteric occurrence, use of the word *thiasos*, and references to mountains, maenads or *bakchai*, and *thyrsoi.* Using these as inclusion criteria, we can find explicit evidence for the *oreibasia* from the fifth century BCE well into the Roman period.

The best-known group is found in Delphi, a group of Delphic and Athenian women called the Thyiades, who performed their ritual on a trieteric basis at night on the slopes of Mount Parnassus.[40]

---

[38] Osborne 2001, Spivey 2006.

[39] As outlined in Henrichs 1987: 100-101: see for example the sixth century bronze 'maenad figure' in the Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. 53.124, described by Lee 1955.

[40] Paus. 10.4.2-4, 6.4; Plut. *de primo frigido* 18 (*Moralia* 953d), *Mulierum virtutes* 13 (*Mor.* 249e-f), *Quaestiones Graecae* 12 (*Mor.* 293b-f), cf. Eur. *Ion* 550-554.

Though the earliest surviving use of the term 'Thyiades' explicitly refers to nymphs,[41] Plutarch claimed that the ritual group in Delphi carried that name in the fourth century BCE and Euripides refers to a maenadic ritual conducted at Delphi in the fifth century BCE.[42] Though there is some evidence that other sites were considered to have a long tradition of maenadic ritual performance (such as Macedonia and Thebes, discussed below), no other site has explicit evidence for such a long tradition of performance of the *oreibasia* as Delphi. We cannot be certain that the Delphic ritual was unchanged over this period or that the ritual was performed in the same way at other sites, but some elements seem to be diachronically and geographically consistent.

There is epigraphic evidence that during the Hellenistic period maenadic rituals were held in Macedonia and Asia Minor. In Miletus a trieteric festival of Dionysos was celebrated under the direction of a civic priestess in the third century BCE, and, nearly a hundred years later in the same city, the epitaph of the 'pious priestess' (τὴν ὁσίην ἱρείην) called Alkmeonis records that she led the bacchants of the city, πολιήτιδες βάκχαι, to a mountain.[43]

Despite Thebes being the 'mother-city of backchai' (according to the Chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone*, 1121-1122: Βακχᾶν ὁ ματρόπολιν Θήβαν), and there being a strong association of Dionysos with the city through his mother, the Theban princess Semele, there is no direct evidence for an *oreibasia* ritual ever being performed there.[44] There is however an inscription, from Magnesia-on-the-Meander in Ionia, which suggests that Thebes was thought to have a distinguished tradition of maenadic rites.[45] The inscription, dating to the Roman period but narrating events that took place in the first half of the third century BCE,[46] describes how Dionysian rituals were set up in Magnesia on the Meander by three Theban women. These women are referred to as 'maenads of the line of Cadmean Ino', drawing a conceptual link between the rites to be inaugurated in Magnesia and the ancient mythological royal family of Thebes.[47] This is by no means evidence that there *was* an ancient tradition of maenadic ritual in Thebes, but it does suggest that Theban maenadic cult was

[41] Alcman fr. 63 (in Campbell 1988: 438-439), cf. Strabo 10.3.10. Soph. *Ant.* 1146-1152 is ambiguous and could refer to ritual or mythical maenads.

[42] During the Third Sacred War (around 356-346BCE): Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII, lines 1-2: τῶν ἐν Φωκεῦσι τυράννων κατειληφότων Δελφοὺς καὶ τὸν ἱερὸν κληθέντα πόλεμον Θηβαίων πολεμούντων πρὸς αὐτούς. Whether or not he was correct in this, he clearly considered the name to be of considerable antiquity, also suggested by Eur. *Ion* 550-554.

[43] *LSAM* 48 and *IMilet*. 733 respectively, both reproduced in the Appendix.

[44] On Thebes as the birthplace of Dionysos, see Eur. *Bakchai* 1-48, *Hymn. Hom. Dio.* 1.1-4, 7.56-57, Pseud.-Apollod. 3.4.3.

[45] *IMagn*. 215, in Kern 1900, historicity discussed by Henrichs 1978, full text in Appendix.

[46] The inscription was dated by Salomon Reinach to the middle of the first century CE, later revised to the mid-second century CE: Reinachs 1890, Henrichs 1978: 126 n 10.

[47] On the non-Euripidean tradition of Dionysos' aunt Ino as 'the archetypal maenad' and sea-goddess, see Henrichs 1978: 137-143.

thought to have an illustrious pedigree at the time that the oracle was delivered, and that the ritual practitioners of Thebes considered themselves to be the inheritors of this tradition.[48]

Groups of women who celebrated Dionysian ritual are explicitly mentioned in other evidence relating to locations in Greece and Macedonia, and by comparing these with what we know about ritual maenadism we can identify these as indirect references to maenadic groups. An epigram by the Hellenistic poet Posidippus of Pella for a *parthenos* named Niko provides evidence that a mountain ritual held for Dionysos was known in Macedonia in the early third century BCE.

> ἐκ τέκνῳ[ν νεάτ]ῃν δυοκαίδεκα καὶ .[.....]σα.
> παρθένο̣[ν ἔκλαιο]ν Πέλλ̣[α] καὶ Εὐιάδ̣[ες
> αἶ̣ τρίς, ἐπ[ειδὴ Μοῖ]ρα Διωνύσοιο θερά[πνην
> Νικὼ Β̣ασ[σαρικῶν] ἤγαγε̣ν ἐξ ὀρέων̣.

> Pella and the Euiades were lamenting the [youngest] of twelve children, a … *parthenos*, “Alas”, three times, since Fate led the servant of Dionysos, Niko, down from the Bassaric mountains.[49]

The epigram appears in the papyrus immediately after two other poems for women which also focus on their religious duties and affiliations, describing their subjects as initiates of the cult of Hecate and the Eleusinian Mysteries respectively.[50] It is not known whether they were memorials for real women or a literary exercise, and for the purposes of this study the question is not of prime concern. If the other cults are known to be genuine, it seems logical that Niko’s epigram also refers to genuine ritual activity that would have been familiar to Posidippus’ audience.

It seems fairly certain that the ritual Posidippus is referring to is an *oreibasia*. The mountains are called ‘Bassaric’, which recalls Aeschylus’ lost play *Bassarai* which dealt with the death of Orpheus at the hands of Thracian maenads, and ‘bassarai’ is used for Dionysian maenads or nymphs in a lyric fragment attributed to the sixth century poet Anacreon.[51] Bremmer associates the word with an epithet of Dionysos thought to derive from *bassara*, fox, referring to a custom of maenads wearing

---

[48] This apparent mythical ancestry and dominance of expert female practitioners in Dionysian matters does not however support Barbara Goff’s suggestion that Dionysian rites were passed down matrilineally: Goff 2004: 215.

[49] Posidippus *AB* 44, translation adapted from Dignas 2004; Dignas uses ‘bacchants’ to translate Εὐιάδ̣[ες, and I have retained *parthenos* over Dignas’ ‘a young girl’. Bremmer 2006 has ‘maenads’ and ‘maiden’ respectively.

[50] Discussed in Dignas 2004, Bremmer 2006.

[51] For Aeschylus’ *Bassarai*, see summary in Sommerstein 2008: 18-19. Anacreon f. 411b: Διονύσου σαῦλαι Βασσαρίδες, ‘the hip-swaying bassarids of Dionysos: Campbell 1988. *Bassarai* also used of mythical maenads by Artemidorus *Oneiro.* 2.37, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 14.219-228. Bassareus as an epithet of Dionysos: Propertius 3.17.30, also found in *Orphic Hymn* 45: Lebreton 2008: 208.

fox-skins.[52] The group name 'Euiades' indicates a female group and recalls the ritual cry 'euai' voiced by women who gathered for the trieteric festival according to Diodorus.[53]

The Euiades may have been a civic group, like the Thyiades; the exclusion of men from the group would suggest that this was not a private group made up of initiates, but there is no way of being certain. Plutarch (*Vit. Alex.* 2.5) mentions other Macedonian groups called Mimallones and Klodones, who carried out particularly wild all-female rites (ὄργια) on Mount Haemus. Plutarch distinguishes between these rites and those of Orpheus, which definitely were associated with the Mysteries, and the historian Polyaenus tells a story about the Mimallones which he dates back to the fifth century BCE, in which he refers to the Mimallones as a group of priestesses.[54] Mimallones carrying ritual implements also appear in the description of the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus by his contemporary Callixenus of Rhodes dating to the first quarter of the third century BCE (quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 198e). It seems likely, on balance, that even if Niko's Euaides were not a civic *thiasos*, Posidippos was aware of an established civic *thiasos* active in Macedonia at the time.

Similar official groups appear in other parts of Greece. The priestesses of Elis, known as 'the Sixteen' and considered by Pausanias to be an ancient organisation, served Dionysos at a festival called the Thyia. Ludwig Weniger made a case for this group to have been at least originally maenadic and that their rituals were probably connected to the rites of the Thyiades at Delphi.[55] Although there is no evidence that maenadic ritual was practiced within Attica, Pausanias (10.4.3) tells us that Attic women took part in such rites: the Delphic Thyiades, he says, were joined by a group of Athenian women, whom he also called Thyiades.

At Delphi, in Plutarch's day at least, the public *thiasos* called the Thyiades was led by a priestess who bore the title 'archikla' (ἀρχικλά, *de Iside et Osiride* 35 = *Mor.* 364e). In Miletus in the late third or early second century BCE, the priestess Alkmeonis led the city bacchants to the mountain, and in Magnesia three apparently professional maenads emigrated from Thebes to set up the appropriate

---

[52] Bremmer 2006: 39-40, with references in footnotes. To the evidence he has amassed, I would add a pair of black-figure cups which show maenads wearing the skin of a dog-like animal, a wolf or fox, with the open jaws framing their faces: both are attributed to the Krokotos group by Beazley, dated to the middle of the sixth century BCE. One is in the Winchester College Museum, Inv. 7, the other in the Munich Antikensammlungen, Inv. J456.

[53] On Euios as an epithet of Dionysos or 'euai' maenadic vocalisation: Soph. *Ant.* 964, *OT* 211, *Trach*. 219, Eur. *Bacch.* 141, Ar. *Thes.* 990-994, Diod. Sic. 4.3.3.

[54] Polyaenus *Strategem* 4.1, in which he claims that the Klodones was a previous name for the same group.

[55] On the Sixteen and the Thyia festival: Pausanias, 5.16.1-8, 6.26.1, Plutarch *Moralia* 251e, 299b. Discussed by Weniger 1883: 1-24, Brown 1982.

Dionysian rites.[56] These women are likely to have belonged to wealthy families. Klea seems to have belonged to a family of priests: Plutarch says that her parents initiated her in the rites of Dionysos, and she has been tentatively identified as a Klea found in a Delphic inscription dated to 118 CE, who was grandmother to another Klea, known as Flavia Klea, who also served as priestess at Delphi during the reign of Antoninus Pius.[57] This priestly pedigree, as well as the earlier Klea's apparent literacy, would suggest high status over a number of generations. The Theban maenads who travelled to Magnesia also appear to have been members of the local aristocracy: they are specified as being 'of the race of Cadmean Ino', a reference to the mythological Theban king Cadmus and his daughter Ino.[58]

High birth however might not have been the only qualification required for a priestess leading the civic *thiasos.* There is some evidence that suggests she would be required to hold the role for several years, which may suggest a degree of social freedom through age or wealth. The Milesian inscription which lists the duties of the Dionysian priestess has been interpreted as a contract of sale for this role, with payments to be made by the successful applicant (or her *kyrios*) over a ten year period.[59] The inscription is incomplete, and we do not know how long the tenure was for the recipient; many offices were sold for life and the long time period for payment of the unknown fee suggests a high price, and therefore likely a long duration of office.[60] In Magnesia, the three Theban women who came to set up Dionysian rites were buried in Magnesia, which suggests that here too the position was considered long-term.

It is most likely that the *thiasoi* leaders, the civic priestesses, were adult women who had already been married and had children. Diodorus Siculus (4.3.3) states that, while the young girls participated in a public procession, the older women conducted sacrifices and sang hymns. If Kapetanopoulos' identification of Plutarch's Klea as the grandmother of Flavia Klea is correct, then she was dead by 118 CE with a grand-daughter old enough to be priestess herself by 138-161 CE. When Plutarch wrote to her, between 110-115 CE and only a few years before her death, she was a

---

[56] *IMilet*. 733.1-3, *IMagn*. 215.24-30. The Magnesian inscription has been dated to the mid-second century, but the events which it recounts are older, and are dated by the oracular consultation described to 278-250 BCE: Henrichs 1978: 125-130.
[57] See the introductory passages of Plut. *Mulierum virtutes* (*Mor.* 242e) and *de Iside et Osiride* (*Mor.* 351c): the inscription is *IG* IX 1, 61.20-22, discussed in Kapetanopoulos 1966, who differentiates her from the Flavia Klea who was priestess during the reign of Antoninus Pius, contra Jannoray 1946.
[58] IMagn. 215.26-27. Aside from Eur. *Bacch.* 680-682, 1129-1130, Ino appears in Hom. *Od.* 5.333-338, Pin. *Ol.* 2.28-30, *Pyth.* 11.1-6, Pherekydes of Athens, *FGrHist* 3 F 90 (discussed Fowler 2000: 371-375). On Ino's connection with maenadic cult, see Henrichs 1978: 137-145, discussed further in Chapter 4, section 3.2.4.
[59] *LSAM* 48.7-11. Interpretation is in Sokolowski 1955: 124.
[60] For an outline of the process of selling or leasing a priesthood, see Connelly 2007: 27-56.

senior priestess, with at least one child.[61] Although this does not exclude a youthful Klea, nursing a baby between performing her religious duties, groups of other Dionysian priestesses were often drawn from the ranks of older women.[62] It may even be that *thiasos* leaders were perhaps widowed with no likelihood of remarrying. In Miletus, the father of the priestess Alkmeonis is named, but not a husband, and the Theban women who emigrated to Magnesia to set up Dionysian rites spent the rest of their lives there and were buried at public expense: for women of eminent lineage, this does not suggest that they were constrained by either existing maternal or marital duties nor their imminent prospect.[63]

The rest of the civic group would also presumably have been drawn from a similar social stratum, as were the Dionysian priestesses of Elis known as the Sixteen, drawn, as Pausanias says, from 'the most senior, worthy, and esteemed of all women'.[64] Participation in the public *thiasos* (or, for Athenian women, in the delegation to Delphi), was a civic service that offered the chance to enhance one's familial reputation. It would seem highly unlikely that such opportunities would not have tended to be filled by members of the higher wealth groups.[65] In his examination of participation in the Thesmophoria, Matthew Dillon concludes that most of the women who stayed away from home for the festival would have been aristocratic, as only these women could be spared for so long from their domestic duties, and the same reasoning would apply to the much longer duration of the journey to Delphi for the *oreibasia*.[66] The round trip from Athens to Delphi to join the Thyiades would have taken at least two weeks and it is unlikely that an economically disadvantaged woman would be able to abandon her domestic work and family for such a long period.[67]

3.2. Male involvement and private *thiasoi*

The civic groups were predominantly, if not exclusively, female: only in Magnesia is there a suggestion that one of the three *thiasoi* led by a priestess might have allowed male members.[68] Henrichs maintained that at least until the third century BCE, men were not involved at all in the maenadic rite, and that any confusion on the matter is based on a mistranslation of a passage in

---

[61] See Kapetanopoulos 1966.
[62] The Sixteen at Elis: see note 55 above. The *gerarai* at Athens: [Dem] *Against Neaira* 59.73.
[63] *IMilet*. 733.5-6, *IMagn*. 215.37-41.
[64] Paus. 5.16.5: ἥτις ἡλικίᾳ τε ἦν πρεσβυτάτη καὶ ἀξιώματι καὶ δόξῃ τῶν γυναικῶν προεῖχεν.
[65] Connelly 2007: 29-55 discusses the various routes to sacred service and the required economic status.
[66] Dillon 2003: 110-120, particularly 112, 118, drawing on Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriasuzae* e.g., 330, 614.
[67] For estimated duration, see section 3.3 below. On the domestic and agricultural workload of poor women, see for example Arist. *Pol.* 6.1323a, discussed in detail by Scheidel 1996.
[68] *IMagn.* 215.36, in the *thiasos* τῶν Καταιβατῶν, discussed Henrichs 1978: 133-134, see also Henrichs 1984b on male involvement in Dionysian *thiasoi*. All-female groups are inferred from the feminine plural nouns naming the groups: βάκχαι (*IMilet.*733.1), Εὐιάδ̣ες (Posidippos *AB* 44.2), Θυιάδες or αἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον γυναῖκες (Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII, Paus. 10.4.2-4), the Sixteen Women of Elis, αἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ἱεραὶ γυναῖκες, ἃς ἑκκαίδεκα καλοῦσιν (Plut. *De mul. vir.* XV = *Mor.* 251e).

Bakchai which seems to refer to a male celebrant, but that Henrichs argues relates to Dionysos himself.[69] If Henrichs is correct, then the *thiasos* which does seem to include men would have to refer to a private group or to male officials who were perhaps present to guard the participants, though there is no explicit evidence for any such role.[70]

This brings us back to the point raised in 2.2 about the involvement of private *thiasoi* in the trieteric *oreibasia*. Aside from the civic *thiasos*, the Milesian inscription refers to private groups which are also called *thiasoi* and were almost certainly made up of initiates of the Dionysian Mysteries.[71] The first thing to make clear is that these private *thiasoi* are not the same as the *thiasos* made up of priestesses, who performed the trieteric *oreibasia* as part of their civic duties. Aside from collecting the fees, the only further involvement specified by the Milesian inscription as part of the priestess' role was to provide the appropriate implements for such initiations at such time as these would be carried out, which would not necessarily be during the trieteric festival (*LSAM* 48 ll.14-15). This section of the inscription is damaged but what survives gives no indication that the Milesian priestess would take a supervisory role over any part of the activity of the private *thiasoi* at the trieteric festival.[72]

The explicit evidence from literary sources gives no suggestion that a civic or 'official' group such as the Thyiades might include men, or that men ever took a central role in performing the *oreibasia*. As has been explained, where we know of the names of civic groups, all but one use the plural feminine form which would exclude the possibility of male involvement. The exception is the Magnesian *thiasos* τῶν Καταιβατῶν, which literally translates as 'of the kataibatēs', a masculine plural noun. This name has caused difficulties for scholars. If it is the genitive form of the masculine noun *hoi kataibatai*, 'those who descend', this means that at least some of the members of the *thiasos* were men, which Albert Henrichs claimed meant that it could not be 'genuinely maenadic'.[73] Whether or not he was correct on this point, it would mean that we are faced with a single exception to the apparent rule that a *thiasos* led by a civic priestess would have been exclusively female. There is however another possible translation of the term which would resolve this problem. It may be translated as 'named after the Kataibatēs [pl.]', an epithet of Zeus and Hermes usually rendered as 'he who descends in lightning'.[74] This cannot simply be a reference to Zeus Kataibates, as it is the

---

[69] Henrichs 1984b, against Dodds 1940: 170, Dodds 1960 on lines 115 and 135ff.
[70] In *LSAM* 48.3-4. Discussion of male involvement in inscriptions: Jaccottet 2003a: 94-97.
[71] See footnote 17 for scholarship.
[72] As proposed by Kraemer 1992: 41.
[73] Henrichs 1978: 133-134 with note 39.
[74] This point is made by Goff 2004: 265 n 115, with reference to the discussion in Henrichs 1978: 133-134, who makes the translation 'named for Kataibatēs' but, in his analysis of its significance, nonetheless argues that it shows male involvement in a civic group. Goff does not, however, address the plural form of this genitive.

genitive of a plural noun, but it might well refer to the catastrophic epiphany of Zeus Kataibates to Dionysos' mother Semele and her subsequent descent to the underworld which would have been facilitated by Hermes Kataibates, and therefore reference Dionysos' birth.[75] If correct, this reading would not require there to be male members of the civic *thiasos*.

There is plenty of evidence for men being initiated into the Dionysian Mysteries and therefore almost certainly into private *thiasoi* from at least the classical period. The Scythian king Skyles was an initiate, and *bakchoi* were known to Plato.[76] Private *thiasoi* were however still led by women, at least in Miletus, where any woman who wished was permitted to initiate new members 'in the city, in the countryside, or on the islands', so long as, when attending the trieteric festival, she paid the priestess the requisite fees for doing so.[77] In the fourth century BCE, Aeschines allegedly assisted his mother when she performed initiations for the Phrygian god Sabazios, whose worship shares many points of comparison with that of Dionysos.[78] The descriptions of public displays of bacchic and Sabazian worship performed by men in this way do not at any point refer to mountains or to trieteric occurrence, and it seems therefore unlikely that these took place on the same occasion as the *oreibasia* of the civic maenads.

Overall, it also seems unlikely that men belonging to either group actually took part in the mountain dance rather than performing some ritual function within the city. Alkmeonis' epitaph does not mention any private groups joining her city bacchants on the mountain, and the other Milesian inscription merely tells us that the private *thiasoi* would 'convene' and perform sacrifices.[79] Plutarch provides two accounts of ritual performances by the Thyiades in which the women were imperilled, on one occasion by wandering into hostile territory and in the other by the sudden arrival of a snowstorm.[80] In neither account is there any suggestion that anyone was present other than the Thyiades; their essential vulnerability is the keynote of the story of the women of Amphissa, and in the story of the snowstorm, Plutarch specifies that a search party had to be sent out to look for them. If private *thiasoi*, including men, were present on the mountain, they seem to have dispersed at some point, leaving the Thyiades alone and unprotected.

---

[75] Hermes appears, rescuing the infant Dionysos from Semele's deathbed, on a red-figure *hydria* dated to c. 400-390 BCE , in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley, California, Inv. 8.3316. On the non-maenadic cult of the deified Semele, see discussion in Chapter 4, section 3.2.3.

[76] Hdt. 4.78-80, Pl. *Phd*. 69c-d. On men being members of *thiasoi*, see Jaccottet 2003a: 94-97, Scullion 2013.

[77] *LSAM* lines 18-20. Goff notes an inscription from Kos which authorises the Dionysian priestess to appoint subaltern 'citizen priestesses' in each deme: *LSCG* 166 (=P-H 27), discussed Goff 2004: 178, 216.

[78] Dem. *de Cor.* 259-260. On the identification of Sabazios with Dionysos, see scholion on Ar. *Vesp.* 9, Diod. Sic. 4.4.1, Strabo *Geog.* 10.3.15, Suidas s.v. Σαβοι; discussion in Kraemer 1979: 61-63, Bremmer 1984: 270, Lowe 2012: 81-82.

[79] *IMilet*. 733, *LSAM* 48 line 4, reconstructed as [συν]αγαγεῖν.

[80] *De mul. vir.* XIII, *de primo frigido* 18 respectively.

There is evidence from the classical period that male initiates of the Dionysian Mysteries might take part in public displays of bacchic celebration. Herodotus' description of the Scythian king Skyles, who literally lost his head through his taste for bacchic cult, describes him as conducting his rites in the streets, as Aeschines did in his mother's Sabazian ritual group.[81] If the Milesian inscription means that Dionysian initiates were also present during the public events, gathering to be convened into private *thiasoi* and perhaps also taking part in the procession, this may explain Plato's reference to masculine or mixed-sex groups of *bakchoi* (*Phaedo* 69d).

Such public processions may have also been part of the festivities leading up to the *oreibasia*. If so, this would provide a visible role for senior male initiates, which may be reflected in the scene in *Bakchai* in which the elderly Cadmus and Teiresias dress as bacchants (170-214). Pentheus, who does not recognise the legitimacy or symbols of any Dionysian cult, assumes they are dressed as women worshippers and treats them with characteristic scorn (248-255). But neither Cadmus nor Teiresias express any concerns about being seen in public dressed in this way and are, if anything, regretful that they will not be joined by the other men of Thebes (204-209). By contrast, when Pentheus gets disguised to spy on the Theban women, he really *is* dressed as a woman, in a *peplos* and *mitra* (833): the feminine components of his costume are repeatedly emphasised and Dionysos even explains to the Chorus that it is the cross-dressing, his appearance γυναικόμορφον, 'in woman-form', that will provoke the mirth of the Thebans (855).

3.3. Location and environment

Moving on from participants, the explicit evidence also contains information about the ritual's environment, where and when it was held. This information can be compared to modern sources that can help add context to the evidence, such as geographic and meteorological data to establish the altitude and weather conditions that participants may have experienced.[82]

The most fundamental and least contested element of the maenadic ritual, which gives it the name *oreibasia* in modern scholarship, is the mountain-side setting. The epitaph of Alkmeonis, the Milesian priestess of Dionysos, says that she led the bacchants of the city to the mountain, and Posidippus' epigram for Niko mentions 'the Bassaric mountain'.[83] The Thyiades climbed from Delphi to the slopes of Mount Parnassus, and Plutarch says that the ancient form of the ritual as practiced by Macedonian women took place on Mount Haemus, whose peaks top 2300 metres.[84] Of the other

[81] Hdt. 4.78-80, particularly at 4.79.3-5, Dem. *de Cor.* 259-260.
[82] While there may have been some variation in temperature, likelihood of snowfall, or even of geographic features, in the two and a half millennia since women danced for Dionysos on Parnassus, these do not yet suggest a significant enough effect to exclude the use of modern data to recreate the environment.
[83] Alkmeonis: ὑμᾶς κεἰς ὄρος ἦγε: *IMilet* 733.3. Niko: ἐξ ὀρέων: Posidippus *AB*44.4.
[84] Plut. *de primo frigido* 18 (*Mor.* 953d), *Vit. Alex.* 2.5.

sites where maenadic ritual is attested by epigram and inscriptions, Magnesia is on the south-western end of the ancient Messogis mountain range, and Pella, where the teenaged Niko went to the 'bassaric mountain', is surrounded by mountain ranges on three sides.[85] Turning to Euripides' evidence, Cithaeron, where he places his Theban maenads, has a 1409m elevation, and Mount Tmolus, which he says was the original home of the Chorus, is identified as the modern Mount Bozdağ, which is now, like Parnassus, a ski resort with elevations of over 2000m. Low-lying Miletus, where Alkmeonis led her bacchants to the mountain, has no such towering slopes but there is a site around ten miles away in the Ilbir Dağ range, though the elevation here is only 400-500m.[86]

Although at Delphi and perhaps Pella, the area immediately surrounding the city might have been rocky and steep enough to be considered 'a mountain', this is definitely not the case at Miletus, where the city stood about ten miles away from the nearest high land. Although ten miles is not an inconceivable distance for a *thiasos* to travel for their rite, it is possible that, in such lowland locations, the ritual group would simply go to a site that was suitably wild and Dionysian. The epitaph of Alkmeonis, the Hellenistic priestess at Miletus, does state that she led the city bacchants 'to the mountain' (*IMilet.* 733.3) but it is possible that this had by Alkmeonis' day become a standard expression for leading the *oreibasia*, regardless of whether or not it took place on a mountain. However, all other locations where we know the *oreibasia* to have taken place had a conveniently close mountain, and the use of the term even in Miletus suggests that the mountain location was considered preferable, if not necessary.

The distance from the sanctuary at Delphi to the slopes of Mount Parnassus above the Corycian cave, where Pausanias tells us that 'the Thyiades experience *mania'* (Paus. 10.32.7: αἱ Θυιάδες … μαίνονται)*,* is only around eight miles as the crow flies, but it is on a steep incline and the modern road comprises nearly 25 miles of hairpin bends to cover this distance.[87] It seems unlikely that the Athenian women, already tired from their journey to Delphi, would immediately attempt this gruelling climb, but would more likely rest until the evening before the *oreibasia* itself was due to be performed. In section 3.1 above, the participants in the civic *thiasoi* were identified as women of high socio-economic status. Given their status, if accommodation was necessary, as for the Athenian women who travelled to Delphi, this would probably be provided by a *proxenos* as part of

[85] *IMagn*. 215, Posidippus AB44. On 'bassaric' as indicating a Dionysian context see footnotes 52 and 53.
[86] *IMilet.* 733.2; for the local geography see Haussoullier 1919: 264-265. Henrichs follows Wiegand in preferring a location for the Milesian maenads in the Stephania hills, which are lower, easily reachable in an hour via the sacred road to Didyma, and therefore, he argues, safer. If safety were indeed a priority this would make sense; however, Wilamowitz (discussed by Henrichs) preferred things not to be too simple for the maenads: Henrichs 1969: 233.
[87] For the geographical differentiation between the upper and lower zones of Parnassus, see McInerney 1997: 281-283.

the custom of reciprocal interstate hospitality, as would any other official delegation on religious business.[88] Xuthus, in Euripides' *Ion*, says that during the Bacchic festival at Delphi he stayed with a *proxenos*, a public host, and it is feasible that the Attic bacchants did the same.[89]

The ritual took place on a trieteric basis; that is, every two years.[90] Festivals held on a two-yearly cycle were certainly not unknown in Dionysian cult, though in Athens the Lenaia, the City and Rural Dionysia festivals, and the Anthesteria were held annually. Trieteric occurrence for Dionysian festivals seems to have been common outside Athens, however: the first Homeric Hymn to Dionysos refers to a trieteric festival, Aelian mentions a biennial Dionysian festival which might or might not be maenadic, and Herodotus identifies a Greek-ness to the religious practices of the Budini tribe on the grounds that they hold a biennial festival for their equivalent of Dionysos.[91]

The emphasis on trieteric occurrence opens up another question, regarding at what time of year the ritual was held. The *oreibasia* is normally assumed to take place in winter, though this is never explicitly stated in the ancient sources, and a 'midwinter' occurrence is now simply assumed.[92] Many of the Attic festivals of Dionysos did occur during the winter and early spring, when Dionysos was thought to be ruling Delphi in Apollo's place,[93] and Plutarch describes an occasion when the ritual at Delphi was interrupted by snowfall and the dancers had to be rescued.[94] A further association of the *oreibasia* with midwinter was made by Lewis Farnell, based on the identification of maenads with ληναί and therefore with the Lenaia festival held in Attica in Gamelion (roughly equivalent to January).[95] The association was strengthened by August Frickenhaus, who proposed that the vases showing Dionysian women dancing with vats of wine were illustrating the Lenaia festival, but this connection has since been challenged.[96] Martin Nilsson suggested an alternative context for the vases of the Anthesteria, in March, but there is no consensus on the significance of the images in relation to maenadic ritual or why the iconography of trieteric maenadic ritual might be associated with any annual festival, and so this association remains unlikely and speculative.[97]

---

[88] Rutherford 2004, Rutherford 2007 on *theoria* discusses such delegations.
[89] Eur. *Ion*, 551. For an overview of the role of the *proxenos*: Dillon 1997: 154-155.
[90] E.g., Diodorus Siculus 4.3.3, Paus. 10.4.3. A document listing the duties of the Dionysian priestess at Miletus also mentions a trieteric festival, though it does not specifically mention an oreibasia: *LSAM* 48.20.
[91] *Hom. Hymn Bacch.* 1.11, Aelian *Historical Miscellany* 13.2, Hdt. 4.108.1-2.
[92] As by Dodds 1951: 271, Guthrie 1955: 178, Bremmer 2012.
[93] Dionysos was though to arrive in the Delphic month Dadaphoros ('Torch-bearing', equivalent to Anthesteria in Athens, and February/March in the Gregorian calendar) and leave in Bysios when Apollo returned (Poseideon, December/January): for the calendar dating see Weniger 1883: 8, Nilsson 1949: 208-209.
[94] Plut. *De mul. vir.* 13 (*Mor.* 249e-f).
[95] Farnell 1909: 109.
[96] Frickenhaus 1912.
[97] See Peirce 1998 with bibliography for full discussion of the identification of the scenes, and Henrichs 1978: 153-155 for discussion of the Anthesteria as an alternative context.

Plutarch's account of a single occasion when the conditions were bad enough to interrupt the ritual does not mean that this was a regular occurrence, as it surely would have been should the ritual have been regularly attempted during midwinter. Environmental data may help with this problem. Parnassus is a ski resort now, and may experience snow anytime between mid-October and late April at the lower slopes, and from September through into late May at higher elevation (above 2260m).[98] But the Thyiades probably did not ascend so high. The Corycian cave on Parnassus, where Pausanias said that the Thyiades danced 'above the clouds', is found at an altitude of 1360m, well below the higher elevation limit for snow outside the winter period.[99] The highest likelihood of fresh snowfall at this altitude occurs between the middle of December and the middle of March, when data suggests that at least two days of seven will experience snow. If Plutarch's account should be understood as meaning that the weather was unusually cold that year, we should probably be looking at a date for the ritual outside this period.

A possible objection arises from the information that there was a month in the Delphic calendar called *Dadaphorios*, 'Torch-bearing' (roughly equivalent to December/January). The potential connection between a torch-procession in maenadic ritual and the name of this Delphic month might seem to align the *oreibasia* with a midwinter date, but many other rituals featured torchlit events and in a cult centre such as Delphi it seems unlikely that in the dark winter months there was only one event that involved torches. Furthermore, a ritual that was held in alternate years seems unlikely to justify naming an annually occurring calendar month. If we are to ignore the non-annual occurrence and instead associate maenadic ritual with Dionysos' annual sojourn in Delphi, then, climactically speaking, a date at either end of winter, in early December or late February, seems most likely, but this remains an unanswered question. We cannot make any assumptions about the climactic conditions other than that snow was possible at the lower levels of Parnassus, and therefore we cannot make any assumption that the *oreibasia* took place during the depths of winter.[100]

Certainly at Delphi, the *oreibasia* took place at night.[101] Euripides described the maenadic Delphic festival as having torch processions (αἱ φᾶναι) and Plutarch describes the Thyiades wandering through the night (περιπλανηθεῖσαι νυκτὸς).[102] Cult titles suggest that several Dionysian festivals

---

[98] Recent historic snowfall data from the skiing website Snow-Forecast.com (https://www.snow-forecast.com/resorts/Mount-Parnassos/history) accessed 03/10/2018 11:20. The higher slopes are around 2260m, and the lower 1640m.
[99] Roux 1976, cf. Paus. 10.32.7.
[100] Matthew Dillon has proposed, without further comment, that the ritual took place in 'spring or summer, or perhaps in autumn'; any time in fact *other* than the depths of winter: Dillon 2003: 145.
[101] Eur. *Ion* 714-717.
[102] Euripides, *Ion*, 551, Plutarch, *Mulierum virtutes* 13, (*Moralia* 249e).

were held at night: in Megara, Dionysos carried the epithet Nyktelios ('Nocturnal' or 'of the nightly festivals', Paus. 1.40.6) and, in Pellene in Achaea, Pausanias documented a night-time festival for Dionysos Lamptēros, the Lamp, (Paus. 7.27.3). Mountains may have also been particularly suited to night-time festivals held by torchlight. In a fragment by the seventh-century poet Alcman, a ritual held on a mountain peak is described as πολύφανος, 'having many torches', and though it is not clear whether or not this is a Dionysian festival, some of the other imagery in the fragment suggests that it may have been an Orphic ritual.[103]

Returning to the passage from Euripides' *Ion* discussed above (section 2.1), Euripides' description of King Xuthus' attendance at Delphi on the occasion of a maenadic ritual raises some interesting points about the circumstances of the *oreibasia*.[104] If the correct reading of the passage is to understand that Xuthus was attending a festival, of which the *oreibasia* formed only one part, then we can begin to piece together the events surrounding the mountain-dance. Pausanias tells us that the Delphic Thyiades were joined in their celebrations by women of Athens, who had travelled to Delphi to take part, stopping to dance at certain locations along the route, at least one of which he says was known to Homer as a place of dancing.[105] This route suggests an overland journey, appropriate to the winter occasion, rather than one by sea. Initiands walking from Athens for the Eleusinian Mysteries took around a day to walk thirteen miles, so it is likely that the Athenian women travelling one hundred miles to Delphi took at least a week to make their journey, including time spent dancing.[106] Even allowing for a mid-winter occurrence, this would give the Athenian women ten hours of daylight per day to travel and dance.[107]

The journey from Delphi to the Corycian cave, the starting point of the Delphic *oreibasia*, is around six miles of steep uphill climb, which is estimated by modern tour guides to take at least three to

---

[103] Alcman fr.56.1 (ἐν κορυφαῖς ὀρέων), in Campbell 1988: 433. The fragment contains reference to milk and herdsmen (lines 4 and 5), which is suggestive of an Dionysian context: see Graf and Johnston 2007: 128-129 on milk imagery in the Orphic fragments; on herdsmen: Orphic fragment 31.24 in Kern 1922, reproduced in Graf and Johnston 2007: 188-189.
[104] Discussed in Scullion 2013, [publication pending].
[105] Paus. 10.4.2-4. Panopeus in Homer: *Od.* 11.581: Πυθώδ᾽ ἐρχομένην διὰ καλλιχόρου Πανοπῆος. Pausanias is talking about what happened in his day, but explicitly links contemporary custom to a Homeric reference. Whether or not he has been correctly informed by the Thyiades to whom he spoke, he considered it feasible that the custom was ancient. Dionysos and the Thyiades certainly appear on the pediment of the fourth century BCE temple of Apollo at Delphi; McInerney 1997: 269, with bibliography.
[106] Dillon 1997: 63.
[107] Between mid-December and mid-February, sunrise in Greece is around 7:30 and sunset around 17:30: data from Her Majesty's Nautical Almanac Office: http://astro.ukho.gov.uk/nao/online/ via their Websurf 2.0 search function, using Filellinon near Delfi as a location. It is of course possible that the Athenian women travelled overnight, but the vulnerability of unaccompanied women at night is made clear from Plut. *Mor.* 249, and there is no record of the Athenian women having an escort, in contrast to the many documented groups who attended Delphi for the Pythian games: Parker 2005: 83-84

four hours.[108] The peak of Parnassus itself is a further 17 miles of switchback paths: Krista Marie Ubbels, who undertook a 'maenadic pilgrimage' as part of her doctoral thesis, found she was not able to reach the very top of Parnassus due to the steepness, and estimated that the whole journey from Delphi might take as long as two days.[109] Mount Cithaeron is 20 miles from the city of Thebes and, at 1400m, its altitude is comparable to the Corycian cave at Delphi. Other sites suggest slightly less gruelling journeys: Mount Grion is 14 miles from Miletus, Mount Kyrros and Durmus Dagi around 12 miles from Pella and Magnesia respectively. These are still long journeys for ritual participants to undertake, particularly if they had also travelled to the city to take part, as the Athenian Thyiades had done.[110]

The two sites for maenadic ritual that required the highest climb and most arduous journeys are Thebes and Delphi. Both sites were thought to be particularly important in Dionysos' mythological biography, Thebes being his birthplace and the sanctuary at Delphi holding his tomb (Philoch. *FGrHist* 328 f7). Both sites also seem to have been associated with a particularly long-lasting or prestigious maenadic cult. According to the Magnesian inscription (*IMagn.* 215), three Theban maenads relocated to Magnesia to set up the correct rituals there in the third century BCE, which suggests that Theban maenadism may have been thought of as being particularly authentic or long-standing in the same way that the rites at Delphi were.

There could be a practical reason for this correlation between difficulty accessing sites and importance of the site in Dionysian cult. In Euripides' *Ion*, King Xuthus stays with a *proxenos* when he attended the festival at Delphi, and presumably the Athenian women who travelled to the sanctuary also had to be housed somewhere between arriving in the city and attempting their monumental climb. It is possible then that, at least at Delphi, the ritual's requirements for suitable housing and hospitality for the participants meant that it became embedded in existing structures of interstate *xenia* relations. The importance and prestige attached to these relationships meant that maenadic ritual that was performed at sites which required such hospitality absorbed some of this importance and helped build such relationships. This in turn may have been instrumental in the particular longevity and status that the ritual had at those sites. The particularly strenuous nature of the ritual at these locations may have resulted in a greater degree of civic cooperation and public display, further elevating the status of the ritual as performed there.

[108] According to the itinerary provided by the tour group 'Delphi Walking Tours'*:* http://www.delphiwalkingtours.com/routes/korikion-antron---delphi [accessed 26/06/2020].
[109] Ubbels 2008: 3, 10.
[110] Athenian Thyiades travelling to Delphi: Paus. 10.4.2-4.

3.4. Costume and props

Some features of maenadic imagery and iconography found in poetry and vase-painting appear very rarely - if at all - in the prose sources for the *oreibasia.* While it cannot be definitely proven that these objects and costumes formed part of the maenadic ritual attributes, it is possible to assess the likelihood that they were by exploring further contextual information found in our wider understanding of Greek religious practices. It was common, for example, for participants in a range of Dionysian activities to be crowned with wreaths of flowers or ivy: Alcibades, gate-crashing the party in Plato's *Symposium*, has recently come from a Dionysian *komos* and is wreathed with violets and ivy (Pl. *Sym* 212e), and the Dionysian women in the Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus wore wreaths of smilax, grapevines, and ivy.[111] Crowns of ivy are common in vase-paintings of maenads, although Euripides also mentions crowns of oak or pine as being suitably Dionysian (*Bacch*. 105-119).

The most widely attested item of maenadic ritual equipment is the *thyrsos*, a wand or staff found in the hands of both ritual and mythological followers of Dionysos. There seems no doubt that this was used in the *oreibasia.* Diodorus Siculus tells us that during the trieteric festivals, while the older women conducted sacrifices and sang hymns, the younger women were permitted to carry the *thyrsos* (4.3.3). In *Bakchai*, Dionysos advises Pentheus on how to carry his *thyrsos* in order to look more like a bacchic worshipper (941-944), and the Theban women mark the start of their ritual dance by raising their *thyrsoi* (724-726). *Thyrsoi* appear more widely as part of Dionysian cult and iconography. In Magnesia-on-the-Meander, part of the advice given by the oracle in order to placate Dionysos was to erect '*thyrsos*-delighting temples' and *thyrsoi* appear among the list of ritual elements that Plutarch associated with Dionysian cult.[112] The mythical *thiasoi* bear them in drama and in vase-painting, and Dionysos himself is often depicted carrying one.[113] According to Euripides' Dionysos, the *thyrsos* should be held in the right hand, though there is no consistency regarding which hand maenads in vase-painting use and the instruction may simply reflect a belief that the left hand was unlucky.[114]

[111] According to Kallixenios of Rhodes, *FGH* 2.27-35, quoted by Athenaeus, *Deip.* 5.198e.
[112] *IMagn.* 215.23: νηοὺς θυρσοχαροῦς; Used in cult: Aelian, *Hist. misc*. 13.2, Strabo *Geography* 10.13, Plut. *Vit Ant*. 24.3, *de Is. et Os*. 35 = *Mor*. 364e.
[113] *Thiasos*: e.g. Soph. *Searchers* fr. 314.172, 226 in Lloyd-Jones 1996, Eur. *Bacch.* 80, 113, Dionysos: Eur. *Bacch.* 25, Ion of Chios fr. eleg. 26 in Campbell 1992, Callistratus, *Depictions* 8.29.
[114] Eur. *Bacch.* 941-942. On the left hand being unlucky, see e.g. Lloyd 1962. All the maenads on one cup by Makron carry their *thyrsoi* in their right hands while on another, also attributed to Makron, most use their left hands: red-figure cups by Makron, one from Vulci, c. 490-480 BCE, Berlin Antikensammlungen F2290, the other of unknown provenance, c. 490 BCE, Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig: KA410.

