THE RITES OF DIONYSUS at Elis were known as the Thyia, the high point of which was the miraculous gift of wine. Three empty jars were sealed and set out overnight, only to be found filled with wine the following morning. The author of this deed was none other than Dionysus himself, summoned to Elis by the sacred college of sixteen women. Their hymn of invocation is preserved by Plutarch:

\[
\text{ἐλθεῖν ἔτρων Ἀλέων αἰ ναὸν}
\]

\[
\text{ἄγινὸν σὺν Χαρίτεσσιν,}
\]

\[
\text{Ἀλέων ἐς ναὸν}
\]

\[
\text{τῷ βοέῳ ποδὶ θύουν,}
\]

\[
\text{ἀξε ῥαῦρε,}
\]

\[
\text{ἀξε ῥαῦρε.}
\]

Although it is impossible to date a piece like this with any certainty, scholars have generally considered it to be of great antiquity, and it may well be the earliest Greek lyric that we possess.
DIONYSUS AND THE WOMEN OF ELIS

The hymn is an example of the ἕμνως κλητικὸς, the function of which is to invoke the presence or power of a god. The appeal most commonly takes the form of an attempt to establish the credentials of the worshipper either by enumerating acts of piety (sacrifices, temples constructed, etc.) or by recounting occasions in the past when the deity answered similar prayers. The hymn of the Elean women exemplifies a less common form, one in which the epiphany of the god is anticipated to ensure that his presence will be propitious. Dionysus is envisaged coming to his temple in bull-form (particularized by the bull’s foot) accompanied by the Charites, who form the god’s retinue and are emblematic of the grace that Dionysus will bring to his rites. A close parallel is to be found in Sappho fr.2 Voigt, in which Aphrodite is summoned to her ναός: the setting and the goddess’s presence as wine-pourer are vividly described.

Plutarch’s interest in the hymn centres on the bovine foot of line 5, but for the modern reader the most interesting question is that posed by the initial address. In no other extant passage of Greek literature is Dionysus, or any other god, called a