The shaft of the *thyrsos* was probably made from the stalk of the Mediterranean giant fennel (*Ferula communis*). This plant can grow well over two metres tall and would provide a strong, segmented, hollow staff; due to its length, relative lightness, and flexible strength, it seems to have been used for a range of secular purposes including as a training weapon and a splint for setting broken bones.[115] The giant fennel matches the description in Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants* of a plant known to the Greeks as a *narthex*, a word which Euripides also uses for the ritual staff of maenads.[116] Edward Oszewski's suggestion that the shaft of the *thyrsos* was made of the stem of a giant artichoke does not match the description of stem, fruits, or flower of the *narthex* as found in Theophrastus; it also lacks the hollow stem of the giant fennel, which would presumably be necessary for Prometheus when he stole fire from the gods and secreted it within a *narthex*.[117]

Eric Dodds noted that the words '*narthex'* and '*thyrsos'* are used apparently interchangeably in *Bakchai* to describe the ritual wand carried by the Theban women, and suggested that, properly speaking, the *narthex* simply refers to the shaft, which requires the addition of ivy leaves to make it a *thyrsos.*[118] This transformation would be achieved by wedging a cluster of ivy leaves into the top of the hollow stalk or binding garlands of ivy vines and leaves to the end of the shaft.[119] Euripides describes his Theban women peacefully repairing the ivy crowns on their *thyrsoi* after their exertions, and a cup attributed to Makron shows a *thyrsos* wielded by a maenad that has criss-crossing cords on the shaft just below the clustered-leaf decoration.[120] In vase-painting, the decorations or finials of *thyrsoi* vary from densely-clustered heart-shaped leaves or buds to long trailing vines, but all could feasibly represent more-or-less stylised ivy leaves and branches;[121] other suggestions have included artichokes and pine cones and even acanthus, but there is no literary evidence to support these connections whereas Dionysos' association with ivy is well-established.[122]

---

[115] For non-ritual uses of the *narthex* see e.g., Hippoc. *Off.* 12, Xen. *Cyr* 2.3.20 cf. Diod. Sic. 4.4.6-7 for its non-lethal qualities in martial training.
[116] Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 6.2.7-8, Pliny *NH* 13.42.1.
[117] Claim made in Olszewski 2019, which nonetheless provides a useful bibliography of the scholarship on the construction of the *thyrsos*. For Prometheus using a *narthex* to hide the divine fire: Hes., *Op* 52, [Aesch.] *PV* 109, cf. Pliny *NH* 13.42.1 on the hollow stem.
[118] E.g. Eur. *Bacch*. *80-82,* Philostr. *Imag.* 1.192. See the discussion in Dodds' commentary on *Bakchai* 113 in Dodds 1960: 82, where he compares uses of '*narthex*' in lines 251 and 706 with '*thyrsos*' in 254 and 704.
[119] Noted by von Papen 1905: 21, red-figure cup from Vulci, c. 490-480, Berlin Antikensammlung F2290, However, this does not seem to be a consistent attribute for the painter: a skyphos also attributed to Makron shows Dionysos holding a *thyrsos* of the vine sort with no bindings: red-figure *skyphos* from Capua, c. 485-480, London British Museum Inv. 1873,0820.375 (E140).
[120] Eur. *Bacch.* 1054-1055: αἳ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν θύρσον ἐκλελοιπότα κισσῷ κομήτην αὖθις.
[121] As pointed out by Dodds 1960 on line 113, with further analysis in Kalke 1985. Other scholars working on maenadic iconography accept without question that the finials are ivy, e.g. Edwards 1960: 84, Moraw 1998: 53-54.
[122] Aside from the references to its use in Dionysian worship in the form of crowns and garlands (e.g. *Bacchae* 81, 177, 205, 254), see references to its Dionysian connections in both *Homeric Hymns to Dionysos* (7.40 and

The fawnskin *nebris*, worn by the Theban women and described by the Chorus in *Bakchai* (e.g. at 111, 136-7, 695-698), is frequently found in vase-paintings showing Dionysian female figures and is usually assumed on these grounds to have been worn by ritual participants.[123] Although the *nebris* does not appear in any of the explicit prose evidence found in accounts of the *oreibasia* performance, it was certainly considered a part of Dionysian ritual costume. The *nebris* is listed alongside the *thyrsos* by Plutarch among the attributes of participants in unspecified Dionysian processions (*de Is. et Os*. 35 = *Mor*. 364e). Euripides' *Phoenissae* contains two references to the fawnskin worn as part of a Dionysian ritual: Antigone describes wearing a *nebris* while taking part in a Dionysian hillside dance, which is probably but not necessarily maenadic (*Phoe.* 1753-7), and the Chorus rebuke Ares for inspiring bloodthirstiness rather than the musical revels of Dionysos, which are represented by the use of *thyrsos* and fawnskin (784-800).[124] Though these examples from Euripides are not explicitly describing an *oreibasia* ritual, the correlation of factors such as the *thyrsoi* and a dance on higher land does strongly suggest that the *nebris* would be a suitable garment for a ritual maenad to wear.[125]

We do not know of any reason that the Greeks gave amongst themselves for the practice: there is no convenient mythological aetiology provided in the dramatic sources for wearing deerskins, as there is for the use of tympana and, somewhat surprisingly, for snakes.[126] It may simply have been an aspect of role-playing the figures from the mythical *thiasos*: the *nebris* certainly appears adorning black-figure female figures dancing before Dionysos long before the *thyrsos* is placed in their hands.[127]

However, unless we assume that ritual was simply drawing on myth, the fact that Dionysian nymphs wear *nebrides* does not tell us why the ritual custom of wearing a fawnskin began. The suggestion that the *nebris* was worn ritually in order to 'communicate to the wearer the Dionysiac virtue of the fawn', put forward by Dodds, is problematic in that there is nothing particularly Dionysiac or

26.9), Ar. *Thes.* 999-1000, Soph. *OC* 668-680, Plut. *Lys.* 28.4. For finials as pinecones, see e.g. Keuls 1985: 360, for artichokes, see Olszewski 2019, who nonetheless accepts that ivy was also used to decorate the *thyrsos.* Herman Schauber's argument that, at least in vase-painting, the finial gradually becomes more like the acanthus raises interesting questions regarding Dionysos' association with afterlife beliefs, but is not relevant to the construction of the ritual *thyrsos*: Schauber 2001.

[123] E.g. by Jeanmaire 1951: 170, discussed further by Kraemer 1979: 70-71 n69 and Bremmer 1984: 280-281. On the *nebris* in vase-paintings of Dionysian female figures, see Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Moraw 1998: 29-65.

[124] It also appears in a speech by Demosthenes as the costume of a worshipper of Sabzios, a Phrygian god associated with Dionysos: Dem. *de. Cor.* 259.

[125] *Phoe.* 1751-2 refers explicitly to a precinct or sanctuary of Dionysos in the 'mountains of the maenads' (ὄρεσι μαινάδων) but this is not necessarily the location of Antigone's dance.

[126] E.g. at *Bacch.* 88-104 (snakes) and 120-134 (tympana).

[127] On the *nebris* and other attributes in early Dionysian scenes see: Edwards 1960: 83, McNally 1978: 121, Moraw 1998: 39-41, Isler-Kerényi 2015: 40-41.

maenadic about a fawn.[128] Dodds appears to base his statement on line 866 of *Bakchai* in which the Chorus compare their movements to those of fawns, but, equally, they make a similar comparison with foals (165-169) without horsehides being part of their costume; they also wear sheep's wool (113) and of course snakes (99-104), without apparently taking on the qualities of those animals.

Peter Maxwell-Stuart offers an ingenious suggestion that complements Dodds' suggestion without needing deer to have 'Dionysiac' qualities. He proposes that deer were thought to be immune to snake venom, and, by wearing their skins, ritual participants were homeopathically absorbing this ability which would be invaluable if snakes were actually used in rituals, as suggested by both Plutarch and Euripides.[129] This is a delightful explanation for a possible aetiology of the practice, but even if correct – which is unproveable – the connection seems to have been forgotten by the fifth century vase-painters. Iconographic studies examining the appearance of maenadic attributes over time do not show a direct correlation between the appearance of the *nebris* and the snake in images of Dionysian women. Though they may appear together in the late black-figure paintings of the sixth century, in the red-figure paintings of the same period the *nebris* has been largely replaced by the pantherskin, or *pardalis*, which also appears (though more rarely) in the late black-figure works.[130] There seems to be no significant correlation between the appearance of the *nebris* and of snakes in the iconography. While this does not disprove Maxwell-Stuart's proposal, the vase-paintings cannot be used as evidence to support it.

But there is very little explicit evidence to say that ritual maenads actually handled live snakes. A single account in Plutarch refers to a Dionysian and almost certainly maenadic rite practiced by Thracian women in which snakes were used, but Plutarch himself says that this was particularly ancient and calls the ritual 'barbarous' (*Vit. Alex.* 2.5, 6: ἐκ τοῦ πάνυ παλαιοῦ … βαρβαρικώτερον). It seems unlikely that he would have described the Thracian rite in this way if the Thyiades of his day were doing the same. The public processions of Sabazios held in fourth-century Athens also included worshippers handling snakes, according to Demosthenes, who describes devotees squeezing them and brandishing them overhead.[131] Demosthenes specifies a characteristic of these snakes: they are τοὺς ὄφεις τοὺς παρείας, 'reddish-brown snakes',[132] and the only reddish-coloured

[128] Dodds 1960: 81.
[129] Maxwell-Stuart 1971. Snakes in ritual: Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 2.5, Eur. *Bacch.*
[130] Edwards 1960: particularly at 83, Moraw 1998: 39-41. Analysis of maenadic iconography of a random sample of 375 vessels conducted by the writer shows that snakes appeared in 13% of images where one or more figure wore a *nebris*, compared to 21% of images in which they wore a pardalis. The pardalis does not appear in any literary sources as a ritual garment.
[131] Dem. *de Cor.* 259-260. On similarities between Dionysos and Sabazios, see footnote 78 of this chapter.
[132] On the connection between Sabazios and these snakes, see Theophr. *Char.* 16.4. Sometimes παρείας has been translated as 'cheeked' or 'fat-cheeked' (as by Rusten in Rusten and Cunningham 2003 ad.loc), but this seems an unlikely characteristic for a snake: a παρωας ἱππος is, apparently, a chestnut horse: *LSJ* s.v. παρωας.

snake commonly found in Greece is the leopard snake, a non-venomous but visually-striking snake that can grow up to a metre long. It would certainly have looked impressive in a procession but, as Demosthenes seems to be pointing out, the handlers were in no danger whatsoever.[133]

Even if snakes were not included in maenadic ritual, the Greek mountainside would have been home to several varieties that were venomous, and a frightened snake suddenly disturbed might well attack an unwary dancer.[134] Mythical maenads are often depicted barefoot, like nymphs, and Bremmer proposes that ritual maenads may have also removed their shoes and danced barefoot.[135] Snakes tend to hibernate during winter, but if the *oreibasia* took place outside the depths of winter then inopportune snake attack might well have been a potential hazard for ritual maenads.[136] The *nebris* may therefore feasibly have become the traditional maenadic costume as a prophylactic against this danger, even if snakes were not routinely handled during ritual performance.

Another attribute often found with both ritual and mythical maenads are drums, particularly the tambourine-like instrument called the *tympanon*. Like the *nebrides*, *tympana* appear frequently in vase-paintings of maenad-figures from the middle of the fifth century onwards, when they start to replace the earlier castanets called *krotala*.[137] The Chorus of *Bakchai* explain the origins of the *tympanon*'s use in their rites as it being a gift from the goddess Rhea, who mingled it with pipe music to accompany the bacchic songs (120-134), and Dionysos himself orders the Chorus to beat their drums around the palace walls (56-63).

Tympana appear alongside other symbols of Dionysian festivals around the statue of Dionysos in the great procession of the Hellenistic king Ptolemy Philadelphus, and there is evidence from the classical period for the use of drums in some forms of ancient Greek ritual held for Dionysos and the associated rites of Cybele.[138] Drums feature in references to Dionysian rites in Euripides' *Cyclops* when the imprisoned satyrs lament the lack of Dionysian pursuits: 'No Dionysos is here, no dances, no bacchic worship or *thyrsos*-carrying, no thundering noise of drums by the gushing springs of water' (63-65). Aristophanes' impatiently waiting Lysistrata complains of her tardy friends that, had she called them to a Dionysian celebration instead, their eagerness would be such that 'the tympana

[133] On the lack of danger, see Ar. *Pl.* 685-695, in which a woman, thinking she has been bitten by such a snake in bed, simply withdraws and goes back to sleep, cf. Hyperides fr. 80.
[134] Ovid describes just such an occurrence in his narrative on the death of Eurydice: *Met.* 10.11-14.
[135] E.g., Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 14.367-369, cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 665, with comment in Dodds 1960: 160. On ritual maenads removing their shoes, see Bremmer 1984: 277.
[136] Bremmer 1984: 269 provides a Hellenistic reference to another springtime Dionysian festival in which snakes were hunted. The case for the *oreibasia* being held outside the winter months is argued in section 3.3 above.
[137] Moraw 1998: 50-51, 57.
[138] E.g., *Homeric Hymn to the Mother of Gods* (line 3), also suggested by Eur. *Bacch.* 156. In the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus: Ath. *Deip.* 5.28 = Casaubon 198d.

would block the streets' (*Lys.* 1-3). Though this is not necessarily a maenadic event, it supports the connection between Dionysian women's rites and the accompaniment of drums.[139]

3.5. Explicit evidence: summary

This discussion of the explicit evidence provides a summary of the key features of when and where the *oreibasia* was performed in ancient Greece, some information about the women who formed the civic groups responsible for performing it, and what equipment they used. The evidence describes a night-time ritual held in alternate years on high ground some distance from the local city. The ritual itself seems to be a torch-lit dance performed by one or more groups called *thiasoi*, who carried *thyrsoi*, wore *nebrides*, and used drums to keep the beat during their dance. At least one of the *thiasoi* at each location was a civic group sponsored by the state, led by a high-status priestess who may have been widowed or was otherwise unfettered by marital responsibilities.

In certain locations, other events, including public processions and sacrifices, may have been part of the festivities. This certainly seems to be true of Delphi, where evidence for the rites is spread over the longest time period. By comparing the geographical data of the known sites and the chronological span of the evidence for ritual performance at these sites, the rituals which would have involved a more strenuous effort by participants seem to have had greater longevity or status. It is possible that this was due to a greater degree of festivity and public display, giving the ritual a higher profile at these locations.

While this evidence provides a wealth of detail about when and where the ritual was held, there are many questions that remain to be answered, concerning the programme of events which culminated in the journey to the mountain and the subsequent dance. Maenadic ritual is sometimes said to be 'on the boundaries' of acceptable Greek religious practice or to 'undercut the values of the *polis*'.[140] The discussion above has gone some way to showing that the historical women we know of who took part in the civic ritual were certainly not marginal and that ritual performance was subject to the same regulation as other cult activity. The evidence discussed in the following section will build on this, showing that the *oreibasia* belonged to a programme of events that belonged firmly in the heart of the *polis*.

4. Reconstructing the *oreibasia*

Drawing together this evidence with other information about similar ancient Greek ritual practices, we can fill in some of the gaps and attempt a recreation of the events leading up to the dance on the mountain. The discussion below will centre on the *oreibasia* at Delphi, for which we have the

[139] I will return to the cognitive effects of drumming when I discuss the work of Gilbert Rouget in Chapter 4.
[140] Quotes from Dillon 2003: 139.

greatest amount of explicit evidence, but will draw on evidence from other locations for comparison where relevant.

The three elements of the events surrounding the *oreibasia* that are attested to in the explicit evidence are a sacrifice, a procession, and the convening of the *thiasoi* (*IMilet* 733, *LSAM* 48.1-4, Diod. Sic. 4.3.3). In his recreation of the *oreibasia*, Bremmer orders the events in the following way: there is a sacrifice in the city or sanctuary; the women, arranged in their *thiasoi*, leave the city or sanctuary for the mountain; on arrival they ceremonially transform themselves into the mythical maenads through taking up their *nebrides* and *thyrsoi* and make offerings of cakes before beginning their dance.[141]

However, we know from other evidence that Greek religious processions often featured the sacrificial animals, displayed publicly to demonstrate their beauty and appropriateness as an offering.[142] If the maenadic ritual followed this pattern, then the procession would occur before the blood sacrifice, not afterwards. Furthermore, those participating in such processions were usually dressed in finery appropriate to the occasion, which for a ritual maenad would surely include her *nebris* and *thyrsos*, so it would follow that these objects were handed out to participants before the procession rather than on arrival on the mountain.[143] In his recreation of the maenadic dance, Bremmer proposed that ritual participants would divest themselves of headbands, shoes, and other individualising garments on arrival in the mountains, thus symbolically ridding themselves of personal identity and entering the liminal stage of the ritual.[144] This supposition is familiar from the vase-paintings which often show women in Dionysian scenes with loose hair and sleeves, suggesting that they have removed or lost their jewellery and fastenings.[145] But if the participants dressed themselves in their maenadic regalia before leaving the city, this would be a more appropriate time to remove such personal effects, and would also mean that potentially valuable items could be stored away safely in the city during the ritual.

Although the Milesian inscription does not define what is meant by 'convening a *thiasos*', it would seem strange for this symbolic transformation not to include dressing for the part. If the women travelled to the mountain in their *thiasoi*, then they would already have begun the ceremonial

---

[141] Bremmer 1984: 277

[142] See for example Burkert 1985: 55-57, Csapo and Miller 2007: 16-17.

[143] See for example, the fabulous golden robes and crowns Demosthenes provided for all 50 of his chorus members when he was *choregos* at the City Dionysia in 348 BCE: Dem. *Against Meidias* (21) 16, 22.

[144] Bremmer 1984: 278.

[145] The so-called 'wing sleeves' are found on Dionysian figures during the early fifth century, as for example in a cup showing *thyrsos*-bearing women dancing with satyrs and Dionysos, in the Oxford Ashmolean Museum inv. 1944.87, three women, some with *thyrsoi* and one with a leopard skin, and on a *pelike* in the British Museum in London, inv. E362.

metamorphosis into maenads by taking up their ritual costume. The allocation of their ritual costume must have also happened before the sacrifice, as Diodorus tells us that the *parthenoi* brandished their *thyrsoi* while the other women conducted sacrifices. We should then perhaps consider the order of events to be: *thiasoi* are convened and costumes put on, then they participate in the torch-lit procession, which culminates in a sacrifice, before leaving for the mountain.

4.1. Convening the *thiasoi*

Following this order of events then, on the evening of the ritual, participants in both private and public *thiasoi* would gather, presumably in or near the sanctuary, to be convened formally into their groups. This would probably happen in the afternoon preceding the night of the ritual, leaving enough time for the formalities to be completed before darkness fell. There would be preparations to be made before the ritual could begin: in Miletus the trieteric festival was the time for the payment of dues by women who had conducted a celebration 'in the city, or in the countryside or on the islands' (*LSAM* 48.19: ἐν τῆι πόλει ἢ ἐν τῆι χώραι ἢ ἐν ταῖς νήσοις). These women would need to meet with the presiding priestess to arrange such payments; Henrichs infers that this represents initiation into a private *thiasos*, which would suggest a public event with official accounting before the private *thiasoi* were permitted to convene for the trieteric *oreibasia*.[146] In Delphi, too, the Athenian participants in the civic *thiasos* would also need to gather and meet their local counterparts. We do not have firm evidence from other locations for such an influx of women and their private groups into the city from outlying areas, but the Magnesian *thiasos* πρὸ πόλεως (if we understand this to mean 'before' or 'outside' the city) might also have included women from the surrounding countryside.

The women of the civic *thiasos* would then be presented with their *thyrsoi* and *nebrides* by their priestess or *thiasos* leader. They would probably put the *nebris* on over their normal clothes. Maenads with *thyrsoi* in red-figure vase-paintings are almost always shown fully dressed under their animal-skin cloaks, and Henrichs regards nudity as a criterion for identification of a nymph rather than a maenad.[147] These are obviously not documentary images of maenadic ritual, but if we are to use iconography at all we must assume that there is something recognisable in the images, some shared cultural knowledge about maenadism.

Narthex-stalks would need to be distributed and, where appropriate, the sacred ivy garlands attached. It seems likely that only the civic group and higher-ranking initiates of private *thiasoi* would be allowed to carry *thyrsoi* which had been dressed in this way. Discussing a line in *Bakchai* in

[146] Henrichs 1978: 149-150.
[147] Henrichs 1987: 100-101, Moraw 1998: 38-39, 44-45.

which the Chorus enjoin worshippers to 'surround with holiness the unruly *narthex*', Dodds suggests that this relates to the act of adding the ivy-garlands to the shafts.[148] The *narthex* is found in the hands of male or mixed-sex groups in a proverb quoted by Plato, which says that 'many are the *narthēkophoroi*, but *bakchoi* are few' (*Phaedo* 69d). The elderly *narthex*-bearer (*narthēkophoros*) Batis in Posidippus' epigram (*AB* 46) is a servant and therefore probably a low-status initiate of the Dionysian Mysteries rather than a maenadic priestess.

Understanding the *narthex* as an unsanctified or incomplete staff would help make sense of this; perhaps the ivy crown was only permissible for a higher-ranking member of the Mysteries or civic priestesses. Referring to Diodorus' distinction between the roles of girls and women, Bremmer has interpreted the *thyrsos*/*narthex* distinction as being connected to status within maenadic cult, with *narthex*-bearers as junior members while the title of *bakchai* was reserved for established cult members who might carry a *thyrsos*, the older women mentioned by Diodorus and the wealthy women who held civic positions.[149] This differentiation of roles by age-group may be echoed in Euripides' *Bakchai*: the First Messenger reports that, upon waking, the maddened women of Thebes are in 'a fine order to behold: young girls, the old women, and those as yet unmarried', suggesting an organisation based on age (693-694). This hierarchy would also explain why Diodorus emphasizes that, during the trieteric *oreibasia*, young girls were permitted to carry the *thyrsos*: at other cult events they would only be permitted to carry the *narthex*, marking them out as junior members of the *thiasos*.

The *thiasos* members not qualified to carry *thyrsoi* might have had torches attached to their *narthekes*. In the *parodos* of Bakchai, Euripides describes Dionysos 'raising the bright-burning pine torch on his *narthex*', which unavoidably recalls the story of Prometheus carrying the fire of Olympus within a *narthex* stalk.[150] Dodds notes that the *narthex* is here used to hold a torch, but, citing vase-paintings that show maenads carrying torches unattached to a *narthex*, does think that this is normal ritual activity.[151] But vase-paintings are not documentary footage of maenadic ritual and the figures illustrated are therefore not subject to the practicalities of marching or dancing with blazing torches close to their loose hair and clothes. Mounting a torch at the end of a long staff would reduce the likelihood of unwanted singeing. Furthermore, the ritual being lit by fire held in a narthex, like the

[148] Dodds 1960 on 113-4: ἀμφὶ δὲ νάρθηκας ὑβριστὰς ὁσιοῦσθ᾽.
[149] Bremmer 2006: 38.
[150] Eur. *Bacch*. 145-147: ἀνέχων πυρσώδη φλόγα πεύκας ἐκ νάρθηκος. For Prometheus and the *narthex*, see footnote 117 above.
[151] Dodds 1960: 88.

divine fire carried by Prometheus, might denote symbolically that the light itself was sanctified, which would also explain why Dionysos himself carries the torch-*narthex* in the *parodos*.

4.2. The procession

Whether these preparations took place in the city or on the mountain, it seems likely that a public procession was a central – and memorable – part of the preparation. The epitaph of Alkmeonis from Miletus describes a procession which has been interpreted as an event at which she would carry sacred implements before the whole city (καὶ ὄργια πάντα καὶ ἱρὰ ἤνεικεμ πάσης ἐρχομένη πρὸ πόλεως) and Euripides refers to a torch-lit procession during the maenadic celebrations at Delphi, which was attended by visiting dignitaries.[152] This may have been a procession through the city, or it may have been a procession to the site of the dance itself. It is possible that the 'whole city' of Miletus joined Alkmeonis and her bacchants on their ten-mile journey to Mount Grion, perhaps to witness the final preparations and the start of the dance. Certainly at Delphi, any watching crowd must have gone home soon after the dance began, or there would have been no need to send out a search party for the women on the night that the snow fell so heavily (Plut. *de prim frig.* 18 = *Mor*. 953d). It would certainly have been more convenient to have the procession through the city and hold the ensuing sacrifice at the civic altar.

During the procession, according to Diodorus Siculus, the young women had a different role to that of the older women. The *parthenoi* performed in what we might think of as a 'mythical maenadic' manner, shouting 'euai' and waving their *thyrsoi*, while in contrast (indicated by the use of the participle δὲ), the older or married women 'come together to conduct sacrifices and bacchic rites'.[153] This suggests a hierarchy of behaviour with junior members providing a public display and senior members officiating in the delicate interactions between the city and the divine.

Despite the testimony of Diodorus that there was a public element to the event and Euripides' description of a torch-procession, Henrichs did not accept this public procession as part of the events surrounding the *oreibasia* at all.[154] He considered the procession mentioned in Alkmeonis' epitaph to occur as part of a Katagogia, the welcoming of Dionysos' arrival by sea, which is also listed as a duty of the priestess in the other Milesian inscription (*LSAM* 48.21-24). In Athens, a ritual called the Katagogia was held annually during the Anthesteria, and during this festival the sacred marriage between Dionysos and the wife of the chief magistrate took place, overseen by a group of women

[152] *IMilet*. 733.3-4, Eur. *Ion* 550-554.
[153] 4.3.3, in the passage quoted in section 2.1.
[154] Henrichs 1969: 233-234, Henrichs 1978: 148-149. *LSAM* 48.21. Cf. Diod. Sic. 4.3.3, Eur. *Ion* 550-554.

called the Gerarai.[155] An annual event could not be the same occasion as the trieteric *oreibasia*, so Henrichs concluded that there were two separate occasions at which the Milesian priestess would take a key role; an annual public Katagogia procession and the trieteric *oreibasia*. The Milesian inscription is incomplete so Henrichs' argument cannot be proved, and Scott Scullion, contending that they were held on the same occasion, argues that there would be very few Dionysian festivals in Miletus at which the priestess would preside.[156] But one annual festivals and another trieteric one does not seem to be an excessive workload for a civic priestess,[157] and there seems no reason to assume that both scholars cannot be correct: the Katagogia and the trieteric *oreibasia were* separate occasions, but *both* included a public procession. Alkmeonis' epitaph might be referring to either or both occasions.

Henrich's reluctance to include the procession as part of the *oreibasia* stems at least in part from his insistence that πρὸ πόλεως meant 'before the city' rather than 'on behalf of the city'; as he did not accept that men might be present at any part of a maenadic ritual, therefore this procession must have taken place on a different occasion.[158] However, 'on behalf of the city' does seem to be a reasonable translation, so perhaps we should not automatically exclude the possibility that this is what was meant.[159] There was a θιασος πρὸ πόλεως in Magnesia in the third century BCE, and by the second century CE Dionysos carried the epithet πρὸ πόλεως in Ephesus where there is also (undated) epigraphic evidence for a θιασος πρὸ πόλεως.[160] A much later inscription also from Miletus, from the second century CE, refers to Asklēpios πρὸ πόλεως; the contemporary temple of Asklēpios was well within the city limits so could hardly be called 'before the city'.[161] All these incidences *could* also mean 'outside the city', just as the same phrase could mean 'in front of the city' in Alkmeonis' epitaph; alternatively, they might all mean 'on behalf of the city'. In either case, the emphasis of the phrase places the procession firmly in the heart of the city's business.

4.3. The raw-eaten sacrifice

As the procession approached the civic altar of Dionysos, according to Diodorus, the senior *bakchai* would be singing hymns and conducting sacrifices. The content of hymns sung to Dionysos on such

---

155 Henrichs 1978: 154, Burkert 1985: 237-242. A Katagogia procession for Dionysos is also known from second-century BCE Priene where it seems to be separate from the celebrations held during Anthesterion (*CGRN* 176.21-22, with associated commentary).
156 Scullion 2013: 8-9.
157 The priestess of Athena Polias in Athens may have had five annual festivals to manage: Connelly 2007: 61.
158 Based on his translation of the epitaph of Alkmeonis: 'Die πάσης ἐρχομένη πρὸ πόλεως kann nicht richtig sein' And 'Die Worte πάσης ἐρχομένη πρὸ πόλεως lassen sich nur so verstehen, dass Alkmeonis "an der Spitze der ganzen Stadt einher schritt"; Henrichs 1969: 225 n 6 and 233.
159 Farnell 1909: 159, Nilsson 1957: 6 both favoured this interpretation.
160 Magnesia: IMagn. 215.35. Ephesus epithet: Jaccottet 2003b: 134. Ephesus *thiasos*: recorded by ibid. at. no. 145.
161 *IMilet.* I 7, 204 (=*LSAM* 52, *SEG* 15, 684, *SEG* 16, 714).

occasions is unknown. But drawing on other evidence there are two things that can be said: first, that ancient hymn-singing was usually accompanied by melodic music, such as that of the lyre or *aulos* and, second, that the plan of a hymn broadly follows three sections: an invocation, a narration, and a request.[162] Drawing on the *parodos* of *Bakchai*, we would expect the hymn to be in ionic meter, which Dodds noted was 'proper to Dionysiac cult-hymns', and probably in the old Phrygian tonal mode, corresponding to the modern Dorian mode used in songs like Scarborough Fair and Eleanor Rigby, and which was commonly used for the Dionysian dithyramb.[163] Between the sections of the hymn, the singers would make what Richard Seaford calls 'doubling cries', repeating the phrases ἴτε βάκχαι and εἰς ὄρος ('On, bakchai!' and 'to the mountain!', as at lines 83, 116) and shouting 'euai' (141).[164] Although the *parodos* does not end with a request for Dionysos to come, which would be unnecessary as the Chorus have accompanied him to Thebes (55-57), the actual cult hymn may well have done: Plutarch describes such a hymn being sung by the Sixteen priestesses of Elis, that called on Dionysos to appear at his temple, and included the duplicated line 'O worthy bull'.[165]

The culmination of the procession would be a sacrifice, described in the Milesian list of a priestess' duties (*LSAM* 48.2-3). After making the sacrifice, the priestess would 'throw in' an *omophagion*, 'that which is eaten raw', following which, other sacrificers would be allowed to 'throw in' their raw morsels. The phrasing of this instruction and the prioritisation of the priestess's 'throwing in' follows the same form as the restriction on private *thiasoi* only being allowed to come together after the public *thiasos* was convened, which may well indicate that they occurred during the same event and certainly suggests that there were other people present intent on making their own sacrifices. This would make sense if the sacrifice was made before the *thiasoi* left the city or sanctuary for the hillside, as part of the preparations.

This sacrifice and the sinister connotations of the 'raw-eaten thing' should not be thought of in terms of *sparagmos*, the rending of living creatures as described in *Bakchai*, nor in terms of the cannibalistic mothers from the gorier myths of women punished for rejecting Dionysos.[166] It is extremely unlikely that animal *sparagmos* was conducted during the ritual as a form of sacrifice. No sources mention it in a ritual context without the motif of the corrupted ritual being present, and

[162] Damen and Richards 2012: 334-335, Petrovic 2015: 257.
[163] On similarities between lyric passages from *Bakchai* and ritual see: Dodds 1960: 71-74, Seaford 1996: 155-157, Carey 2016: 73-74. For choral prayer motifs in tragedy more generally, Stehle 2004.
[164] Seaford 1996: 155
[165] Plut. *QG* 36, discussed Otto 1995: 80.
[166] Eur. *Bacch.* 734-768, discussed in Henrichs 1982: 144, Bremmer 1984: 275-276. On the child-killing mothers, *Bakchai passim,* Plut. *QG* 38, Pseud-Apollod.2.2.2. Both the Minyades and the Argive women are also accused of eating their children.

therefore it would be at odds with the method described above to accept its historicity: aside from the cattle-rending scene in *Bakchai*, there is no literary account of mythical maenads performing *sparagmos* on animals.

Images of maenads with torn animal parts appear in vase-painting from the second quarter of the fifth century BCE, predating Bakchai, so we cannot assume that animal *sparagmos* is a Euripidean innovation.[167] These images are not intended to show historical ritual sacrificial practice: aside from the lack of normal markers of a sacrifice scene, the animals are clearly deer and the Dionysian sacrificial offering of choice was a goat.[168] The practicalities of how and when *sparagmos* would have to occur if it were part of a sacrifice also make it unlikely. Sacrifices tended to occur at the outset of a religious occasion, to ensure that the gods were looking favourably on the ritual performance. If ritual maenads were catching deer and tearing them apart in order to procure sacrificial meat, they would have to do this during their ritual when they were in the forested mountains, rather than before they began their ritual, thereby undermining the function of the sacrifice. Even if this were the case, it seems highly unlikely that a noisy *thiasos* of drum-beating, shouting women would be able to capture a deer with their bare hands in the dark.

However, Dionysos' association with raw meat predates the earliest connections between maenads and sparagmos. Although maenads holding torn animals appear from around 470 BCE,[169] around a decade earlier there was a brief flourishing of images of Dionysos holding parts of a deer. This figure, usually referred to as Dionysos *mainomenos,* appears on seven vases that have been dated to slightly earlier, between 480 and 470.[170] Alcaeus calls Dionysos 'Raw Eater', and Dionysos was certainly known later as Omestes ('Raw Eater') on Lesbos, and as Omadios (the 'Raw One') on Tenedos and Chios.[171]

---

[167] These images may not, however, pre-date Aeschylus' *Pentheus*, which may also have also included animal sparagmos. Torn animals in vase-painting: Red-figure lekythos, 470-460 BCE, Museo Arch. Regionale Paolo Orsi, Syracuse, Inv. 24554. Volute krater attributed to the Blenheim painter, c. 475-450 BCE, Shefton Museum, Newcastle, Inv. T115. An amphora attributed to the Achilles painter, c. 460-420 BCE, Amphora: Paris, Cabinet des Medailles, Inv. 357.
[168] Goats as the sacrificial offering of choice for Dionysos: sacrificial calendar from Athens, ca. 475-450 BCE (*CGRN* 21), sacrificial calendar from Erchia ca. 375-350 BCE (*CGRN* 52). On identification of deer and goats: Moraw 1998: 174. On sacrificial iconography: Ekroth 2011.
[169] Moraw 1998: 58.
[170] E.g.: red-figure pelike, first half fifth century BCE, British Museum, Inv. E362; bell krater fragment, mid-fifth century BCE, in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam, Inv. 404; hydria attributed to the Niobid Painter, mid fifth century BCE, now in an unknown private collection (Beazley *ARV*^{2} 605.65BIS), fragments of a white-figure rhyton, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Inv. G249. Carpenter 1993 lists the images and examines them in detail, with some further discussion in Carpenter 1997: 37-41.
[171] Alcaeus Fr. 129: Ζόννυσσον ὠμήσταν (Ζόννυσσον being the Aeolic form of Dionysos), Porphyry *De abstinentia ab esu animalium* 2.55.

Albert Henrichs has shown that, in maenadic ritual, it is Dionysos who does the 'raw-eating', rather than his followers.[172] Euripides says that Dionysos 'hunts the blood of the slain goat, a raw-eaten offering', and the Milesian instruction appears in a context suggestive of a closely-regulated sacrificial context, portraying raw-eating as the result of a properly conducted ritual rather than a frenzied hunt.[173] The only literary reference to maenads - mythical or historical - eating raw flesh is found in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* 1.636, when he compares warriors swarming ashore to 'raw-flesh-eating Thyiades' (Θυιάσιν ὠμοβόροις). 'Raw-eating' or carnivorousness is used regularly in ancient Greek sources to describe the eating habits of savage beasts and uncivilized foreigners who refrained from cooking their meat or fish prior to consumption.[174] Where it is used of Hellenic humans, it also carries connotations of cannibalism. As far back as Homer, a warrior who hated someone with particularly a violent, savage hatred is described as to be willing to eat their enemy raw, an offence against the victim who is denied burial rites, but also debasing the hater, reducing him through his passion to a bestial state.[175] It is likely, given the martial context of Apollonius' usage, that he intends 'raw-eating' to be a metaphorical allusion to the rage and violence of the mythical Thyiades, not a reference to *literal* ritual cannibalism. The most likely explanation of the images of animal *sparagmos* in vase-painting is that offered by Suzanne Moraw in her 1998 study of maenadic iconography, that such images are symbols, reinforcing the wildness of the mythical *thiasos*, reflecting their strength, mastery over animals, and their devotion to Dionysos.[176] More specifically, the vase-paintings that show torn animal limbs may be illustrating his mythical *thiasos*, lacking access to domesticated animals or sacrificial knives, providing such raw offerings from him in the only way it was able, by catching a wild animal and tearing it apart.

Dionysos in many different incarnations likes his meat raw; *omophagia* is not something specific to his worship in maenadic cult. It was not unusual in Greek *theoxenia* rituals for raw meat from the sacrifice to be put aside for the gods to enjoy, placed on a table or part of the altar and perhaps taken later by the priest.[177] The *omophagion* could well have been a form of these *trapezomata*, the offerings placed on the table to encourage the god to join in the shared meal.[178] An inscription

---

[172] Henrichs 1978: 144, 147-152, Bremmer 1984: 274-275.
[173] *Bacch.* 138-139: ἀγρεύων αἷμα τραγοκτόνον, ὠμοφάγον. On the subject of this line being Dionysos, see Henrichs 1984b: particularly at 76-79, contra Dodds 1960: 85-86.
[174] Of foreigners: Hdt. 1.202.3, Thuc. 3.94.5, Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 7.5.2, Strabo 15.2.2, Arrian *Indica* 28.1. Of monsters and wild beasts: Hes. *Theog*. 295-300, Aesch. *Ag*. 827, *Sept*. 541, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.4, Plut. *Mor.* 991d.
[175] Hom. *Il.* 4.35, 22.347, Xen. *Hell.* 3.3.6, Plut. *Mor.* 11b, 506b.
[176] Moraw 1998: 58, 142. I will return to the interpretation of maenads' relationship to animals in Chapter 4, section 3.3.
[177] Gill 1974, Ekroth 2008, Jameson 2014. The term used by both Gill and Jameson for the placing of raw meat on a table for the gods is 'deposition'.
[178] In Homer, these pieces of raw meat are placed on the altar with a verb specific to raw meat, ὠμοθετέω, as for example at *Il.* 1.461, 2.424, *Od*. 3.458: Jameson 2014: 170, 174-175.

recording the sacrificial expenses from the deme of Aixone in Attica records two drachmae for firewood alongside almost all of the sacrifices listed: the exception is a sacrifice to Dionysos Anthios, whose sacrifices would probably, but not necessarily exclusively, have been made at the Anthesteria.[179] A fragment of Euripides' lost play *Cretans* refers to an initiate 'performing the raw-eaten feast' (τὰς ὠμοφάγους δαῖτας τελέσας) for the god Zagreus, a deity associated with Orphic cult.[180] Zagreus appears to be an alternative, though rare, name for Dionysos; the names are found together in a fragment ascribed to Callimachus and also in Plutarch.[181] But once again, the initiate does not say he ate raw meat himself, and it would be perfectly reasonable to assume that he is referring to a sacrificial offering of raw meat, just as was the case in Miletus. A raw-offering may have been made on the occasion of the *oreibasia*, but the Milesian inscription does not specify this and we may be in danger of conflating two separate occasions.

Bremmer associates the sacrifice of raw meat with the symbolic shift separating the maenads from their non-ritual lives, and suggests it happened before leaving the city. There is evidence to suggest that there were Dionysian shrines in wild woodland places that might not leave archaeological evidence: several vase-paintings show women with maenadic attributes at a woodland altar before a statue of Dionysos apparently mounted on a tree, and the Hellenistic Sicilian poet Theocritus also describes a group of mythical maenads with their *thiasoi* on a mountain, fashioning altars from living plants.[182] In some locations there may have been a permanent dedicated shrine somewhere in the city or on the route to the mountain. An inscription from Ephesus, dated to the fourth or third centuries BCE, has tentatively been interpreted as referring to a Dionysian shrine for the use of female 'mountain-wanderers', though no possible site has been identified and there is no corroborating evidence for an *oreibasia* at Ephesus.[183] It remains most likely that, on the occasion of the *oreibasia*, this sacrifice took place in full view of the city, at the civic altar of Dionysos.

---

[179] *CGRN* 57, with commentary, connection with raw sacrifice made by Parker 2010. Lines 21-24 of the Milesian inscription refer to a Katagogia, which may have also taken place during the Anthesteria. This strengthens the argument that the oreibasia took place other midwinter, although the question of the trieteric recurrence still remains.

[180] Eur. Fr. 472.11-12; a likely reconstruction of the play can be found in Collard and Cropp 2008: 529-556, fragment discussed at 539. δαίτη, a poetic form of δαίς, usually used in a culinary context as a banquet: e.g., *Il.* 15.95, 19.179.

[181] Callim. Fr. 43 of the *Aetia*, in the *Etymologicum Magnum;* Plut. *de E apud Delphi* (*Moralia* 389a).

[182] Images found on the 'Lenaia vase' group, catalogued most completely by Peirce 1998, cf. Theocritus, *Idyll* 26, lines 1-6: Ἰνὼ καὐτονόα χἀ μαλοπάραυος Ἀγαύα τρεῖς θιάσως ἐς ὄρος τρεῖς ἄγαγον αὐταὶ ἐοῖσαι. χαἰ μὲν ἀμερξάμεναι λασίας δρυὸς ἄγρια φύλλα κισσόν τε ζώοντα καὶ ἀσφόδελον τὸν ὑπὲρ γᾶς ἐν καθαρῷ λειμῶνι κάμον δυοκαίδεκα βωμούς, τὼς τρεῖς τᾷ Σεμέλᾳ, τὼς ἐννέα τῷ Διονύσῳ. The reference in Theocritus is noted by Bremmer 1984: 278.

[183] *Inschriften von Ephesos* 106 in Engelmann, et al. 1980 (=*SEG* 26, 1237), discussed with further speculation by Hawkins 2007.

4.4. Dancing on the mountain

Following the procession and sacrifice, the civic *thiasos* would set off for the mountainside, with or without the private *thiasoi* accompanying them. And from this point, our prose sources are silent about what happened, and we must rely more heavily on the poetic and visual depictions to understand what the dance might have been like.

On arrival at the site of their dance, perhaps at a woodland shrine, an offering of some sort might be made, as Theocritus suggests (*Idylls* 26.7). The beginning of the dance would be marked by the women raising their *thyrsoi* and calling on Dionysos (*Bacch.* 723-727), perhaps using a similar form of words as do Sophocles' Chorus in *Antigone*, who cry 'Hail, leader of the dance of the stars breathing fire, master of the voices heard by night, son of Zeus, appear, king, with your attendant Thyiads, who in their frenzy dance all night in honour of their lord Iacchus!' (Soph. *Ant.* 1146-1154).

The wild dance of the maenads is commonly found in the vase-painting, but rarely mentioned in the prose texts. Although Pausanias described the Attic Thyiades as stopping to dance on their way to Delphi, the mountain rites themselves are usually called not *choreumata* but *orgia*, a term used of several other rites, particularly Mystery cults, but which has no overt connection with dance.[184] Dancing, however, features heavily in the poetic depictions of maenads, where it is described as physically strenuous: the Lydian Chorus of *Bakchai* describe collapsing with exhaustion before being roused to rejoin the dance (*Bacch.* 135-150). This immediately recalls Plutarch's account in which the Thyiades, exhausted by their all-night ritual, collapsed in the marketplace in Amphissa (*De mul. vir.* XIII). Other poetic sources refer to a wild dance, though as is often the case it is not clear whether this is the dance of the mythical *thiasos* of the historical ritual. Athenaeus quotes Pratinas, a sixth century BCE poet, describing a Dionysian dance, with stamping feet and joyous shouts.[185] Though Plutarch does not specify that they have been dancing all night, it would make sense to assume that their 'wandering by night' (περιπλανηθεῖσαι νυκτὸς) across the mountainous region between Delphi and Amphissa would be similar to the dances that Pratinas described as 'racing over the mountains' (χορεύματα … ἀν᾽ ὄρεα σύμενον).

The quantity and range of vase-paintings showing maenads apparently in the throes of such a dance have drawn much interest from scholars of ancient dance. Lilian Lawler attempted to recreate the steps of a maenadic dance from detailed examination of iconographical elements and metrical

[184] Paus. 10.4.3. Dionysian ὄργια: Hdt. 2.81, Eur. *Bacch.* 34. Other uses of ὄργια: *Hymn. Hom. Dem*. 273, 476, Ar. *Ran.* 386, Hdt. 2.51, 5.61.

[185] Attributed to Pratinas PMG 708, cited in Athenaeus, Deip. 14.617c-d: τίς ὁ θόρυβος ὅδε; τί τάδε τὰ χορεύματα; τίς ὕβρις ἔμολεν ἐπὶ Διονυσιάδα πολυπάταγα θυμέλαν; ἐμὸς ἐμὸς ὁ Βρόμιος, ἐμὲ δεῖ κελαδεῖν, ἐμὲ δεῖ παταγεῖν ἀν᾽ ὄρεα σύμενον μετὰ Ναϊάδων 5οἶά τε κύκνον ἄγοντα ποικιλόπτερον μέλος.

analyses of what she considers maenadic lyric passages.[186] She offered a complete choreography of such a dance that gradually allowed increasing 'freedom and individual variation', becoming more and more vigorous until the dancers become dizzy and unsteady and the coherent structure breaks down. While Lawler's assumption that vase-paintings reflected actual cult practice is not secure, these scenes show the sort of dances that the painters thought that maenads *might* perform. If, as Lawler suggests, maenadic ritual participants had a certain amount of freedom to improvise their dance steps as they felt suitable for their maenadic performance, then these images are the sort that are likely to have influenced this improvisation.

One particular dance pose stands out among these. In vase-painting, maenads are often shown with their necks extended, tilting their heads far backwards or forwards, which is usually interpreted as depicting a typically maenadic dance move.[187] Head-shaking certainly seems to have been practiced in the Roman worship of Dionysos and in the cult of Cybele and could feasibly have been part of the maenadic ritual in Greece.[188] In *Bakchai,* Pentheus says he has been practicing bacchic dancing by shaking his head back and forth, and a Hellenistic epigram by Dioscorides for the *aulos*-player Aleximenes commands a group of female figures called Thyiades – who may or may not represent a ritual group - to mourn Aleximenes by whirling their hair.[189] The ritual Thyiades of the period might then, like their mythical namesakes, throw their heads back and forth, as Euripides describes Dionysos dancing, 'casting his luxurious curls into the air' (*Bacch.* 150: τρυφερόν τε πλόκαμον εἰς αἰθέρα ῥίπτων).

One thing we can infer from the sources, without delving too far into the realm of experience, is that participation in maenadic ritual was almost certainly something that was enjoyable. The enthusiasm shown by both Skyles and Olympias is also echoed by Aristophanes' impatient Lysistrata, who says that her friends would not be late had she invited them for a bacchic celebration.[190] This eagerness may also be the reason that the Milesian inscription specifies that the private *thiasoi* must wait for the public *thiasos* to be convened (*LSAM* 48 1-4): it is all too easy to imagine a milling crowd of keen initiates becoming restless and disrupting the proper order of ceremony. This evidence of course relates to the private groups who participated for their own myriad reasons, rather than for the

---

[186] Lawler 1927, with the following choreographic description at 110-113.
[187] Though Thomas Carpenter argues that it originally indicated singing, he accepts that by the late fifth century it has come to be almost uniquely associated with Dionysian dancing: Carpenter 1997: 84.
[188] Other examples of head-shaking in ancient ritual are provided by Dodds 1940: 160-161, Bremmer 1984: 278-279 with particular examples in notes 56 and 57.
[189] Eur. *Bacch.* 930-931: ἔνδον προσείων αὐτὸν ἀνασείων τ᾽ ἐγὼ καὶ βακχιάζων ἐξ ἕδρας μεθώρμισα. Dioscorides' epitaph for Aleximenes, in which Thyiades are entreated to 'whirl your long flowing locks' (περιδινήσασθε μακρῆς ἀνελίγματα χαίτης): Dioscorides 485 in the *Greek Anthology*: Paton 1917.
[190] Hdt. 4.78-80, Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 2.5, Ar. *Lys*. 1-3.

benefit of the city, but despite the gravity of the occasion there is no reason to think that the public priestesses would not also have enjoyed their chance to play the role of the maenads.

This discussion ends the reconstruction of the oreibasia ritual. Past this point, the prose sources are of no further help in unpicking ritual experience from imagination in the poetic and visual sources as we lack a complete understanding of what is meant by terms relating to *mania*, such as those used of the Thyiades by Plutarch (*De mul. vir.* XIII).

5. Chapter summary: the end of the evidence

This chapter has reviewed the evidence for the *oreibasia* from prose and poetic sources and from vase-paintings, and explored what we know about the key features and staging of the ritual. A proposal has been made for the programme of events, demonstrating how the *oreibasia* fitted into the structures of ancient Greek cult activity, placing many of the events surrounding it within the city (or at Delphi, within the sanctuary) rather than on the mountainside itself. By centring the cult activity within the city itself, performed in front of the populace and with the participation of private groups, the oreibasia becomes more aligned with what we know of other civic rituals. For example, the mysterious *omophagion* of the Milesian sacrifice cannot be equated with the murderous violence of the Theban women in *Bakchai*, but instead belongs to a wider tradition of sacrificial meat being offered raw.

The status of maenadic priestesses has been evaluated and some suggestions made about the relationship between private and public *thiasoi*. Far from being the religious expression of marginalised women, the civic *oreibasia* was in reality clearly embedded in the orthodox structures of Greek religion and performed by educated, elite women who, like Alkmeonis of Miletus, could refer to their ritual activity with pride, and who were respected enough by their communities to have tombs built at public expense in prominent locations, like those of the Theban maenads who set up rites in Magnesia.

This discussion has shown that poetic depictions of the imagined maenad do seem to include some elements drawn from ritual practice, though whether this is a case of myth reflecting ritual or ritual imitating myth cannot be ascertained from our scant knowledge of changes to ritual practice over time. The key features of the trieteric festival described by Diodorus – the women, the ritual site away from the city and, where possible, at elevation, the *thyrsos*, and the dance - do appear across different chronological spans and geographic areas suggesting reasonably continuous and consistent practice across several centuries. There are still areas of uncertainty where the literary sources fail to explain some of the finer details. We can say with some certainty, for example, that the fawnskin *nebris* found in so many vase-paintings was a part of maenadic ritual costume from an early date,

but the extant literary and visual evidence gives no firm answer on whether or not snakes were ever used during the *oreibasia* itself, or just in public processions, or whether they were only used by particular individuals to create a particular effect.

With the exception of Plutarch's mysterious ἐκμανεῖσαι, the prose sources rarely describe the mental state of participants either, and all too often the question of what a Hellenistic woman felt when she danced on a mountain for Dionysos has also been consigned to the hinterland between myth and ritual, too entwined to ever be understood. In the second century CE, the grammarian Diogenianus recorded a proverb 'the bacchants are silent',[191] and, so far as their ritual experience is concerned, the bacchants have indeed held their silence. For all the varied images of the mythical maenad that were produced, bought, and prized across Greece, the ritual maenad slips back behind her sister so far as the evidence is concerned.

As described in Chapter 1, the theory of predictive processing may be able to shed some light on these problems and offer a different way of interpreting the evidence. The subsequent two chapters will look at how participants' cultural knowledge about maenads would have influenced their interpretation of their experiences of the ritual activity and environment. In order to do this, I will be referring back to the description of the imagined maenad and the cognitive model known as 'predictive processing' as outlined in Chapter 1, section 2. Cognitive theories of how our minds function suggest that cultural knowledge, of the sort captured in poetic and visual depictions of the imagined maenad, affects how we interpret sensory data and thus shapes what we call our experience of events. These sources clearly have something to add to our understanding not only of how ritual maenads behaved during their performance, but also how they imagined themselves and experienced their selves (Chapter 4), and how they made senses of the sensory data generated by the ritual activity and environment (Chapter 5).

[191] Diogenianus, *Proverbia,* s.v. Βακχης.

Chapter 4: Imitation, *mimesis*, and loss of self

Πενθεύς:	ἀλλ᾽ ἦ ποτ᾽ ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν
Διόνυσος:	… νῦν δ᾽ ὁρᾷς ἃ χρή σ᾽ ὁρᾶν.
Πενθεύς:	οὐχὶ τὴν Ἰνοῦς στάσιν ἢ τὴν Ἀγαύης ἑστάναι, μητρός γ᾽ ἐμῆς;
Διόνυσος:	αὐτὰς ἐκείνας εἰσορᾶν δοκῶ σ᾽ ὁρῶν.
Pentheus:	But were you a beast before? For now, indeed, you have the form of a bull.
Dionysos:	… Now you see as you should.
Pentheus:	Don’t I have the posture of Ino, or of my mother Agaue?
Dionysos:	Looking at you, I seem to see them.

(Euripides, *Bacchae* 922-924, 925-926)

1. Introduction

In Chapter 1 section 2, I explained the basic theories of event cognition and predicting processing. This explanation described how experience is formed in working memory through both external cues, which provide the sensory data that our brains need to process in order to understand what is happening around us, and internal cues, including mood, cultural knowledge, and expectation, that our brains use to interpret the sensory data.

In Chapter 2, I explored the scholarship on maenadic ritual experience and some of the challenges that researchers have encountered. Two themes arose from these studies that relate to the maenadic state of mind: those that deal with how the ritual affected a ritual participants’ sense of identity, including such troublesome concepts as ‘loss of self’ and ‘possession’, and those that deal with the ritual participant’s relationship with Dionysos, particularly the possibility that she might experience a visual hallucination of a Dionysian epiphany.

This chapter and the following one will each explore one of these aspects of maenadic ritual experience from a cognitive perspective. In this chapter, I will present my argument that, through the conscious act of taking on a role and the use of rhythmic music, maenadic ritual could induce a cognitive experience that could be described as a ‘loss of self’. This discussion will begin with exploring the concept of maenadic ritual as a mimetic performance, based on the statement by Diodorus Siculus (4.3.3) that women gathered in cities across Greece to celebrate Dionysos by *mimoumenas tas … mainadas*. Through analysis of ancient and modern concepts of *mimesis* and mimetic performance (section 2), I will present my argument that such a performance would require a ritual participant to do more than simply provide a superficial resemblance to a mythical maenad.

Section 3 will then address the opposite end of the spectrum, the concept that maenadic ritual was a 'possession trance' in which participants would feel completely taken over by an inhabiting spirit. Finally, section 4 will examine the cognitive effects of role-play and music, presenting a synthesis of psychological and neuroscientific studies on of the effects of rhythm and role play on the brain and self-identity.

2. The process of μιμεῖσθαι: creation of the ritual world

This section will involve a detailed discussion of the concept of *mimesis*, through analysis of the terms μιμεῖσθαι and μίμησις, and how they relate to the act of representing or imitating. Exploring the influential work of Erich Auerbach on literary *mimesis* in Homer, I will explain why translation of these terms as 'imitation' has caused some scholars to argue that it meant only a symbolic act with a superficial resemblance. Such interpretations have led to a misunderstanding about the nature of the ritual maenads' representation of the mythical maenads, which is refuted by more recent scholarship on *mimesis* from a performative and philosophical perspective. These studies offer instead an interpretation of *mimesis* as a performance that creates a simulated world within which the performer identifies with the emotional state of their characters. I will end this section with a summary of how we should therefore understand the maenadic ritual *mimesis,* and what this implies a ritual maenad might feel when she performed a representation of a mythical maenad.

2.1. μιμεῖσθαι and μίμησις

The word Diodorus uses to describe the ritual participant's act is μιμουμένας (4.3.3), the feminine plural middle or passive accusative participle of the verb μιμεῖσθαι. The verb is used in ancient Greek to denote an act of imitating, portraying, or representing something, and is related to a group of words concerned with this action, including μίμησις, which is the noun denoting such a representation.[1] In the following discussion I have, somewhat reluctantly, transliterated this Greek word as *mimesis*. The reason for my reluctance is that 'mimesis' is a word that has been adopted by several disciplines, from psychology and anthropology to art and literary criticism, to denote a range of concepts involving representation, copying, acting, and imagining.[2] These different disciplines use the word 'mimesis' both to explore the relationship between the copy, representation or replica and the original thing being represented (the 'referent'), and to describe the process by which the representation or copy is made. These modern uses vary between disciplines and are not

[1] *LSJ* s.v. μῑμέομαι, μῖμησις. For the etymology see Halliwell 2009: 15-22, with the scholarship provided in footnote 39, p. 17.
[2] See, for example, its use in psychology, Billett 2014, and anthropology, Taussig 1991. The two most influential scholars who used the term are probably Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach: for the development of the concept of 'mimesis' in Benjamin's work, see Beatrice Hanssen 2004, in Auerbach's, see Auerbach 1953: 3-23, Bremmer 1999, which will be discussed later in this chapter. On the varied history of the use of the term, see discussion in Gebauer and Wulf 1995.

necessarily helpful in a discussion of the ancient use of μιμεῖσθαι to describe ritual behaviour. Nor is 'imitation' a suitable translation: Stephen Halliwell points out that this word is commonly used in a way that is 'predominantly pejorative—typically implying a limited aim of copying, superficial replication, or counterfeiting'.[3] If we intend to explore what a mimetic performance meant to the Greeks, we should avoid importing such value judgements. In the following discussion, I will use *mimesis* to indicate that I am discussing the Greek usage, and 'mimesis' when discussing the literary concept found in the work of, most prominently, Erich Auerbach.

We know from the ancient evidence that ritual maenads adopted the costume and behaviour of their mythical counterparts, and that there were some characteristic poses or movements associated with maenadic ritual performance.[4] Words from the word group to which *mimesis* belongs are found in the ancient sources relating to sound, movement, and visual similarity. The earliest use of a word belonging to the μίμ- family is found in a fragment of Aeschylus' *Edonians* from the first half of the fifth century BCE, in which some pieces of Dionysian ritual equipment are described as being mimetic of 'the terrifying voice of bulls' (Aesch. Fr. 57: ταυρόφθογγοι … φοβεροὶ μῖμοι). Other early uses refer to vocal representations, as when the Muses are described as being able to replicate the languages and vocal styles of all men, and to physical movements, as when Pindar refers to a chorus representing horses or dogs with the movement of their feet.[5] Visual similarity could also be the basis for describing something as being 'mimetic'. In another Aeschlyean fragment, from *Theoroi*, some satyrs are astonished by artefacts which so closely resemble themselves that they proudly declare that their own mothers, seeing the 'finely painted' images, would be fooled.[6]

Mimesis can, then, denote a physical similarity, achieved through costume, sound, and movement, what we might call in English an 'imitation' or 'resemblance'. It is not clear from the ancient accounts whether maenadic ritual participants were expected to go beyond the purely physical in their representation of maenads. Albert Henrichs argued in several papers that ritual maenads would not have done so, describing their maenadic performance as 'basically mimetic or commemorative', going on to argue that 'maenadic "madness" is ritualistic, not psychological…. The peculiar religious identity of the maenads had more to do with sweat and physical exhaustion than with an abnormal state of mind', and 'their wild dancing and ecstatic behaviour were interpreted as

[3] Halliwell 2009: 152.
[4] Discussed in Chapter 3 sections 3 and 4.
[5] Auditory *mimesis*: Hom. Hymn. Ap. 156-164, cf. Pindar, *Pythian* 12.21. Choreographic: Pindar, fr. 107ab in Race 1997: Πελασγὸν ἵππον ἢ κύνα Ἀμυκλᾳ̈ίαν ἀγωνίῳ ἐλελιζόμενος ποδὶ μιμέο.
[6] Aes. fr. 78c.6-7 in Sommerstein 2008, cf. Halliwell 2009: 19-20. The text is fragmentary and context unclear, but the representations are described as μ[ί]μημα.

‘madness’ only by the uninitiated’.[7] If correct, this would mean that the experience of performing the *oreibasia* was more one of ensuring a convincing superficial likeness than one of adopting a deeper psychological role. Under this interpretation, ritual maenads performing a *mimesis* of the mythological maenads would not attempt to engage with the psychology of their role models, but only to describe them through behavioural imitation. This is important for interpretations of ritual as ‘basically mimetic’, as Henrichs put it in 1978, because it would suggest that a mimetic ritual performance has no deeper meaning than what is temporarily, brilliantly, foregrounded by the act of performance. It would require less emotional commitment and engagement to perform the role of a maenad if the performance only needed a participant to act like a maenad, rather than if she had to try and feel like one as well.

2.2. ‘Mimesis’ as imitation or representation

The hugely influential literary critic Erich Auerbach used ‘mimesis’ to describe the way in which a culture chooses to portray the world through the medium of literary composition.[8] He dealt with ‘mimesis’ in Greek literature by examining the account from *Odyssey* 19.392-466 describing how Odysseus got his scar, which appears as of a sort flashback in the middle of the narrative of Eurykleia bathing him on his return to Ithaca. In the passage, the narrative focus shifts entirely from the bathing scene to the events decades previously when the young Odysseus was injured whilst hunting a boar. Auerbach uses this self-contained vignette to explore what he sees as a typically Homeric style of ‘foregrounding’ apparently insignificant background details – how Odysseus got his scar in this case – at the cost of narrative tempo – the description occurs just as Eurykleia recognises her long-lost king.[9]

For Auerbach, the hallmark of Homer’s style is that all events are presented with equal importance; once introduced, the story of the scar becomes the immediate focus of the poet’s and therefore the audience’s attention, with no attempt to instruct the audience in how they should feel about the events. For contrast, the account of Odysseus’ scar is compared against an Old Testament story in which God instructs Abraham to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22.1-19). Auerbach considered that the author or narrator of this story demonstrated a more selective approach to choosing which details

[7] Quote taken from Henrichs 1978: 144, Henrichs 1982: 146-147, and Henrichs 2012 respectively. It is not clear whether, or to what degree, Henrichs and others subscribing to this view (discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1), have been directly influenced by Auerbach, but the tone of their interpretation suggests at least a correlation. Joan Breton Connelley is less dismissive of ritual *mimesis*, but does not speculate on performer experience: Connelly 2007: 104-111.

[8] Auerbach 1953. The following discussion of Homeric ‘mimesis’ is found in Chapter 1, pp. 3-23. An introduction to this work – and a word of caution on Auerbach’s adoption of the term ‘mimesis’ - is offered by Bremmer 1999.

[9] For a different interpretation of Homer’s technique here, exploring narratological strategies to build suspense and place the audience’s focus in the mind of Eurykleia, see de Jong 2001 ad. loc.

to emphasize, guiding the reader or audience not only through the narrative but also through how they should interpret it. Moreover, Auerbach found that the biblical characters displayed a higher degree of psychological depth than did Homer's heroes, whom he described as 'waking every morning as if it were the first day of their lives: their emotions, though strong, are simple and find expression instantly'.[10] His world is full of detail, such as the story of how Odysseus got his scar, but all detail is presented with the same level of importance, a dazzling array of immersive information which, however, has no 'complexity of psychological life'.

According to Auerbach then, Homer's literary 'mimesis' renders the world accurately, in the sense that every element is available to view in detail, but without a didactic or moralising function and without any serious attempt to draw a convincing psychological portrait of any of his characters. Although Auerbach is discussing literary 'mimesis' and certainly does not describe ritual performance as mimetic, his conception of Homeric 'mimesis' was popular and influential among classical scholars until the early 1990s.[11]

This interpretation of μίμησις as a performance that lacks depth has found its way into scholarly interpretations of how we should understand μιμεῖσθαι in a ritual performative context. In C.H. Oldfather's 1935 Loeb volume the phrase was translated as 'acting the part of the maenads', which captures something of the performative aspect of the original Greek.[12] More recently, however, some scholars have instead translated the term as 'imitating' and insisted that, because the act is described as μιμουμένας, therefore the ritual performance itself – the μίμησις – was merely a symbolic imitation of the *mania* experienced by mythological maenads.[13]

Since the 1990s, however, Auerbach's conception of 'mimesis' has become less influential outside literary studies, and classicists have revisited ancient uses of μίμησις and its associated verb μιμεῖσθαι in an attempt to better understand how mimetic performances should be understood within the ancient Greek context. The poem that Auerbach used to illustrate Greek 'mimesis' was, after all, composed for the emotional rollercoaster of live performance, not for quiet, contemplative reading alone. In the next section, I will explore how *mimesis* has been reassessed since Auerbach's day, with a focus on performance and action, and how this helps us understand what a mimetic ritual performance might entail.

---

[10] Auerbach 1953: 12
[11] Bakker 1999: 11-12. Auerbach's lack of interest in philosophical *mimesis* is also noted by Halliwell 2009: vii.
[12] Oldfather 1935.
[13] Henrichs 1978: 143, 147, Keuls 1985: 358.

2.3. Μιμεῖσθαι as performance

Between 1998 and 2009, Egbert J. Bakker and Jan Bremmer contributed to a volume reassessing Auerbach's work, and Stephen Halliwell undertook two detailed studies of uses of the μίμησις word group in Platonic and Aristotelean thought.[14] All three writers emphasise that there is no single, simple, English equivalent of μίμησις in ancient Greek. Bremmer pointed out that an ancient Greek *mimesis* is not simply 'copying', though it can mean this, but can be a creative representation of something that doesn't exist in reality.[15] Drawing on developments since Auerbach's time in research on Homeric performance and orality, Bakker argued that 'mimesis originally does not denote a relationship between [the product of mimetic performance] and its referent… but *between an action … and its model'*.[16] Furthermore, he pointed out that the verb μιμεῖσθαι is in the middle voice, indicating that the performer 'is necessarily affected by the action denoted'. In contrast to Auerbach's literary concept of 'mimesis', Greek usage emphasizes the connection between the person making the representation and the act of performance. Bakker's differentiation is important when considering how best to translate *mimoumenas tas mainadas*. While Oldfather's translation 'acting the part' uses the language of theatre to focus on the action being performed, translating μιμεῖσθαι as 'to imitate' changes the emphasis from the effects of performance on the performer to a comparison between original referent and the authenticity of the action's product, the μίμησις. In this, Bakker follows Vernant, who differentiated between *mimesis* that was done with the aim of fooling or entertaining a spectator, and 'philosophical' *mimesis* that was done 'with the aim of undergoing a change within oneself'.[17] Vernant's focus, like that of Bakker, was on the action, μιμεῖσθαι, rather than the product of the action, μίμησις. Ustinova comes to a similar conclusion when she says that 'Imitation not only does not preclude striving to feel like the commemorated individuals, but on the contrary, encourages or even requires that'.[18]

Halliwell concurs that ancient uses of μίμησις did *not* simply mean an 'artistic deception', of the sort attacked by Plato, but a representation of something that reflected a truth about the relationship between the original and the product of the mimetic process.[19] This could be done 'in the real world', as when someone emulates the behaviour of another person, whether real or imagined, for the purposes of appearing or being more like them; Halliwell calls this 'behavioural imitation' and describes it as reflecting the existing world and, importantly, being carried out in the existing world. When Plato talks about the man who becomes corrupted through imitating his immoral master

[14] Bremmer 1999, Bakker 1999, Halliwell 1998, Halliwell 2009.
[15] Bremmer 1999: 6.
[16] Bakker 1999: 15-17, italics in the original.
[17] Vernant 1991: 184.
[18] Ustinova 2018: 181.
[19] In *Rep*. 10.598d; Halliwell 2009: 4-5, 12-13.

(*Gorgias* 510b-511a: διὰ τὴν μίμησιν τοῦ δεσπότου καὶ δύναμιν), he is describing what Halliwell would define as 'behavioural imitation'.

A different sort of mimetic process takes place by what Halliwell terms 'impersonation', in which the performer creates a self-contained artificially constructed world in which the *mimesis* is real and adopts a character within that imagined world. This sort of *mimesis*, strongly connected in Plato to the poetic arts, is a representation within a simulated dramatic or artistic world that, for the duration of the performance, the audience is understood to accept, even while consciously being aware of its fictitious nature. The performer creates an artistic world, a conduit between the original thing being represented and the viewer or audience, and the process of representation must be coherent and truthful enough to adequately communicate the meaning of the original. The audience understands that the performer is not attempting to 'be' or appear to be the object of their performance, but to represent the truth of that object. When a poet performed a Homeric speech by Penelope, the audience were on some level aware that the words were being sung by a bearded man, but within the poetic world created through the performer's skill, the representation of an archaic Ithacan queen is conjured before them. The audience's conception of the historicity of Penelope herself is not significant; the distinction Halliwell makes between impersonation and imitation is that imitation takes place in the 'real' world, and impersonation in a world that is recognised as an artistic construct.

The finely-held balance between the performer's own identity and their adopted character is found in other aspects of ancient Greek performance, for example in the self-referentiality found in dramatic choral songs, and in the use of changing first-person character in epinician odes.[20] Henrichs relates self-referentiality with breaking down the barriers between the 'dramatic realm...[and]…the political and cultic realms of the here and now', dragging the mythical paradigm of the narrative into the present day of the performed ritual, and argues that such moments occur particularly around references to maenadic dances.[21] Likewise, Bruno Currie notes that the shift in 'speaking persona' in the Pindaric odes also occurs at points where the ode 'takes a "leap" or "zooms" from one temporal level to another, from the mythical past to the here-and-now of performance'.[22]

Diodorus' own opinion on μιμεῖσθαι also seems to suggest this reading. In a passage discussing history-writing (20.43.7), he describes the creation of a narrative that describes factual events,

[20] Henrichs 1994, Currie 2013.
[21] Henrichs 1994: 70, 79.
[22] Currie 2013: 270-271, acknowledging Henrich's influence on this concept.

saying that written history makes a representation (μιμεῖσθαι) of the past that fails to accurately capture them in their proper order. His point is not that the *mimesis* of history writing is inauthentic, but that creating a linear narrative means that something of the disorder of things happening as they do, all at once, is lost. The structure or rhythm of writing about events in an intelligible manner means that reality must be reshaped to fit the requirements of structure, in the same way that words must be reshaped to fit the meter of poetry.[23] This would align his use of μιμεῖσθαι with the poetic process of capturing and processing the realistic and disorderly wealth of detail, seen by the poet in his mind's eye, and transmitting it through the medium of rhythm and form into something that the audience can understand and share. This would also stand in contrast to Auerbach's complaint that Homeric *mimesis* lacked a didactic voice.[24] If we can accept that Diodorus meant us to understand that maenadic ritual *mimesis* was an 'impersonation', then Halliwell argues that it would certainly have the potential to act on the performer as they assimilate or 'self-liken' themselves into characters from their simulated world.[25]

Bakker's discussion of performative μιμεῖσθαι tends towards the latter of Halliwell's two mimetic processes, that of 'impersonation'. He argues that, at least in poetic *mimesis*, the poet creates a world by essentially visualizing their simulated world and then inhabiting and describing it; this, Bakker argues, is the 'vision of the Muses' for which the poet acts as a conduit, passing on the vision to his audience through his words, rhythm, and gestures.[26] This inhabitation of the poetic simulation allows the wealth of 'foregrounded' detail that the poet can describe minutely , focussing his audience's attention which in turn aids their immersion in the simulation.[27] This may be achieved by providing minutely-detailed descriptions, such as the Teichoscopia scene from *Iliad* 3.121-244, or the description of the shield of Achilles in *Il.* 18.478-608, during which the poet 'evokes a lifelike ('vivid') mental representation of persons, objects, actions, and their setting'.[28] But it can also involve a shift of perspective, encouraging the audience to identify with a particular character within the narrative. Returning to Auerbach's example of the scar of Odysseus with this concept of narrative immersion, Homer's foregrounding of the story of how Odysseus got his scar invites the audience into the mind of Euryklea, sharing her memories of the hunting accident, at the very narrative moment at which the memory is brought to her mind.[29] What Auerbach saw simply as a

[23] Halliwell 2009: 291-292.
[24] Auerbach 1953: 13.
[25] Halliwell 2009: 52-54, citing Pl. *Rep*. 3.395d1–3. The discussion relates to poetry but, as Halliwell points out, it is poetry read aloud, as a performance.
[26] Bakker 1999: 21-24.
[27] On audience immersion in narrative, see Allan 2019, Budelmann and van Emde Boas 2019.
[28] Allan 2019: 18.
[29] de Jong 2001 ad loc. explains this well.

wealth – even an excess - of unfiltered detail, can instead be understood as a technique for drawing the audience into the memories and emotions of the protagonists.

Moreover, the context of the *mimesis* was a religious event, a ritual offering to the gods made in the hope of maintaining or improving the relationship between humanity and divinity.[30] Considering the maenad's role-play in this way, it would suggest that, the more elaborate and convincing the simulated world was, the more pleasing Dionysos would find the offering. The performer's intention is, therefore, important, as it affects the quality of the product offered: Aristotle says that poets do their best work not when feigning emotion, but when it is heartfelt (*Poet.* 1455a). This may also be reflected in language: in Greek there is no distinction between an actor's face and the theatrical mask he wears, both are πρόσωπον.

This level of immersion in performance could be dangerous. In *Republic,* Socrates argues that the virtuous man would be uneasy in performing the words or thoughts of a villain or unworthy person, for fear of their corrupting him.[31] Plutarch describes two such events: an actor performing the role of Atreus was said to have got carried away and killed a passing assistant, and the Dionysian priest Zoilus, who killed a ritual participant during the Agrionia.[32] Though Plutarch hastens to add that Zoilus' act was theoretically permitted by the ritual's rules, this was clearly an unusual event worthy of comment. Both stories are probably apocryphal, but they demonstrate an awareness of the possibility that actors could get too immersed in their roles, that the barrier separating self and character could become porous.

But, in general, these hazards were minor compared to the dangers of offering an inadequate gift to the gods. Robert Parker argues that poetry and myth are full of examples in which the gods reject offerings because of some other offence perpetrated by the suppliant: it is not the quality of the gift alone which sways the god's favour but that it is offered with 'honour and recognition and *kharis*'.[33] Parker's focus is on sacrifice, but Jan Bremmer's chapter in the same volume extends the underlying concepts of reciprocity and recognition to other ritual acts such as hymns and prayers of thanksgiving.[34] A dance offered to the gods must therefore be aesthetically pleasing, as a sacrifice must be, but must also be offered with appropriate deference and piety.

[30] Sørensen 1993: particularly at 16-20. Sørensen does not directly discuss ancient Greek ritual but attempts to define the main characteristics of what scholars refer to as 'ritual'.
[31] *Rep.* 396c-e, discussed Halliwell 2009: 52-53. This idea may relate to the ancient theory of extramission in optics, discussed in Lehoux 2007.
[32] Plutarch: *Vit. Cic*. 5.3, *QG* 38.
[33] Parker 1998: 118-123, quoting Pl. *Euthyphr.* 15a.
[34] Bremmer 1998.

2.4. Summary: μίμησις and inhabiting a role

The discussion above shows how scholarship has shifted over the last half century from thinking about *mimesis* as the object or copy that reflects an original, to thinking about the process of *mimeisthai* as a process. Under this reading, *mimeisthai* denotes the creation of a simulated space into which the poet or artist draws their audience. This shift casts a different light on what the ritual performers may have thought about what they were doing when they were *mimoumenas tas mainadas*.

This move from the 'real' world to the constructed world correlates broadly to the concept of 'narrative immersion', used in the scholarly discourse in the field of classics to describe how an audience or reader is drawn into the narrative world of a performance or text.[35] This concept clearly has relevance to my discussion of mimetic performance and scholars working in this field often use cognitive theories and psychological research to model audience responses. However, although this study draws on many of the same foundations, scholarship on narrative immersion rarely deals with performances other than recital or improvisation of poetry and, to my knowledge, never on the experience of the performer rather than the audience.[36] While some of the scholarship on narrative immersion is relevant, especially that pertaining to the creation of the simulated world, it is important to recognise that performer and audience may have significantly different experiences inside that world.

Returning to the experience of the performer, the ancient uses of μιμ-family words do not suggest that a mimetic ritual would necessarily have been a superficial or passionless imitation. If we consider it, using Halliwell's categories, as 'behavioural imitation' in which performers considered themselves to be acting 'in the real world', then their performance would have been thought to have the potential to change their characters. If, on the other hand, they were 'impersonating' the mythical maenads in a self-contained artistic world created by the ritual, then they would have been creating a temporary conjuration of the mythical *thiasos*. Whichever of Halliwell's interpretations we apply to maenadic ritual as a mimetic performance, there is a strong suggestion that the performers were seen as not simply resembling maenads, but as either aligning their characters with those of the maenads or as 'conjuring up' their mythical role models. Either path would be expected to have an effect on the performer at least for the duration of their performance.

The evidence presented here suggests that the interpretation of a mimetic performance as one in which participants merely had to display a superficial resemblance to their mythical counterparts is

[35] See for example a recent edited volume on experience and narrative: Grethlein, et al. 2019.
[36] A valuable exception to the first point is the study by Laura Gianvittorio-Ungar on dance as a narrative: Gianvittorio-Ungar 2019, in Grethlein, et al. 2019.

clearly an inadequate description of a more complex process. English lacks a suitable word for such an act, but Halliwell's 'representation' seems an acceptable translation. During their ritual performance, participants *represented* mythical maenads: this act involved both outward likeness and some sort of conscious attempt to imagine themselves as being mythical maenads. But the question remains of how they would have experienced this inhabitation of their roles. Rohde thought that it would have felt like 'possession' by Dionysos or his maenads, Harrison that it evoked a sense of collective consciousness shared with other members of their group, Vernant that it made the individual experience themselves as 'other'.[37] What these three interpretations have in common is that they all touch on the idea that participants might feel that their sense of who they were would be affected.

There is some suggestion that a mimetic performance might be experienced as a sense of there being another identity present in one's mind. Plato's Socrates argues that the success of a mimetic poetic performance is less attributable to the technical skill of the poet than to what he calls a divine power (*Ion* 533d: θεία … δύναμις) that affects poets when they begin to write rhythm and melody, and which seizes them in the way that Corybantes and bacchic women are seized (534a).[38] The costumes and props might be considered an aid to channelling this power, as when in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (146-152), the playwright Agathon adopts the costumes and mannerisms of the characters for whom he is composing.

In relation to the performance of maenadic ritual, we might consider the costumes, shouting, and dancing as correlating to the technical skill of the poet, but Plato's argument suggests that something more was needed to make their performance successful. The following section will explore how this has led to maenadism being categorised as a 'possession' ritual, and whether or not this is justified.

3. Maenadic ritual as a possession trance

This discussion will focus on the highly influential interpretation by Gilbert Rouget of maenadic ritual as essentially a possession cult.[39] Rouget examined the use of music in possession cults from a range of global contexts, and applied his findings to maenadic ritual, arguing that music induced a trance state, resulting in participants feeling they had been 'possessed' or 'seized' by a controlling spirit. This section of the chapter will first discuss possession rituals, examining typologies of trance and

[37] References in discussion in Chapter 2, sections 2.1 (Rohde), 2.2 (Harrison), and 3.3 (Vernant) respectively.
[38] This passage is discussed, though not in relation to rhythm, in Sparousi 1991: 18-20.
[39] Rouget's chapter on trance in Greek ritual is in Rouget 1985: 187-226, on bacchic cult from p.206. Rouget's interpretation of Dionysian cult is heavily influenced by the work of Henri Jeanmaire and Erich Dodds (Jeanmaire 1951, Dodds 1951).

possession, and explaining how maenadic ritual has come to be associated with this type of religious experience. Having raised some concerns with Rouget's categorisation, I will then consider the options for the identity of the possessing spirit.

3.1. Typologies and mechanisms of trance

From an anthropological perspective, the mental state thought to be induced during a ritual like the *oreibasia* is usually described as a 'trance', and, particularly, a 'possession trance', a dissociative state, one in which ritual participants might feel that their own self had left their body, or that another spirit had joined them inside their own bodies.[40] The anthropologist I.M. Lewis, examining shamanistic practices from a range of cultures, briefly mentions Dionysian ritual as one in which a ritual practitioner might purposely induce an experience of 'possession' by Dionysos.[41] Building on Lewis' work, Gilbert's Rouget's 1985 ethnographic study on music and trance devoted a chapter to ancient Greek ritual with a particular focus on Dionysian cult, and also interpreted maenadic ritual as essentially one in which practitioners would induce a trance state which he also associated with a feeling of being possessed.[42] Contrasting 'trance' with his definition of 'ecstasy', which he associated with Christian mystic experiences that come in solitude and quiet contemplation, Rouget defined trance as a state which is achieved through stimulation: noise, movement, and being in a group.[43]

3.1.1.Typologies

In the trance state, the subject develops physical symptoms including trembling, lack of awareness of surroundings, swooning, and insensitivity to pain, and trance is transitory, meaning that the individual returns to their previous state afterwards, though they may have no recollection of what has happened while they were entranced.[44] This definition of 'trance' clearly fits well with descriptions of maenadic cult, which is characterised by group dancing, and at least one account of ritual performance contained a description of participants collapsing into sleep.[45] By including evidence from poetic literature and from the uses of 'like a maenad' or 'like a bacchant' as a simile, we find references to all of these symptoms.[46] It seems therefore a reasonable conclusion that maenads – mythical or ritual – were associated with the symptoms of a mental state that can be defined as 'trance'.

---

[40] Lewis 1971, particularly at 38-43.
[41] Ibid. at pp. 55-56.
[42] Rouget 1985: 206-226.
[43] Ibid. at 3-11., a definition often used in scholarship exploring experience of ancient ecstatic rituals, e.g. Dell'Isola 2020, Patzelt 2020.
[44] Listed at Rouget 1985: 13.
[45] Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII, cf. *Bacch.* 135-150.
[46] For example, trembling: *Il.* 22.460-461, Eur, *Ion*, 1203-1205; lack of awareness: *Bacch.* 1084-1087, insensitivity to pain: *Bacch.*757-764, Nonnus, *Dion.* 14.367-369, 384-385.

But 'possession' as used by these scholars is a more challenging concept. Lewis defined two forms of possession: uncontrolled or involuntary, in which an often-unwilling subject is spontaneously seized by a spirit, and the controlled shamanistic type, in which a trained practitioner purposely sets out to invite a spirit to share their body or mind.[47] Of these, Lewis saw Dionysian cult as an example of the shamanistic tradition, in which practitioners could experience what he called a 'joyous Dionysian epiphany'. Rouget categorised possession rituals slightly differently, by the level of control that the spirit exhibited over the subject, rather than by the agency of the practitioner: Lewis' distinction, he argued, was inadequate because it neglected cases in which an intended possession involves a complete replacement of personality.[48] He classed maenadic ritual as enacting a 'full possession', the complete replacement of oneself by another entity, as opposed to trances characterised by the coexistence of spirit and subject together within the body (which he called 'inspiration'), or by those in which the subject experiences a 'communion, revelation, or an illumination' due to close proximity to divinity.

Rouget based his claim that maenadic ritual evoked a 'full possession' on a discussion in Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates says that the man who 'correctly experiences *mania* and is seized finds release from present ills' (244e-245a: λύσιν τῷ ὀρθῶς μανέντι τε καὶ κατασχομένῳ τῶν παρόντων κακῶν εὑρομένη, translated by Rouget as 'correctly entranced and possessed').[49] This is a difficult passage in a complicated work, but the verb κατέχω (from which κατασχομένῳ is derived), which I have rendered here as 'seized' but is sometimes translated as 'possessed', does not mean necessarily that the subject would feel controlled or replaced by another being. Yulia Ustinova has examined what she refers to as 'inconsistent' ancient uses of this verb and found that Greek conceptions of such 'seizure' range from complete identification with the possessing spirit, god, or nymph to simply a sense of the spirit's presence.[50] This range of meanings covers all Rouget's three types of 'possession': in fact we find words of the κατέχω group used explicitly to describe the speech of oracles, which Rouget had categorised as 'inspiration'.[51] The passage Rouget cites cannot alone support his argument that Dionysian *mania* was equivalent to his category of 'full possession'.

3.1.2. Mechanisms

Rouget pays more attention to the mechanisms of achieving such a state than does Lewis and argued that maenadic ritual evoked trance through the emotional impact of music in the ancient

[47] Lewis 1971: 44-57, with the following quote from p.55.
[48] Rouget 1985: 17-31, with typologies at 26 and in relation to maenads at 200-210.
[49] Passage discussed: ibid. at 192-201. Rouget's rendering of the passage is given on p. 192.
[50] See Ustinova 2018: 2-3, 31 n 16. In the following chapter I will return to the theme of sensing the presence of Dionysos.
[51] As at Paus. 10.33.11, see also the examples provided by Ustinova, ibid. at 31 n19.

Phrygian mode played on the *aulos* or other wind instruments during the ritual.[52] Music has a long history of being used in rituals to induce mental state changes and these seem to have been well known to the ancient Greeks and utilised in religious events.[53] Plato associated music with cult practice such as those of the Corybantes (*Ion* 536b, *Laws* 790d-791b), and Aristotle complained that Plato should have banished the Phrygian mode along with the *aulos* from his ideal republic, because it was emotionally arousing and 'orgiastic' (ὀργιαστικὰ καὶ παθητικά, Arist. *Pol.* 8.1340a-1342b, cf. Pl. *Rep.* 399a). 'Orgiastic' here may refer to particular secretive religious practices such as the Mystery cults as well as bacchic worship but may simply mean 'excited'.[54]

Overall, this evidence would appear to support Rouget's theory. In cognitive terms, music can be considered a form of communication that has semantic meaning, which is conveyed through pitch and rhythm at a more general, broader level than language, but is certainly capable of referential power.[55] The *aulos* seems to have been particularly suited to the ancient Phrygian mode, which was used for particularly Dionysian music such as the dithyramb, and seems to have been considered suitable for generating an appropriately bacchic atmosphere.[56] The *aulos* and other wind instruments appear in depictions of maenads and other highly charged Dionysian scenes; Euripides' Chorus sing of dancing 'when the holy sweet-voiced pipe (λωτὸς εὐκέλαδος) clamours its sacred frolic' and the fragment of Aeschylus' *Edonians* cited by Rouget describes a little-known wind instrument called a *bombyx*.[57]

However, while ancient philosophy does seem to have made a conceptual connection between melodic music and *mania*, maenads in the poetic sources and in vase-painting are as likely, if not more so, to be accompanied by rhythmic percussion instruments as by lyres or *auloi.* In her study of maenads in vase-painting, Suzanne Moraw notes that, while black-figure maenads may be shown playing melodic or percussive instruments in what she terms 'Dionysian banquet scenes', red-figure scenes more commonly show dancing maenads playing percussive instruments, while the *auloi* and lyres are reserved for attendant satyrs.[58] While of course these images are not necessarily intended to accurately depict ritual practice, we might understand this stylistic change as an attempt by the

---

[52] Rouget 1985: 213-224.
[53] See West 1992: 246-252 for a fuller range of sources on Greek attitudes to emotional effects of music.
[54] Religious practises called ὄργια: *hHymn. Cer*. 273, Ar. *Ran.* 386, Hdt. 2.51, 2.81, Eur. *Bacch.* 34. Excited or inflamed (derived from ὀργάω): Thuc. 4.108, Ar. *Lys.* 1113.
[55] Patel 2010: 327-335
[56] West 1992: 180-181, 229-231 on the aulos and Phrygian mode and 343-344, 363-364 on its use in the dithyramb.
[57] Eur. *Bacch.* 154-160: λωτὸς ὅταν εὐκέλαδος ἱερὸς ἱερὰ παίγματα βρέμῃ. Cf. Aes. *Fr.* 57 from *Edonians*, in Sommerstein 2008, see also Dioscorides *Epitaph for Aleximenes* no.485 = G-P 25, Pratinas fr. 708 (in Athen. *Deip*. 14. 617b-f).
[58] Moraw 1998: 45-46, 50, 52-53.

early red-figure painters to show that the melodic music belonged to the mythological plane of the satyrs.[59] This would again correlate with the idea that the melodic music was in some way associated with inducing *mania*. But if it is the maddening music of the pipes that induces *mania*, then what is the role of the drumming?

Rouget was extremely resistant to the idea that drumming might facilitate a trance, as he associated evocation of this state with the emotional power of melody alone.[60] However, as Rouget himself admitted, Euripides also places the hide-covered hand-drum called the *tympanon* in the hands of his maenads.[61] Tympana are mentioned three times in the prologue and parodos of *Bakchai,* compared to only one mention of a type of pipe (at 60, 120-134, 156). In the fragment of *Edonians* quoted above, the bombyx 'which brings on *mania*' (l.5: μανίας ἐπαγωγὸν) is accompanied by cymbals, the 'twang of strings', and 'the fearful deep voice of the drum' (lines 6-11). Percussive instruments such as *tympana* and *krotala* appear at least as often as *auloi* in vase-paintings of maenads and in accounts of other highly emotionally charged rites such as those of Cybele.[62] In poetic sources, too, drums feature at least as often as melodic wind instruments: Dioscorides' epitaph for the *aulos*-player Aleximenes commands the Thyiades to mourn him by beating drums, and in Euripides' *Cyclopes,* the imprisoned satyrs, miserable with lack of Dionysian pursuits, bewail the lack of 'shouting of drums' (65-66: τυμπάνων ἀλαλαγμοὶ) but do not mention pipes.[63]

On a very basic level, it is easier to dance together if there is a repetitive beat to help the dancers keep time. In his epitaph for Aleximenes, Dioscorides enjoins the Thyiades to grieve by beating their drums and whirling their hair, suggestive of the characteristic head-tossing pose found in so many depictions of maenads in vase-painting and suggesting that the Thyiades beat their drums while dancing to the music of the *aulos*.[64] So on one level, drumming may have helped the ritual participants keep time, at least during some stages of their performance.

---

[59] Applying Robin Osborne's theory that early red-figure painting marks a change in focus by the painter towards depicting the inner life of the characters: Osborne 2018, discussed in Chapter 1, 1.1 and Chapter 2, section 4.

[60] Rouget 1985: against drumming 169-183 particularly 172-176, 321-326 on music's emotional impact

[61] Ibid. at 214.

[62] See Castaldo 2009. Unfortunately, studies of maenadic iconography rarely look in detail at the type of music depicted, and studies of depictions of ancient music rarely look at specifically maenadic iconography. Edwards 1960 makes no mention of music, McNally 1978 is more interested in music in relation to satyrs, and though Moraw 1998 notes where musical accompaniment appears, she does not analyse it in detail. In studies on music, maenadism is dealt with fairly cursorily: West 1992, Bundrick 2005. See however Ustinova 2018: 154 n199 for references to drums used in the rites of Cybele.

[63] Dioscorides see footnote 57 above, Eur. *Cyc.* 63-72.

[64] Dioscorides, see footnote 57. On the head-tossing pose, see Chapter 3, section 4.4.

Although maenadic ritual clearly has some factors in common with Rouget's description of a possession trance, the ancient evidence has to be interpreted in a very particular way to fully support his theory. But one person's 'possession' may be another person's 'complete identification' or, for that matter, their 'immersion in a role'. Given the similarities between the physical signs of trance and evidence for similar symptoms in maenadic ritual, it would be unwise to simply dismiss Rouget's claim that participants would experience their ritual as a type of possession.

3.2. The identity of the possessing spirit

In the 'enthusiastic' scholarship, it is common to find references to ritual maenads experiencing a complete identification with or possession by Dionysos.[65] Other singular characters from myth have been proposed as the mythical archetype to be imitated during the *oreibasia*: Henri Jeanmaire claimed that they identified with Semele as 'the model of the Bacchantes', and Henrichs proposed that Dionysos' aunt Ino might embody the 'archetypal maenad'.[66] If we are to do justice to Rouget's work, we need to address these suggestions.

3.2.1. Dionysos

There are two main arguments offered to support claims that ritual maenads would have experienced a complete identification with or possession by Dionysos, and both are flawed. One is based on a conception of the maenadic ritual as involving a sacramental meal in which an animal is killed by ritual participants, an idea first proposed by Rohde and enthusiastically developed into the consumption of a god-substitute by Harrison and Dodds.[67] Participants would ingest the god with the raw meat in order to become more godlike themselves: 'if you want to be like god you must eat god… and you must eat him quick and raw, before the blood has oozed from him'.[68]

This theory was based on an assumption that the *oreibasia* was a precursor to the Dionysian or Orphic Mysteries, which reference the myth of the infant Zagreus dismembered and eaten by Titans.[69] Raw-eating is suggested in a possibly Orphic context in a fragment of Euripides' *Cretans*.[70] But this should not be treated as hard evidence for raw-eating in Orphism as practiced nor is it describing a maenadic sacrifice: the speaker is male, and his feast appears in a list of other ritual

---

[65] Such as Rohde 1894: 47, Harrison 1903: 388, Dodds 1940: 157, Dodds 1951: 77, discussed in Chapter 2 sections 1 and 2.
[66] Semele: Jeanmaire 1951: 347; Ino: Henrichs 1978: 137-143.
[67] Rohde 1894: 10, Harrison 1903: 478-571, Dodds 1940: 164-166, discussed in Chapter 2, sections 1 and 2, and Chapter 3, 4.3.
[68] Dodds 1940: 165.
[69] Most completely discussed in Henrichs 1982, also Bremmer 1984: 274-275.
[70] Eur. Fr. 472.11-12; a likely reconstruction of the play can be found in Collard and Cropp 2008: 529-556, fragment discussed at 539.

activities associated with mystery cult initiation, as part of the 'pure' way of life to which he has submitted.[71]

With the benefit of hindsight, this sacramental theory does not convince and is heavily influenced by the desire of scholars to see a foreshadowing of the Christian communion meal in the Dionysian Mysteries. No extant version of the Zagreus myth includes the eating of flesh until the fourth century CE, and in these the Titans did not eat little Zagreus raw but boiled him.[72] Plutarch is the earliest writer to suggest any sort of consumption connected with the murder, and there it is blood, not flesh.[73] Furthermore, if we are to seek mythological aetiologies that include the slaughtered baby Dionysos, mythical maenads do not appear in the Zagreus story and are never associated with murderous Titans, but are the god's nurses and protectors.[74] It is probably safe to exclude this theory, though it has proved remarkably durable.

The second thread in the argument that maenads identified with Dionysos is philological. The most common alternative name for maenads is βάκχαι, usually Latinised to 'bacchants', a term used to refer to both male and female Dionysian celebrants. In the classical period, Dionysos himself carries the epithet Βάκχος, 'Dionysos the Bacchant', and this has been assumed to indicate that ritual participants were named for self-identifying with Dionysos.[75] However, Marco Antonio Santamaría has traced the earliest uses of βακχ- root words used for Dionysian worshippers and as epithets of Dionysos.[76] He concluded that the terms βάκχαι or βάκχοι, used to describe people in the grips of delirium or frenzy, appear long before Dionysos becomes 'the Bacchant' himself and that Dionysos' earliest epithet was Βάκχιος, 'God of those who behave in bacchic ways'. This particular version of the epithet is found twice in the third century BCE Milesian list of duties of the Dionysian priestess.[77] The god got his epithet from the frantic behaviour of his worshippers; the worshippers did not adopt his epithet as their collective name. We can also exclude this argument from evidence for worshippers self-identifying with Dionysos.

3.2.2.Animals

Rouget also excluded the possibility that ritual maenads could have thought that Dionysos was possessing them, though for different reasons. Rouget was under the misapprehension, drawn from

[71] Edmonds III 1999.
[72] The earliest instance appears to be in Firmicus Maternus 6.1-5, then also found in Olympiodorus' sixth century commentary *In Phaedo* 1.3 = *Orphic Fragment* 220 in Kern 1922, both discussed by Edmonds III 1999.
[73] Plut. *de esu cranium* 1.7 (=*Mor.* 996c. For a full recent discussion see Georgoudi 2011: 51-52.
[74] E.g. Hom. *Il.*6.130-143, Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 14.219-220.
[75] E.g., Soph. *OT* 211, Eur. *Hipp.* 560, both examples are in lyric passages. Interpretation first found in Rohde 1925: 272 note 32, repeated in Dodds 1960: 83, Cole 1980: 229.
[76] Santamaría 2013. He finds similar patterns in the designation of other Dionysian groups relevant to this study such as Lenai and Bassarai.
[77] *LSAM* 48.19, 22.

Dodds' work, that there was a male celebrant among the ritual maenads who would himself have identified as Dionysos and assumed that this would preclude the ritual maenads from *also* identifying with Dionysos.[78] He instead offered the somewhat unconvincing proposal that they would identify the possessing spirit as an animal, and that they would vocalize like cows or dance like panthers.[79] Rouget's suggestion of cows is influenced by Henri Grégoire conflating two versions of the Proitides myth: in the Hesiodic fragment in which the unfortunate girls make cattle-noises, their madness is ascribed to ox-eyed Hera, not Dionysos.[80] The identification with panthers, which Rouget himself calls 'surprising', is based on Louis Séchan's interpretation of a single vase-painting of a *pardalis*-wearing maenad as representing a particularly feline pose, suggesting to him a dance 'punctuated by sudden leaps'.[81] I have been unable to trace details of the piece's current location, but from Séchan's drawing it is a perfectly standard image of a dancing maenad wearing the *pardalis*, no more or less feline than others.

3.2.3. Semele

Semele can surely also be ruled out as a role model for ritual participants. Unlike the women who form the *thiasos*, she does not appear in any of the literary sources or vase-painting as part of a group. There are a number of images which show a female figure in the company of Dionysos, which are usually identified as the deified Ariadne or Semele depending on context, but never bear any maenadic attributes.[82] Where they represent Semele, they seem to be referencing her as a deity after her return from the underworld: on a black figure *hydria*, Semele (named) holds a torch and greets Dionysos who arrives in a chariot, almost certainly a reference to the *katabasis* and subsequent apotheosis.[83]

The cult of Semele is not well-attested and little is known about it: sacrifices to her appear in a fourth-century calendar from Erchia and one from late third-century Mykonos, but neither case is

[78] The misapprehension of a male celebrant is taken from Dodds 1940: 170, n71, in regards to the subject of *Bacch.* 135-140. Henrichs 1984b has since then convincingly ruled out Dodds' interpretation of these lines and it is unlikely that there was ever a Dionysian priest involved in the *oreibasia.*
[79] Suggestions for the identification of the possessing spirit are made at Rouget 1985: 208-10
[80] Grégoire 1961, developing an idea expressed in Grégoire 1948; Hes. Fr. 79 in Most 2018. In the versions in which Dionysos is the cause of their madness, there is no mention of imitation of cattle: Pseud-Apollod. 2.26ff, Ov. *Met*. 3.559, Sen. *Oed*. 486ff.
[81] Séchan 1930: 74. Cf. Weege 1926: figure 1.
[82] On the *anakalypsis* gesture: Llewellyn-Jones 2003, particularly Chapter 4. On identification: Carpenter 1997: 62-69. Moraw 2011: 233-235 has suggested that these nameless figures may represent the Athenian basilinna during the Anthesteria, elevated by her participation in the ritual to a semi-divine state.
[83] *Hydria* from the third quarter of the sixth century BCE in the Berlin Antikensammlung Inv. F1904; discussed by Moraw 2011: 236 (plate XL fig. 5). A profile head facing Dionysos is also named Semele on a cup from the same period by the Kallis Painter in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Inv. 172. On the cult of chthonic Semele, see Scullion 2000.

trieteric nor are there any indicators that they involved groups of women.[84] Semele is linked to a trieteric Dionysian festival in an Orphic hymn, but in this text she is a deity receiving honours, not a celebrant herself.[85] The only mention of Semele indulging in any sort of maenadic behaviour is in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* while she is carrying Dionysos and he is exerting his influences from the womb (8.6-33, emphasis on Dionysos' influence at l.13).

3.2.4. Ino

A better case can perhaps be made for Ino as a role model. When the townspeople of Hellenistic Magnesia needed to set up Dionysian rites, they were told to send to Thebes for 'maenads from the race of Cadmean Ino'.[86] At least as early as Homer, Ino was identified with a sea-goddess called Leukothea, and Walter Otto attributed this syncretion to Dionysos' own affinity with moisture, making Ino-Leukothea the closest of all his nurses to himself in nature.[87]

Ino has little or no presence in vase-painting so we are reliant on her complicated portrayal in the literary record to understand her.[88] In *Bakchai*, Ino appears among the other Cadmeian sisters cursed with madness for impiety, taking an active role in the murder of Pentheus (26-38, 680-682, 1129-1130). This would seem an unlikely role-model for our ritual participants. However, prior to *Bakchai*, there is no surviving reference to Pentheus being killed by his mother and aunts.[89] He is certainly killed by maenads at Dionysos' command: Aeschylus mentions his fate in *Eumenides* 25, and fragments of his lost plays *Pentheus* and *Xantriai* also appear to retell the story, [90] but in none of these sources is the murder explicitly committed by Pentheus' female relations. The earliest image that indisputably shows the death of Pentheus, a late sixth century *psykter* predating the first production of *Bakchai* by a century, names one of the female figures responsible as Galene, 'Tranquil', not a name associated with the Cadmeian bacchants.[91] Other images that predate

[84] *CGRN* 52.44-51, 156.23-24.
[85] Orphic Hymn 44 in Athanassakis and Wolkow 2013; cf. Pindar, *Pythian* 11.7-9 in which she assemble a group of heroine, in a possible reference to convening a *thiasos.* Also see *Hymn. Hom. Dio*. 1.11-12, Eur. *Phoe*. 1751-1757.
[86] *IMagn.* 215.26-27: λάβητε Μαινάδας, αἳ γενεῆς Εἰνοῦς ἄπο Καδμηείης (see Appendix for full text).
[87] Otto 1965: 72-73. Earliest references to Ino-Leucothea: Hom. *Od.* 5.333-338, Pin. *Ol.* 2.28-30, *Pyth.* 11.1-6. On the Greek cult of Ino-Leukothea see Farnell 1916, Henrichs 1978: 137-145. She appears briefly in Burkert 1985: 134, 172. On her association in the Roman world with Mater Matuta see Kaizer 2005.
[88] Carpenter 1997: 56-57 discusses the inconclusive identifications of Ino receiving the infant Dionysos in vase-painting.
[89] Webster 1967: 268-269, March 1989, Thumiger 2006: 201-202 n39, Sommerstein 2013: 36.
[90] Sommerstein 2008: 170-175, 188-191
[91] Pentheus' assailant is named 'Galene' on a fragmentary red-figure psykter by Euphronios dated to around 520-510 BCE, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Inv. 10.221.

Euripides also show notable differences from the story presented in *Bakchai*: Pentheus is bearded, not youthful, and, where he is depicted clothed, he wears armour rather than a dress.[92]

In the non-Euripidean version of the story, found from the fifth century onwards, Ino is in fact firmly on Dionysos' side, and her madness is inflicted by Hera in punishment for helping her infant nephew.[93] Under the jealous goddess' maddening influence, Ino and her husband killed their two sons and Ino threw herself into the sea.[94] This non-Euripidean version of the story obviously cannot be reconciled with Ino being alive when Dionysos is an adult, but fits better with the non-Euripidean version of the Pentheus myth and supports the idea of the murderous Cadmean sisters being Euripides' invention. Euripides' most famous dramatic innovation was, of course, to have Medea kill her children, but the group of plays that were presented with *Bakchai* in 405 BCE also seem to have carried the theme of troubled relationships between parents and children.[95] *Bakchai* was performed alongside *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, another play involving killing one's child, and *Alkmeon in Corinth*, which involves a child being sold into slavery and may have also ended with a ruler left childless through his misdeeds.[96] It seems safe then to assume that Ino's enmity towards Dionysos in this play was not part of the official cult narrative, in which she remained his nurse and protector.[97]

But the unavoidable problem with Ino as role-model for the ritual participants is that she is singled out as an individual, and maenads – both ritual and mythical – are almost invariably part of a group. It would perhaps be feasible for the ritual *thiasos* to be representing Ino and Dionysos' nymph-nurses,[98] but Ino never appears among the nymphs of Nysa in any version of her myth. Jane Harrison had explored this idea but was unable to find any connective tissue between the nurses in

---

[92] On a red-figure *lekanis* dated to c. 430BCE in the Musee du Louvre, Paris, Inv. G445, and a red-figure cup by Douris dated to around 480BCE, in the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Inv. AP2000.02. See discussion in Weaver 2009, who notes other differences between the early images and Euripides' version of the story. On Pentheus' youthfulness see *Bacch.* 274, 330, 1185-1187, also implied by his lack of children 1308-1312.
[93] The story is first mentioned in the mid-fifth century by Pherekydes of Athens, *FGrHist* 3 F 90, discussed Fowler 2000: 371-375. Plutarch *QR* 13 gives a different (and less virtuous) cause of her madness. Ino as a nurse of Dionysos is also invoked in a Hellenistic inscription from Thessaly (as 'ὦ Βάχχοιο τιθηνήτειρα'), discussed in context of cult activity by Henrichs 1978: 139.
[94] Described by Ovid, *Met.* 4.416-562, and also referred to by Eur. *Med.* 1282-1289, Ps-Apollod. 3.4.3, Paus. 1.44.7, 3.34.4. Aeschylus' lost *Athamas* is thought to be about this part of the myth: Sommerstein 2008: 2-3.
[95] On *Medea*, see e.g., March 1989: 50-52, citing Euripides himself as witness (*Medea* 1282ff. on Ino being the only woman other than Medea to have attacked her own child).
[96] If Eur. fr. 76 is correctly attributed to this play: see Collard and Cropp 2008: 87-93, Hall 2010: 341-343 for discussion of the themes. The text of the fragment is as follows: ρᾶτε τὸν τύραννον ὡς ἄπαις γέρων φεύγει· φρονεῖν δὲ θνητὸν ὄντ᾽ οὐ χρὴ μέγα, 'See how the king is fleeing into exile, childless in old age; one who is mortal should not think proudly'.
[97] Nor did it affect the appeal of her cult, as shown by the continued evidence through the Hellenistic and Roman period, described by Henrichs 1978: 137-145.
[98] Described by Homer *Il.* 6.130-143.

myth and the maenads in ritual, merely saying like a true Ritualist that 'mythology has half-forgotten the ritual from whence it sprang'.[99]

In any case, all these suggestions seem unnecessary, not to say tortuous, given that myth provided a perfectly acceptable and well-described group of women with whom ritual maenads could identify any feeling of possession that they might experience. Ritual maenads already had the role models of the mythical *thiasos*, who were, like themselves, female and part of a closely unified group.

3.3. Identification with the mythical maenads

Rouget was remarkably uninterested in the possibility that the possessing spirit would have been identified as a mythical maenad, presumably due to his conviction that the Phrygian music evoked Dionysos himself, not his handmaidens.[100] Erwin Rohde, by contrast, had included this possibility in his interpretation of the maenadic experience: participants would 'burst the boundaries of their souls… becoming as the spirits of the throng who surge around the god'.[101] If we take Rohde's 'becoming as' to correlate to Rouget's 'possession', albeit with the caveats described above about possession as a concept, we can say a bit more about the characteristics of the spirit with whom the ritual maenad would identify herself.

The figure of the mythical maenad was introduced in Chapter 1 section 3.2, when I described Euripides' depiction of the Lydian Chorus of women who have accompanied him into Greece and differentiated between maenads and punished women. In that description, I described them as representing 'the archetypal maenad', identifying their key features as being their devotion to Dionysos and their joy at his presence. Aside from *Bakchai*, these qualities are found abundantly in both the literary and visual sources, echoes of which can be found in the sources for ritual maenads as well.

In an unattributed fragment, Aeschylus describes Dionysos as 'harnesser of the maenads' (fr. 382: μαινάδων ζευκτήριε), emphasising his place at the heart of the *thiasos* as the one who brings them together, and Sophocles' Chorus in *Antigone* call on him to appear with σαῖς ἅμα περιπόλοις Θυίαισιν, which might be translated as 'encircling' or 'patrolling' Thyiades' (Ant. 1150-1151:). Both phrases stress not only the centrality of Dionysos among his women, but also, by the use of the metaphors of yoking or harnessing and of patrols or guards, his leadership and their service to him.

---

[99] Harrison 1903: 401-403.

[100] He does mention possession by nymphs in passing, but does not expand on this: Rouget 1985: 208.

[101] '[D]ie Feiernden selbst … sprengen die enge Leibeshaft ihrer Seele, Verzauberung packt sie, und sie selbst fühlen sich … als Geister aus dem Schwarm, der den Gott umtost': Rohde 1894: 14.

In *Bakchai*, Dionysos describes the *thiasos* as 'my companions and fellow-travellers' (56-57: παρέδρους καὶ ξυνεμπόρους ἐμοί). The use of παρέδρους here is echoed in term used by Diodorus for the ritual role models, τὰς … παρεδρεύειν τῷ θεῷ μαινάδας (4.3.3). This verb παρεδρεύω carries the meanings 'to wait upon' or 'to serve', to be in attendance upon, implying both physical proximity and a focus of concentration and care on the object of the verb.[102] This dual meaning may also be implied in a term Plutarch uses for the Thyiad priestesses, αἱ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον γυναῖκες, literally 'the women about Dionysos', but which can be read as 'the women attending on Dionysos'.[103]

The devotion of the maenad to the service of Dionysos and her physical closeness to him can also be inferred from vase-paintings of Dionysian women. From the earliest archaic black-figure vase-painting, Dionysian female figures appear frequently in attendance on Dionysos, in a procession or dance. These figures have no obvious attributes to distinguish them from one another; they are often accompanied by satyrs and dance with them in apparently affectionate couples. Around 530 BCE, in both black-figure and early red-figured works, the standard maenadic attributes begin to appear: *thyrsoi*, animal skins (both the *nebris* and the *pardalis* – the skin of a spotted cat that Dionysos also wears), and ivy crowns. These attributes appear in both the late black-figure paintings and in the early red-figure works, with no obvious change in mood in the scenes. However, shortly after the turn of the fifth century, Dionysian female figures in the red-figure vase-painting develop a pronounced character of their own which is only rarely seen in the late black-figure paintings.[104] They are more frequently found attending on Dionysos without the companionship of satyrs: when satyrs are present, they are rarely on friendly terms anymore.[105]

These iconographic changes may be explained by a theory proposed by Robin Osborne, which was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.1. Osborne noted the changes to iconography of several subjects in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE and interpreted them as reflecting a growing interest in representing inner life, thoughts, and feelings, rather than actions.[106] Under this reading, the images make a statement not about what mythical maenads *did* but what they were thought to be *like*. In the late black-figure work, the more generic 'nymph-attendant' figures begin to take on

---

[102] *LSJ* παρεδρεύω, with meanings given in A and A2.
[103] Plut. *De mul. vir.* XIII line 2 (*Mor.* 249e), XV (*Mor.* 251e). For περὶ with the accusative as meaning 'attendant upon, see *LSJ* περὶ C.I.2 and C.I.3.
[104] There are a number of studies of the changes in maenadic iconography of this period. Some of the most thorough are: Edwards 1960, McNally 1978, Carpenter 1986: 76-97, Henrichs 1987, Hedreen 1994, Carpenter 1997: 53-69, Moraw 1998, Heinemann 2016: 166-179.
[105] McNally 1978, Hedreen 1994, Moraw 1998: 100-139.
[106] Although sadly he does not look at maenads, he discusses satyrs in detail: Osborne 2018: 188-204.

specifically Dionysian attributes, emphasising that they have a particular affinity with their god; in the first quarter of the fifth century, they are showing signs of a clear character of their own.

Reassessing the iconographic changes in this light, the maenads seem to be gradually getting closer to Dionysos. They move spatially closer to him, they increase in numbers proportionate to the satyrs, upsetting the previous balance of maenad-satyr couples.[107] They are no longer the equals and partners of satyrs, but have replaced them as his chief attendants, crowding around their beloved god. Through the fifth century, the *nebris* is gradually almost completely replaced by the *pardalis* (in paintings only; in literature the *nebris* remains the maenad's primary costume). The change of costume signals the maenad's new, closer role as the companion of Dionysos, who has been associated with big cats himself at least as far back as the Homeric Hymns, and is never shown wearing the *nebris*.[108]

This may also help explain the changes to images interpreted as showing animal *sparagmoi*, which were discussed in Chapter 3, 4.3. In the black-figure images, maenads roughly manhandle animals in ways that make you fear for the animals' safety: on late sixth century BCE *amphora*, a pair of maenads grapple with a lion, one reaching for its muzzle while it turns to the other, who is holding its tail.[109] Moraw interprets such images of rough treatment of animals primarily as borrowing iconography from the archaic motif of *Potnia theron*, the 'Mistress of the Beasts', using the existing iconographic tradition to emphasise the dominance of the maenad over the natural world.[110] Though there is clearly some violence implied by these images, they do not actually show *sparagmos* or the animal being killed.

Images showing maenads with torn parts of animals, usually deer, do not appear until around 470 BCE, about a decade after the images of 'Dionysos *mainomenos*' in the same pose are first seen.[111] The way maenads treat animals in vase-painting can therefore be seen as another of several changes to iconography that occurs around this time, the others (already discussed) being: the change from *nebris* to *pardalis,* the closer proximity to Dionysos, and the increasingly antagonistic relationship with satyrs.[112] This change occurs precisely around the time that Osborne has identified as marking

[107] The satyr is relegated to providing musical accompaniment on a red-figure hydria c. 480-470 BCE by the Klephrades painter, private collection (previously Basel Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, Inv LG.FIS.B.04. Discussion of arrangement and ratio of figures: Moraw 1998: 111-113.
[108] *Hom. Hymn Bacch.* (7).44. Ibid. at 29-65.
[109] In the University of Mississippi museum, Inv. 77.3.58.
[110] She appears on the 'François vase', c.570-560 BCE, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, Florence, Inv. 4209, discussed in Moraw 1998: 142-144.
[111] In images of Dionysos: Carpenter 1993 lists the images and examines them in detail, with some further discussion in Carpenter 1997: 37-41. In maenads: Moraw 1998: 58.
[112] It is worth noting also that the relationship with satyrs is only antagonistic when the scene shows a *thiasos* group, particularly if Dionysos is present: a separate though short-loved theme found in the iconography of the

the increased interest in representing inner life rather than actions, suggesting that we should understand the iconographic change as reflecting an attempt to depict the feelings of closeness that the mythical maenad was thought to feel for her master.

3.4. Summary: ‘possession’, music, and possessing spirits

This section has examined Rouget’s arguments for maenadic ritual being a possession trance. There are significant points of similarity between Rouget’s trance state and descriptions of maenadic ritual, including use of music and physical effects. However, the likenesses break down when he seeks to make maenadism primarily a possession trance, largely due to what is probably a (very understandable) lack of familiarity with the ancient sources and misunderstanding of the subtleties of the verb κατέχω. The passage from Plato that he quotes cannot carry the weight of his interpretation, nor can his theory on the mechanism of possession trance explain the preponderance of percussion instruments in maenadic imagery. Identification of who the possessing spirit might be, made by Rouget and others, have all proved unsatisfactory. It remains most likely that, as Diodorus suggests, ritual maenads would identify with mythical maenads, and any replacement of personality they experienced would be assumed to be a ‘seizure’ by these figures.

The greatest strength of Rouget’s work is that it offers us a way of thinking about the ‘bottom up’ effects of music during ritual performance, and how they might interact with the ‘top down’ effects of consciously performing a role as described in section 2. The next section will explore how an understanding of the interaction of cognitive processes triggered by role play and music might cast light on this.

4. The experience of μιμεῖσθαι: cognitive effects of music and role play

In this section, I will move on to describe a cognitive interpretation of the effects of role-play or role immersion and music in maenadic ritual. The discussion above suggested that one aspect of mimetic performance might be to imagine the inner mental life of those characters, and the following discussion will provide an explanation of how role immersion is induced through the cognitive mechanisms associated with role-play, and how music could be used to facilitate this. This does not by any means exclude the well-documented correlation between music and trance induction, which, as Lewis and Rouget well knew, is widely documented in a range of cultures. Instead, it offers an additional way of thinking about the effects of music on the cognition of performers and, particularly, on how they experienced their awareness both of their individual and ritual identities.

---

period 470-431 BCE shows what Moraw calls ‘the bourgeoise maenad’, who appears in comfortable domestic scenes with a similarly house-broken satyr: Moraw 1998: 59-61, 175.

This discussion will begin with exploration of changes to how we experience our own identity when we engage in role-play, then move on to how music affects group formation and bonding, and finally examine the effects of different types of music, comparing these with the depiction of music-induced madness in Euripides' *Herakles*.

4.1. Role play, music, and cognition

Our awareness of our own self – usually called 'meta awareness' – can be inhibited by even the most superficial of role play: a recent study of the brain activity of experienced amateur actors found that, when asked to answer a question as themselves but with a different accent, their brains showed inhibited activity in an area of the brain implicated in how we form our sense of self.[113] When asked to answer the question 'in character', the effects were even more marked, also showing increased activity in the precuneus, a part of the brain that is deactivated in exercises such as meditation designed to reconnect our mind with our 'self'. The authors concluded that, when imagining ourselves to be another character or person, our brains are put under a greatly increased cognitive load by the task of running two identities and manage cognitive resources by reducing the activity of processing our own self.

This is a fundamentally different cognitive state to one in which the individual has lost their sense of self entirely or feels completely possessed by another identity: both identities are running simultaneously. The idea of public performers splitting their cognitive resources, rather than becoming totally immersed in their role, may be reflected in the concerns found in some ancient writers about the authenticity of simulated emotions. In *Ion*, Plato's Socrates implies that the rhapsode who has one eye on his audience's responses is fundamentally different from – and inferior to - the poet who composes while filled with divine power (*Ion* 533b-534a, 535e). Demosthenes demanded that an orator delivering a funerary oration should exhibit genuine grief, not the sort of grief contrived by the technique of an actor (*De cor.* 287). The Hellenistic actor Polos seems to have taken these concerns to heart: during a performance of *Electra*, he augmented his acting abilities by carrying the urn containing his own recently deceased son's ashes on stage as a prop (Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 6.5).

The examples given here are obviously not direct comparisons for women's ritual performance, but they do reflect an interest documented by the ancient writers about the level of emotional engagement with their role expected of a performer. Scholarship on ancient theatrical performance continues to debate whether or not actors would have used anything like what we would call Stanislavskian or 'method' acting techniques. Some scholars are sceptical that the necessary

---

[113] Brown, et al. 2019.

‘psychological realism’ can be found in the characters of ancient tragedy,[114] but there is a growing body of work that explores both ancient acting techniques and how modern performative methodologies can be applied to ancient performance.[115] Ismene Lada-Richards has compared descriptions of the ancient art of performance with modern immersive acting techniques, and argued that the Athenians were aware of an actor’s ability both to genuinely feel the emotion they wanted to portray and, at the same time, be self-consciously performing that feeling.[116]

The idea of an actor holding both cognitive processes in tension in this way immediately recalls the findings from fMRI scans of actors speaking ‘in character’, discussed above, in which the actor’s self and the adopted role divided cognitive processing capacity, resulting in both identities being simultaneously present. This is also echoed in studies on narrative immersion that described the audience being simultaneously aware of the simulated world of the performance and the ‘real’ world in which the performance is taking place.[117]

Returning to ritual performance, music may have played a role in facilitating the identification with another ‘self’. A series of studies written up in a special issue of the journal *Psychomusicology* suggest that there is a causal link between absorption in listening to music, evocation of emotional state, and a reduced sense of one’s own self and identity.[118] Listening to music has been demonstrated to induce empathic emotional responses, encouraging the subject listening to imagine the emotion felt by the composer or performer, and share in that emotion themselves.[119] A second study in the same volume proposed that emotional induction of this sort is ‘conducive to the generation of visual imagery’; that is, it facilitates the creation of a mental representation of the world derived from memory or imagination rather than visual stimulus.[120] A third study, examining the relationship between meta-awareness (awareness of one’s own self and identity) during music listening, found that around half of the subjects who experienced visual imagery also reported a decreased sense of meta-awareness.[121]

[114] See for example: Goldhill 2007: 81, 111.
[115] Lada-Richards 2002, Lada-Richards 2005, Cole 2014.
[116] A very satisfying example of this division from the perspective of the performer is given by Aristophanes in *Ekklesiazusae* 248ff, discussed in detail and with reference to other examples in Lada-Richards 2002: 403-409, cf. 412-415.
[117] Division of attention in the context of the spectator, see Budelmann and van Emde Boas 2019.
[118] *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, & Brain*, vol. 29, 2-3, published by the American Psychological Association in June 2019. Relevant papers from the edition are cited separately.
[119] Taruffi and Kussner 2019: 66-67 review the main literature on this phenomenon.
[120] In a recent study of 500 participants, more than three quarters reported spontaneously experiencing visual imagery whilst listening to music: Day and Thompson 2019
[121] Vroegh 2019.

Taken together, these studies suggest that there is a direct link between consciously taking on a role and a reduction in our awareness of our own identity, which is exacerbated by the effects of music in making us imagine the feelings of another individual. In the context of maenadic ritual, the conscious act by participants of imagining themselves to be mythological maenads could therefore be intensified by the presence of music, in effect amplifying the identity of the mythological role model at the cost of their own meta-awareness.

In the experiments exploring the effects of music described above, the music used was always melodic. This may offer support to Rouget's theory that it was melodic music, not percussion, that was responsible for inducing an altered mental state. If we accept that hearing such sounds encourages us to imagine and share in the feelings of others and facilitates taking on another role, then Aristotle's claim that Dionysian music could arouse 'orgiastic' feelings seems perfectly reasonable (Arist. *Pol.* 8.1340a-1342b, discussed above, section 3.1.2). Music, particularly that which was associated with a specific divinity or mood, could induce that mood in others. Used in a mimetic ritual performance, it could facilitate the role play by increasing participants' ability to imagine the feelings of their role models.

4.2. Shared music and group identity

Synchronised group dancing to music was a fundamental part of Greek religious practice, both as an ephemeral aesthetic symbol, like a hymn or the smoke of sacrifice, and as a performative expression of involvement with social religious structures.[122] We find this in Pausanias' description of the Thyiades as performing as a chorus, a cohesive group, rather than as individuals raging and rushing through the woods.[123] Although the Thyiadic dance, like that of the Corybantes, may have been wilder and less structured than the formal Athenian choral performances, they are clearly described as being of the same type.[124]

Drumming, singing, and dancing together – high energy musical activities that express what is called 'interpersonal synchrony' - have been found to increase electrical activity in the brain's 'reward centre' and engage the body's endogamous opioid system to release endorphins, which both make you feel good and are implicated in forming intense social bonds.[125] These processes boost pro-social behaviour towards those with whom one is sharing the activity. Synchronic group vocalising and dancing has been found to significantly increase both reported levels of trust between group

[122] On the ubiquity of dance in ancient Greece see Lawler 1947. For the function of dance in religious contexts, see Lonsdale 1993, Calame 1997: particularly Chapter 3, Connelly 2011.
[123] Paus. 10.4.3.
[124] Discussed in Budelmann and Power 2015: 273-275, 281.
[125] Kokal, et al. 2011, Tarr, et al. 2014. See Grape Viding, et al. 2002, Chanda and Levitin 2013, Keeler, et al. 2015 for discussion of the role of music, oxytocin production, and social bonding.

members and subsequent cooperative behaviour, even when individual risk is increased.[126] As the ritual participants were seeking to portray or embody a unified group, rather than the punished women or any of the singular characters found in myths or in Dionysos' biography, the performance was essentially a cooperative one rather than antagonistic or individualising.[127] The use of rhythm in maenadic ritual activity therefore would actively encourage each member of the group to imitate the others, falling into a pattern of rhythmic entrainment which helped to create a strong sense of group unity.

Identifying as a group in this way means that the individual must temporarily overlook categorizations which differentiate members of the group, including those that they possess themselves. The basis for their inclusion in the group becomes more relevant than any other facet of their personality.[128] This behaviour – called depersonalization – means that an individual may consciously or unconsciously downplay characteristics which do not match the qualities of the group overall which make up their positive distinctiveness. This supports the theory, based on the fMRI study of actors taking on a role discussed above, that maenadic ritual participants might experience a diminution of their own sense of self during their ritual *mimesis*.

This does not mean that there was no room for individual behaviour among a group of ritual maenads. Studies of oxytocin production during group singing show increased levels of the pro-social compound in participants during improvisation as well as structured song.[129] In her 1927 paper attempting to recreate a maenadic ritual choreography based on vase-paintings, Lillian Lawler suggested that the dance would begin slowly with all participants keeping time, before gradually becoming more frantic with increasingly individualised and improvised movements.[130] In this way, a ritual participant could respond to the stirring of her own soul, to use Rohde's delightful phrase,[131] and enhance her individual engagement with ritual performance.

The research presented in section 3 suggests that ritual participants would retain some control over their behaviour, but it is of course possible that, in the grips of their enthusiasm for representing the mythical maenad, the unaccustomed freedoms of running through the woods at night, and combination of fear and excitement induced by the darkness and wildness of the mountain, they might become so excited that they were actually in danger of becoming out of control, if not, as

---

[126] Reddish, et al. 2013.
[127] Brown 2019: 180-182.
[128] Hogg 2001: 187.
[129] Keeler, et al. 2015.
[130] Lawler 1927, with the choreographic description at 110-113, discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 section 4.4.
[131] 'Seelenbewegung', used primarily of the original Thracian ritual, e.g. at Rohde 1894: 55.

Dodds would have it, 'hysterical'. The 'maddening skirl of the pipes' might do its job all too well, and the beneficial form of maenadism engendered by the choral singing might - theoretically - decay into the destructive form. However, when we examine the particular effects of rhythmic music on pro-social behaviour, we find a place after all for the effect of drums in focussing the experience on forming a close-knit group.

4.3. Combination of pipes and drums

Performing rhythmic music together is particularly effective in forging group identity and effecting 'depersonalization', the prioritising of a group over oneself. These effects described above of rhythmic entrainment are particularly associated with percussive music, which has been shown to boost pro-social behaviour.[132] A group can strengthen bonds between individuals within that group through rhythmical activity.[133] Merlin Donald posits that rhythm encouraged imitation in early humans, facilitating the development of language and therefore communication.[134] Rhythmic sounds and actions are easily copied within a group, activating physiological neural processes to generate a bond between group members.[135]

If we take the 'possessing spirit', the figure with whom the ritual maenad would have identified herself, to be the mythical maenads rather than any of the singular figures that have been suggested and excluded, we can revisit Rouget's insistence that it was pipe music, not rhythmic drumming that was instrumental in bringing about the maenadic trance state. This discussion will bring us back to the differentiation, made in Chapter 1 section 3.3 between the mythical maenads and the punished women of the resistance myths.

The differentiation between beneficial and destructive forms of *mania* in the depictions of different groups of Dionysian women brings the discussion back to the relative effects of melodic and percussive music examined in section 3.1.2 above. A passage from Euripides' *Herakles*, cited by Rouget as evidence for the unimportance of drumming in bacchic ritual is particularly interesting.[136] As Lyssa begins piping her terrible flute music to drive the hero mad (lines 871, 879, 897), the alarmed Chorus express their concern about the effects of this music: 'the dance begins without the drums' (891: κατάρχεται χόρευμα τύπανων ἄτερ).[137] For Rouget, this confirmed this theory that it

---

132 Kirschner and Tomasello 2009, Kokal, et al. 2011.
133 McNeill 1997, Huron 2001.
134 Donald 2000: particularly at 145-146
135 Kirschner and Tomasello 2009.
136 Rouget 1985: 214.
137 I follow Bond 1981, Kovacs 1998 in accepting τύπανων in line 889 rather than τυμπάνων as found in Hermann's text: both carry the meaning of 'drum', and to insist on the more maenadic 'tympanon' would seem unnecessary.

was melodic pipe music, emphatically *not* rhythmic percussion, that creates the necessary emotional state.

Rouget's interpretation, essentially equating the terrible, destructive *mania* suffered by Herakles with the *mania* induced by Dionysian ritual, is very much in line with what we have seen of Harrison and Dodds' understanding of maenadic ritual as something 'hysterical' and potentially violent.[138] As Yulia Ustinova has demonstrated, *mania* caused by Lyssa and *mania* caused by Dionysos are clearly and emphatically linked in Greek thought.[139] Maenadic imagery is found throughout Greek tragedy to describe warriors at the height of their battle-lust: Hippomedon in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* 'rages for the fight like a Thyiad' (498: βακχᾷ πρὸς ἀλκὴν Θυιὰς) and an anonymous warrior in Sophocles' *Antigone* is 'like one maddened with the bacchic onslaught' (135-6 ὃς τότε μαινομένᾳ ξὺν ὁρμᾷ βακχεύων).[140]

But Lyssa's place is on the battlefield, not in the *oikos*; her baleful influence over Herakles is out of place and expresses itself as *mania* of the most destructive type, the type that kills children. The Chorus explicitly describe it as lacking the drums 'that bring pleasure to the *thyrsos* of Bromios' (892: οὐ βρομίῳ κεχαρισμένα θύρσῳ) and mourn that instead of Dionysian libations of wine being poured out, only blood will flow (894-5: πρὸς αἵματ᾽, οὐχὶ τᾶς Διονυσιάδος βοτρύων ἐπὶ χεύμασι λοιβᾶς). Comparison with the *parodos* of *Bakchai* seems to reinforce the role of drums in mediating the maddening sound of the Phrygian flute. The Chorus refer twice to sweet-voiced flutes as part of their mountain-running, but in both cases say that the flute-music is mingled with the sound of tympana.[141]

If, for Euripides, the Chorus experience 'good' *mania* and Herakles 'bad', then an equally valid interpretation is that pipe music can evoke too powerful an effect and needs the drum accompaniment found in Dionysian ritual to transform a potentially dangerous experience into the 'glad work and easy toil' of maenadic dance (*Bacch.* 66-67: πόνον ἡδὺν κάματόν τ᾽ εὐκάματον). In terms of immersion, discussed in section 2.4, the pipes would help create the simulated world of ritual performance, while drum music helped the performers inhabit the character roles within this world.

---

[138] Discussed in Chapter 2 section 1.3.
[139] Ustinova 2018: 217-222.
[140] Other examples of maenadic imagery used to describe warriors: Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 1.636, the (probably third century BCE) Epitaph of Menius, 6.123 in the Palatine Anthology. Martial aspects of maenadic imagery are discussed briefly by Schlesier 1993: 98-99.
[141] *Bacch.* 120-134, 155-164.

5. Summary: Authenticity and experience of maenadic ritual *mimesis*

This chapter overall set out to explore the divergent opinions on the authenticity of maenadic ritual *mimesis*, whether it should be considered a bloodless imitation or a complete loss both of self and of self-control. The answer has been, unsurprisingly, that it was neither. Ritual maenads might experience some change to their awareness of their own identities, but this would not automatically mean that they would feel completely possessed by a consciousness external to their own. Nor was Gilbert Rouget's assessment of maenadic ritual as a possession trance found to be completely satisfactory as an interpretative framework. His use of the ancient sources to support his independent theory about trance and possession was occasionally problematic, and his insistence that drumming was not conducive to creating the particular maenadic mental state has been undermined by subsequent neuroscientific research.

Rather than talk in terms of 'ecstasy' or 'enthusiasm' or even 'possession', terms which may be interpreted differently by different subjects and by different scholars, we can now speak more objectively about the cognitive functions that were activated, and how these may have been interpreted to form an experience. I have presented my evidence for concluding that the ancient meaning of a mimetic ritual performance was one in which the participants attempted to embody their role models not only through visual and auditory resemblance but also through a mental process of visualising themselves actually to be someone else. The act of representation, as described by the verb μιμεῖσθαι, does not of itself indicate a lack of emotional commitment, nor does it make any value judgements about the quality or 'reality' of the end product. Research on narrative immersion has been shown to support this reading, and it is inaccurate to assume that, because a performance was mimetic, that it was also 'fake'.

Role play, particularly when augmented by music, can have the effect of reducing the individual's own sense of self by sharing cognitive resources between the two competing identities. While ritual maenads would self-identify with the mythical maenads they were emulating, they would retain also an awareness of their own selves. The interplay of conscious intent – the internal cues - and the acts of hearing and playing music – the external cues – has been shown to aid the creation of a simulated world in which ritual participants were able to immerse themselves in their roles. This fits with 'loss of self' as described in the scholarship discussed in Chapter 2, and though it does not meet the criteria for Rouget's 'full possession', it opens up the possibility that ritual maenads experienced what he called 'communion' trance, which he defined as 'a revelation, or an illumination'.[142]

[142] Rouget 1985: 27.

Musical activity in maenadic cult may well have produced a trance state, as Rouget argued, but this analysis has shown that there were specific effects of the musical accompaniment which have a direct bearing on maenadic cult being a communal experience. Rhythmic entrainment, induced by synchronised drumming, dancing, and vocalising, would have created a sense of group unity among participants, forming a shared identity that became linked with that of the mythical *thiasos* through the conscious adoption of that role.

Comparison of the description of types of music and their effects found in Euripides' *Herakles* with *Bakchai* suggests that percussive music was thought to serve a specific function in Dionysian ritual, conflicting with Rouget's insistence that it was melodic music alone that brought about maenadic trance. The use of drums may have helped ritual participants create the shared group identity that allowed them to channel the stimulation caused by the Phrygian pipe music.

The combination of role-play and music has the potential to induce effects which could, for the ritual participant, have felt like a mythical maenad was also present within her mind. This would, however, emphatically not have felt like a complete possession of the type suggested by Rouget in the sense that she would no longer have been aware of her own self or felt that she was being controlled by the possessing spirit.

The co-existing character, the mythical maenad, is typified by her devotion to Dionysos, and her desire to serve and be close to him. But how might this feeling of closeness affect the maenad's mind? It is worth noting here that the audience for maenadic ritual was not simply the human onlookers, but Dionysos himself. Thinking of the maenad's dance as an offering to the gods like a hymn or a sacrifice emphasises the need for the performance to be whole-hearted, a genuine dedication of effort and commitment to the ongoing and constantly re-negotiated relationship between humanity and divinity. This relationship is characterised by reciprocity, a favour for a favour, and so, in the next chapter, I will explore the potential in maenadic ritual for participants to feel that Dionysos responded to this offering, through examination of the cognitive factors that are implicated in epiphanic events.

Chapter 5: Agency detection and epiphany

καὶ τοὺς μὲν Βοιωτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας καὶ Θρᾷκας ἀπομνημονεύοντας τῆς κατὰ τὴν Ἰνδικὴν στρατείας καταδεῖξαι τὰς τριετηρίδας θυσίας Διονύσῳ, καὶ τὸν θεὸν νομίζειν κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον ποιεῖσθαι τὰς παρὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπιφανείας.

'And the Boeotians and the other Greeks and Thracians, recalling the conquest of India, established the trieteric sacrifices for Dionysos, and believe the god at this time to appear to mortals.'

(Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica,* 4.3.2)

1. Introduction[1]

Chapter 1 introduced the problem of understanding how maenadic ritual was experienced by participants in the face of the silence of our sources. Chapter 2 examined the ways in which some scholars have approached this problem and identified the points at which academic opinion divides. Chapter 3 then laid out what is known with any certainty about the details of ritual performance, such as where, when, and by whom it was performed, and what such a performance entailed.

In the last chapter, I explored the cognitive effects of a ritual performance in relation to *mimesis*. I concluded that, when ritual participants consciously took the role of mythical maenads, certain cognitive functions would be triggered. These functions would have been experienced as a strong sense of identification with the mythical *thiasos*, and a reduction in the individual ritual participant's sense of her own identity, the 'loss of self' identified in the scholarship as a particularly Dionysian experience. In identifying with the mythical maenad in this way, the ritual participant would share some of her characteristics; particularly, she would share in the characteristic devotion to Dionysos, found in so many of the depictions of maenads in poetry and vase-painting.

This chapter will explore the other main theme identified in the scholarship: epiphany. My reinterpretation of the ancient evidence for mimetic ritual practice has already suggested that performance of the *oreibasia* required a significant level of emotional commitment to the task of 'representing the maenads'. In this chapter, I will offer a theory on how this commitment might be rewarded with the arrival of Dionysos on the mountain amongst his dancers. If we were to accept Dodds' interpretation of maenadic ritual as essentially 'hysterical', it would possible that an

[1] A version of the research presented in this chapter has been accepted for publication in Eidinow, et al. 2021 (forthcoming).

epiphanic experience could be put down simply to over-excitement and imagination.[2] But this is merely restating the issue in different, pseudo-clinical terms, and, furthermore, in terms which belong to a now outdated psychological lexicon.[3] Since Dodds' day, our understanding of how the brain works and how cognition functions have developed out of all recognition, and new insights from these fields can cast new light on old problems. The application of theories and research from cognitive neuroscience to the ancient evidence for maenadic ritual practice will now be brought together to demonstrate that the climax of the maenadic ritual was, at least for some participants, an epiphanic experience.

To explore this subject, I will first examine what an epiphany meant in ancient Greek thought and outline the evidence for Dionysos as a particularly epiphanic god, in both myth and ritual (section 2). I will then lay out a possible explanation of epiphanic or 'sensed presence' experiences from a cognitive perspective, drawing on the theory of predictive processing in conjunction with another cognitive theory, called agency detection (section 3). By combining these theories with what we know of the environment and activity of the maenadic ritual, I will present a case for arguing that ritual maenads might feel that a supernatural being was in the forests with them during their ritual (section 4), and end with some reflections on what this means for how maenadic ritual was viewed in ancient Greek society.

2. Dionysos as an epiphanic god

Once it was established that Dionysos was not a new arrival in the Greek pantheon, a new interpretation was needed to explain the recurrent myths which concern his sudden and often turbulent arrival in a new city.[4] Many modern scholars have interpreted these arrivals as a metaphor for epiphanies, arguing that Dionysos is characterised by being suddenly, violently, present in the human sphere.[5] Albert Henrichs described him as revealing himself 'more often, more ostentatiously, and with greater emphasis on his anthropomorphic properties than any other Greek god'.[6] Jean-Pierre Vernant called him 'the god of *parousia*' ('presence'),[7] and Walter Otto said that the myths in which Dionysos suddenly arrives in a Greek state reflected his 'overpowering nature and epiphany', appearing among men 'like a storm'.[8]

---

[2] Dodds 1940: 159, Dodds 1951: 76.
[3] See for example St-Amand and LeBlanc 2005.
[4] Discussed in Chapter 2 section 1.1.
[5] Petridou 2016: 7-9, with notes 51 and 52 providing a comprehensive bibliography, pp.302-305 on the myths of Dionysos' arrival in Greece.
[6] Henrichs 1993: 19-22
[7] Vernant 1988: 390.
[8] Otto 1995: 53-64, 75-78, quotes from p.78.

What actually constituted an epiphany in Greek thought is not as straightforward as the sudden appearance of a god 'in person'. In epic poetry and hymns, gods might appear in disguise as mortals, but in such splendid, shining forms that they were easily identifiable as gods.[9] A god's presence might also be heard or even smelled: Odysseus recognises Athena's presence be her voice alone and when Demeter reveals herself to Metaneira, a rich perfume wafts around her.[10]

But myths about Dionysos' epiphanies are not really more common than myths about the epiphanies of other gods: he is far less likely than Zeus or Apollo to erupt into the mortal realm to conduct a seduction or rape, he is conspicuously absent from Homer so plays no part in the Trojan War, and he has no particular mortal favourite to mentor and protect in an extended narrative, as Athena does for Odysseus. Why then should he be considered more epiphanic than other gods?

As well as direct face-to-face contacts, there was a variety of less dramatic occurrences that might be interpreted as meaning that a god was present, including dreams, omens, oracles, and auditory phenomena.[11] Georgia Petridou has examined typologies of ancient Greek epiphanic experiences in detail, and categorised them by their form.[12] 'Form' describes *how* the god appears, and there are several categories of epiphany other than the most obvious one in which the deity appears 'in person'. A god's presence could be inferred from arrival or departure of creatures associated with them, as when the sacred snake of Athena disappeared from her temple, or the arrival of doves in Sicily which indicated Aphrodite's presence.[13] Epiphanic dreams might feature a god appearing directly to the sleeper, or a god's presence might be inferred from a dream that did not explicitly feature a god but was understood to have come from a god.[14]

In addition to form, Petridou differentiates between epiphanies that occur spontaneously at the apparent whim of the god, which she terms 'crisis' epiphanies, and those that occur in the tightly-structured context of ritual, termed 'cult' epiphanies.[15] Epiphanies of either type might take a range of forms. Aside from a full-body appearance of a god, crisis epiphanies might include unexpected dreams (as opposed to those expected or hoped for by those incubating at a shrine), the sudden appearance of a tangible, material image or statue of a god, or the appearance of a sign indicating a god's interest in events. Cult epiphanies included incubation dreams, rituals such as *theoxenia* and

---

[9] As Aphrodite appeared when she came to Anchises: *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* particularly at 178-190.
[10] Hom. *Il.* 10.274-277, Soph. *Aj*. 14-17, *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 275-280. On the scent of epiphany, see Clements 2015.
[11] See Herman 2011, Platt 2011, Petridou 2016, Platt 2016.
[12] Petridou 2016; pp. 29-103.
[13] Athena: Hdt. 8.41; Plut. *Them*. 10.1–2. Aphrodite: Aelian *NA* 4.2.
[14] On epiphanic dreams: Dodds 1951: 102-135, Petsalis-Diomidis 2005: 206-208, Graf 2016, Petridou 2016: 171-192.
[15] Platt 2016: 494, Petridou 2016: 2-4.

those public rites marking the arrival of a god, and the climax of mystery cult initiations, called Epopteia.[16] In many rituals, the cult statue would be a physical representation of the god's presence, and under certain circumstances seeing a cult statue could be construed as witnessing a god.[17]

The span of experiences that might be interpreted as a divine presence indicates a general acceptance of the power of gods to infiltrate the mortal plane. Not everyone might have a vision of Athena in full war-gear with terrible eyes shining, but they could comfort themselves with the knowledge that even her favourite Odysseus sometimes had to make do with recognising her voice in a heron's cry.[18] Experiencing the presence of the gods was more a matter of interpretation of signs than of revelation in the Christian sense, and the ways in which the gods might make their presence known were multitudinous and varied.

2.1. Anthropomorphic epiphanies: myths of Dionysos

Henrichs identified several myths associated with Dionysos' interactions with humans: his capture by and transformation of the Tyrrhenian pirates (described in the *Hymn. Hom. Dio.* 7, cf. Ovid, *Met.* 3.580-689), his conflict with the Thracian king Lycurgus (*Il.* 6.130-143, Diod. Sic. 3.65.4-8), and his conflict with his cousin Pentheus (Eur. *Bakchai*, Ov. *Met.* 3.509-579. 690-731).[19] Otto also included the stories of the daughters of Minyas (Ov. *Met*. 3.1-54, 389-415) and Dionysos' war against the Argives (Paus. 2.20-23, Pseud-Apollod. 2.37ff.), which have similar themes.[20]

These myths share a common theme of Dionysos taking revenge for being dishonoured by humans. Lycurgus attempted to drive him out of Thrace, the Minyades rejected his worship, and the kings of Argos and Thebes refused to allow Dionysian cult in their lands. The pirates and Pentheus both treated the disguised Dionysos dishonourably, ignoring warnings that the man before them was really a god. The human antagonists in myths of Dionysos' epiphanies fail to give him his appropriate honour and recognition, and all suffer a terrible punishment: the Tyrrhenian pirates are turned into dolphins, the Minyades into bats,[21] in Argos and Thebes groups of women are driven mad, Lycurgus becomes mad and kills his son, Pentheus is torn apart by his mother and aunts.

For Walter Otto, the important element of the Dionysian epiphany myths was that Dionysos interacts with humans in the mortal world, often in human form. In poetic narratives about his

---

[16] On Epopteia, see for example Clinton 2003, on *theoxenia* rituals, Jameson 2014.
[17] See discussion in Platt 2011: 77-123, Petridou 2016: 49-62.
[18] *Il*. 10.274-277.
[19] Henrichs 1993: 19-20. Henrichs also lists Dionysos' presence among his nurses in *Iliad* book 6 as an epiphany. As the passage describes his interactions with Lycurgus and the nurses are nymphs, not humans, I have included this epiphany in the Lycurgus group.
[20] Otto 1995: 74, 77.
[21] In Plutarch's account (*QG* 38) the Minyades become mad, though Plutarch does not comment on the nature of their offence.

epiphanies, Dionysos only rarely actually displays his divinity to mortals in the way that, for example, Aphrodite and Demeter do in their Homeric Hymns. He frequently appears in human disguise, usually that of a beautiful young man: Pentheus and the Tyrrhenian pirates both see Dionysos face to face, but at the time Dionysos is disguised in human form.[22] In Aeschylus' lost *Edonians*, Lycurgus seems, like Pentheus, to have interviewed Dionysos, but once again the god is apparently disguised during the interview.[23]

How humans respond to Dionysos' presence – disguised or otherwise - can dictate whether things will go well or badly for them. In the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates, one character does recognise Dionysos' divinity, despite his disguise. Alone among his villainous companions, the helmsman looks at the mysterious stranger and calls out in alarm: 'what god is this that you have captured and taken in chains? (*Hymn. Hom. Dio.* 7.17, 21: τίνα τόνδε θεὸν δεσμεύεθ᾽ ἑλόντες). The helmsman is rewarded for his actions: even as his comrades leap into the sea to escape the phantasms of lions and bears that pursue them, Dionysos rewards the helmsman by making him 'all-happy' (54: πανόλβιος). In his recognition of Dionysos as a god, albeit an unknown or new one, and his advice to adopt a more appropriate course of action, the helmsman serves a similar function to the venerable seer Teiresias in *Bakchai*, who warns Pentheus against treating Dionysos with scorn (*Bacch.* 272, 312-3: οὗτος δ᾽ ὁ δαίμων ὁ νέος… τὸν θεὸν δ᾽ ἐς γῆν δέχου καὶ σπένδε καὶ βάκχευε καὶ στέφου κάρα). Of the named characters who appear onstage during the play, Teiresias alone escapes without punishment. The Athenian Ikarios offered Dionysos hospitality and was rewarded with the knowledge of viticulture;[24] Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus on the island of Naxos, caught Dionysos' eye and he made her his wife.[25]

These last two are not 'resistance myths' because the human who encounters Dionysos does not reject him, and they do not feature in Henrichs' list. They are still epiphanic myths: Ikarios is given the intoxicating secret of wine, Ariadne is swept away to a new life as Dionysos' consort.[26] Both Ikarios and Ariadne met Dionysos face to face, like the helmsman, and both are transformed by their encounter. If we are seeking a common theme in Dionysian epiphany myths, this could mean we

---

[22] *Hymn. Hom. Dio.* 7.1-6, Eur. *Bacch.* 53-54.
[23] Aesch. frr. 60: τίς ποτ᾽ ἔσθ᾽ ὁ μουσόμαντις ('Who is this singer of prophecies?'), and 61: ποδαπὸς ὁ γύννις; ('where did this effeminate come from?'). In *Iliad* 6.130-143 there is no clear indication that Lycurgus and Dionysos come face to face.
[24] Pseudo-Hyginus *Astronomica* 2.4 cf, *Fabulae* 130, Ps-Apollod. 2.191-192, Paus. 1.2.5, Aelian *NA* 7.28, Statius *Theb.* 12.618.
[25] Hes. *Theog.* 947ff., Diod. Sic. 4.61.5, Plut. *Thes.* 20.1, Apollod. *Epit.* E1.8-9, Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.997, Paus. 1.20.3.
[26] Classical writers have little to say about the moment when Ariadne first met Dionysos, but it was a popular subject for later writers, who depicted the scene with swooning, luxurious romanticism: E.g. Phil. *Imag.* 1.15, Seneca, *Oed.* 487-502, Nonnus, *Dion.* 47.426-471.

should understand Dionysian epiphany myths as being morality stories, in which humans either accept Dionysos and are rewarded (Ariadne, Ikarios, the helmsman) or reject him and are punished (Lycurgus, Pentheus, the pirates).

However, this oversimplifies and ignores other elements of the myths about Ariadne and Ikarios. Despite Ikarios' kindliness, his encounter with Dionysos ended badly: he was murdered by the shepherds who first tasted his wine, and his daughter Erigone hanged herself in grief.[27] Various accounts exist of Ariadne's fate, but at least three different versions exist in which her association with Dionysos led directly to her death. Homer says that she was killed by Artemis 'on the testimony of Dionysos', Plutarch that she died giving birth to Dionysos' child, and Nonnus that she fell in battle fighting alongside Dionysos.[28] Ariadne was, in some versions, made a goddess, and Ikarios and Erigone were commemorated in Athens after their deaths, but their encounters with Dionysos blended rewards with suffering.[29]

The interpretation proposed by Otto is that these epiphanies tell us something about the nature of the divinity. All these myths carry an air of uncertainty and danger; Dionysos' epiphanies can bring joy, but they can bring destruction. Dionysos, for Otto, is characterised by 'ecstasy and terror… wildness and the most blessed deliverance', as a force that appears suddenly, demanding recognition, offering ecstasy in one hand and terror in the other.[30] His presence in the mortal world does not remove human suffering and his followers are not freed from grief, but their sorrows are held up against the awesome joy that is the other side of his gift.

2.2. Sudden epiphanies: images of Dionysos

Dionysian epiphanies also occur outside the heroic mythological sphere. There are several accounts of Dionysos making 'crisis' epiphanic appearances in response to current events, in dreams and as disembodied sounds. Pausanias gives two accounts of dreams in which Dionysos gave advice on matters concerned with the theatre: one to Aeschylus, advising him to become a tragedian, and one to an unnamed Spartan general with advice to 'honour the new Siren', taken as a reference to the recently deceased Sophocles.[31] Plutarch described strange phenomena during Octavian's siege of Alexandria in his war against Mark Antony (*Vit. Ant*. 75.3-4): in the dead of night there was suddenly the sound of music, revelry, and cries of 'euai' in the dark streets. The sounds headed for the city

[27] Pseudo-Hyginus *Astronomica* 2.4 cf, *Fabulae* 130, Ps-Apollod. 2.191-192, Statius *Theb.* 11.644, Aelian *NA* 7.28.
[28] *Od.* 11.325: Διονύσου μαρτυρίῃσιν, Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 20.1, Nonnus, *Dion.* 47.665, cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 339.
[29] On Ariadne as a goddess: Hes. *Theog.* 947ff., Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 20.1-5. On rituals held for Erigone see the references in footnote 27 above. Ikarios' name was associated with the Attic deme Ikaria (or Ikarion, now known as Dionyso): Paus. 1.2.5, Robinson 1948.
[30] Otto 1995: 65, 105-106.
[31] Paus. 1.21.1, 2, discussed Petridou 2016: 224-5.

gates, as though a wild bacchic *thiasos* was passing out of the city, and the event was interpreted as Dionysos finally abandoning Antony.

There are also accounts of mysterious appearances of some sort of 'image' of Dionysos that describe an aetiology for existing cult practices. The Greeks had a long tradition of such sudden encounters with divinity through the medium of images or cult statues, and these are generally dangerous encounters in which, as Petridou puts it, 'viewing those images entailed the same dangers and posed the same challenges as viewing the divinities in person'.[32] In each case the pattern is the same: established practice is explained in terms of divine advice issued after a miraculous and often frightening appearance of an object which represents a god.

According to Pausanias (10.19.3) some fishermen in Methymna in Lesbos once made an unusual catch: a face or mask of olivewood (πρόσωπον ἐλαίας ξύλου) that had 'something of the god' about it (φέρουσαν μὲν ἐς τὸ θεῖον) but was so exotic-looking and unlike the familiar images of Greek gods (ξένην δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ θεοῖς Ἑλληνικοῖς οὐ καθεστῶσαν) that the confused men enquired of the Pythia what it might be. On being told that it was an image of Dionysos Phalles, a cult of this aspect of Dionysos was established, and the 'face' became an object of cult worship there.[33]

In Magnesia-on-the-Meander in the third century BCE, a storm had split open a plane tree and revealed an image or statue of Dionysos (*IMagn.* 215:7: ἀφείδρυμα Διονύσου). Like the Lesbian fishermen, the people of Magnesia also sent to Delphi for advice, asking what it signified and what best to do about it. The Pythia replied that Dionysos had appeared because they had failed to build him a suitable temple when they founded their town, and that they needed to rectify this by setting up suitable rites and building a temple 'delighting in the *thyrsos*' (νηοὺς θυρσοχαροῦς). No information is provided as to what happened to the miraculously occurring image, but as one of the *thiasoi* set up as part of the city's response was called 'the *thiasos* of the plane tree' (*IMagn.* 215.34: θίασον τὸν Πλατανιστηνῶν), it is reasonable to assume that the tree at least remained an object of veneration.

A third account, also recorded by Pausanias, did not result in the setting up of rites but of ending them. A man named Eurypylos had acquired a chest which, when opened, was found to contain an image of Dionysos (Paus. 7.19.6: Διονύσου δὲ ἄγαλμα). When Eurypylos laid eyes on the image, he was driven from his senses by the god (ἔκφρων μετὰ τὴν θέαν) and remained mad with only brief periods of lucidity. During one of these, he sent to Delphi for advice and was told to travel until he came to a place where they conducted a strange or foreign sacrifice (θυσίαν ξένην). He came to a

[32] Ibid. at 62-64.
[33] Burkert 1983: 202-203, Petridou 2016: 206

place where human sacrifices were performed for Artemis Triklaria and, thanks to a fortuitous prophecy given to the local people, he was hailed as their king, restored to his senses, and put an end to the sacrifices. A river nearby was, Pausanias adds, renamed *Meilichos*, 'Gentle', which was also a cult title of Dionysos on Naxos (Ath. *Deip.* 3.78c-d).

In all three accounts of the sudden advent of an image of Dionysos, the images' appearances caused consternation or worse to the witnesses, sending them to seek expert advice on how to appropriately manage the unexpected epiphany. These sudden appearances are dangerous because they are a sign that something has gone wrong in the relationship between humanity and the gods. The worried witnesses embark on a risk management strategy, first seeking expert advice through consulting the existing communication channels with the divine and then taking corrective action by adjusting existing religious practices.

An account in the Suda demonstrates the porous boundaries between mythical narratives and aetiological accounts of sudden epiphanies. It describes the appearance of a vision or apparition of Dionysos (φάσμα του Διονύσου) to the daughters of the mythical king Eleuther; the girls responded contemptuously (ἐμέμψαντο) and Dionysos, enraged at their disrespectful response, put them into a state of *mania* (ἐξέμηνεν) that was only lifted when their father, on the advice of an oracle, set up appropriate honours for Dionysos.[34] This story clearly shares some features (the group of princesses, imposition of *mania*) with the stories in which Dionysos is treated disrespectfully by mythical figures. But this is not an anthropological epiphany of Dionysos in disguise as a mortal: the author of the Suda specifies that this appearance was a *phasma tou Dionysou*.[35] Though the exact meaning of this term now escapes us, Petridou has found numerous examples of *phasmata* in religious contexts and argues that such appearances should be understood as epiphanies: they represent the god's presence and carry the same risks and should be considered as belonging to the same class as effigy epiphanies.[36]

These crisis epiphanies match what Verity Platt calls 'narratives of epiphanic arrival', where the image takes the place of the god to instigate changes to religious practice, and follow the same pattern as those appearances found in the anthropomorphic epiphany myths.[37] In each case, Dionysos – or his representation - appears suddenly, causing alarm in witnesses, until advice from a religious expert – an oracle in the crisis epiphanies, sometimes the god himself in anthropomorphic

[34] Suda, Adler no. μ 451.
[35] No such distinction is made, for example in the case of Pan's appearance in the Arcadian mountains: Suda, Adler no. ι 545.
[36] Petridou 2016: 64-68.
[37] Platt 2011: 96-97, cf. Larson 2016: 70-73.

myths - explains what changes must be made to religious practices. In the anthropomorphic epiphany myths, the advice is usually ignored, resulting in the prime antagonist's death or the destruction of their family, while the survivors of Dionysos' anger adopt the correct rites. In the crisis epiphanies, the advice of the religious expert is usually followed with alacrity, and the disaster averted.

2.3. Controlled epiphanies: rituals and festivals of Dionysos

The final group of Dionysian epiphanies to examine are those which occurred in a ritual context, with all necessary safety measures in place. These are what Petridou calls 'cult epiphanies' which occurred on a regular and controlled basis and differ from those in the previous section which, though they affected subsequent practice, were unusual and dangerous events which were not part of an established ritual at the time. 'Cult' epiphanies, on the other hand, refer to existing practices in which Dionysos was considered to be manifest in some form and therefore the dangers inherent in his advent were mediated by the ritual. The evidence for most of these rituals comes from classical and Hellenistic Athens, but there are accounts from other states collected by Pausanias of ritual which were current in his day but may be of earlier antiquity.

Walter Burkert identified four main types of Dionysian festival across Greece: wine festivals, such as the Anthesteria and Lenaia, phallic festivals like the Attic Rural Dionysia, Katagogia festivals in which Dionysos arrived by sea, and festivals on the lines of the Agrionia, which centred on 'women's uprising, madness, and cannibalistic fantasies'.[38] However, Burkert's categories are not entirely satisfactory. They oversimplify the content of each festival and ignore quite significant overlaps of activity. Most surprisingly, as the Lenaia and both Rural and City Dionysia are all placed in different categories, performance in or viewing of a dramatic chorus disappears entirely.[39] Classifying the Lenaia as a wine festival ignores the use of *lēnai* as apparently a synonym or correlate of 'bacchant' or 'maenad'.[40] The state-sanctioned performance of the *oreibasia* is ignored, classified instead as 'celebrated by smaller groups, colleges and cult associations' rather than something done on behalf of and before the whole the city, as emphasized in the epigraphic evidence.[41] Some festivals do not seem to fit any of his categories: where, for example, should we place the festival celebrated in

---

[38] Burkert 1985: 163.

[39] Theatre is notably absent from Burkert's *Greek Religion*, with no listings in the index. There are no listings either for 'chorus, and 'tragedy' has only two. His views on the origin and function of tragedy are found in Burkert 1966, but this does not deal with choral performance.

[40] Lenai: Heraclitus fragment D18 (in Laks and Most 2016), Theocritus, *Idylls* 26, Strabo 10.3.10. Also found on a fragmentary Egyptian *ostrakha* c. 100CE, reproduced as Anonymous fragment 1038, in Campbell 1993, cf. *IGii*^{2} 1524a.44-50, 112. Hesychius gives the definition of ληναί as 'βάκχαι. Ἀρκάδες'.

[41] The *thiasos* of the populace' and its primacy above other *thiasoi*: *LSAM* 48.3-4; the 'city bacchants' led by the priestess Alkmeonis: *IMilet.* 733.3, discussed Merkelbach 1972, Henrichs 1978: 148-149, Connelly 2007: 167-168, 255.

Macedonia, in which a blaze of flame would appear over Dionysos' temple if the season ahead was going to be good, or the Heroïs ritual invoking Semele that was celebrated by the Thyiades in Delphi?[42]

Considering Burkert's categorisations from the perspective of epiphany, the only group which might be considered uniformly epiphanic are the Katagogia festivals. But, as described above, these religious events were multifaceted and resist such differentiation as Burkert sought to impose. By re-considering what constituted an epiphany in a cult setting, epiphanies of some form were expected or hoped for in many if not all of Dionysos' festivals. Many of these controlled epiphanies are what Petridou categorises as 'effigy epiphanies', in which the god is embodied by the presence of his cult images, or epiphanies *pars pro toto* ('part for whole'), in which the presence of one aspect of his domain represents the presence of the whole god.[43] A cult statue might be considered as an embodiment of the god when the ritual context built an expectation in the witnesses that the god was inhabiting its statue, and under these circumstances seeing a cult statue would be an epiphanic experience for the audience.[44] The processions in which Dionysos' statue was carried into the city, for example, have been interpreted as representing his epiphany: at the Athenian City Dionysia his statue would be carried into Athens from nearby Eleutherai, at the Attic Rural Dionysia, a *phallos* represented the god.[45] These types of epiphany were understandably popular in civic celebrations, being 'the most economic way to organise an epiphany'.[46]

In the theatre or symposia, Dionysos' presence was so pervasive during these events that no discrete part of them seems to constitute a specific epiphanic event. There is no reason to think that Dionysos would not be thought to be present during these: in the theatrical festivals, Dionysos' presence could have been inferred from his cult statue, his priest, the hymns offered by dancing choruses, and the sacrifices offered at the *thymele* altar prominently placed in the orchestra.[47] The plays offered were expected to have at least *something* to do with Dionysos, to paraphrase a well-known Athenian proverb, though what sort of something and how it would be judged to be present or absent is now lost to us. Though symposia were not primarily religious events, they had ritual components, being framed with prayers and libations, and offered an opportunity for the experience

---

[42] Heroïs: Plut. *QG* 12. Macedonian epiphany of light: [Ps-Arist.] *Mir. ausc.* 842a, discussed in terms of an epiphany by Petridou 2016: 104, with reference to Dodds 1960: 213 on line 1082-3.
[43] Petridou 2016: 63 following Versnel 1987.
[44] Petridou 2016: 56-61.
[45] On the statue of Dionysos Eleuthereus, see Paus. 1.20.2-3, 38.8, discussed Hedreen 2004 particularly 46-47. See Csapo 1997 on phallic representations of Dionysos, cf. Ar. *Ach.* 241-279.
[46] Petridou 2016: 21-22, noting at p.75 that *pars par toto* epiphanies were also relatively simple to stage.
[47] On the City Dionysia and its inherent Dionysian-ness, see for example Goldhill 1987, Seaford 2006: 87-104 particularly at 93-97 on play content.

of *pars par toto* epiphany. Certainly, a symposiast would be hard pushed to forget Dionysos' presence, running through his veins in the form of wine.[48]

Several accounts of Dionysian festivals refer to his epiphany *pars par toto* in the form of wine.[49] In Elis, and on Andros and Teos, we have accounts of wine suddenly appearing in vessels left within a temple (Elis, Paus. 6.26.1-2, Plut. *QG* 200b, [Arist.] *Mir. ausc.* 842a-b), flowing freely from a spring (in Teos, Diod. Sic. 3.66.2) or from the temple itself (Andros, Paus. 6.26.2, Pliny *NH* 2.106, 31.16). The Teans believed that this happened because Dionysos was born in that area, but according to Pliny (*NH* 2.106) the Andreans referred to it as *dios theodosia*, a gift of god and a god itself. Pausanias adds that, in Elis, women gathered together the previous night to sing an ancient hymn of invocation, requesting that Dionysos come, and that the Eleans believed that Dionysos attended their festival himself, providing the miracle of wine as the evidence for his presence.

A final example of possible epiphany took place in Athens on the night of the second day of the Anthesteria: in a small, undistinguished building in the Athenian agora, the wife of the archon basileus awaited the god's arrival for their 'Sacred Marriage'.[50] What this ritual actually entailed was held in the highest secrecy and has been the subject of much speculation, though it probably represented a re-enactment of Dionysos' epiphany to Ariadne on Naxos.[51] Dionysos may have been represented by a statue, a priest, or even by the basilinna's own husband, but this would not mean that Dionysos was not thought to be present and working through this avatar. Just as Zeus had taken the form of Amphitryon to impregnate Alkmene, the basilinna might believe that Dionysos could be present in the form of her husband. Gods always took on disguises when seducing mortals, so the presence of an apparently human mortal being would not have been thought to mean that Dionysos was not also present.[52]

2.4. Discussion of themes from Dionysian epiphanies

This discussion has examined the evidence for Dionysos being a particularly epiphanic god, by looking at examples of his epiphanies in myth and in both crisis and cult settings. Between these categories, there are some common themes and some notable differences.

[48] Though only so long as the drinkers were indulging in moderation: In a fragment by the comic playwright Eubulus (fr. 94 Kassel-Austin), Dionysos says that the fourth krater 'belongs to me no longer'.
[49] Larson 2007: 138-139, Jiménez San Cristóbal 2021. On Dionysos being embodied by wine, Csapo 1997: 258, particularly the references in notes 24 and 25.
[50] On the 'Sacred Marriage', see e.g. [Dem.] 59 *Against Neaera* 73-78., Arist. *Pol*. 3.5 and Hsch. s.v. Διονύσου γάμος. Petridou 2016: 239-242 discusses the sacred marriage as an epiphany.
[51] E.g. Burkert 1985: 239-240, Avagianou 1991: 179-194, Jameson 1993: 325-326, Robertson 1993: 208-209, Goff 2004: 38-39, Parker 2005: 303-305.
[52] Petridou 2016: 243-248. Zeus and Alkmene, Apollod. *Bibl*. 2.4.8. Zeus' deception of Alkmene is also implied by Hes. [*Sc*] 27-38.

Rather than the more common rape myths connected to Zeus or Apollo, Dionysian epiphanies in myth signify danger to whole communities, caused by the actions of a few who do not give him suitable honour. Dionysos appears suddenly, and his appearances must be responded to immediately and in the right spirit. In these stories, the episodes of *mania* induced by rejecting his rites may be concluded by rituals being set up or a priest's intervention,[53] but, equally as often, they are only resolved when the main antagonist is dead. The underlying theme of the myths is not that Dionysian epiphanies are especially frequent but that, due to Dionysos' habit of appearing disguised, they are unpredictable and the danger of a witness' response being deemed impious is correspondingly greater. The myths suggest, therefore, that Dionysian epiphanies are, if not more frequent, then certainly more dangerous.

Narratives concerning spontaneous epiphanies also carry an echo of this theme. The curious image that drove Eurypylos from his senses and the *phasma* of Dionysos, mocked by the daughters of Eleuther, recall the 'resistance' myths that resulted in *mania*. Both these episodes of *mania*, and the anxiety caused by the other spontaneous epiphanies, were finally resolved when the appropriate rites were established, so these stories seem to serve primarily an aetiological function. In none of these accounts does Dionysos spontaneously appear in his undisguised divine form; the unexpected appearance of his image or effigy alone was considered capable of inducing *mania*.

Emphasizing the similarity between poetic epiphanies and those in which the god is represented by an image, Verity Platt has noted that 'in person' epiphanies in poetry also often result in witnesses spontaneously responding using a ritual form of invocation and promises of offerings.[54] This, she argues shows that the poetic accounts of epiphanies reflect a characteristic cultural response common to what Petridou calls crisis epiphanies. Both mythical and crisis epiphanies occur where proper religious honours have not been forthcoming, and so the safest way of responding to such an event is to use the safety measures of the ritual form. In this way, the reciprocal relationship of goodwill between the state or individual and the divine is rebalanced, and the risk of divine disapproval is mitigated.[55]

If we accept Petridou's inclusion of the presence of effigies and objects representing the god as potentially epiphanic events, then all the festivals of Dionysos examined contain elements that may have been interpreted as epiphanies. Despite the perils of unmediated Dionysian epiphanies as

[53] Suggested by Plut. *QG* 38 in relation to the Minyades, and Diod. Sic. 4.68.4 in relation to the Argive women.
[54] Platt 2016: 494, citing *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 92-106.
[55] On ancient Greek risk management practices in the face of an uncertain future, see Eidinow 2011: particularly 2-6 for a summary. On ritual sacrifice as maintaining the relationship between humanity and divinity, see for example Naiden 2016 with bibliography.

found in both the myths and the narratives around spontaneous appearances, the ritual form seems to have transformed the potentially dangerous situation into something more controllable.

Whether or not Dionysos can be said to be 'more epiphanic' than any other Greek god, there is certainly considerable evidence that his epiphanies were thought to occur both spontaneously and through the medium of rituals. Dionysian myths emphasize the suddenness of his epiphanies and the danger associated with this suddenness. Some of his rituals had aetiologies deriving from spontaneous epiphanies, and some ritual forms encouraged viewers or participants to 'see' him as being present. These rituals help mediate the dangerous force of sudden appearances of divinity in the mortal world. Once present, it was important that the god was treated appropriately, made welcome, and given due honours, but doing so was no guarantee of the epiphany being a safe one.

If maenadic ritual was believed to centre on an epiphany of Dionysos, as Diodorus claims in the quote at the head of this chapter, there are therefore a range of different ways in which his presence might be experienced. He might appear as an animal or even as ivy, hardly a difficult phenomenon to achieve in a forest. His mask or cult statue might be set up on the mountain side to focus worshippers' attention on his presence.[56] These might all be considered to meet the criteria for participants experiencing a Dionysian epiphany.

But it is also possible that something much more unusual and startling might occur. The final example discussed above raises the point that controlled epiphany in ritual context is something that is experienced within the mind of the beholder or beholders. The basilinna could experience an epiphany of Dionysos so long as she believed that what was presented to her *was* Dionysos. That belief, drawn from her immersion in the culture which expected epiphany under particular ritual circumstances, informed how she interpreted her experience.

Ritual maenads would also have been immersed in this culture and have these expectations. If Diodorus is to be believed, the occasion of the trieteric festival was the time at which Dionysos appears to mortals (4.3.2). Maenadic ritual participants could perhaps hope for more than a *pars pro toto* epiphany or a glimpse of his mask, animated by the wind in the trees. They were after all taking the role of mythological characters who are both worshippers and companions of Dionysos. In *Bakchai*, the disguised Dionysos responds to Pentheus' angry interrogation about how his rites are passed on by saying they are transmitted face-to-face with the god, 'ὁρῶν ὁρῶντα' ('seeing him as he saw me': *Bacch.* 470). In the *parodos*, the Chorus sing that Dionysos is corporally present among

[56] Both the disembodied masks and the mask-idols found on the Lenaia vases, discussed in Chapter 3, 3.3, are frequently flanked by female figures armed with *thyrsoi*, snakes, and other maenadic attributes.

them as the leader of their dance (114-115, 140), and they draw a touching comparison between the maenad's relationship to Dionysos and that of a foal to its mother (165-169).

So the question for examination is whether or not maenadic ritual could have evoked an experience that was more like these descriptions or those of the mythological narratives than like the controlled cult epiphanies; that is, one in which Dionysos was felt to present among them in his anthropomorphic form. In the absence of first-hand narratives, there is no decisive evidence either way. But if we accept that epiphany is an interpretation of events in the mind of the subject, then this suggests that the first place to start looking for epiphanic experience is in the effects of maenadic ritual on the minds of participants.

3. Cognitive mechanisms associated with epiphanic experiences

There are two theories offered by neuropsychology and cognitive science which produce effects which might be interpreted as an epiphany: 'sensed presence' (offered by neuropsychologists) and 'agency detection' (offered by proponents of the cognitive science of religion). These concepts are related but have different mechanisms and different triggers. Sensed presences may occur without any external stimuli and are relatively rare, while agency detection is a response to sensory data coming from outside the body and a reasonable rate of false positives is to be considered normal. They are however both implicated in neurological explanations of epiphanic events, and psychologist James Cheyne has suggested that agency detection may be involved in sensed presences experienced during sleep paralysis.[57] In the following discussion I will explore whether or not maenadic ritual could have induced either of these effects, showing that agency detection is a far more likely candidate for a Dionysian epiphany in the context of the *oreibasia*.

Gabriel Herman compared Greek narratives of spontaneous epiphanies against modern accounts of individuals sensing or even seeing a presence near them at times of extreme stress.[58] These are known as 'sensed presence' experiences; sensory hallucinations which occur when an individual is aware of being in a high-risk situation, and in which a being or agent offers some support or help in mitigating that risk.[59] Herman found a good degree of correlation between modern sensed presence events and ancient Greek crisis epiphanies. However, he excluded ritual epiphanies from his study, as they did not tend to occur during periods of the type of extreme peril required to generate a stress hallucination.

[57] Cheyne 2012, discussing agency detection explicitly at pp.227-229.
[58] Herman 2011.
[59] Cheyne 2012 provides a summary on the subject of sensed presences.

For maenadic ritual to induce a sensed presence experience, we would have to assume that participants were in a stressed state. This is certainly possible: although Herman's examples come from acute, life-threatening danger, sensed presence events have been recorded in a range of circumstances and have been reported by patients with particular neurological conditions in non-threatening environments.[60] It is also possible that the mountainside, especially at night, could have been a frightening environment, with the result that participants may have been concerned for their safety.[61] Participants may have experienced some performance anxiety or deep-rooted concern about their ability to perform their civic function appropriately and successfully.[62]

However, sensed presence events occur not when a subject is anxious, but when they are actively frightened when presented with imminent danger.[63] Fear and anxiety describe different emotions in clinical psychology: fear has a specific, present focus and triggers the autonomic fight-or-flight processes of the body, anxiety is primarily a cognitive activity involving negative ideation about future events and is often found where there is no proximal danger.[64]

None of the surviving evidence for maenadic ritual participation explicitly mentions the emotional state of participants. However, the use of 'like a maenad' and related similes and imagery occur in Greek poetry to describe a character in the grip of a strong emotion, many of which might be described as being on the fear-anxiety axis.[65] Helen is facing a clear danger and contemplating taking flight in her name play by Euripides when she is 'ὡς … Βάκχη θεοῦ', and Herakles, hallucinating the presence of his enemy and exhibiting the 'fight' response to perceived danger, is described by his father as ἐβάκχευσεν.[66] But, on the other hand, such maenadic imagery is used to describe characters in a range of other emotional states, such as violence or blood-thirstiness (Aesch. *Ag.* 1235 of Clytemnestra, *Septem* 497-498 of a warrior), frenzied inspiration (Eur. *Hec.* 121, of Cassandra), even of frantic joy (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 386, Soph. *Trach.* 216-220). The emphasis in these

[60] Landtblom, et al. 2011.
[61] On mountains as potentially alarming places in Greek imagination, see Buxton 1992.
[62] For example, perhaps not meeting the purity or pedigree criteria for such a role: Connelly 2007: 44-46. On at least one occasion, the basilinna who took part in the sacred marriage was accused of not meeting the correct citizenship standard: [Dem] 59 *passim*, discussed by Eidinow 2016: 317-320.
[63] Unless there is a distinct underlying neurological condition such as epilepsy or lesions in specific areas of the brain: Herman 2011: 150-151, Cheyne 2012: 221.
[64] See Muris and Rachman 2010: 1-3 for definitions. Sustained anxiety can also lead to physical symptoms such as panic attacks: *DSM-5*, s.v. Panic Disorder, Diagnostic Criteria A.
[65] Found in around 40% of the instances given by Schlesier 1993, in her discussion of the uses of maenadic metaphor in tragedy.
[66] *Hel.*, 543 and *Her.*, 966. Lacking a suitable English verb for 'to be bacchic', this is probably best translated here as 'having become like a bacchant'.

uses is not on the type of emotion, but its strength.[67] This cannot demonstrate an association in ancient poetry between maenadic imagery and the emotion of fear.

Another factor that could have increased the likelihood of such an experience would be the location: sensed presence events are found more commonly at high altitudes and are more commonly experienced at night.[68] But, once again, these cannot be found to apply to the *oreibasia*. Sensed presence experiences occur high up on mountain peaks where altitude affects blood oxygen levels, far, far higher than any of the locations where we know maenadic ritual was performed.[69] Laboratory experimentation has suggested that it may be the danger of these environments rather than the altitude itself which induces the experience, and that night-time occurrences are linked to sudden waking from sleep rather than the darkness.[70] Without a better understanding of the level of fear that ritual participants might be experiencing, there is no unequivocal evidence that maenadic ritual could induce an epiphany through the sensed presence mechanism.

3.1. Unexpected sensory information and agency detection

The cognitive science of religion (CSR) offers an alternative theory to explain why and how the maenadic ritual form might induce a feeling that there was a presence nearby. This is a theory proposed by the anthropologist Stewart Guthrie to explain the ubiquity of beliefs about supernatural beings and spirits across all human cultures and is based on how our brains deal with unexpected sensory data. In order to explain this phenomenon, it is first necessary to understand how our minds deal with unexpected sensory information.

In Chapter 1 section 2 the theory of predictive processing was introduced, which describes how our minds make sense of information about the world in order to make predictions about the most beneficial course of action. Predictive processing also explains what happens when our minds are presented with data that is unexpected.

Imagine that you are sitting in your kitchen and suddenly notice a cat sitting on the counter. Your memory returns the information that your neighbour owns a black cat who has been known to come in through your kitchen window. If the cat in your kitchen is black, you may deduce that it is your neighbour's cat, and may further infer that the kitchen window has been left open again. You may decide to hoist Sooty off the counter and shoo him out of the door or to give him a cuddle, depending on your preferences. Faced with new sensory data, and drawing on your memory banks,

[67] Maenadic similes are also found to correlate to the symptoms of Gilbert Rouget's trance state, discussed in Chapter 4, section 3.
[68] Cheyne 2012: 225-227.
[69] On the altitude of maenadic sites, see Chapter 3 section 3.3.
[70] Cheyne 2012: 226-229.

your brain has produced a 'schema' or model of what is happening and, crucially, suggested what actions you need to take in order either to avoid harm (Sooty's paws are *always* dirty and he wipes them all over your clean counter) or to gain benefits (Sooty is a very patient cat who doesn't mind you cuddling him while you unwind from the day's stress). Your recognition of Sooty's presence and the presentation of possible courses of action is an example of predictive processing making sense of explicable data through an existing schema.

However, if the cat in your kitchen is *white*, this represents unexpected sensory data. Your schema does not have an explanation and needs to be updated. Your brain performs a fast scan of other known neighbourhood cats (none are white), assesses the possibility that you are hallucinating or that Sooty has changed colour overnight (unlikely), and checks for any other information that may be relevant (there was a moving van in the road yesterday – could there be a new neighbour with a white cat?). You do not know for sure what the appearance of the white cat means, but you can update your schema to include the new sensory information (a black *or* a white cat may appear in my kitchen), and perhaps resolve to drop in on the new arrivals, or at least close the kitchen window.

In a sunny kitchen, the sight of a cat appearing is an unambiguous phenomenon. The light is bright, the space is familiar, the cat is recognisably a cat. This is a situation of 'high sensory reliability', meaning that it allows you a clear understanding of what your senses are telling you. Situations such as that of the maenadic ritual are known as having 'low sensory reliability'; the information provided by the sense organs comprises confusing or mixed signals, blurred by the low and variable light and the effects of sounds in an unfamiliar landscape. The sensory data your brain is receiving is incomplete and an accurate causal model cannot be generated to describe your environment and the possible risks. The process of checking sensory data against the predictions returns the equivalent of an error message that says 'error-checking failed due to inadequate information'.

Such unexplained sensory phenomena cause problems for the brain's predictive models and tend to put us on high alert that something may be wrong. To return to the 'sudden cat appearance' analogy, sometimes there is no explanation for the white cat's appearance: if you are alone in a closed room with no windows and a suddenly feel a furry body brushing against your ankles, there is no ready solution to account for this data. Knowing for sure that there cannot be a cat in the room, you will probably be startled and reflexively shrink back. You may wonder if you've just had a paranormal experience of a ghost cat. Similarly, when a branch snaps in the forest, or the pipes in the heating system creak at night, it is not unusual to immediately think 'That's a burglar/stalker/serial killer!' Threat reports like this clearly have an evolutionary benefit for early

humans: an individual who can predict the presence of a threat from unexplained sensory data is more likely to be ready to defend itself and survive to rear offspring should that threat be present. The phenomenon of inferring the presence of an entity in this way is known as 'agency detection' and has been argued to hold a key position in explaining humanity's apparent predisposition to conceive of - and sometimes to see - gods and spirits present in the mortal realm.

The original formulation of agency detection as proposed by the anthropologist Stewart Guthrie described the tendency as a cognitive 'device'.[71] This was a specialised cognitive process which, once triggered by unexplained phenomena, runs like a computer programme and detects or predicts the presence of an active anthropomorphic agent or presence- and, moreover that the agent is likely to represent a threat.[72] For the purposes of ensuring the safety of the individual, it is better for the device to report a false positive (thinking that there *is* a burglar when there isn't) than a false negative (thinking there *isn't* when there is). The original model therefore predicted that the agent detection device would have evolved to be 'hyperactive'; that is, it would detect agents where there were none, particularly in threatening situations or when the incoming sensory information is potentially confusing or misleading.[73] The device was dubbed the 'hyperactive agent detection device' or HADD.[74] The HADD theory has undergone several iterations and refinements since its inception, but the basic principle – that the brain has a tendency to 'glitch' under particular circumstances and incorrectly ascribe agency to random data – remains a fundamental part of the cognitive approach to understanding religion.

Guthrie's original formulation sought to explain the existence of religious beliefs by postulating a biologically driven brain function, responding to bottom up sensory data, that would make humans more likely to imagine anthropomorphic agents in their environment. Barrett and Lanman's moderation of the model rather saw it as strengthening socially-derived religious concepts; providing reinforcements of existing belief structures through personal experiences.[75] The current model of agency detection has moved away from positing a single 'device' responsible, towards an interaction between several processes, including the model of predictive coding described above which may be informed by taught or intuitively-derived belief systems.[76] This model suggests that

---

[71] Guthrie 1980: argument laid out at 187-189. Developed further by Pascal Boyer and Justin Barrett: Guthrie 1993, Boyer 1994, Barrett 2000: particularly at 30-31, Boyer 2001: 51-91, Barrett and Lanman 2008.
[72] Guthrie's development of erroneous anthropomorphism: Guthrie 1993. Scott Atran and Ara Norenzayan proposed that the default interpretation is that the agent will not be friendly, that the brain treats such unexplained agents as potential threats: Atran and Norenzayan 2004.
[73] See Barrett 2000: 31-32, Boyer 2001: Ch. 4, particularly 143-145.
[74] Barrett 2000.
[75] Explicitly stated at Barrett and Lanman 2008: 116.
[76] Andersen 2019

when bottom up sensory data is unreliable, the brain relies more heavily on the top down interpretative predictions drawn from experience and knowledge. If the subject expects an agent to be present, this is the prediction or schema that becomes dominant, and further incoming data is interpreted against this prior expectation.[77]

3.2. Agency detection in the laboratory setting

The theoretical model of the HADD as developed by Guthrie, Boyer, and Barrett proposed that conditions of low sensory reliability, sense of threat, and predictive schemata would increase the rate of agent detection. There has been a series of experiments conducted in this area, testing which of these factors affect how accurately test subjects pick out human figures or voice disguised among white noise or visual distractors. They also test how frequently 'false positives' are made - identifications of such figures and voices where none in fact are present.

The most recent results are still under discussion on both the theoretical and the experimental sides of the discipline. The main developments discussed below are broadly arranged thematically by agency-detection trigger (sensory deprivation, threat, priming). Some studies will appear in several sections as their findings relate to different triggers. The research discussed is not exhaustive and fuller lists of practical experimentation can be found in the comprehensive literature reviews collated by Marc Andersen and David Maij and Michiel van Elk.[78]

3.2.1. Low sensory reliability

Two laboratory-based experiments have assessed the role of low sensory reliability in triggering agent detection.[79] Michiel van Elk asked subjects to identify whether or not a human figure was present in a pattern of light-points. [80] If a figure was present, it was disguised by or masked with a varying number of additional light-point, or, in some cases, there might be no figure present at all, simply a random scattering of light-points. Van Elk's results showed that, unsurprisingly, as the number of visual distractors increased, participants were less able to correctly identify human figures. Participants were also more likely to identify a human figure where there was not one present than to miss a disguised figure.

---

[77] For summaries of the development of the original HADD model and subsequent refinements, see van Leeuwen and van Elk 2019, Andersen 2019.

[78] Andersen 2019, Maij and van Elk 2019. Note that both these works contain reference to the experiments by the authors and their teams published in print in 2019, but which were available online from 2017: Andersen, et al. 2019, Maij, et al. 2019.

[79] van Elk 2013, Andersen, et al. 2019. Both studies were looking primarily at cues such as pre-existing beliefs and mood (the role of belief and expectation in both these studies will be discussed below).

[80] van Elk 2013. The chief variable that van Elk was testing for was belief in the paranormal.

Marc Andersen and his teams at Aarhus and Bielefeld Universities also used sensory reliability as a variable in their study using virtual reality headsets.[81] Participants were asked to click a button if they identified the presence of a 'being' in each of two forest environments; the first was brightly lit (high sensory reliability) and the second was dim and misty (low sensory reliability). Neither environment in fact contained a 'being', but subjects were more than twice as likely to identify a being when shown the low sensory reliability environment than when they were shown the high sensory reliability environment.

Disruption of sensory data in the form of partial sensory deprivation is also implicated in 'sensed presence' events. In the 1980s, the psychologist Michael Persinger theorised that paranormal experiences of gods or spirits occurred in some individuals due to a faulty connection in neural wiring between the two hemispheres of the brain.[82] Input processed in one hemisphere was not accurately transmitted to the other hemisphere, resulting in that information being identified as a separate entity, a 'non-self' presence which he termed a 'sensed presence'. In order to test this theory, subjects were administered a low-level electrical current applied to the cable of brain tissue that joins the two hemispheres, disrupting its ability to transmit signals. Persinger found that two thirds of subjects who received the electrical disruption experienced a 'sensed presence' (compared to around 30% in the control group) and concluded that his theory of hemispherical disturbance causing sensed presence was proven.[83]

In 2005, a team from Uppsala University led by Pehr Granqvist attempted to replicate Persinger's findings. They found however no significant difference in reports of sensed presence between the group which had received the electric current, and their control group, with 30% of both groups reporting the effect.[84] They also noted that the helmet used to deliver the electrical current – an adapted motorcycle helmet – meant that subjects were put under partial sensory deprivation (visual and auditory), and concluded that this may have been partly responsible for the 30% success rate in inducing a sensed presence.

[81] Andersen, et al. 2019. The chief variable that Andersen was testing for was expectation.
[82] Dr. Persinger has performed multiple experiments of this type, dating back to the 1980s: Persinger 1987. The description below is taken from Persinger and Healey 2002, which provides a full bibliography of his publications. The problems with Persinger's method will be discussed in the following section, but his results are still illuminating for the purposes of this discussion.
[83] Persinger and Healey 2002: 534-535.
[84] Granqvist, et al. 2005. Persinger's own experiment in 2002 had shown that his control group had a 30% reporting rate of a sensed presence, but he labelled this iatrogenic: Persinger and Healey 2002: 539.

3.2.2. Threat and fear

It is very hard to induce a sense of genuine threat in a laboratory setting.[85] David Maij and his colleagues tested subjects' propensity to identify agency having primed them first with 'threat cues', including showing them images of snakes, playing them horror film-style music, or using a VR headset to simulate a 'creepy basement' environment.[86] The results were *not* in line with the agency detection theory, which proposed that threat should make agency detection more likely. [87] Test subjects who had received 'threat priming', were overall slightly *less* likely to identify an active agent in disguised patterns than subjects who had not received such priming. This would seem to undermine the proposal that feeling threatened would increase the likelihood of agency detection processes being triggered.

However, the threat priming cues were unrelated to the tests that were used to assess agency detection but were simply there to raise anxiety levels. The subjects primed with the image of a snake, for example, were not asked to identify snakes in the agency detection task. This could be corrected by using specifically designed VR environments that included threat cues appropriate to the location.[88] Additionally, 'threat priming' did not actually have much effect on the anxiety levels reported by the subjects. Even with the 'scary basement' VR environment, the average post-priming anxiety score never went above 2.82, indicating only a slight increase in anxiety from the baseline of 2.[89] While subjects could be subjected to a more frightening VR experience, potentially raising their anxiety to ethics committee-challenging levels, there may be a fundamental flaw with testing anxiety in the lab. The environment of a laboratory is one in which subjects may not exactly feel comfortable, but they do feel that someone is in charge.[90]

It is also difficult to accurately assess how afraid a subject was in hindsight. Retrospective interviews conducted by Kirsten Barnes and Nicholas Gibson with subjects who claimed to have had supernatural experiences found that an experience involving an entity was more likely to have

---

[85] Andersen's team had in fact taken pains to select an environment that was not too frightening; they had rejected a night-time forest environment and had not observed any fear-effect among their test subjects during experimentation: Andersen et al. 2019: 59-60.
[86] Maij, et al. 2019.
[87] Found in Guthrie 1993, Barrett 2004: Ch.3, Atran 2011, cf. Barrett 2000: 31-32, Boyer 2001: Ch. 4, particularly 143-145, Atran and Norenzayan 2004.
[88] This was also suggested by Andersen's team following their forest environment tests: Andersen, et al. 2019: 60-61.
[89] The control group (whose who received neutral cues) reported average anxiety levels of around 2, the subject groups receiving threat cues reported average anxiety levels of 1.87 (images of snakes), 2.55 (scary music) and 2.82 (VR scary basement).
[90] One of the common factors in the sensed presence experiences recorded by Barnes and Gibson was feeling that circumstances were not under control: Barnes and Gibson 2013: 59.

occurred in an environment that the subject described as uncomfortable or threatening.[91] Those individuals who identified the presence as a ghost reported feeling more frightened than those who interpreted it as being an angel. Barnes and Gibson proposed that the difference in interpretation may have affected how frightening the individual remembered the environment as having been, with an angel's presence being more reassuring than that of a ghost and therefore the encounter being remembered as less threatening.[92] The *interpretation* of the event affected how the subsequent narrative was formed and how the retrospective emotions were understood and described.

3.2.3. Priming, belief, and expectation

This leads to the third factor identified in the HADD theory: that pre-existing belief or 'priming' can affect how likely it is that agency detection will be triggered. In a lab setting, there are two distinct forms of priming; first, the instructions and cues given over the course of the experiment can affect what the subject expects is going to happen (as with the threat triggers used in the VR experiments described above) and, secondly, the subject has a range of pre-existing assumptions about the world based on their life experiences and cultural conditioning.

The effects of pre-existing belief have been tested for in a range of experiments. In the interviews conducted by Barnes and Gibson, a pre-existing belief in god was found to be a significant predictor of whether that individual had had a sensed presence experience.[93] The beliefs did not have to be spiritual in a conventional religious sense: that is, they are not dependant on a Judeo-Christian belief system. The Uppsala experiments, discussed above, found that, on analysing the information provided by subjects from the pre-testing questionnaires, there was a strong correlation between 'sensed presence' and subjects holding 'new age' beliefs or expressing interest in unusual and mind-altering experiences, whether or not they had received the electrical current. Michiel van Elk found that believers in the paranormal were more likely than sceptics to identify a human figure in the control tests in which no figure was actually present.[94] Researchers at the University of Helsinki found that believers in the paranormal were more prone than sceptics to detect faces in arrangements of inanimate objects, even when the pictures had been selected because they did *not* appear to contain faces.[95]

Once again, Maij's experiments offer a different picture, with no correlation between supernatural beliefs and agency detection, but, overall, his test subjects reported a low level of pre-existing belief

[91] Ibid. at 55.
[92] Ibid. at 57.
[93] Ibid. at 56.
[94] van Elk 2013: 1043-1044.
[95] Riekki, et al. 2013.

in paranormal and religious beings.[96] These were not people who had previously expressed a tendency to see invisible agents at work in the world in their everyday lives, so it is perhaps unsurprising that they registered higher levels of resistance to doing so under test conditions. Priming, in terms of their pre-existing belief structure, did not predispose them to interpret ambiguous data as an agent.

Beliefs of this kind are not something that can be switched on and off in a laboratory to see if a single individual responds differently to an environment depending on whether or not they believe in supernatural beings. It is possible though to manipulate a specific expectation in a particular scenario. In Andersen's VR forest environment subjects were divided into two groups; one group were told there was a low probability that their environment contained a 'being', the other that there was a high probability.[97] Subjects in the high probability group were on average more than ten times more likely to detect a being than those in the low probability group.[98] The differences attributed to priming were much greater than the slight tendencies found in studies which assessed the effects of paranormal beliefs.[99] Andersen's findings suggest that expectation brought on by instruction is at least as powerful as personally-held beliefs in eliciting a sensed presence or detecting an agent.

3.3. Summary: factors that affect agency detection

The findings reviewed here show, then, that the picture is not quite as simple as the original model of the HADD would predict. Although bottom-up sensory information has a role in agency detection, the information has to be interpreted according to schemata in order to make a positive identification of an entity being nearby. The urgency created by a sense of threat, which was predicted to increase the likelihood of detecting agency in the theoretical model, has not been found to have an effect, though the experiments so far have had methodological problems. Furthermore, the type of belief or expectation that informs the predictive schemata has been shown to have variable effects, with informed expectation of a presence being more effective than pre-existing religious beliefs.

All the factors must work together to induce an experience of agency in one's surroundings. The most recently-proposed model, the Interactive Religious Experience Model (IREM) proposed by Michiel van Elk and Neil van Leeuwen, has been criticized precisely for being 'top heavy', down-

---

[96] Scoring an average of around 2.5 on a scale in which 1 was 'not at all' and 7 indicated a high level of belief: Maij, et al. 2019: 28, 29-30.
[97] Andersen, et al. 2019: 56.
[98] 1.26 average detections per scenario, compared to 0.1 average in the low probability group: ibid. at 58-59.
[99] Such as Riekki, et al. 2013, van Elk 2013.

playing the role in agency detection of evolutionary pressures and sensory input in favour of the influence of culturally-instilled schemata.[100] Furthermore, variation in circumstances and surroundings can significantly change the effects of priming, and these factors must be taken into consideration when using such research data.

4. Agency detection variables in maenadic ritual

Returning to the maenads on the mountain, we have examined research on three factors thought to contribute to triggering agency detection: low sensory reliability, sense of threat, and cultural priming. The effects of threat have not been tested sufficiently to assess whether or not this might have contributed to inducing a sensed presence. Low sensory reliability has a moderate effect in detecting an agent, but the effect of priming varies considerably depending on the type of beliefs held about supernatural agents and on pre-test instructions.

The next task is to seek evidence for these factors in the maenadic ritual itself. This pattern of this discussion will follow the description of the factors in the previous section, with one difference. As there is little information about how – or whether - ritual maenads were formally prepared for their ritual, I have separated out the factor 'Priming, belief, and expectation' into 'Priming from pre-existing belief and preparation', which will discuss priming factors that might be present before the festivities started, and 'Priming from ritual activity', which looks at the activities immediately surrounding the ritual which might have provided priming.

4.1. Low sensory reliability

The maenadic ritual environment has three elements which would have contributed to low sensory reliability: it is night-time, it is lit by torches, and it is on a mountainside. Imagining how these sensory elements would have been experienced by ritual participants conjures an environment full of ambiguous auditory and visual cues in which it would have been difficult for individuals to create a clear mental representation of what is surrounding them. The light from torches would have been blown by the night breezes, which would have also caught the tree branches, creating a kaleidoscope of blazing light and shifting shadows. The winter winds blowing through the trees would also provide texture to the soundscape, and the slopes of the mountain would have been the home of both predatory and prey animals, carrying out their own nightly rituals. The Bronze Age clearances had driven wildlife to just the type of landscape where we also find maenads: uncultivated, heavily wooded areas, well away from the cities.[101] Large nocturnal beasts, including

---

[100] van Leeuwen and van Elk 2019, with commentaries and response by the authors.

[101] Hughes 1994: 76-77, MacKinnon 2014b: 204-207. Mountains as a location for hunting: Soph. *Phil*. 936-7, 954-956, Arrian, *Cyn.* 34.1-36.4.

lions and boar, were all found in the wooded uplands, and their passage through the undergrowth would certainly have been audible.[102]

Aside from the combination of darkness and shifting fire-light, there are other factors which will have shaped the experience of the ritual practitioners. The ritual activities were themselves noisy with shouting or singing and banging drums or cymbals.[103] The landscape would have provided its own sonic accompaniment to the dance; the echoes of ritual shouts and urgent drums would have sounded very different throbbing from the towering cliffs of Parnassus compared to how they had sounded during the procession through the city.[104] During her 'maenadic pilgrimage' up Parnassus, Krista Ubbels also noted that clay pipes in the streams fed by natural springs made a rhythmic booming sound where the water struck them: there is no evidence that there was anything like that in place when the original Thyiades danced there, but certainly the rushing water would have been heard.[105]

Participants would have been further blurring their impression of their surroundings by tossing their heads in a dance-move strongly associated with maenads.[106] This 'head tossing' is a characteristic pose of maenads in vase-painting that appears in maenadic iconography around 500 BCE though it appears earlier in a non-Dionysian context.[107] If we apply Osborne's theory that iconographic changes occurring in the early fifth century reflect a shift from representing external activity to expressing 'inner life',[108] we should expect the sudden appearance of the pose in maenadic iconography to make a point about what is happening inside the figure's mind. This certainly seems to be reflected in Thomas Carpenter's analysis of the use of the pose: he concluded that, when found in the black-figure works, the pose represented the act of singing but that by the second half of the fifth century it was most commonly used to denote ecstatic ritual.[109] Eurydice Kefalidou associates it with a pathos formula found in range of depictions of *mania*, including that of Salmoneus and Dionysos himself as well as maenads.[110] Something about the pose presumably, then, made it suitable as a marker of the sort of excitement and even *mania* associated with maenadic ritual.

---

[102] MacKinnon 2014a: 163-169. On mountain-dwelling boar and lions; *Od*. 19.430 ff, Hdt. 7.125-126.
[103] On shouting and the use of drums, see Chapter 3, 3.4, 4.3, and Chapter 4, 3.1.2, with the cognitive effects of drums described in Chapter 4, 4.3.
[104] The relatively new field of auditory archaeology may add some new insights to the atmospheric effects of echoes in this landscape: e.g. Mills 2016: 60-65.
[105] Ubbels 2008: 14-15.
[106] The evidence for this dance-move is described in Chapter 3, section 4.4.
[107] Carpenter 1997: 83-84, Moraw 1998: from p. 63 on 'ecstatic' dance poses, Kefalidou 2009.
[108] Osborne 2018 discussed in Chapter 4 section 3.3.
[109] Carpenter 1997: 83-84.
[110] Kefalidou 2009.

From a physiological point of view, this movement would have caused an imbalance in the inner ear chambers which govern our balance, known as vestibular disruption. The vestibular system interacts with somatosensory processing, the brain function that interprets the individual's position in space,[111] and neurological research suggests that vestibular malfunctions can inhibit the brain's ability to model its environment.[112] The effects of vestibular disruption are particularly significant when the subject is attempting to navigate with limited visual input to help calibrate the signals from the vestibular system.[113] By disrupting their vestibular systems through repeated head-shaking, in conditions which at best provided uncertain and unreliable sensory input, the maenadic dancers were actively interfering with their brains' ability to make sense of their surroundings and increasing the likelihood of the brain having difficulty processing the incoming signals.

The model of predictive coding proposes that, in order to avoid sensory overload and the resultant cognitive depletion, the brain employs schemata which tell it where to direct its attention.[114] Attention is directed according to what information is the most salient under the specific circumstances: if you are walking in a tiger-infested jungle, your attention is more likely to be drawn to sinister movements in the undergrowth than the flight of butterflies. Where sensory data is at best unreliable, the brain relies more heavily on the predictions drawn from schemata than it does where sensory data is clear and unambiguous.[115] With maenadic ritual, how participants' brains processed the darkness and shifting shadows will have been strongly influenced by their predictive schemata which, given the infrequency of ritual performance, would have been drawn predominantly from cultural knowledge.

4.2. Threat and fear

Laboratory experimentation did not find a significant relationship between fear or threat priming and agency detection (Section 3.2.2 above), but, as discussed, the methodologies employed did not actually induce a significant level of threat awareness. As it is one of the three factors identified in the agency detection theory, it is worth briefly assessing whether or not the maenadic ritual environment could have induced a sense of threat.

Firstly, the darkness alone might cause fear in participants. Other ancient Greek rituals also incorporated sensory deprivation due to environmental factors, often with a powerful emotional effect; the oracle of Trophonius and the final revelation of the Eleusinian Mysteries also utilised the

[111] Lopez and Blanke 2011.
[112] Tian and Poeppel 2010, Mast and Ellis 2017.
[113] Seemungal 2017: 25-26, 37-40.
[114] Norman and Bobrow 1975, Folk, et al. 1992, Schjødt and Jensen 2018.
[115] Schjødt and Jensen 2018: 327, suggesting that many rituals use darkness precisely for this reason.

effects of darkness on the individual.[116] The tendency to turn towards the light and associate it with life, reason, and happiness is widely found in Greek literature; conversely, night is associated with terror, death and malignity.[117] Hesiod makes Night one of the first children of Chaos, personifies her as 'gloomy' or 'deadly', and names her children loathsome, ruinous, and painful.[118] In the darkness, the sounds of the mountain itself, the sounds of pipes, bull-roarers, and tympana create a confusing and possibly frightening soundscape: in a fragment of *Edonians* Aeschylus lists the bewildering variety of sounds, calling it βαρυταρβής, terrifying.[119]

However, in Dionysian cult specifically, there seems to be an emphasis on darkness *not* being threatening. In the Derveni papyrus, Zeus approaches Night to find out his future; she is the one 'who knows all oracles' (to use Alberto Bernabé's translation of the *hapax* πανομφευουσα), and in Euripides' *Bakchai,* Dionysos tells Pentheus that his rites are practiced in the dark, as the darkness itself holds solemnity (σεμνότητ᾽ ἔχει σκότος).[120] As well as – or even instead of – inducing fear, the darkness might bring the individual a sense of wonder as they approached these vast and mysterious powers. The effects of repetitive beats *might* be terrifying but might also foster a sense of group unity which might allay fears.[121]

Wild places including mountain tops might cause a heightened sense of threat. Those who lived in mountainous regions or regularly visited the mountain for hunting or travel might develop some familiarity with the environment; however, the women who performed maenadic ritual were unlikely to have the same experiences.[122] Of the likely sites of maenadic ritual, the very least arduous journey a participant might face would be the 19km trek from Pella to Mount Kyrros; by contrast, Mount Cithaeron is more than 32km from the city of Thebes, and the Athenian Thyiades faced not only the 160km journey from Athens to Delphi, but then the 35km trip from the town to

[116] Trophonius: Plut. Mor. 590a-592e. Eleusis: Yulia Ustinova has worked extensively on the experiential effects of darkness, particularly in caves, on ritual participants: Ustinova 2009b, Ustinova 2009a, Ustinova 2013. On Eleusis: Pausanias 1.38.7, cf. *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 336-338, 478-9. Kevin Clinton gives a stirring description of how the opening of the telesterion at Eleusis might have appeared to initiands: Clinton 1993: 118-119, Clinton 2007: 353-354. The archaeology of uses of light and darkness in temples and rituals are discussed by Boutsikas 2017.
[117] Lloyd 1966: 42-43. Homer uses φάος to describe deliverance (*Il*. 6.6, 15.741, 16.95, 17.615), and to look upon the sun is used synonymously with being alive (*Il*. 18.61, *Od*. 4.540).
[118] Epithets of Night: ἐρεβεννή, ὀλοή; Hes., *Theog*. 213, 224. On the characteristics of Night and her children in *Theogony*, see e.g. Solmsen 1982: 6-7, Rowe 1983: 127-128.
[119] Aesch. fr. 57, discussed Ustinova 2018: 175.
[120] Zeus' visit to Night is found in the Orphic Fragment 6 in Bernabé 2004, discussed further in Bernabé 2002: 103-104, Bernabé 2007: 104-106. Darkness bringing wisdom: Eur. *Bacch.* 485-486.
[121] On pro-social effects of drumming, see for example Kokal, et al. 2011 with references. The cognitive effects of drumming on participants were discussed in Chapter 4 sections 4.2 and 4.3.
[122] This is the case even in old age, when the social and familial restrictions on their freedoms might be expected to have waned. Louise Pratt 2000 argues convincingly that elderly women did not enjoy an increased freedom of movement. On familiarity with mountains among some (male) groups, see Roy 1999.

the mountain. These are not journeys that would be undertaken on a frequent basis, and there is a noticeable dearth of evidence for maenadic ritual in regions like Arcadia, where mountains were in plentiful supply and inhabitants would be more familiar with the environment.[123] Maenadic ritual participants are unlikely to have developed familiarity with mountain landscapes and would have drawn on cultural knowledge – a schema - about imaginary mountains to a higher degree than would travellers who had some personal experience. The world they entered was both the actual geography of the mountainside, with its attendant sensory effects, and the concept of 'mountainside' that existed within the Greek imagination, inhabited by gods and monsters.

The schema associated with mountains as a conceptual landscape in the Greek imagination is often a place of danger. Richard Buxton identifies three characteristics of the idea of mountains in Greek imagination, which he terms 'wild' – that mountains are the place of monsters and violence, 'reversals' - that they are a place where 'the distinctions of the city are collapsed' - and 'before' – that humans were thought to have originally lived on mountains, and in myth and metaphor spend their youth there.[124] The three terms are linked through the mythological mountain *topos* being an environment in which humans come into contact with gods and monsters, with their own primitive origins, and with excluded or marginal members of their own civilization. Through the stories of these contacts, the Greeks could explore the limits and limitations of their own humanity.

But ritual maenads were not simply women from the city anymore; through their ritual preparations they had partially suppressed their own selves in favour of the identity of the mythical maenads, who they might imagine would feel very much at home in such wild environments. Nysa, where Dionysos was raised and the home of his first *thiasos*, is an idealised pastoral idyll, a holy place filled with woody glades, caves, and uninterrupted forests.[125] The *nebris*, the spotted fawnskin worn by ritual maenads, is also found in vase-painting worn by hunters and nymphs, both characters who would have been familiar with the mountain.[126] The awe-struck Herdsman in *Bakchai* recounts that, when the Theban women begin their dance, the whole of nature moves with them, the mountain itself and all the animals, and 'nothing was left unmoved by their running' (723-727). The act of likening themselves to the mythical maenads seems to make the mountain less threatening.

The assessment for presence of threat priming in maenadic ritual is, ultimately, inconclusive. Based on how darkness and mountains are described in the poetic sources, both these features of the

---

[123] Hesychius defines ληναί as 'βάκχαι. Ἀρκάδες', which may suggest an Arcadian *oreibasia*, but this is very slight evidence.

[124] Buxton 1992: particularly at 7-10.

[125] *Il*. 6.133, *Hymn. Hom. Dio*. 1.8-9, also Hymn 26, Soph. *Ant.* 1131-1336.

[126] Harden 2015 examines the uses of the *nebris* in archaic art.

ritual's environment could well have been experienced as threatening. But, on the other hand, there is also some evidence that in a Dionysian, and particularly in a maenadic context, threat perception was (or at least was intended) to be reduced. The mountain may still have loomed large in the imagination as a place of transformation but, by wearing the *nebris* and behaving like a mythical maenad, the ritual maenad was asserting her right to be there.

4.3. Priming from pre-existing belief and preparation

Marc Andersen's experiment (discussed above, sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3) showed that subjects who were primed to expect a 95% chance of seeing a being in the VR forest experiment were significantly more likely to do so. By comparing the results of Andersen's experiments with the Helsinki experiments, it appears that pre-testing instruction had a greater effect on the number of false positives subjects experienced than any pre-existing beliefs.[127]

Entering the discussion on the existence of 'belief' in ancient Greek religion is not the purpose of this thesis, but there are some points that should be made. Firstly, there is a growing body of evidence for what Henrik Versnel calls 'low intensity beliefs' in ancient Greek religious thought.[128] Low intensity beliefs are not the same as Thomas Harrison's 'Belief with a capital B' that is found in reflective theology.[129] They are, rather, beliefs that are held implicitly and are rarely questioned or even articulated in everyday life. They correlate broadly to what cognitive scientists call 'intuitive beliefs', defined by Jennifer Larson as 'automatically generated by domain-specific mental tools' and which may simply be thought of as 'common sense' or 'second nature'.[130] Because they are automatically generated under particular circumstances, low intensity or intuitive beliefs inform the schemata generated by our minds during predictive processing under the relevant context.

In section 2 of this chapter, I explored the evidence for Dionysos being thought of as an epiphanic god, concluding that there was considerable evidence that Dionysos would be thought to appear in some form during his festivals. This is suggestive of a widely held, low intensity, intuitive belief in the possibility of Dionysos' epiphany. In all forms of literature – dramatic, epic, prose – there is evidence for a low intensity belief that gods do appear in the world in some way and for the belief that proper rituals can bring about a safe epiphanic experience. Other than in the deeply reflective philosophical works, the notion of epiphany permeates all aspects of how the Greeks wrote about their gods, suggesting that it was a central part of Greek intuitive thinking about their gods.[131] If, as I argued in

---

[127] Riekki, et al. 2013, Andersen, et al. 2019, discussed in 3.2.3 above.
[128] Versnel 2011: 546-554.
[129] Harrison 2016, Eidinow 2019.
[130] Larson 2016: 66-67, 375-6.
[131] On 'embeddedness' as a characteristic of a successful religious belief, see Sosis 2019. On transmission of religious beliefs, see Boyer 1994, Sperber 1996.

Chapter 1 section 2.3, even Athenian women of the classical period had a reasonable degree of contact with the art and literature created by Athenian men, it seems reasonable that at least some of the marginally less restricted Hellenistic elite women who danced in Miletus and Magnesia would also have come into contact with such products and absorbed the intuitive beliefs embedded in them.

There is no source that tells us for certain and in detail how ritual maenads were prepared for their experience. Evidence from other, better-documented cult activities, however, demonstrates that pre-activity preparation was common in Greek cult, particularly in activities that have some similarities to maenadism in terms of emotional content or female participation. Using these examples, a set of criteria can be identified which can then be applied to maenadism, at the least demonstrating that there was a suitable opportunity for such instruction to take place and the expectations to be formed.

One of the best-known opportunities in the Athenian world for provision of ritual instruction is that of the *arrhephoroi*. Two little girls lived on the Acropolis for just short of a year, involved in the preparation of the *peplos* to be presented to Athena at the following Panathenaia festival.[132] During their sojourn on the Acropolis, they had responsibilities which they were expected to discharge to a certain standard, and, bearing in mind their young age, it must be assumed that they did this under the guidance of the priestess of Athena Polias and the *parthenoi* who performed the bulk of the weaving.[133]

Other, less prolonged, periods of ritual preparation are found in the incubation periods before consulting an oracle or when awaiting healing at a temple of Asklepios. The second century CE *Lex Sacra* from the Pergamene Asklepieion contains detailed instructions for pilgrims preparing for healing.[134] Petitioners wanting to be healed by Asklepios would stay within the temple precinct, where there were cult personnel on site who cared for the patients and ensured that precinct rules were followed.[135] A similar pattern is found in the activities around consultation of the cave oracle of

---

[132] The ritual and evidence are discussed in e.g. Burkert 1985: 228-229, Dillon 2003: 57-60, Connelly 2007: 30-31. The length of stay on the Acropolis is estimated from the duties of the *arrhephoroi*, from beginning the *peplos* in the month of Pyansepsion, to the nocturnal rite of the Arrhephoria in Skirophorion: described in Boutsikas and Hannah 2012.

[133] Aleshire and Lambert 2003, discussing the reconstructed decree *IG* II^2 1060 + *IG* II^2 1036, in which the fathers of *arrephoroi* request that they might make a dedication as their daughters performed their roles appropriately (lines 11-17).

[134] Petsalis-Diomidis 2005, Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 222-227.

[135] Though much of our evidence comes from the Roman period: Aristid. *Or.* 48.41 mentions a nurse, and *Sacred Tales* 2.21 suggests that there were people present with the patients that were expected to give instruction, although in this case it was not required due to the enthusiasm of the patients.

Trophonius in Lebadeia.[136] Pausanias gives an account of the process: petitioners would stay for several days in a sacred building, sacrificing daily until a *mantis,* examining the entrails, provided approval that the petitioner was ready to enter the cave. The petitioner was then washed and anointed by two boys and taken by priests to complete further preparation under their supervision before entering the cave.[137]

These three accounts have several similarities: the individual taking part spends time away from home, in a temple or sacred place, performing prescribed activities under guidance from more experienced or priestly advisors. At the end of their period away there is a climactic event involving an epiphany or brush with divine power, after which they can return home, their ritual completed.[138] The sojourn in the temple of the Arrephoroi culminated in a night-time ritual in which they carried sacred objects into a subterranean passage, under strict instructions not to open the baskets,[139] and to exchange their baskets for another vessel down in the dark, before returning to the open air and their families.[140] The incubation period at the Asklepieion, leading up to the healing epiphanic dream, has been compared to mystic initiation; both climax in a transformative closeness between god and mortal, for which the mortal has to make proper preparations or risk divine punishment.[141] Plutarch's description of a young man's experience consulting the oracle of Trophonius has been compared to an out-of-body experience in which the subject felt joy and awe, and heard a voice reveal mysteries to him.[142] As with incubation at the Asklepieion, local stories describe punishment if the proper preparations for consulting the oracle were not made.[143]

If an epiphanic experience is the climax of maenadic ritual, we might expect to see a similar pattern in the preparations: time spent away from home, possibly with a group of other ritual participants, and the opportunity for an experienced religious official to provide some tutelary instruction. And, indeed, there is evidence that would support the comparison. The Athenian Thyiades spent around a week on the road, travelling the 100 or so miles from Athens to Delphi, stopping to dance along the way, and this journey would have provided ample opportunity for some sort of instruction on

---

[136] Discussed in Ustinova 2009a.
[137] Paus. 9.39.6-11. Plutarch describes the vision apparently bestowed on a petitioner named Timarchus (*Mor.* 590a-592e); though he does not provide much detail of the consultation process, what he describes agrees with the account in Pausanias.
[138] This pattern is of course also found in many other rituals, particularly initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries: Clinton 2003, Bremmer 2014.
[139] The aetiological myth warned that opening the box might result in their being punished with madness and suicide: Paus. 1.18.2, Hyginius, *Fabulae*, 166.
[140] Paus. 1.27.3, Harpokration s.v. *arrhephorein.*
[141] As befell the curious Aeschines, *IG* IV^2, 1, nos 121–2 A11, cited and discussed in context of mystic initiation in Petridou 2016: 179-184.
[142] Plut. *De gen.* 21-22 (*Mor.* 590b-592f), vividly described by Ustinova 2009a: 274-275.
[143] Paus. 9.39.12.

what to expect to be passed on.[144] The tasks of the Theban maenads in Magnesia were to 'provide rites and noble customs' (αἳ δ' ὑμεῖν δώσουσι καὶ ὄργια καὶ νόμιμα ἐσθλὰ) as well as setting up bacchic *thiasoi* in the city.[145] This implies a passing-on of knowledge from an experienced ritual practitioner to their new *thiasos* companions. It is also possible that the 'sacred things' (τέλεστρα, *LSAM* 48.15) that the Milesian priestess had to provide for women conducting Dionysian initiations would have included information as well as objects: the apparently similar initiations conducted by Glaucothea for Sabazios included readings from a book, so it is possible that Dionysian initiations also included a transmission of knowledge.[146]

4.4. Priming from ritual activity

Moving on, then, to context-specific priming activity for the possibility of Dionysos' epiphany during ritual, the most obvious form of context-specific instruction is the mimetic act of taking on the role of the mythical maenad, a figure characterised by her physical and emotional closeness to Dionysos.[147] The ritual created a simulated world in which participants felt themselves to represent the mythical maenads, both at a cognitive level and, through their costume and activity, through physical likeness.

Aside from this internal priming, there would have prompts from the activities surrounding the ritual. We know from Diodorus Siculus and Pausanias that the *oreibasia* was the culmination of a set of ritual events within the city that involved a procession, sacrifices, and hymn-singing.[148] If my reconstruction of events surrounding the *oreibasia* is correct, and participants took part in a public procession before leaving for the mountain, this would provide an extra opportunity for priming.

Aside from the physical act of embodying a mythical maenad, such processions would undoubtedly be accompanied by music, and it seems likely that this would be music in the Phrygian mode which Rouget thought invoked Dionysos and would at the very least have brought him vividly to mind.[149] The lyrics of the hymns themselves may also be instructive here. As discussed in Chapter 3 section 4.3, the content of hymns sung to Dionysos on such occasions is unknown, but, if the Chorus of *Bakchai* are correct when they claim that they are singing traditional hymns, then we may use these passages to guess at the likely content.[150]

---

[144] On the Athenian women's journey: Paus. 10.4.2-4.
[145] *IMagn*.215.27-29.
[146] Dem. *De cor.* 260. On the similarities of Sabazios and Dionysian worship, see Chapter 3, 3.2 with footnote 78.
[147] See Chapter 4, 2.3 and 3.3.
[148] Diod. Sic. 4.3.3, Paus. 10.4.2-4, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, section 4.
[149] Rouget 1985: 213-226.
[150] Eur. *Bacch.* 71-72, see Damen and Richards 2012, cf. Seaford 1996: 155, Carey 2016: 73-74.

The plan of a hymn broadly follows three sections: an invocation, a narration, and a request.[151] Of the six choral songs in *Bakchai*, four do begin with an invocation: of the personifications Holiness (370-372) and Dirce (519-520), of the Hounds of Madness (977), and of Dionysos himself (1160). The *parodos* does not open with an invocation, but Dionysos is named three times by three different epithets in the first strophe.[152] The final section of three of the six choral songs in *Bacchae* do indeed contain descriptions of or request for Dionysos to be present among his women, at lines 135-169, 556-584, and 1017-1023.[153] Fragments of the prayers and songs offered to Dionysos by the Sixteen in Elis also suggest that an invocation formed part of their ceremonies: 'Summon the god' they shouted, and 'Come, Lord Dionysos'.[154] This is in no way conclusive, but does provide circumstantial support for prayers and the singing of hymns to be an opportunity for raising the expectations of those present that Dionysos may also appear.

4.5. Summary: factors for agency detection in maenadic ritual

This discussion has compared findings from research on agency detection to show that two factors thought to contribute to triggering agency detection - low sensory reliability and instruction – can be shown to be present to some degree in maenadic ritual. Low sensory reliability seems to have been built into the ritual form by virtue of its location and the typically maenadic dance with its associated vestibular disruption. Priming is also present, from pre-existing low intensity beliefs and probably from pre-ritual instruction, and also from the ritual activity leading up to the dance itself.

The evidence for threat priming being present is less conclusive, as some elements of Dionysian ritual seem to actively reduce the perception of threat. However, the effects of threat have not been tested sufficiently in a laboratory setting to assess whether or not this might have contributed to inducing agency detection, and further testing may open up new areas for examination in the ancient evidence.

5. Chapter summary: Maenadic ritual and epiphany

Walter Burkert argued that 'the functioning of religion, and of Dionysian cult in particular, rests on the chances for some extraordinary, "divine" experience'.[155] The discussion above has provided

[151] Petrovic 2015: 257.

[152] As Bromios (66), Bakchos (67-68) and as Dionysos (72), all names that are repeated throughout the *parodos.*

[153] Of the remaining three, all express some sort of religious sentiment. One expresses views about accepting hardship in life (902-911) and another rejoices in Dionysos' triumph over his enemy (1153-1164). Curiously, a fourth (ll.417-133) includes an injunction not to over-think things. This would be a satisfying link to analytical reflection reducing tendencies to accept religious beliefs, but the connection may be a symptom of this writer over-thinking things.

[154] Plut. *QG* 36, discussed Otto 1995: 80.

[155] Burkert 1993: 268.

evidence that maenadic ritual of itself contained all the necessary factors required to induce such an experience.

This changes our understanding of what the climax of the ritual would be, and places maenadic ritual on an even footing with the other Dionysian rituals in which epiphany was an expected outcome, discussed in section 2.3. Far from being an outpouring of personal frustration or hysteria, performed on the fringes of Greek religion by marginalised women, maenadic ritual offered a small group of elite women the chance to come face to face with god.

Not all participants would have had the same responses or had the same levels of emotional arousal at the same time, and so their experiences may have varied in intensity. From the experiments of Persinger and others discussed in section 3.2, we might conservatively estimate that around 30% of participants would have at least one experience of a presence being nearby. Although the number of participants required to form a *thiasos* is unknown, if such groups were equivalent to a dramatic chorus, numbering between twelve and fifteen, perhaps four women would have such an experience.

On her return to normal life, with the leisure to reflect on her experience, a ritual maenad would, like one of Barnes and Gibson's subjects, create a narrative interpretation about what she had experienced and who exactly had come to join her ritual.[156] This reflection on her experience would have, one hopes, given her some pleasure and a sense of the important role she had played in maintaining the city's relationship with the gods: this seems likely, in light of Barbra Goff's discussion of women utilising their ritual involvement as a cultural resource to examine their social identity.[157]

Once a woman had had such an experience, it would enter her memory and form part of future schemata when she next experienced such unexplained sensory information in a similar context. A priestess might hold office for ten years or more,[158] allowing her at least five opportunities to take part in the *oreibasia*. Posidippus' teenaged bacchant Niko had apparently taken part three times already when she met her untimely death (*AB* 48). Each iteration of ritual performance by a susceptible practitioner could potentially increase the strength of the schemata that identified a mysterious presence among the trees and increase the chances of having such an experience.

Though this encounter with a god may have been alarming, the priming and role immersion would, I believe, have made it also a wondrous thing. The emphasis found in the Dionysian myths about the

[156] Barnes and Gibson 2013. On the role of memory and reflection in narrative formation, see Taves and Asprem 2016, discussed in Chapter 1, section 2.2.
[157] Goff 2004 *passim.* discussed in Chapter 2, 3.2.
[158] See discussion in Chapter 3 section 3.1 on duration of holding a priesthood.

importance of responding to his epiphanies correctly and instinctively might reflect or explain the need for a participant to immerse herself in her role: by consciously taking on the persona of the mythical maenad she may have moderated her expectations and intuitive responses to reflect those of Dionysos' closest companions, who would undoubtedly have greeted him appropriately.

After the hard physical labour of the ritual preparation, and the excitement and anxiety about leaving the city and entering the forests below the towering peaks of the Dionysian mountains, to suddenly 'know' that Dionysos had acknowledged your offering and graced you with his presence must have been thrilling, world-shaking. Once again, Euripides' words may best describe it, when, after their fear, imprisonment, and terror at the earthquake, the Chorus of *Bakchai* greet their god with joyful recognition: ὦ φάος μέγιστον ἡμῖν εὐίου βακχεύματος, ὡς ἐσεῖδον ἀσμένη σε, μονάδ᾽ ἔχουσ᾽ ἐρημίαν, 'O supreme light of deliverance to all our ecstatic band, how glad I am to see you: I was alone and bereft!'[159]

[159] Eur. *Bacch.* 608-609, trans. Kovacs 2002.

Chapter 6: Maenadic ritual through the cognitive lens

1. Process and methods

This thesis opened with the enigmatic proverb from Diogenianus, that 'the bacchants are silent', and the pessimistic statement made by Albert Henrichs back in 1969, on the futility of trying to imagine what a Greek woman might feel when she joined the *thiasos.*[1] The subsequent investigation has shown that, although of course the voices of long dead, silent women can never be completely recovered, there is some cause for cautious optimism that we can, in fact, go some way towards understanding what the women of the civic *thiasoi* might experience.

Cognitive theories about event experience and predictive processing allow us to examine this unknown quantity – the maenadic experience - through the effects of known quantities – the internal and external cues generated by participation in the ritual. But in order to apply these theories, we need to understand the relevant cues, and this has involved unpicking over a century of scholarship to examine underlying assumptions about the role of women in ancient Greek religious life, the impact of changing conceptions of 'madness' and *mania* over time, and the difficulties in integrating the varied depictions of Dionysian women and maenadic ritual found in a range of different types of ancient source. The metaphor of the yoke from Atossa's dream introduced the nature of this last difficulty, that the mythical and ritual maenads have to be harnessed together in some way, but that previous attempts have lacked a suitable model for how artistic depictions could be incorporated into understanding ritual experience.

Women experiencing Dionysian *mania* appear in the ancient sources in a variety of forms and contexts, and the terminology and imagery that the Greeks used to describe them overlap and blur the boundaries between the different groups depicted. Thanks to this ambiguity in the ancient sources, it is no surprise that, for example, the wretched Theban princesses of *Bakchai* have become confused with the Theban maenads who crossed the Aegean to bring noble Dionysian rites to the city of Magnesia. Likewise, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when much of the groundwork on Greek religion was done, contemporary views on 'madness' and women's marginal role in ancient Greek society reinforced this confusion. This misconception has pervaded perceptions of maenadic ritual in the century since, relegating the civic performance of a ritual, intended to please Dionysos, to the margins of ancient Greek society.

[1] Diogenianus, *Proverbia* 3.43, Henrichs 1969: 224.

In counterpoint to the enthusiastic approach, a more sceptical interpretation also developed, that separated depictions of mythical maenads from ritual performance and adhered, sometimes rigidly, to prioritising the evidence from the prose and epigraphic sources. At its best, this strand of scholarship returned Klea, Alkmeonis and the Theban maenads to positions of civic responsibility and respect. At its worst, it robbed them of any emotional engagement with their religious activity, branding their performance 'fake' and merely symbolic.

Subsequent strands of scholarship sought to modify both extremes. The lack of evidence in the prose sources about maenadic ritual experience, the 'silence of the bacchants', meant that interpretative methodologies from other disciplines had to be used to review the evidence found in the ancient sources. Scholars working with theories drawn from anthropology examined the social function of women's rites, re-assessing the societal and personal benefits of maenadic ritual performance. Though these studies did not, perhaps, dramatically deviate from the enthusiastic and sceptical positions, they narrowed the gap between them. A ritual might be performed by marginalised members of society yet still serve a useful social purpose; a woman might use her ritual activity to reflect on her own role within a society that deprived her of rights.

From the point of view of understanding maenadic ritual experience, the most promising strand of scholarship was that which looked at how the minds of ritual participants would be affected by ritual activity and expectations, the 'embodied' approach. Neurophysiological and ethnomusicological examinations of ritual activity narrowed the chasm between the lyric passages of *Bakchai* and ritual experience, studies of *mania* and epiphany reassessed what these concepts meant in the ancient Greek religious landscape. Tracing the evolution of scholarship on maenadic ritual through the waves of different approaches – enthusiasm, sceptical, anthropological, and embodied – has showed the value of examining the evidence from new perspectives, as each wave has modified the findings of the previous wave and added to our understanding.

Taking these imaginative and innovative approaches as a starting point, I have adopted a cognitive approach to fashion a new yoke that not only holds the maenads together but clearly defines the role of each figure in the relationship. The chariot that is harnessed to this yoke is my interpretation of what it felt like to dance on the torchlit mountain for Dionysos, the most present and yet elusive of the Olympians.

My work builds on previous scholarship by changing how depictions of maenads in vase-painting and poetry are used. Bringing together the insights about ritual activity and cultural conceptions from previous approaches provides the basis for my examination of the *oreibasia* from a cognitive perspective. By examining the ancient sources for both 'bottom up' sensory information, that would

have been generated by the ritual, and for 'top down' factors of intention, mood, and predictive schemata, I have been able to apply cognitive theories to maenadic ritual to interpret experience. The dual theories of event segmentation and predicative processing provide an interpretative mechanism for understanding the relationship between poetic and visual sources and lived experience. Rather than the poetic narratives being either a completely distinct entity from ritual experience or a realistic representation of what was experienced during ritual, such depictions would have been used by participants to understand what they were feeling and sensing during their ritual activity. This has yielded significant insights into both the process and experience of performing the *oreibasia*, which in turn affect how we understand the place of the civic cult in the ancient Greek religious landscape.

2. Performance of maenadic ritual

Chapter 3 returned to the ancient evidence for the performance of maenadic ritual, collating the information on where, when, and how maenadic ritual was performed in the ancient Greek world. Evidence drawn from prose and poetic sources as well as from vase-painting was analysed and assessed, and the chief factors that would have provided the sensory data for ritual performers was identified. Overall, although the evidence for how maenadic ritual was performed is scattered geographically and diachronically in small scraps across the ancient Greek world, I found a high level of agreement in the evidence for what maenadic ritual entailed. The common factors – groups of women, a night-time event, dressing like a mythical maenad, shouting and singing – allowed a reasonably full reconstruction of the events around and leading up to the *oreibasia.*

Re-examination of the sources for maenadic ritual from this perspective showed that, far from being a marginal aspect of ancient Greek religion, maenadic ritual was a prestigious and closely managed part of the religious landscape. The women who took part were respectable - and respected - members of their society, who took pride in their ritual activity and were celebrated and remembered long after their deaths. This discussion also presented the case against *omophagia* being a part of maenadic cult activity, placed the dance ritual itself within a programme of religious events, and clarified the role of the private *thiasoi* in ritual performance.

This study has shown that it is perfectly possible for maenadic ritual participants both to be in control of themselves and, simultaneously, to have had a moving and inspiring experience. In particular, I find myself in agreement with Rohde, Harrison, and Dodds that the artistic depictions have a role to play in understanding the experience *and* that participants might experience loss of self and epiphany. I also find myself agreeing with the more sceptical approach of Henrichs and Rapp, that the civic ritual was not out of control, violent, or marginal.

But I have found some significant areas of disagreement. I disagree with Rohde and Henrichs, for example, that cyclical performance and centralised cult control meant that maenadic ritual only retained a shadow of its former power, that it was 'simply' symbolic. Understanding experience as a product of the embodied mind means that bodily action, sensory data, intentionality, and expectations all affect ritual experience. Nor do I accept the assumption that a *mimetic* performance must be emotionless; the research from scholars working with ancient philosophical texts like Stephen Halliwell have shown that *mimesis* is not simply an 'imitation'.

3. Experience of maenadic ritual

In chapters 4 and 5 I presented case studies on two aspects of maenadic ritual experience, using research drawn from psychology and neuroscience to interpret the sensory data generated from the ritual activity and environment identified in Chapter 3. The first dealt with group identity and 'loss of self', the second with agency detection and 'epiphany'. In each case, the evidence was presented for how specific cognitive mechanisms could be triggered by maenadic ritual, and how the effects of these mechanisms would be interpreted using predictive schemata drawn from cultural knowledge about maenads.

In Chapter 4, I examined Diodorus Siculus' statement that maenadic ritual was a *mimetic* performance, investigating the claim on three grounds: the object of the *mimesis*, the nature of a *mimetic* performance, and, finally, what cognitive mechanisms are activated by the process of such a performance. Previous interpretations had suggested that *either* the performance was wholly symbolic and choreographed *or* that it represented a full-blown descent into violence and mayhem. These readings were largely influenced by an outdated misapprehension that any loss of control means a total loss of control and a misunderstanding of the meaning of a *mimetic* performance. The final section of Chapter 4 examined what this cultural knowledge about the inner life of mythical maenad comprised, based on the artistic depictions from *Bakchai* and vase-painting, concluding that her defining characteristic is her physical and emotional closeness to Dionysos.

My conclusions in regards to 'loss of self' were that neither the 'enthusiastic' nor the 'sceptical' interpretation was correct. A *mimetic* performance did not mean that the performers were emotionally distant from their role models, nor that they lost all sense of their own identities, but, rather, that they could maintain the duality of their personal and performed identities simultaneously. Such role-play, augmented by music, could induce a temporary split in cognitive resources which could be experienced as the intensity of one's personal identity being reduced as resources are allocated to imagining the performative identity. This would not feel like a complete

‘possession’ by another spirit, as Gilbert Rouget had argued, but a sense of belonging to the group of mythical maenads that were the object of the *mimesis.*

A second area explored in this chapter, also prompted by Rouget’s work, was the use of different types of music in maenadic ritual. In agreement with Rouget’s work, I presented psychological research on the effects of listening to and creating music on self-identification and group cohesion. I disagreed here with Rouget’s conclusion that drumming had no place in inducing the maenadic state of mind, providing evidence for the effects of synchronised drumming and rhythmic entrainment in creating a united group.

In Chapter 5, the barriers between the phenomenal world and the divine world were further eroded as we turned to the experience of epiphany. First examining the claim that Dionysos was ‘a particularly epiphanic god’, I explored the sources which describe Dionysian epiphanies, concluding that Dionysian epiphanies were particularly likely to involve visual appearances rather than the less dramatic types such as *pars par toto* epiphanies. Working on an assumption that a Dionysian epiphany involved some way of convincing the mind that a ‘being’ was present, I introduced the cognitive mechanism known as agency detection, which is strongly implicated in a range of supernatural experiences.

Having identified the triggers for agency detection as described in both theory and laboratory testing, I examined the evidence for whether or not these were present in maenadic ritual. The key triggers identified in laboratory testing, unreliable sensory data and priming, were found to be present. Fear or anxiety, the third trigger identified in theory but not in laboratory testing, could also be shown to be present in the ritual, but the lack of experimental data made this of secondary importance. Taking a heightened likelihood of agency detection being triggered in conjunction with increased reliance on schemata due to the unreliable sensory data, I argued that this could induce the sense of an agent being present in the woods. Through a combination of low-intensity beliefs, priming, and predictive schemata derived from cultural knowledge about maenads’ proximity to Dionysos, this could have led to ritual participants identifying this agent as the epiphanic Dionysos.

The findings from this study show that it is possible to extract information about lived experiences from ancient sources by applying a multidisciplinary approach to elements that are repeated in the evidence. It has also shown how different types of evidence can be used together; the artistic evidence can be used to describe cultural knowledge, which helped shape lived experience and should - in fact *must* -be considered when we are assessing experience. Experience happens in the mind, and we cannot ignore the influence of predictive processing, culturally derived schemata, and other cognitive functions, when we want to understand it.

This study has built on and developed the work of previous scholars, extending Jan Bremmer's work on the physiological aspects of maenadic cult to include cognitive processes and the effect of ritual performance on the embodied mind. In doing so, the physiological features of ritual performance which had the greatest impact in achieving these effects can be identified: ambiguous sensory stimuli, head-shaking, synchronised music and dance. Some physiological features which were thought to be important, such as high elevation, have been found to be relatively unimportant, while, conversely, the roles of intention and imagination have been shown to be highly significant.

Through the use of an interdisciplinary approach, I have been able to suggest ways in which the maenadic ritual form had developed to active encouraged such effects. This has allowed me to demonstrate not only that Yulia Ustinova's definition of divine *mania* was present in maenadic ritual, but to explain in detail the mechanisms by which this effect was achieved and the form that this *mania* might take: a strong sense of unity among participants, awareness of another identity alongside one's own, and the impression that Dionysos was actually present among the worshippers. These findings correlate well with the scholarship on Dionysian religion more widely, which describe Dionysos as an epiphanic god and 'the Dionysian experience' as one in which the worshipper experienced a 'loss of self'. This interpretation also dovetails well with the research of Felix Budelmann and the team at Oxford investigating literature using cognitive theories, who describe the way that dramatic and lyric narratives move the listener between the mythical and the human realms. Ritual role-play also has this power to reduce self-awareness and stimulate participants' visual imaginings, allowing their minds to transcend human-mythical distinctions.

4. Maenadic ritual in wider social and religious context

Due to the difficulties in generalising about a large and diverse group, and unlike Ustinova's study, which included discussion of the experience of Dionysian mystery cult initiates, this thesis has focussed on ritual performance by a small group of elite women. By focussing on this group and showing maenadic ritual to be no more marginal than other women-only rituals, this study adds to the arguments put forth in Barbara Goff's work on how women could have used ritual experience to examine their roles within their society and use ritual to develop their own sense of agency. By gaining a clearer understanding of what maenadic *mania* might entail, the objections raised in earlier scholarship that maenadic ritual was 'hysterical', and too disreputable or marginal to have had civic respectability, are greatly reduced.

Understanding maenadic ritual as an epiphanic event casts a different light on how the ritual would have been perceived by the ancient Greeks. Far from being viewed with disgust or suspicion, as the hysterical outpourings of marginalised women, the civic *oreibasia* was an opportunity for

respectable citizen women to experience a blurring of the boundaries between the human sphere and the divine, elevating them temporarily to the status of Dionysos' companions, and offering them the opportunity to have a profound and meaningful religious experience.

If, as I argued in chapter 3, we can assume some continuity of practice across time and place, then the maenadic ritual shares many features with other civic festivals, including public processions and sacrifices, age-specific activities, hierarchical structure, and *proxenia*. This suggests that maenadic cult occupied a prestigious position in civic cult no different from any other public religious event. The accounts which speak scathingly of public displays of male bacchic worship seem to belong to the sort of private *thiasoi* mentioned in the Milesian list of the duties of the priestess; no such approbation is found in the epigraphic or prose sources which refer to female performance of civic cult.

Both experiences examined – loss of self and epiphany - are associated in the scholarship on Dionysian religion, but are more usually discussed in relation to the activities considered to be 'male' or at least male-dominated such as symposia, theatre, and mystery cult initiation. This means that maenadic ritual, as practiced in a civic context exclusively or predominantly by women, may have had similar emotional effects and socio-cultural status as those activities associated with men. The emphasis on the groups as being all-female and the high status of participants suggests that this was not a case of women adopting male gender roles in a 'rite of rebellion' (a theory which has in any case come under criticism from anthropologists) but a specific role for women in ancient Greek society that provided an encounter with divinity.

In demonstrating that maenadic ritual could produce a cognitive effect that would have been interpreted as epiphany, this thesis contributes to the study of Dionysos as 'the epiphanic god'. The environment and activity connected with this particular ritual held in his honour acted together to induce this experience: at least in maenadic cult, there is a cognitive process underpinning the idea of Dionysos as an epiphanic god.

In discussion of the process and cognitive effects of conducting a mimetic performance, I have extended the discourse on narrative immersion and poetic *mimesis* to include not only the audience but also the performer. This creation of a simulated world, blurring of the division between human and divine realms, also adds to the conception of Dionysos described by Albert Henrichs as dissolving boundaries between polarities. We should perhaps see the ancient conception of Dionysos, not as simultaneously embodying two extremes of such a polarity, but as the force that temporarily draws them together, making such distinctions irrelevant.

5. Future directions

The positive findings of this study will, I hope, offer the basis for a methodology for future research seeking to understand an experience based on a combination of 'bottom up' sensory effects and 'top down' cultural knowledge. As was shown in the discussion of the use of anthropological theories (in Chapter 2 section 2.2), the potential for an interpretative theory to become obsolete is a perennial hazard in the use of interdisciplinary approaches. This thesis may also become obsolete, should the theories of predictive processing or agency detection be disproved. Unfortunately, it is all too common for the interpretation to survive long after the theory has been discredited. Despite the 'rites of rebellion' theory being currently out of favour among anthropologists, it is still common to see women's involvement in Dionysian cult described as 'marginal'. As with all interdisciplinary work, this study may need revisiting as the science behind the cognition of experience develops. For example, agency detection theory, though not laboratory testing, suggests that fear or anxiety should be triggering factors in agency detection and, therefore, in epiphanic experiences. If this is found to be the case, a further area for exploration would be to explore any relationship between rituals which involved fear or anxiety-inducing elements and the possibility of inducing epiphanies.

The question of the relationship between civic maenadic cult and the Dionysian Mysteries remains open, and further enquiry into this dynamic would be beneficial. The role of private *thiasoi* in the performance of the trieteric *oreibasia* has been discussed, and it seems likely that private groups had some part to play in state maenadic cult. There is a large body of evidence relating to such private bacchic groups, and the geographic distribution of, for example, dedications to Dionysos with epithets relating to aspects of maenadic ritual, such as *Bakchios* or *Oreios*, may identify locations where an *oreibasia* was performed, whether by private or public *thiasoi*.

Other aspects of ancient religious experience which include epiphanic elements – including those which have epiphanic iconography – could also be analysed using the factors for agency detection described in Chapter 5. Particular areas of interest for a similar approach might be theatre and symposia, exploring how the presence of Dionysos might be experienced in these contexts. Symposia would be particularly interesting because of the specificity of the timing of priming, such as prayers and drinking songs, the use of different vessels at different points, and the types of images found on different parts of these vessels.

The model of religious event experience proposed by Ann Taves and Egil Asprem proposes that epiphany narratives could be deconstructed to look for factors which might have induced epiphanies. The work on 'sensed presences' described in Chapter 5 are particularly relevant for

epiphanies in times of extreme peril and could be used to help deconstruct crisis epiphanies of the sort described by Georgia Petridou.

Revisiting Rouget's trance induction theory with relation to the type of musical accompaniment shown in vase-paintings of ecstatic rituals might also be a productive field. The psychological research suggests that melody alone is not enough to induce 'loss of self' but requires rhythmic accompaniment. The application of Rouget's theories to ancient Greek rituals have suffered somewhat as the scientific research has moved on, but music clearly played a role in inducing profound emotional effects on ritual participants. A short study on the use and possible effects of different types of music in 'ecstatic' Greek rituals seems justified.

The women who danced for Dionysos on the mountainside, who sang and drummed and lit the night with their torches and their cries, these women left no accounts of their experience, no record of what they saw or felt. The bacchants kept their silence, and that silence has been too tempting for scholars not to fill it with speculation. But some of this speculation has been detrimental to modern views of the historical women, who took part in a religious event as a civic service for the benefit of their city. They have been called 'hysterical', and their civic duty, the important task of maintaining the state's relationship with an awesome and dangerous god, has been marginalised to the very limits of social acceptability. Conversely, their act of worship has also been described as 'faking it', denying the reality of their transcendent, fleeting, experience of existing in both the mythical and human worlds. These were women whose ritual identity offered them the opportunity to see the face of god, to feel him near them in the darkness, to *know* that he had accepted their ritual-offering and had come to dance with them. Refocussing our assessment of their ritual to examine their experience from a cognitive perspective means that we can return the to the honoured place they clearly held in ancient Greek culture; not just as Dionysos' priestesses, but as his companions.

Appendix: Inscriptions, text and translation

1. *IMilet*. 733: Epitaph of Alkmeonis, priestess of Dionysos

(=*SEG* 17, 503, *PHI* 457)

Discovered during the excavation of Miletus at the beginning of the 20th century and first published by Theodor Wiegand in 1905.[1] It is now in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (inv. no. 5043).[2] Dated to the 3rd or 2nd century BCE (by the letter forms) by Werner Peek.[3] As no commentator since Peek (that I have been able to find) has since seen the stone to confirm his assessment, this dating is generally accepted, with due caution.[4]

Text

1. τὴν ὁσίην χαίρειμ πολιήτιδες εἴπατε βάκχαι
2. ἱρείην· χρηστῇ τοῦτο γυναικὶ θέμις.
3. ὑμᾶς κεὶς ὅρος ἦγε καὶ ὄργια πάντα καὶ ἱρὰ
4. ἤνεικεμ πάσης ἐρχομένη πρὸ πόλεως.
5. τοὔνομα δ᾽ εἴ τις ξεῖνος ἀνείρεται· Ἀλκμειωνὶς
6. ἡ Ῥοδίου, καλῶμ μοῖραν ἐπισταμένη.

Translation

Bakchai of the city, say ‘Farewell, you holy priestess.’

This is what is due to a worthy woman.

She led you to the mountain, and she carried all the sacred objects and implements, in procession for and before the whole city.

Should some stranger ask for her name: Alkmeonis, daughter of Rhodios, who knew her allotted share of fine things.

Comments

Translation adapted from Henrichs with the following alterations:[5]

Lines 2 and 6, χρηστῇ … καλῶμ μοῖραν ἐπισταμένη: I have chosen not to adopt Henrichs’ well-known and perfectly reasonable translation of ‘good’ and ‘who knew her share of the blessings’. I am wary that these English terms might suggest an eschatological inference in the Greek, which I do not believe to be present, and therefoer prefer a more prosaic, though less elegant, translation.[6]

Line 4, πρὸ πόλεως: Haussoullier connected this term with Dionysos ‘πρὸ πόλεως’, an epithet implying his status as protector of the city. Henrichs, however, excludes this interpretation without providing a reason.[7] This issue is discussed in my main text, Chapter 3 section 2.1; I have translated this rather clumsily as ‘for and before’ to capture both meanings.

[1] Wiegand, *Sitz. Berlin* 1905: 247-248.
[2] Hermann, et al. 2006: 66.
[3] W. Peek, *MDAI(A)* 56, 1931 no 17.
[4] As by Henrichs 1969: 225 n 5, Jaccottet 2003b: no 149, Bowden 2010: 112.
[5] Henrichs 1978: 148.
[6] Though Henrich’s translation is a great improvement on Haussoullier’s imaginative ‘qui sait [maintenant] la destinée réservée aux bons’: Haussoullier 1919: 257, accepted by Jaccottet 2003b. For the same reason, I have avoided Scullion’s use of the present tense for ἐπισταμένη, which he offers without further comment: Scullion 2013: 8.
[7] Henrichs 1969: 225 n 6 and 233.

2. *LSAM* 48: List of duties of the priestess of Dionysos

This inscription outlines the duties and payments for the priestess of Dionysos in Miletus and has been interpreted as a contract of sale for this role.[8] It has been dated to 276/5 BCE by the reference to the *stephanephoros* Poseidippos, who is known from a list of eponyms (*IMilet*. 123). It is currently in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, Inv. 1063a and b. A second copy of lines 17-24 was found built into a church, and is now in the Museum of Miletus, Inv. 1714. The original text of Sokolowski has been republished following revision, as *IMilet.* VI, 3, 1222 (=*CGRN* 138, *SEG* 15, 679), which text is reproduced here.

The fullest copy of the text is broken into two pieces, both of which are much damaged. The text also uses several cultic terms that are not easily translatable; the sense has therefore proven difficult to restore.

Text

[..?..]
1. [...c.5..]Ν· ὅταν δὲ ἡ ἱέρεια ἐπι[τελέσ]ηι τὰ ἱερὰ ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλ[εω]ς
2. [πάσης] μὴ ἐξεῖναι ὠμοφάγιον ἐμβαλεῖν μηθενὶ πρότερον
3. [ἢ ἡ ἱέ]ρεια ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἐμβάληι· μὴ ἐξεῖναι δὲ μηδὲ
4. [συν]αγαγεῖν τὸν θίασον μηθενὶ πρότερον τοῦ δημοσίου·
5. 5[ἐὰ]ν δέ τις ἀνὴρ ἢ γυνὴ βούληται θύειν τῶι Διονύσωι,
6. [πρ]οϊεράσθω ὁπότερον ἂν βούληται ὁ θύων καὶ λαμβανέτω
7. [τὰ] γέρη ὁ προϊερώμενος· τὴν δὲ τιμὴν καταβάλλειν ἐν ἔτεσιν
8. [δέ]κα, δέκατομ μέρος ἔτους ἑκάστου, τὴμ μὲν πρώτην κατα-
9. [βολὴν] ἐμ μηνὶ Ἀπατουριῶνι τῶι ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ μετὰ
10. [Πο]σείδιππον τῆι τετράδι ἱσταμένου, τὰς δὲ λοιπὰς ἐν τοῖς
11. [ἑπο]μένοις ἔτεσιν μηνὸς Ἀρτεμισιῶνος τετράδι ἱσταμένου.
12. [......1 line......]
13. [...c.5..] δὲ τὴν ἱέρειαν γυναῖκας διδόναι ΔΙΙΙΝΛ[..?..]
14. [......c.11..... τ]ὰ δὲ τέλεστρα {καὶ τελεστ} παρέχ[ειν ταῖς]
15. 15[γυναιξὶν] ἐν τοῖς ὀργί[οις πᾶ]σιν· ἐὰν δέ τις θύειν βούλ[ηται]
16. [τῶ]ι Διονύ[σω]ι γυνή, διδότω γέρη τῆι ἱερείαι σπλάγχνα, νεφ[ρόν],
17. σκολιόν, ἱερὰμ μοῖραν, γλῶσσαν, σκέλος εἰς κοτυληδόνα [ἐκ]-
18. [τ]ετμημένον· καὶ ἐάν τις γυνὴ βούληται τελεῖν τῶι Διονύσωι
19. τῶι Βακχίωι ἐν τῆι πόλει ἢ ἐν τῆι χώραι ἢ ἐν ταῖς νήσοις, [ἀπο]-
20. διδότω τῆι ἱερείαι στατῆρα κατ’ ἑκάστην τριετηρίδα·
21. τοῖς δὲ Καταγωγίοις κατάγειν τὸν Διόνυσον τοὺς ἱερεῖ[ς]
22. καὶ τὰς ἱερείας τοῦ [Διονύ]σου τοῦ Βακχίου μετὰ τοῦ [ἱερέως]
23. [κ]αὶ τῆς ἱερείας πρ[ωῒ τ]ῆ[ς] ἡμέρας μέχρι τῶν [..?..]
24. [....c.7... τ]ῆς πόλεως [..?..]Α συντελῶσι

[..?..]

Translation

Whenever the priestess performs the sacrifices on behalf of the whole city, no one is allowed to cast in an *omophagion* before the priestess does so on behalf of the city. Nor is it allowed for anyone to convene a *thiasos* before the civic [*thiasos* is convened]. If a man or woman wishes to sacrifice to

[8] Sokolowski 1955: 124.

Dionysos, whomever of the two (priests) the sacrificer would like should officiate as deputy-priest, and this deputy-priest is to receive the perquisites.

The price will be paid over ten years, a tenth part in each year, the first payment on the fourth of the month of Apatourion of the god's year after Poseidippos, the remainder in each of the following years in the month of Artemision on the fourth day.

[Line 12 is missing; lines 13-15 are incomplete but a few phrases and words can be deciphered]

…to provide for the women at the festival [*tēn hiereian*]…. supply the things for initiations [*ta telestra*]… in all the rites [*orgia*]…

If any woman wishes to sacrifice to Dionysos, she will give to the priestess the perquisites; the entrails, a kidney, small intestines, the sacred portion, the tongue, the leg cut off as far as the hip.

And if a woman wishes to celebrate for Dionysos Bacchios in the city, in the countryside, or on the islands, she must pay a stater to the priestess at each trieteric celebration.

During the Katagogia, the priests and the priestesses of Dionysos Bacchios will lead Dionysus down together with the priest and the priestess, on the morning of the day until the …. of the city…. they celebrate…

Comments

Translation adapted from Peels and Carbon for *CGRN* with the following alterations:[9]

Line 1, ἐπι[5]ηι: I have chosen not to use the restoration ἐπι[τελέσ]ηι, and retain Sokolowski's assumption that, whatever verb is missing here, it would most naturally relate to sacrifice:

Line 2 ὠμοφάγιον: I do not however retain Sokolowski's assumption that the *thiasoi* would eat the *omophagion*.[10] I discuss the *omophagion* and the sacrifice in Chapter 3, section 4.3, and therefore have simply transliterated this term rather than use Peels and Carbon's ''a raw piece of meat'.

Line 4: [συν]αγαγεῖν: I have rejected the more static 'assemble', as the Greek carries the inference of movement together, which I feel is better represented by 'convene'.

Lines 13-15: The fragmentary state of these lines makes interpretation difficult. I have tried to avoid assuming that all three lines refer to the same event, though this sadly means that my translation is less coherent. I have translated τὴν ἱέρειαν as 'the festival' (sing. acc.); Peels and Carbon omit this without comment. These lines may refer to the same event, so the initiations mentioned in line 14 may have taken place during the festival referred to in line 13, but this is speculation.

3. *IMagn*. 215: Dionysian rites established in Magnesia-on-the-Meander

(= *SEG* 17, 495)

The inscription is on a marble plate, found in two well-preserved pieces but reconstructed as a single *stele*. The pieces were found in 1890 in a ravine in Magnesia-on-the-Meander, in Caria in Asia Minor, and published by Salomon Reinach the same year.[11] The *stele* was probably originally located just to the west of the 'Roman Gymnasium', near an ancient marble building which was possibly a Dionysian sanctuary and may have been attached to a wall or pillar.[12]

[9] *CGRN* 138.
[10] Sokolowski 1955: 124.
[11] Reinachs 1890.
[12] Kern 1900: 140.

An inscribed base, found at the same location, into which the plate fits records that the *stele* was dedicated to Dionysos by an '*archaios mystes*', Apollonios Mokoldes (*SEG* 45, 1595=*IMagn*. 215b). The term '*archaios mystes*' is also found on a second century CE inscription nearby, where it seems to refer to a high-ranking member of a Dionysian association during the imperial period.[13] Apollonios records that he had an old oracle re-inscribed; his dedication was dated by Reinach, on the grounds of palaeography, to the middle of the first century CE, subsequently revised to mid-second century by Hiller von Gaertringen.[14] Although it remains possible that Apollonios had falsified the oracle or been misled himself, Albert Henrichs has defended its authenticity as a genuine oracle and dated the consultation to 278-250 BCE.[15] The *stele* is currently in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Inv. no. 3083.

Text

1. Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ.
2. ἐπὶ πρυτάνεως Ἀκροδήμου τοῦ Δι-
3. οτείμου ὁ δῆμος ὁ Μαγνήτων ἐπερω–
4. τᾷ τὸν θεὸν περὶ τοῦ σημείου τοῦ
5. γεγονότος ὅτι πλατάνου κατὰ τὴν
6. πόλιν κλασθείσης ὑπὸ ἀνέμου εὐ–
7. ρέθη ἐν αὐτῇ ἀφείδρυμα Διονύσου,
8. τί αὐτῷ σημαίνει ἢ τί ἂν ποιήσας
9. ἀδεῶς διατελοίη· δι’ ὃν θεοπρόποι
10. ἐπέμφθησαν ἰς Δελφοὺς Ἑρμῶναξ
11. Ἐπικράτους Ἀρίσταρχος Διοδώρου.
12. Θεὸς ἔχρησεν·
13. Μαιάνδροιο λαχόντες ἐφ᾽ ὕδασιν
14. ἱερὸν ἄστυ Μάγνητες κτεάνοις
15. ἐπαμύντορες ἡμετέροισιν,
16. ἤλθετε πευσόμενοι στομάτων ἀπ’ ἐ–
17. μεῖο, τίς ὑμεῖν μῦθος, ἐπεὶ Βάκ–
18. χος θάμνῳ ἔνι καίμενος ὤφθη.
19. ἐξεφάνη δὲ ἔτι κοῦρος, ἐπεὶ πτολί–
20. αιθρα τιθέντες νηοὺς οὐκ ᾠκίσ–
21. σατ’ ἐϋτμήτους Διονύσῳ. ἀλλὰ
22. καὶ ὥς, ὦ δῆμε μεγάσθενες, ἵδρυε
23. νηοὺς θυρσοχαροῦς· ἱερῆα τίθει
24. δὲ εὐάρτιον ἁγνόν·
25. ἐλθέτε δὲ ἐς Θήβης ἱερὸν πέδον, ὄφρα λάβητε
26. Μαινάδας, αἳ γενεῆς Εἰνοῦς ἄπο Κα–
27. δμηείης· αἳ δ’ ὑμεῖν δώσουσι καὶ
28. ὄργια καὶ νόμιμα ἐσθλὰ καὶ θιά-
29. σους Βάκχοιο καθειδρύσουσιν
30. ἐν ἄστει. κατὰ τὸν χρησμὸν διὰ
31. τῶν θεοπρόπων ἐδόθησαν ἐκ Θηβῶν
32. Μαινάδες τρεῖς, Κοσκώ, Βαυβώ
33. Θετταλή, καὶ ἡ μὲν Κοσκὼ συνήγαγεν

[13] Henrichs 1978: 126-127 n 9.
[14] Reinachs 1890: 350, Henrichs 1978: 126 n10.
[15] Henrichs 1978: 125-9.

34. θίασον τὸν Πλατανιστηνῶν,
35. ἡ δὲ Βαυβὼ τὸν πρὸ πόλεως, ἡ δὲ
36. Θετταλὴ τὸν τῶν Καταιβατῶν.
37. θανοῦσαι δὲ αὗται ἐτάφησαν
38. ὑπὸ Μαγνήτων, καὶ ἡ μὲν Κοσκὼ
39. κεῖται ἐν Κοσκωβούνῳ, ἡ δὲ Βαυ–
40. βὼ ἐν Ταβάρνει, ἡ δὲ Θετταλὴ
41. πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ.

Translation

To good fortune! When Akrodemos son of Dioteimos was *prytaneis*, the people of Magnesia consulted the god concerning a sign appearing; an image of Dionysos was found in a plane tree before the city which had been broken by the wind. What does this mean and what must be done to bring it to an end? For this purpose, the oracle-envoys Hermonax son of Epikratos and Aristarchos son of Diodoros were sent to the Delphians.

The god answered: Magnesians, who obtained the holy city on the Meander river, defenders of our possessions: You came to hear from my mouth what the appearance of Bakchos in the foliage means for you. He showed himself as still a youth, when the clear–aired city was founded; however, well–cut temples have not yet been built for Dionysos. Do the following, mightiest people: Dedicate temples which delight in the *thyrsos* and appoint a suitable and sacred priest.

Go to the holy plain of Thebes to fetch maenads from the race of Cadmeian Ino. They will bring you rites and noble customs and will establish *thiasoi* of Bakchos in the 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 *thiasos* named after the plane tree, Baubo the *thiasos* for and before the city, and Thettale the *thiasos* named for Kataibates. After their deaths they were buried by the Magnesians, and Kosko lies buried in the area called Hillock of Kosko, Baubo in the area called Tabarnis, and Thettale near the theatre.

Comments

Translation of lines 1-24 are my own; translation of lines 25-41 adapted from Henrichs with the following alterations:[16]

Line 28, ὄργια: Henrichs is almost certainly correct to assert that these are ‘maenadic rites’, but this clarification is not present in the text and ‘rites’ remains preferable, particularly if we are to understand the ὄργια of *LSAM* 48 line 15 as referring to private initiations. In the interests of clarity, Henrichs did not seem to think this was the case, and associated the events covered in the damaged section of *LSAM* 48 as referring to ‘all the maenads’ meetings’.[17]

Line 28-29, θιάσους: Henrichs translated this as ‘troops of Bacchus’. I have chosen to transliterate as *thiasos* is a term that I discuss in my main text.

Line 35, the *thiasos* πρὸ πόλεως: See discussion above, on *IMilet.* 733 line 4, and in the main text. I have used the same formulation for my translation here.

[16] Ibid. at 123-124.
[17] Henrichs 1969: 236 ad loc.

Bibliography

Aleshire, Sara B., and Stephen D. Lambert. (2003). 'Making the "Peplos" for Athena: A New Edition of "IG" II² 1060 + "IG" II² 1036', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 142: 65-86.

Allan, Rutger J. (2019). 'Narrative Immersion: Some Linguistic and Narratological Aspects' in *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece*, Grethlein, J., L. Huitink and A. C. F. Tagliabue, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 15-35.

Alonso Fernández, Zoa (2013). 'Maenadic Ecstasy in Rome: Fact or Fiction?' in *Redefining Dionysos*, Bernabé, A., M. Herrero de Jáuregui, A. I. Jiménez San Cristóbal and R. Martín Hernández, (eds.), (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter), 185-199.

Andersen, Marc. (2019). 'Predictive Coding in Agency Detection', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 9 (1): 65-84.

Andersen, Marc, Thies Pfeiffer, Sebastian Müller, and Uffe Schjoedt. (2019). 'Agency Detection in Predictive Minds: a Virtual Reality Study', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 9 (1): 52-64.

Arlen, Shelley. (1996). '‘For love of an idea’: Jane Ellen Harrison, heretic and humanist', *Women's History Review*, 5 (2): 165-190.

Arnaoutoglou, I.N. (2003). *Thusias heneka kai sunousias. Private religious associations in Hellenistic Athens*, (Athens: Academy of Athens).

Arnott, W. G. . (2000). *Menander. Samia. Sikyonioi. Synaristosai. Phasma. Unidentified Fragments.* , (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Athanassakis, A.N., and B.M. Wolkow, (eds.), (2013). *The Orphic Hymns: Translation, Introduction, and Notes*, (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Atkinson, R.C., and R.M. Shiffrin. (1968). 'Human Memory: A Proposed System and its Control Processes' in *Psychology of Learning and Motivation: Advances in Research and Theory*, Spence, J.T. and K.W. Spence, (eds.), (New York NY, San Francisco CA, London: Academic Press), 90-196.

Atran, Scott. (2011). *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Atran, Scott, and Ara Norenzayan. (2004). 'Religion's Evolutionary Landscape: Counterintuition, Commitment, Compassion, Communion', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 27 (6): 713-730.

Auerbach, Erich. (1953). *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).

Avagianou, Aphrodite. (1991). *Sacred Marriage in the Rituals of Greek Religion*, (Bern and New York NY: P. Lang).

Babbitt, Frank Cole. (1931). *Plutarch. Moralia, Volume III: Sayings of Kings and Commanders. Sayings of Romans. Sayings of Spartans. The Ancient Customs of the Spartans. Sayings of Spartan Women. Bravery of Women.*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Baddeley, A.D., and G Hitch. (1974). 'Working memory', *Psychology of learning and motivation*, 8 (47-89).

Bakker, Egbert J. (1999). 'Mimesis as Performance: Rereading Auerbach's First Chapter', *Poetics Today*, 20 (1): 11-26.

Barnard-Cogno, Camille. (2006). 'Jane Harrison (1850–1928), between German and English Scholarship', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 13 (4): 661-676.

Barnes, Kirsten, and Nicholas J. S. Gibson. (2013). 'Supernatural Agency: Individual Difference Predictors and Situational Correlates', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 23 (1): 42-62.

Barrett, Justin L. (2000). 'Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4 (1): 29-34.

———. (2004). *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, (Oxford: AltaMira Press).

Barrett, Justin L., and Jonathan A. Lanman. (2008). 'The Science of Religious Beliefs', *Religion*, 38 (2): 109-124.
Benedict, Ruth. (1934). *Patterns of Culture*, (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).
Bernabé, Alberto. (2002). 'La théogonie orphique du papyrus de Derveni', *Kernos*, 15: 91-130.
———. (2004). *Poetae epici Graeci testimonia et fragmenta : Pars II Fasc. 1, Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta*, (Munich and Leipzig: B. G.Teubner).
———. (2007). 'The Derveni Theogony: Many Questions and Some Answers', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 103: 99-133.
———. (2013). 'Dionysos in the Mycenaean World' in *Redefining Dionysos*, Bernabé, A., M. Herrero de Jáuregui, A. I. Jiménez San Cristóbal and R. Martín Hernández, (eds.), (Berlin and Boston MA: De Gruyter), 23-37.
Billett, Stephen. (2014). 'Mimesis: Learning Through Everyday Activities and Interactions at Work', *Human Resource Development Review*, 13 (4): 462-482.
Blakely, Sandra. (2007). 'Kadmos, Jason, and the Great Gods of Samothrace: Initiation as Mediation in a Northern Aegean Context', *Electronic Antiquity [Online]*, 11. https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ElAnt/V11N1/blakely.html.
Blundell, S. (1995). *Women in Ancient Greece*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Bond, Godfrey W. (1981). *Euripides: Heracles*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Bonfante, Larissa. (1993). 'The Etruscan Dionysos' in *Masks of Dionysos*, Carpenter, T. H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 221-238.
Boutsikas, Efrosyni. (2017). 'The Role of Darkness in Ancient Greek Religion and Religious Practice' in *The Oxford Handbook of Light in Archaeology*, Papadopoulos, Costas and Holley Moyes, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press). http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198788218.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198788218-e-2.
Boutsikas, Efrosyni, and Robert Hannah. (2012). '"Aitia", Astronomy and the Timing of the Arrhephoria', *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 107: 233-388.
Bowden, Hugh. (2010). *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd).
Bowersock, G.W. (1965). 'Some Persons in Plutarch's Moralia', *The Classical Quarterly*, 15 (2): 267-270.
Boyer, Pascal. (1994). *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press).
———. (2001). *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, (New York NY: Basic Books).
Braund, David. (2019). 'Historiography and Theatre: The Tragedy of Scythian King Skyles' in *Ancient Theatre and Performance Culture Around the Black Sea*, Braund, D., E. Hall and R. Wyles, (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 433-452.
Bremmer, Jan N. (1984). 'Greek Maenadism Reconsidered', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 55: 267-286.
———. (1998). 'The Reciprocity of Giving and Thanksgiving in Greek Worship' in *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, Gill, Christopher, Richard Seaford and Norman Postlethwaite, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 127-138.
———. (1999). 'Erich Auerbach and His Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 20 (1): 3-10.
———. (2006). 'A Macedonian Maenad in Posiddipus (AB 44)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 55: 37-40.
———. (2012). 'Maenads' in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th edition)*, Hornblower, S. and A. Spawforth, (eds.), (Oxford and Online: Oxford University Press). https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198606413.001.0001/acref-9780198606413-e-3860.
———. (2014). *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter).

———. (2019). 'Greek Maenadism' in *The World of Greek Religion and Mythology: Collected Essays II*, Bremmer, Jan N., (ed.), (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 251-278.
Brown, Christopher. (1982). 'Dionysus and the Women of Elis: *PMG* 871', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 23 (4): 305-314.
Brown, Steven. (2019). 'A Unifying Model of the Arts: The Narration/Coordination Model', *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 37 (2): 172-196.
Brown, Steven, Peter Cockett, and Ye Yuan. (2019). 'The neuroscience of *Romeo and Juliet*: an fMRI study of acting', *Royal Society Open Science*, 6 (3): 181908.
Budelmann, F., and T. Power. (2015). 'Another Look at Female Choruses in Classical Athens', *Classical Antiquity*, 34 (2): 252-295.
Budelmann, Felix, and Evert van Emde Boas. (2019). 'Attending to Tragic Messenger Speeches' in *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece : Under the Spell of Stories*, Grethlein, J., L. Huitink and A. C. F. Tagliabue, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 59-80.
Bundrick, Sheramy, D. (2005). *Music and Image in Classical Athens*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Burkert, Walter. (1966). 'Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 7 (2): 87-121.
———. (1983). *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press).
———. (1985). *Greek Religion*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
———. (1987). *Ancient Mystery Cults*, (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press).
———. (1993). 'Bacchic *Telete*' in *Masks of Dionysos*, Carpenter, T.H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 259-275.
Burton, Joan. (1998). 'Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World', *Greece & Rome*, 45 (2): 143-165.
Busfield, J., and J. Campling. (2017). *Men, Women and Madness: Understanding Gender and Mental Disorder*, (London: Macmillan Education, Limited).
Buxton, Richard. (1992). 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 112: 1-15.
Calame, Claude. (1997). *Choruses of young women in ancient Greece : their morphology, religious role, and social function*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield).
Camerer, Colin F., Anna Dreber, Felix Holzmeister, Teck-Hua Ho, Jürgen Huber, Magnus Johannesson, Michael Kirchler, Gideon Nave, Brian A. Nosek, Thomas Pfeiffer, Adam Altmejd, Nick Buttrick, Taizan Chan, Yiling Chen, Eskil Forsell, Anup Gampa, Emma Heikensten, Lily Hummer, Taisuke Imai, Siri Isaksson, Dylan Manfredi, Julia Rose, Eric-Jan Wagenmakers, and Hang Wu. (2018). 'Evaluating the replicability of social science experiments in Nature and Science between 2010 and 2015', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2 (9): 637-644.
Campbell, David A. (1988). *Greek Lyric, Volume II: Anacreon, Anacreontea, Choral Lyric from Olympus to Alcman*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
———. (1992). *Greek Lyric, Volume IV: Bacchylides, Corinna, and Others.* , (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
———. (1993). *Greek Lyric, Volume V: The New School of Poetry and Anonymous Songs and Hymns*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Carey, Chris. (2016). 'Looking at the Bacchae in *Bacchae*' in *Looking at Bacchae*, Stuttard, David, (ed.), (London, Oxford, New York NY: Bloomsbury), 71-82.
Carpenter, Thomas H. (1986). *Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art: Its Development in Black-Figure Vase Painting*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
———. (1993). 'On the Beardless Dionysus' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Carpenter, T. H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 185-206.
———. (1997). *Dionysian Imagery in Fifth-Century Athens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Castaldo, Daniela. (2009). '"The Sound of Krotala Maddening Women": Krotala and Percussion in struments in Ancient Attic Pottery' in *An Archaeology of Representations: Ancient Greek*

Vase-Painting and Contemporary Methodologies, Yatromanolakis, Dimitrios, (ed.), (Athens: Institut du Livre A. Kardamitsa), 283-298.
Cesario, Joseph. (2014). 'Priming, Replication, and the Hardest Science', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 9 (1): 40-48.
Chanda, Mona Lisa, and Daniel J. Levitin. (2013). 'The neurochemistry of music', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17 (4): 179-193.
Cheyne, James A. . (2012). 'Sensed Presences' in *Hallucinations: Research and Practice*, Blom, J.D. and I. Sommer, (eds.), (New York NY: Springer), 219-234.
Chomsky, Noam. (1959). 'A Review of B.F. Skinner's 'Verbal Behaviour'', *Language*, 35 (1): 26-58.
Clark, Andy. (2013). 'Whatever Next? Predictive Brains, Situated Agents, and the Future of Cognitive Science', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 36 (3): 181-204.
Clements, Ashley. (2015). 'Divine Scents and Presence' in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, Bradley, Mark, (ed.), (London: Routledge), 46-59.
Clinton, Kevin. (1993). 'The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis' in *Greek sanctuaries : new approaches*, Marinatos, Nanno and Robin Hägg, (eds.), (London and New York NY: Routledge), 110-124.
———. (2003). 'Stages of Initiation in the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries' in *Greek Mysteries: the Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*, Cosmopoulos, Michael B., (ed.), (London and New York NY: Routledge), 50-78.
———. (2007). 'The Mysteries of Demeter and Kore' in *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Ogden, Daniel, (ed.), (Oxford and Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 342-356.
Cohen, David. (1989). 'Seclusion, Separation, and the Status of Women in Classical Athens', *Greece and Rome*, 36 (1): 3-15.
Cole, Emma. (2014). 'The Method behind the Madness: Katie Mitchell, Stanislavski, and the Classics', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 7 (3): 400-421.
Cole, Susan G. (1980). 'New Evidence for the Mysteries of Dionysos', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 21: 223–238.
———. (1981). 'Could Greek Women Read and Write?' in *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, Foley, Helene P., (ed.), (London and New York NY: Routledge), 219-246.
Collard, C., and M. Cropp. (2008). *Euripides: Fragments Aegeus-Meleager*, (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press).
Connelly, Joan Breton. (2007). *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece*, (Princeton NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press).
———. (2011). 'Ritual Movement Through Greek Sacred Space: Towards an Archaeology of Performance' in *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean: Agency, Emotion, Gender, Reception*, Chaniotis, Angelos, (ed.), (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner), 313-346.
Corner, Sean. (2012). 'Did 'Respectable' Women Attend Symposia?', *Greece and Rome*, 59 (1): 34-45.
Cover, Michael Benjamin. (2018). 'The Death of Tragedy: The Form of God in Euripides's *Bacchae* and Paul's Carmen Christi', *Harvard Theological Review*, 111 (1): 66-89.
Csapo, Eric. (1997). 'Riding the Phallus for Dionysus: Iconology, Ritual, and Gender-Role De/Construction', *Phoenix*, 51 (3/4): 253-295.
Csapo, Eric, and Margaret C. Miller, (eds.), (2007). *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond: From Ritual to Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Currie, B. G. F. (2013). 'The Pindaric First Person in Flux', *Classical Antiquity*, 32 (2): 243-282.
D'Angour, Armand (2014). 'Sense and Sensation in Music' in *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics*, Destrée, Paul and Penelope Murray, (eds.), (New Jersey NJ: Wiley-Blackwell), 188-203.
Damen, Mark L., and Rebecca A. Richards. (2012). '"Sing the Dionysus": Euripides' *Bacchae* as Dramatic Hymn', *American Journal of Philology*, 133 (3): 343-369.
Day, Robina, and William Thompson. (2019). 'Measuring the Onset of Experiences of Emotion and Imagery in Response to Music', *Psychomusicology*, 29 (2-3): 75-89.

de Jong, Irene. (2001). *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Dell'Isola, Maria. (2020). '"They are not the words of a rational man": ecstatic prophecy in Montanism 71' in *Approaching Religious Transformations from Archaeology, History and Classics*, Gasparini, V., M. Patzelt, R. Raja, A. Rieger, J. Rüpke and E. Urciuoli, (eds.), (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter), 71-86.
des Bouvrie, Synnøve. (1997). 'Euripides' *Bakkhai* and Maenadism', *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 48: 75-114.
Deuse, Werner. (2010). 'Plutarch's Eschatological Myths' in *On the daimonion of Socrates: Plutarch*, Nesselrath, Heinz-Günther, (ed.), (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck GmbH and Co. KG), 169-198.
Dignas, B. (2004). 'Posidippus and the Mysteries: Epitymbia Read by the Ancient Historian' in *Labored in Papyrus Leaves: Perspectives on an Epigram Collection Attributed to Posidippus (P.Mil.Vogl. VIII 309)*, Acosta-Hughes, Benjamin, Elizabeth Kosmetatou and Manuel Baumbach, (eds.), (Washington DC: Centre for Hellenic Studies), 177-186.
Dillon, Matthew. (1997). *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*, (London and New York NY: Routledge).
———. (2003). *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion*, (London and New York NY: Routledge).
———. (2013). 'Engendering the Scroll: Girls' and Women's Literacy in Classical Greece' in *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, Grubbs, Judith Evans and Tim Parkin, (eds.), (Oxford and New York NY: Oxford University Press).
Dillon, Matthew, Esther Eidinow, and Lisa Maurizio, (eds.), (2016). *Women's Ritual Competence in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean*, (London and New York NY: Taylor & Francis).
Dodds, E.R. (1940). 'Maenadism in the Bacchae', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 33 (3): 155-176.
———. (1951). *The Greeks and the Irrational*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA and London: University of California Press).
———. (1960). *Euripides' Bacchae*, (Oxford: Clarendon).
Donald, Merlin. (2000). 'Preconditions for the Evolution of Protolanguages' in *The Descent of Mind: Psychological Perspectives on Hominid Evolution*, Corballis, Michael and Stephen E.G. Lea, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 138-154.
Duff, T. E. (2011). 'Plutarch's Lives and the Critical Reader' in *Virtues for the People: Aspects of Plutarchan Ethics*, Roskam, Geert and L. U. C. Van Der Stockt, (eds.), (Leuven: Leuven University Press), 59-82.
Durkheim, Émile. (1915). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (London: George Allen & Unwin).
Edmonds III, Radcliffe G. (1999). 'Tearing Apart the Zagreus Myth: A Few Disparaging Remarks on Orphism and Original Sin', *Classical Antiquity*, 18 (1): 35-73.
Edwards, M.W. (1960). 'Representations of Maenads on Archaic Red-Figure Vases', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 80: 78-87.
Eidinow, Esther. (2011). *Luck, Fate and Fortune: Antiquity and Its Legacy*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic).
———. (2012). 'Madness' in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th edition)*, Hornblower, S., A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow, (eds.), (Oxford and Online: Oxford University Press). https://www-oxfordreference-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-7044?rskey=5rOo4r&result=1.
———. (2016). *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
———. (2019). 'The (Ancient Greek) Subject Supposed to Believe', *Numen*, 66 (1): 56-88.
Eidinow, Esther, Armin W. Geertz, and John North, (eds.), (2021 (forthcoming)). *Cognitive Approaches to Ancient Religious Experience*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Ekroth, Gunnel. (2008). 'Burnt, cooked or raw? Divine and human culinary desires at Greek animal sacrifice' in *Transformations in Sacrificial Practices: From Antiquity to Modern Times : Proceedings of an International Colloquium, Heidelberg, 12-14, July 2006*, Stavrianopoulou, E., A. Michaels and C. Ambos, (eds.), (Berlin: LIT Verlag), 87-112.

———. (2011). 'Meat for the gods' in *Nourrir les dieux? Sacrifice et representation du divin*, Pirenne-Delforge, Vinciane and Francesca Prescendi, (eds.), (Liège: Centre International d'Etude de la Religion Grecque Antique), 15-42.

Engelmann, Helmut, Dieter Knibbe, and Reinhold Merkelbach. (1980). *Die Inschriften von Ephesos. Teil 4, Nr. 1001-1445 (Repertorium)*, (Bonn: R. Habelt).

Ericsson, K.A., and W. Kintsch. (1995). 'Long-term working memory', *Psychological Review*, 102: 211-245

Farnell, Lewis R. (1907). *The Cults of the Greek States: Volume 3*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

———. (1909). *The Cults of the Greek States: Volume 5*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

———. (1916). 'Ino-Leukothea', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 36: 36-44.

Farroni, Teresa, Gergely Csibra, Francesca Simion, and Mark H. Johnson. (2002). 'Eye contact detection in humans from birth', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99 (14): 9602-9605.

Ferguson, Eamonn, and Filip Lievens. (2017). 'Future directions in personality, occupational and medical selection: myths, misunderstandings, measurement, and suggestions', *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 22 (2): 387-399.

Folk, Charles L, Roger W Remington, and James C Johnston. (1992). 'Involuntary covert orienting is contingent on attentional control settings', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human perception and performance*, 18 (4): 1030-1044.

Fowler, Robert L. (2000). *Early Greek Mythography: Volume 2: Commentary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Frickenhaus, August Heinrich. (1912). *Lenäenvasen*, (Berlin: G. Reimer).

Friesen, Courtney J.P. (2015). *Reading Dionysus: Euripides' Bacchae and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans, and Christians*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck).

Gagne, Renaud. (2016). 'Who's afraid of Cypselus? Contested theologies and dynastic dedications' in *Theologies of Ancient Greek Religion*, Eidinow, E. and J. Kindt, (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 62-88.

Gagné, Renaud, and Albert Henrichs. (2019). 'The Battle for the Irrational: Greek Religion 1920–50' in *Rediscovering E. R. Dodds: Scholarship, Education, Poetry, and the Paranormal*, Stray, C., C. Pelling and S. Harrison, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 36-87.

Gebauer, G., and C. Wulf. (1995). *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press).

Geertz, Armin W. (2010). 'Too Much Mind and Not Enough Brain, Body and Culture. On What Needs to be Done in the Cognitive Science of Religion', *Historia Religionum*, 2: 21-38.

Georgoudi, Stella. (2011). 'Sacrificing to Dionysos: Regular and Particular Rituals' in *A Different God?: Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism*, Schlesier, R., (ed.), (Walter De Gruyter Incorporated), 47-60.

Gerber, Douglas E. (1999). *Tyrtaeus, Solon, Theognis, Mimnermus. Greek Elegiac Poetry: From the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Geuss, Raymond, and Ronald Speirs, (eds.), (1999). *Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Gianvittorio-Ungar, Laura. (2019). 'Dancing the War Report in Aeschylus' Seven against Thebes' in *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spell of Stories*, Grethlein, J., L. Huitink and A. C. F. Tagliabue, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 235-251.

Gill, David W. J. (1974). 'Trapezomata: A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 67 (2): 117-137.

Gluckman, Max. (1954). *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Goff, Barbara. (2004). *Citizen Bacchae: Women's Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*: University of California Press).

Goldhill, Simon. (1986). *Reading Greek Tragedy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

———. (1987). 'The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 18: 58-76.

———. (1994). 'Representing Democracy: Women at the Great Dionysia' in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts presented to Davis Lewis*, Hornblower, S. and R. Osborne, (eds.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 347-369.

———. (2007). *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*, (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press).

Gore, C. J. , A. G. Hahn, G. C. Scroop, D. B. Watson, K. I. Norton, R. J. Wood, D. P. Campbell, and D. L. Emonson. (1996). 'Increased Arterial Desaturation in Trained Cyclists during Maximal Exercise at 580 m Altitude', *Journal of Applied Physiology*, 80 (6): 2204-2210.

Gore, C. J., P. E. McSharry, A. J. Hewitt, and P. U Saunders. (2008). 'Preparation for football competition at moderate to high altitude', *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 18 (s1): 85-95.

Graf, Fritz. (1993). 'Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions' in *Masks of Dionysos*, Carpenter, T.H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 239-258.

———. (2016). 'Healing' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Eidinow, E. and J. Kindt, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 505-518.

Graf, Fritz, and Sarah Iles Johnston, (eds.), (2007). *Ritual texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*, (London & New York NY).

Grandin, Temple, and Catherine Johnson. (2005). *Animals in translation : using the mysteries of autism to decode animal behaviour*, (London: Bloomsbury).

Granqvist, Pehr, Mats Fredrikson, Patrik Unge, Andrea Hagenfeldt, Sven Valind, Dan Larhammar, and Marcus Larsson. (2005). 'Sensed presence and mystical experiences are predicted by suggestibility, not by the application of transcranial weak complex magnetic fields', *Neuroscience Letters*, 379 (1): 1-6.

Grape Viding, Christina, Maria Sandgren, Lars-Olof Hansson, Mats Ericson, and Töres Theorell. (2002). 'Does Singing Promote Well-Being?: An Empirical Study of Professional and Amateur Singers During a Singing Lesson', *Integrative physiological and behavioral science : the official journal of the Pavlovian Society*, 38: 65-74.

Green, Peter. (2015). *The Iliad : A New Translation*, (Berkeley CA: University of California Press).

Grégoire, Henri. (1948). 'Bacchos le Taureau et les Origines de son Culte ', *Revue Archéologique*, 29/30: 401-405.

———. (1961). *Les Bacchantes*, (Paris: Belles Lettres).

Grethlein, Jonas, Luuk Huitink, and Aldo Carlo Fernando Tagliabue. (2019). *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece : Under the Spell of Stories*, (Oxford and New York NY: Oxford University Press).

Gruen, E.S. (1990). *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, (Leiden: Brill).

Guthrie, Stewart. (1980). 'A Cognitive Theory of Religion', *Current Anthropology*, 21 (2): 181-203.

———. (1993). *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*, (New York NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Guthrie, W. K. C. (1955). *The Greeks and their Gods*, (Boston MA: Beacon Press).

Guthrie, W.K.C. (1935). *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement*, (London: Methuen & Company, Limited).

Hall, Edith. (2010). *Greek Tragedy: Suffering under the Sun*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Halliwell, Stephen. (1998). *Aristotle's Poetics (2nd edition)*, (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press).

———. (2009). *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).

Hanssen, Beatrice. (2004). 'Language and mimesis in Walter Benjamin's work' in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, Ferris, David S., (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 54-72.

Harden, Alastair. (2015). 'The Archaic Iconography of the Animal-Skin Garment' in *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, Österreich, Beiheft 2: ΦΥΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΖΩΙΑ. Pflanzen und Tiere auf griechischen Vasen*, Lang-Auinger, Claudia and Elisabeth Trinkl, (eds.), (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press), 261-270.

Hari, Riitta, Linda Henriksson, Sanna Malinen, and Lauri Parkkonen. (2015). 'Centrality of Social Interaction in Human Brain Function', *Neuron*, 88 (1): 181-193.

Harris, W.V. (2013). *Mental Disorders in the Classical World*, (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill).

Harrison, Jane E. (1894). 'Rohde's Psyche vol 2', *The Classical Review*, 8 (4): 165-167.

———. (1903). *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

———. (1912). *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

———. (1927). *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion [second edition]*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Harrison, Thomas. (2016). 'Belief vs. Practice' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Eidinow, E. and J. Kindt, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 21-28.

Haussoullier, Bernard. (1919). 'Bacchantes milésiennes', *Revue des Études Grecques*, 32 (146/150): 256-267.

Hawkins, Shane. (2007). '"IvE" 106: ὀρειογυάδων καὶ ἐνέδρας', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 162: 117-124.

Hawley, Richard, and Barbara Levick. (1995). *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, (London: Routledge).

Hecker, J.F.C. (1888). *The Black Death and the Dancing Mania*, (London, Paris, New York NY and Melbourne: Cassell & Co.).

Hedreen, Guy. (1994). 'Silens, Nymphs, and Maenads', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 114: 47-69.

———. (2004). 'The Return of Hephaistos, Dionysiac Processional Ritual and the Creation of a Visual Narrative', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 124: 38-64.

Heinemann, Alexander. (2016). *Der Gott des Gelages: Dionysos, Satyrn und Mänaden auf attischem Trinkgeschirr des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr*, (Berklin and Boston MA: De Gruyter).

Henderson, Jeffrey. (1991). 'Women and the Athenian Dramatic Festivals', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 121: 133-147.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. (2010). 'The weirdest people in the world?', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33 (2-3): 61-83.

Henrichs, Albert. (1969). 'Die Maenaden von Milet', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 4: 223-241.

———. (1978). 'Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 82: 121-160.

———. (1982). 'Changing Dionysiac Identities' in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* Meyer, B.F. and E.P. Sanders, (eds.), (Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press), 137-160.

———. (1984a). 'Loss of Self, Suffering, Violence: The Modern View of Dionysus from Nietzsche to Girard', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 88: 205-240.

———. (1984b). 'Male Intruders among the Maenads: The So-Called Male Celebrant' in *Mnemai: Classical Studies in Memory of Karl K. Hulley*, Evjen, H.D., (ed.), (Chico CA: Scholars Press), 69-91.

———. (1987). 'Myth Visualized: Dionysos and His Circle in Sixth-Century Attic Vase-Painting' in *Papers on the Amasis Painter and His World*, (Malibu CA: J.P.Getty Museum), 94-124.

———. (1993). '“He Has a God in Him”: Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Carpenter, T. H. and C. A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press), 13-43.
———. (1994). '"Why Should I Dance?": Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 3 (1): 56-111.
———. (2012). 'Dionysus' in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th edition)*, Hornblower, S., A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow, (eds.), (Oxford and Online: Oxford University Press). https://www-oxfordreference-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-2226.
Herman, Gabriel. (2011). 'Greek Epiphanies and the Sensed Presence', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 60 (2): 127-157.
Hermann, P. , W. Günther, and N. Ehrhardt. (2006). *Milet: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen seit dem Jahre 1899. Volume VI, fasc. 3: Inschriften von Milet*, (Berlin: de Gruyter).
Herrmann, P. (1998). *Inschriften von Milet, Teil 2: Inschriften n.407-1019* (Berlin & New York NY: De Gruyter).
Hershbell, Jackson P. (1997). 'Plutarch's Concept of History: Philosophy from Examples', *Ancient Society*, 28: 225-243.
Hewett, Kate J., Ian P. Curry, Edna Rath, and Stephanie M. Collins. (2009). *Subtle Cognitive Effects of Moderate Hypoxia. USAARL Report 2009-17*, (Fort Rucker, AL: U. S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory).
Higgins, J. P., T. Tuttle, and J. A. Higgins. (2010). 'Altitude and the Heart: is Going High Safe for your Cardiac Patient?', *American Heart Journal*, 159 (1): 25-32.
Hogg, Michael A. (2001). 'A Social Identity Theory of Leadership', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5 (3): 184-200.
Hohwy, Jakob. (2013). *The Predictive Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Hornblower, Simon. (2010). *Thucydidean Themes*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Howard, Marc W., and Michael J. Kahana. (2002). 'A Distributed Representation of Temporal Context', *Journal of Mathematical Psychology*, 46 (3): 269-299.
Hughes, Alan. (2008). 'Ai Dionysiazusai: Women in the Greek Theatre', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 51 (1): 1-27.
Hughes, J.D. (1994). *Environmental Problems of the Greeks and Romans: Ecology in the Ancient Mediterranean*, (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
Hunt, Arthur S., and C. C. Edgar. (1934). *Select Papyri, Volume II: Public Documents*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Huron, D. (2001). 'Is music an evolutionary adaptation?', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 930: 43–61.
Isler-Kerényi, Cornelia. (2001). 'Review: Susanne Moraw, Die Manaden in der attischen Vasenmalerei des 6. und 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.', *Gnomon*, 73 (4): 336-342.
———. (2015). *Dionysos in Classical Athens: An Understanding through Images*, (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill).
Jaccottet, Anne-Françoise. (2003a). *Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme. Vol I Texte*, (Zürich: Akanthus Verlag).
———. (2003b). *Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme. Vol II: Documents.*, (Zürich: Akanthus Verlag).
Jameson, Michael. (1993). 'The Asexuality of Dionysus' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Carpenter, T. H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 44-64.
Jameson, Michael H. (2014). 'Theoxenia' in *Cults and Rites in Ancient Greece: Essays on Religion and Society*, Jameson, Michael H., (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 145-176.

Jannoray, Jean. (1946). 'Inscriptions delphiques d'époque tardive. Inscriptions de Lébadée', *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 70: 247-262.
Jeanmaire, Henri. (1951). *Dionysos : histoire du culte de Bacchus*, (Paris: Payot).
Jiménez San Cristóbal, Ana Isabel. (2021). 'The Epiphany of Dionysus in Elis and the Miracle of the Wine (Plutarch, Quaestiones Graecae 299 B)' in *Plutarch's Religious Landscapes*, Hirsch-Luipold, R. and L. Roig Lanzillotta, (eds.), (Leiden: Brill), 311-331.
Jones, Gregory S. (2014). 'Voice of the People: Popular Symposia and the Non-Elite Origins of the Attic "Skolia"', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 144 (2): 229-262.
Jones, W. H. S. (1935). *Pausanias. Description of Greece, Volume IV: Books 8.22-10 (Arcadia, Boeotia, Phocis and Ozolian Locri).* , (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Jung, Carl G. (1938). 'The History and Psychology of a Natural Symbol' in *Psychology and Religion*, Jung, Carl G., (ed.), (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press), 78-114.
Kaizer, Ted. (2005). 'Leucothea as Mater Matuta at *Colonia* Berytus: A note on local mythology in the Levant and the Hellenisation of a Phoenician city', *Syria*, 82: 199-206.
Kalke, Christine M. (1985). 'The Making of a Thyrsus: The Transformation of Pentheus in Euripides' Bacchae', *American Journal of Philology*, 106 (4): 409-426.
Kapetanopoulos, E. (1966). 'Klea and Leontis: Two Ladies from Delphi', *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 90: 119-130.
Keeler, Jason R., Edward A. Roth, Brittany L. Neuser, John M. Spitsbergen, Daniel J. M. Waters, and John-Mary Vianney. (2015). 'The neurochemistry and social flow of singing: bonding and oxytocin', *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 9: 518-518.
Kefalidou, Eurydice. (2009). 'The Iconography of Madness in Attic Vase-Painting' in *Athenian Potters and Painters Volume II*, Oakley, John H. and Olga Palagia, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxbow Books), 90-99.
Kennaway, James. (2019). 'Music and the Body in the History of Medicine' in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Body* Kim, Y. and S. L. Gilman, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 333-348.
Kern, O. (1900). *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeanader*, (Berlin: W. Spemann).
———. (1922). *Orphicorum fragmenta*, (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos).
Keuls, Eva C. (1985). *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA: University of California Press).
Kim, Heejung S., David K. Sherman, Shelley E. Taylor, Joni Y. Sasaki, Thai Q. Chu, Chorong Ryu, Eunkook M. Suh, and Jun Xu. (2010). 'Culture, serotonin receptor polymorphism and locus of attention', *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 5 (2-3): 212-218.
Kim, Heejung, and Joni Sasaki. (2013). 'Cultural Neuroscience: Biology of the Mind in Cultural Contexts', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65 (1): 487-514.
Kindt, Julia. (2009). 'Polis Religion - A Critical Appreciation', *Kernos*, 22: 9-34.
King, Helen. (1993). 'Once Upon a Text: Hysteria from Hippocrates' in *Hysteria beyond Freud*, Gilman, Sander L., Helen King, Elaine Showalter, G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, (eds.), (Berkeley CA: University of California Press), 3-90.
———. (2007). *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*, (London: Routledge).
———. (2012). 'Hysteria' in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (4th edition)*, Hornblower, S., A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow, (eds.), (Oxford and Online: Oxford University Press). https://www-oxfordreference-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-3213.
Kippenberg, H. (2002). *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).
Kirschner, S., and M. Tomasello. (2009). 'Joint drumming: Social context facilitates synchronization in preschool children', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 102: 299-314.

Kokal, I., A. Engel, S. Kirschner, and C. Keysers. (2011). 'Synchronized drumming enhances activity in the caudate and facilitates prosocial commitment--if the rhythm comes easily', *PLoS One*, 6. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22110623.

Kovacs, David. (1998). *Euripides: Suppliant Women. Electra. Heracles.* , (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

———. (1999). *Euripides: Trojan Women, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Ion.* , (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

———. (2002). *Euripides VI: Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Kraemer, Ross Shephard. (1979). 'Ecstasy and Possession: The Attraction of Women to the Cult of Dionysus', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 72 (1): 55-80.

———. (1992). *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in Greco-Roman World*, (New York NY: Oxford University Press).

Kurby, Christopher A., and Jeffrey M. Zacks. (2008). 'Segmentation in the perception and memory of events', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12 (2): 72-79.

Lada-Richards, Ismene. (2002). 'The subjectivity of Greek performance' in *Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession*, Easterling, Pat and Edith Hall, (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 395–418.

———. (2005). 'Greek Tragedy and Western Perceptions of Actors and Acting' in *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Gregory, Justina, (ed.), (Oxford and Malden MA: Blackwell), 459-471.

Laks, André , and Glenn W. Most. (2016). *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume III: Early Ionian Thinkers, Part 2*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Landtblom, A. M., H. Lindehammar, H. Karlsson, and A. D. Craig. (2011). 'Insular cortex activation in a patient with "sensed presence"/ecstatic seizures', *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 20 (4): 714-718.

Lange, John. (1966). 'The Argument from Silence', *History and Theory*, 5 (3): 288-301.

Larson, Jennifer L. (2007). *Ancient Greek Cults*, (Abingdon and New York NY: Routledge).

———. (2016). *Understanding Greek Religion*, (Oxford and New York NY: Taylor & Francis).

Lattimore, Richmond. (1951). *The Iliad of Homer*, (Chicago IL: Chicago University Press).

———. (1958). 'The Trojan Women' in *Euripides III: Heracles, The Trojan Women, Iphigenia among the Taurians, Ion*, Arrowsmith, W., A. Carson, R. Lattimore and R. F. Willetts, (eds.), (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press).

Laughlin, Simon B. (2001). 'Energy as a constraint on the coding and processing of sensory information', *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 11 (4): 475-480.

Lawler, L.B. (1927). 'The Maenads: A Contribution to the Study of the Dance in Ancient Greece', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 6: 69-112.

Lawler, Lillian Brady. (1947). 'The Dance in Ancient Greece', *The Classical Journal*, 42 (6): 343-349.

Lebreton, Sylvain. (2008). 'Les épiclèses dans les *Hymnes orphiques*: l'exemple de Dionysos' in *Actes du colloque international de Lyon, 19-21 juin 2008*, Bouchon, Richard, Pascale Brillet-Dubois and Nadine Le Meur-Weissman, (eds.), (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux), 201-218.

Lecznar, Adam. (2020). *Dionysus after Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy in Twentieth-Century Literature and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Lee, Mireille M. (2015). 'Body Modification' in *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*, Lee, Mireille M., (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 54-88.

Lee, Sherman E. (1955). 'An Etruscan Dancing Maenad', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 42 (8): 186-188.

LeFrançois, B.A., R. Menzies, and G. Reaume. (2013). *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Incorporated).

Lehoux, Daryn. (2007). 'Observers, Objects, and the Embedded Eye. ', *Isis*, 98: 447-467.

Lewis, I.M. (1971). *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, (New York NY: Routledge).

Lighthill, Sir James. (1973). '*Artificial Intelligence*', Science Research Council, http://www.chilton-computing.org.uk/inf/literature/reports/lighthill_report/contents.htm.
Lillard, A. (1998). 'Ethnopsychologies: Cultural Variations in Theories of Mind', *Psychological Bulletin*, 123 (1): 3-32.
Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd. (2003). *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece*, (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales).
Lloyd-Jones, Hugh. (1996). *Sophocles: Fragments*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Lloyd, G. E. R. (1962). 'Right and Left in Greek Philosophy', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 82: 56-66.
Lloyd, G.E.R. (1966). *Polarity and Analogy: Two types of argumentation in early Greek thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
LoBue, Vanessa, and Judy S. DeLoache. (2008). 'Detecting the Snake in the Grass: Attention to Fear-Relevant Stimuli by Adults and Young Children', *Psychological Science*, 19 (3): 284-289.
Lonsdale, Steven. (1993). *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
Lopez, Christophe, and Olaf Blanke. (2011). 'The Thalamocortical Vestibular System in Animals and Humans', *Brain Research Reviews*, 67 (1): 119-146.
Lowe, Dunstan. (2012). 'Sabazius in the Aeneid (7.341-60)', *Vergilius*, 58: 81-91.
Mac Góráin, Fiachra, (ed.), (2019). *Dionysus and Rome: Religion and Literature*, (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter).
Macintosh, F. (2010). 'Dancing Maenads in Early Twentieth Century Britain' in *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World: Responses to Greek and Roman Dance*, Macintosh, F., (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 188-208.
MacKinnon, Michael. (2014a). 'Fauna of the Ancient Mediterranean World' in *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, Campbell, Gordon Lindsay, (ed.), (Oxford Oxford University Press), 156-179.
———. (2014b). 'Hunting' in *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life*, Campbell, Gordon Lindsay, (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 203-215.
MacLeod, Leona. (2006). 'Marauding Maenads: The First Messenger Speech in the "Bacchae"', *Mnemosyne*, 59 (4): 578-584.
Maij, David L. R., and Michiel van Elk. (2019). 'Evolved priors for agent detection', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 9 (1): 92-94.
Maij, David L. R., Hein T. van Schie, and Michiel van Elk. (2019). 'The Boundary Conditions of the Hypersensitive Agency Detection Device: an Empirical Investigation of Agency Detection in Threatening Situations', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 9 (1): 23-51.
March, Jennifer R. (1989). 'Euripides' Bakchai: A Reconsideration in Light of Vase-Paintings', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* (36): 33-65.
Marois, R., and J. Ivanoff. (2005). 'Capacity limits of information processing in the brain', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 9 (6): 296-305.
Martinez-Conde, Susana, Stephen Macknik, and David H Hubel. (2004). 'The role of fixational eye movements in visual perception', *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 5 (3): 229-40.
Mast, F.W., and A.W. Ellis. (2017). 'Internal Models, Vestibular Cognition, and Mental Imagery: Conceptual Considerations' in *Vestibular Cognition*, Ferrè, E.R. and L.R. Harris, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 89-106.
Maxwell-Stuart, P.G. (1971). 'Dionysus and the Fawnskin', *The Classical Quarterly*, 21 (2): 437-439.
McCauley, Robert N., and E. Thomas Lawson. (2002). *Bringing ritual to mind : psychological foundations of cultural forms*, (Cambridge and New York NY: Cambridge University Press).
McCulloch, Warren, and Walter Pitts. (1943). 'A Logical Calculus of Ideas Immanent in Nervous Activity', *Bulletin of Mathematical Biophysics*, 5: 115-133.
McGinty, Park. (1978a). 'Dionysos's Revenge and the Validation of the Hellenic World-View', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 71 (1/2): 77-94.

———. (1978b). *Interpretation and Dionysos: Method in the Study of a God*, (The Hague, Paris, New York NY: De Gruyter).
McGrew, Timothy. (2014). 'The Argument from Silence', *Acta Analytica*, 29 (2): 215-228.
McInerney, J. (1997). 'Parnassus, Delphi, and the Thyaides', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 38 (3): 263:283.
———. (2003). 'Plutarch's Manly Women' in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, Rosen, R. and I. Sluiter, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 319-344.
McNally, S. (1978). 'The Maenad in Early Greek Art', *Arethusa*, 11: 101-135.
McNeill, W.H. (1997). *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Melena, J.L. (2000-2001). '24 Joins and Quasi-joins of Fragments in the Linear B Tablets from Pylos', *Minos : Revista de filología egea. Suplementos*, 35-36: 357-370.
Miano, Daniele. (2019). 'Liber, Fufluns, and the others: rethinking Dionysus in Italy between the fifth and the third centuries BCE' in *Dionysus and Rome: Religion and Literature*, Mac Góráin, Fiachra, (ed.), (Berling and Boston MA: de Gruyter), 111-132.
Miller, George A. (1960). *Plans and the structure of behavior*, (New York: Holt).
Mills, S. (2016). *Auditory Archaeology: Understanding Sound and Hearing in the Past*, (New York NY: Taylor & Francis).
Milstead, Zachary. (2018). 'Religion and Arguments from Silence', *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 10 (3): 155-169.
Moraw, Suzanne. (1998). *Die Mänade in der attischen Vasenmalerei des 6. und 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr*, (Mainz: von Zabern).
———. (2011). 'Visual Differences: Dionysos in Ancient Art' in *A Different God? Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism*, Schlesier, Renate, (ed.), (Berlin and Boston MA: De Gruyter), 233:252.
Mossman, Judith, (ed.), (1997). *Plutarch and His Intellectual World*, (Havertown: Classical Press of Wales).
Most, Glenn W. (2018). *Hesiod. The Shield. Catalogue of Women. Other Fragments.* , (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Muris, P., and S.J. Rachman. (2010). *Normal and Abnormal Fear and Anxiety in Children and Adolescents*, (Burlington: Elsevier Science).
Murray, A. T., and William F. Wyatt. (1925). *Homer. Iliad, Volume II: Books 13-24*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Naiden, F.S. (2016). 'Sacrifice' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Eidinow, Esther and Julia Kindt, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 464-475.
Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. (1872). *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, (Leipzig: E.W. Fritzch).
Nilsson, Martin P. (1949). *A History of Greek Religion*, (Oxford: Greenwood Press).
Nilsson, Martin Persson. (1957). *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup).
Niven, Jeremy E, and Simon Laughlin. (2008). 'Energy limitation as a selective force on the evolution of sensory systems', *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 211 (11): 1792-1804.
Norenzayan, Ara, and Steven J Heine. (2005). 'Psychological Universals: What Are They and How Can We Know?', *Psychological Bulletin*, 131 (5): 763-84.
Norman, Donald A., and Daniel G. Bobrow. (1975). 'On data-limited and resource-limited processes', *Cognitive Psychology*, 7 (1): 44-64.
Oldfather, C. H. (1935). *Diodorus Siculus. Library of History, Volume II: Books 2.35-4.58*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Olszewski, Edward. (2019). 'Dionysus's Enigmatic Thyrsus', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 163 (2): 153-173.
Oranje, Hans. (1984). *Euripides' Bacchae: the Play and its Audience*, (Leiden: Brill).

Osborne, Robin. (2001). 'Why Did Athenian Pots Appeal to the Etruscans?', *World Archaeology*, 33 (2): 277-295.
———. (2010). 'The Ecstasy and the Tragedy: Varieties of Religious Experience in Art, Drama and Society' in *Athens and Athenian Democracy*, Osborne, Robin, (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 368-404.
———. (2018). *The Transformation of Athens: Painted Pottery and the Creation of Classical Greece*, (Oxford and Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).
Otto, Walter F. (1965). *Dionysos: Mythos und Kultus*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann).
———. (1995). *Dionysus: Myth and Cult*, (Indianapolis and Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press).
Padel, R. (1994). *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).
Palgi, Phyllis, and Henry Abramovitch. (1984). 'Death: A Cross-Cultural Perspective', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 13: 385-417.
Parker, Robert. (1998). 'The Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion' in *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece*, Gill, Christopher, Norman Postlethwaite and Richard Seaford, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 105-127.
———. (2005). *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
———. (2010). 'New Problems in Athenian Religion: The 'Sacred Law' from Aixone' in *Myths, Martyrs and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer*, Dijkstra, J.H.F., J.E.A. Kroesen and Y. Kuiper, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 193-208.
———. (2011). *On Greek Religion*, (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press).
———. (2019). 'The Greeks and the Irrational' in *Rediscovering E. R. Dodds*, Stray, C., C. Pelling and S. Harrison, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 116-127.
Patel, A.D. (2010). *Music, Language, and the Brain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Paton, W.R., (ed.), (1917). *The Greek Anthology, Volume II: Book 7: Sepulchral Epigrams. Book 8: The Epigrams of St. Gregory the Theologian*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Patzelt, Maik. (2020). 'About servants and flagellants: Seneca's Capitol description and the variety of 'ordinary' religious experience at Rome' in *Approaching Religious Transformations from Archaeology, History and Classics*, Gasparini, V., M. Patzelt, R. Raja, A. Rieger, J. Rüpke and E. Urciuoli, (eds.), (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter), 117-136.
Peirce, Sarah. (1998). 'Visual Language and Concepts of Cult on the "Lenaia Vases"', *Classical Antiquity*, 17 (1): 59-95.
Persinger, Michael A. (1987). *Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs*, (New York NY: Praeger).
Persinger, Michael A., and Faye Healey. (2002). 'Experimental Facilitation of the Sensed Presence: Possible Intercalation between the Hemispheres induced by Complex Magnetic Fields', *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 190 (8): 533-541.
Petersen, Anders Klostergaard, Gilhus Ingvild Sælid, Luther H. Martin, Jeppe Sinding Jensen, and Jesper Sørensen, (eds.), (2018). *Evolution, Cognition, and the History of Religion: A New Synthesis. Festschrift in Honour of Armin W. Geertz* (Leiden: Brill).
Petridou, Georgia. (2016). *Divine Epiphany in Greek Literature and Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Petrovic, Ivana. (2015). 'Hymns in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*' in *Hymnic Narrative and the Narratology of Hymns*, Faulkner, Andrew and Owen Hodkinson, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 244-267.
Petsalis-Diomidis, Alexia. (2005). 'The Body in Space: Visual Dynamics in Graeco-Roman Healing Pilgrimage' in *Seeing the Gods: Patterns of Pilgrimage in Antiquity*, Rutherford, Ian and Jaś Elsner, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 183-218.
———. (2010). *Truly Beyond Wonders: Aelius Aristides and the Cult of Asklepios*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Pirenne-Delforge, V. (2009). 'Under Which Conditions Did the Greeks "Believe" in Their Myths? The Religious Criteria of Adherence' in *Antike Mythen. Medien, Transformationen,*

Konstruktionen. Festschriften für Fritz Graf, Walde, C. and U. Dill, (eds.), (Berlin: de Gruyter), 38-54.
Platt, Verity J. (2011). *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Graeco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
———. (2016). 'Epiphany' in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Eidinow, E. and J. Kindt, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 493-504.
Pratt, Louise H. (2000). 'The Old Women of Ancient Greece and the Homeric Hymn to Demeter', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 130: 41-65.
Prins, Y. (1999). 'Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters' in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, Dellamora, Richard, (ed.), (Chicago IL: Univeristy of Chicago Press), 43-82.
Race, William H. (1997). *Pindar. Nemean Odes. Isthmian Odes. Fragments.* , (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. . (1922). *The Andaman Islanders*, (Glencoe IL: The Free Press).
Raichle, Marcus E., and Debra A. Gusnard. (2002). 'Appraising the brain's energy budget', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99 (16): 10237-10239.
Rapp, Adolf. (1872). 'Die Mänade im griechischen Cultus, in der Kunst und Poesie', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 27: 1-22, 563-611.
Reddish, Paul, Ronald Fischer, and Joseph Bulbulia. (2013). 'Let's dance together: synchrony, shared intentionality and cooperation', *PloS one*, 8: e71182. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3737148/.
Reinachs, Salomon. (1890). 'Oracle de le Pythie de Delphes Adressé a la Ville de Magnésie du Méandre', *Revue des études grecques*, 3 (12): 349-361.
Riekki, Tapani, Marjaana Lindeman, Marja Aleneff, Anni Halme, and Antti Nuortimo. (2013). 'Paranormal and Religious Believers Are More Prone to Illusory Face Perception than Skeptics and Non-believers', *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 27 (2): 150-155.
Robben, A.C.G.M. (2005). *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*, (Malden MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).
Roberts, Brent W., and Joshua J. Jackson. (2008). 'Sociogenomic Personality Psychology', *Journal of Personality*, 76 (6): 1523-1544.
Robertson, N. (2003). 'Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual' in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*, Cosmopoulos, M., (ed.), (London and New York NY), 218-240.
Robertson, Noel. (1993). 'Athens' Festival of the New Wine', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 95: 197-250.
Robinson, David M. (1948). 'Three New Inscriptions from the Deme of Ikaria', *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, 17 (2): 141-143.
Rohde, Erwin. (1894). *Psyche : Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)).
———. (1925). *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, (London & New York NY: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co).
Roselli, David Kawalko. (2011). *Theater of the People: Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens*, (Austin TX: University of Texas Press).
Rouget, Gilbert. (1985). *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, (Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press).
Rouse, W.H.D. (1904). 'Miss Harrison's Greek Religion', *The Classical Review*, 18 (9): 6.
Roux, G. (1976). 'Corycian Cave' in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*, Stillwell, Richard, William L. McAlister MacDonald and Marian Holland, (eds.), (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0006%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DK%3Aentry+group%3D5%3Aentry%3Dkorykian.
Rowe, C. J. (1983). ''Archaic Thought' in Hesiod', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 103: 124-135.

Roy, James. (1999). 'The Economies of Arkadia' in *Defining Ancient Arkadia Symposium*, Nielsen, Thomas H. and James Roy, (eds.), (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Polis Centre), 248-319.
Rusten, Jeffrey, and I. C. Cunningham. (2003). *Theophrastus, Herodas, Sophron. Characters. Herodas: Mimes. Sophron and Other Mime Fragments.*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Rutherford, Ian. (2004). 'The Keian Theoria to Delphi: Neglected Data from the Accounts of the Delphic Naopoioi (CID 2.1-28)', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 147: 107-114.
———. (2007). 'Network Theory and Theoric Networks', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 22 (1): 23-37.
———. (2018). 'Delphi, Primeval Purification and Theoria: In Search of a Schema', *Ariadne Supplement Series*, 1: 21-32.
Sanders, Todd. (2003). 'Rains gone bad, women gone mad: rethinking gender rituals of rebellion and patriarchy', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6 (3): 469-486.
Sandys, John Edwin. (1885). *The Bacchae of Euripides (Second Edition)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Santamaría, M.A. (2013). 'The Term βάκχος and Dionysos Βάκχιος' in *Redefining Dionysos*, Bernabé, A., M. Herrero de Jáuregui, A. I. Jiménez San Cristóbal and R. Martín Hernández, (eds.), (Berlin and Boston MA: de Gruyter), 38-57.
Sasaki, Joni, Heejung Kim, Taraneh Mojaverian, Lauren D S Kelley, In Young Park, and Skirmantas Janusonis. (2011). 'Religion priming differentially increases prosociality among variants of Dopamine D4 Receptor (DRD4) gene', *Social, Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 8 (2): 209-215.
Schauber, Hermann. (2001). 'Der Thyrsos und seine pflanzliche Substanz', *Thetis*, 8: 35-46.
Scheidel, Walter. (1996). 'The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (II)', *Greece & Rome*, 43 (1): 1-10.
Schjødt, Uffe, and Jeppe Sinding Jensen. (2018). 'Depletion and deprivation: Social function pathways to a shared metacognition' in *Metacognitive Diversity: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Proust, J. and M. Fortier, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 319-342.
Schlesier, Renate. (1993). 'Mixtures of Masks: Maenads as Tragic Models' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Carpenter, T. H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 89-114.
Scott, James M. (2008). 'Dionysus and the *Letter of Aristeas*' in *XIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Ljubljana, 2007*, Peters, Melvin K. H., (ed.), (Atlanta GA: Society of Biblical Literature), 325-338.
Scott, Mary. (1983). 'Charis in Homer and the Homeric Hymns', *Acta Classica*, 26: 1-13.
Scullion, Scott. (2000). 'Heroic and Chthonian Sacrifice: New Evidence from Selinous', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 132: 163-171.
———. (2013). 'Maenads and Men [unpublished paper shared with the author]'
———. (2019). '‘The road of excess’: Dodds and Greek Tragedy' in *Rediscovering E. R. Dodds*, Stray, C., C. Pelling and S. Harrison, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 128-148.
Seaford, Richard. (1981). 'Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysian Mysteries', *The Classical Quarterly*, 31 (2): 252-275.
———. (1987). 'Pentheus' Vision: Bacchae 918-922', *The Classical Quarterly*, 37 (1): 76-78.
———. (1993). 'Dionysus as Destroyer of the Household: Homer, Tragedy, and the Polis' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Carpenter, T. H. and C.A. Faraone, (eds.), (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press), 115-146.
———. (1996). *The Plays of Euripides: Bacchae*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books).
———. (2006). *Dionysos*, (London: Routledge).
Séchan, L. (1930). *La danse grecque antique*, (Paris: E. de Boccard).

Seemungal, B.M. (2017). 'The Components of Vestibular Cognition - Motion *versus* Spatial Perception' in *Vestibular Cognition*, Ferrè, E.R. and L.R. Harris, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 25-42.
Segal, Charles. (1961). 'The Character and Cults of Dionysus and the Unity of the Frogs', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 65: 207-242.
———. (1982). *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripdies' Bacchae*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press).
Segal, Robert A. (1980). 'The Myth-Ritualist Theory of Religion', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 19 (2): 173-185.
Shapiro, Alan. (2009). *Euripides: Trojan Women*, (New York NY: Oxford University Press).
Sherwood, Chet C., Francys Subiaul, and Tadeusz W. Zawidzki. (2008). 'A natural history of the human mind: tracing evolutionary changes in brain and cognition', *Journal of Anatomy*, 212 (4): 426-454.
Shukitt-Hale, Barbara, and H.R. Lieberman. (1996). 'The Effect of Altitude on Cognitive Performance and Mood States' in *Nutritional Needs and Cold and High-Altitude Environments: Applications for Military Personnel in Field Operations*, Marriott, B.M. and S.J. Carlson, (eds.), (Washington DC: Committee on Military Nutrition Research), 435-451.
Silk, M. S., and J. P. Stern. (1981). *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Simon, B. (1980). *Mind and madness in ancient Greece: the classical roots of modern psychiatry*: Cornell University Press).
Simons, D., and C.F. Chabris. (1999). 'Gorillas in our midst: sustained inattentional blindness for dynamic events', *Perception*, 28: 1059-1074.
Singer, Peter N. (2018). 'The Mockery of Madness: Laughter at and with Insanity in Attic Tragedy and Old Comedy', *Illinois Classical Studies*, 43 (2): 298-325.
Sokolowski, F. (1955). *Lois Sacrées de l'Asie Mineure*, (Paris: E. de Boccard).
Solmsen, Friedrich. (1982). 'The Earliest Stages in the History of Hesiod's Text', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 86: 1-31.
Sommerstein, Alan H. (2008). *Aeschylus III: Fragments*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
———. (2013). *Aeschylean Tragedy*, (London, New Delhi, New York NY and Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing).
Sørensen, Jørgen Podemann. (1993). 'Ritualistics: a New Discipline in the History of Religions' in *The Problem of Ritual*, Ahlbäck, T., (ed.), (Åbo & Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International), 9-25.
Sosis, Richard. (2019). 'Why Cultural Evolutionary Models of Religion Need a Systemic Approach' in *Evolution, Cognition, and the History of Religion: a New Synthesis. Festschrift in Honour of Armin W. Geertz*, Petersen, Anders Klostergaard, Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Luther H. Martin, Jeppe Sinding Jensen and Jesper Sørensen, (eds.), (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill), 45-61.
Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane. (1990). 'What is Polis Religion?' in *The Greek city: from Homer to Alexander*, Murray, Oswyn and S. R. F. Price, (eds.), (Oxford: Clarendon), 295-322.
———. (2000). 'Further Aspects of *Polis* Religion' in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion*, Buxton, Richard, (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 38-55.
Sparousi, Mihai. (1991). 'Plato's *Ion*: Mimesis, Poetry, and Power' in *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory : An interdisciplinary approach:Volume 2: Mimesis, semiosis and power*, Bogue, Ronald, (ed.), (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company), 13-26.
Sperber, Dan. (1996). *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*, (Oxford: Blackwell).
Spivey, Nigel. (2006). 'Review Article: Greek Vases in Etruria', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 110 (4): 659-661.
St-Amand, Nérée, and Eugène LeBlanc. (2005). 'Women in 19th-Century Asylums: Three exemplary Women; A New Brunswick Hero' in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, LeFrançois, B.A., R. Menzies and G. Reaume, (eds.), (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Incorporated), 38-48.

Stadter, Philip .A. (1965). *Plutarch's historical methods: an analysis of the Mulierum virtutes*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).
Stehle, Eva. (2004). 'Choral Prayer in Greek Tragedy: Euphemia or Aischrologia?' in *In Music and the Muses: The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City*, Murray, Penelope and Peter Wilson, (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 121-156.
Stuttard, David, (ed.), (2016). *Looking at Bacchae*, (London, Oxford and New York NY: Bloomsbury).
Sutton, Richard, and Andrew G. Barto. (1981). 'Toward a Modern Theory of Adaptive Networks: Expectation and Prediction', *Psychological Review*, 88 (2): 135-70.
Tang, Yiyuan, Wutian Zhang, Kewei Chen, Shigang Feng, Ye Ji, Junxian Shen, Eric M. Reiman, and Yijun Liu. (2006). 'Arithmetic processing in the brain shaped by cultures', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 103 (28): 10775-10780.
Tarr, Bronwyn, Jacques Launay, and Robin I. M. Dunbar. (2014). 'Music and social bonding: "self-other" merging and neurohormonal mechanisms', *Frontiers in psychology*, 5: 1096-1096.
Taruffi, Liila, and Mats Kussner. (2019). 'A Review of Music-Evoked Visual Mental Imagery: Conceptual Issues, Relation to Emotion, and Functional Outcome. ', *Psychomusicology*, 29 (2-3): 62-74.
Taussig, Michael T. (1991). *Mimesis and alterity : a particular history of the senses*, (New York and London: Routledge).
Taves, Ann, and Egil Asprem. (2016). 'Experience as event: event cognition and the study of (religious) experiences', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 7 (1): 1-20.
Thomas, Oliver. (2020). *The Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Thumiger, Chiara. (2006). 'Animal World, Animal Representation, and the "Hunting-Model": Between Literal and Figurative in Euripides' "Bacchae"', *Phoenix*, 60 (3/4): 191-210.
Tian, Xing, and David Poeppel. (2010). 'Mental Imagery of Speech and Movement Implicates the Dynamics of Internal Forward Models', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1: Article 166.
Tsiafakis, Despoina. (2000). 'The Allure and Repulsion of Thracians in the Art of Classical Athens' in *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Cohen, B., (ed.), (Leiden, Boston MA and Köln: Brill), 364-389.
Tylor, Edward Burnett. (1871). *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, (New York NY: Harper).
Ubbels, K.M. (2008). '*The Maenads: More than Greece's Good-time Girls: An Examination in Athenian Image, Text, and Historical Evidence*', Doctoral Thesis, Pennsylvania State University.
Ustinova, Yulia. (2009a). 'Cave Experiences and Ancient Greek Oracles', *Time and Mind*, 2 (3): 265-286.
———. (2009b). *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
———. (2013). 'To Live in Joy and Die with Hope: Experiential Aspects of Ancient Greek Mystery Rites', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 56 (2): 105-123.
———. (2018). *Divine Mania: Alteration of Consciousness in Ancient Greece*, (London: Routledge).
van Bremen, R. (1996). *The Limits of Participation: Women and the Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben).
van Elk, Michiel. (2013). 'Paranormal believers are more prone to illusory agency detection than skeptics', *Consciousness and Cognition*, 22 (3): 1041-1046.
van Leeuwen, Neil, and Michiel van Elk. (2019). 'Seeking the Supernatural: the Interactive Religious Experience Model', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 9 (3): 221-251.
Ventris, M., and J Chadwick. (1956). *Documents in Mycenaean Greek: Three Hundred Selected Tablets from Knossos, Pylos and Mycenae with Commentary and Vocabulary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Vernant, J.P. (1988). 'The Masked Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae*' in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, Vernant, J.P. and P. Vidal Naquet, (eds.), (Cambridge MA and London: Zone Books), 381-412.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. (1991). 'The Birth of Images' in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays of Jean-Pierre Vernant*, Zeitlin, Froma I., (ed.), (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press), 164-185.

Versnel, Henrik. (1987). 'What Did Ancient Man See, When He Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Epiphany' in *Effigies dei*, van der Plas, D., (ed.), (Leiden, New York NY and Köln: Brill), 42-55.

———. (1994). *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual*, (Leiden, New York NY and Köln: Brill).

———. (2011). *Coping With the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*, (Leiden, New York NY and Köln: Brill).

Veyne, Paul. (1988). *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?*, (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press).

von Papen, Ferdinand-Gaudenz. (1905). '*Der Thyrsos in der Griechischn und Romischen Literature und Kunst*', Doctoral Thesis, Friederich-Wilhelms-Universitat zu Bonn.

Vroegh, Thijs. (2019). 'Zoning-In or Tuning-In? Identifying Distinct Absorption States in Response to Music', *Psychomusicology*, 29 (2-3): 156-170.

Wahl, O.F. (1995). *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness*, (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press).

Waller, John. (2009). 'A forgotten plague: making sense of dancing mania', *The Lancet*, 373 (9664): 624-625.

Weaver, Benjamin. (2009). 'Euripides' "Bacchae" and Classical Typologies of Pentheus' "Sparagmos" 510-406 BC', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 52: 15-43.

Webster, T.B.L. (1967). *The Tragedies of Euripides*, (London: Methuen).

Weege, F.H.W. (1926). *Der Tanz in der Antike*, (Halle/Saale: M. Niemeyer).

Weniger, Ludwig. (1883). *Das Kollegium der sechzehn Frauen und der Dionysosdienst in Elis*, (Weimar: Druck der Hof-Buchdruckerei).

West, Martin L. (1982). *Greek Metre*, (Oxford and New York NY: Oxford University Press).

———. (1990). *Studies in Aeschylus*, (Stuttgart: Teubner).

———. (1992). *Ancient Greek Music*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

———. (2003). *Homeric Hymns. Homeric Apocrypha. Lives of Homer*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Whitehouse, Harvey. (2004). *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission*, (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press).

Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Ulrich von. (1872-73). *Zukunftsphilologie!. Eine Erwidrung auf Friedrich Nietzsche's "Geburt der Tragoedie"*, (Borntraeger: Berlin).

Wilson, Claire, Raymond Nairn, John Coverdale, and Aroha Panapa. (2018). 'How mental illness is portrayed in children's television: A prospective study', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 176 (5): 440-443.

Wright, Matthew. (2018). *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy (Volume 2) : Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides*, (London: Bloomsbury).

Wyles, Rosie. (2016). 'Staging the Bacchae' in *Looking at Bacchae*, Stuttard, David, (ed.), (London and New York NY: Bloomsbury), 59-70.

Zacks, Jeffrey, Nicole Speer, Khena Swallow, Todd S. Braver, and Jeremy Reynolds. (2007). 'Event Perception: A Mind/Brain Perspective', *Psychological Bulletin*, 133 (2): 273-93.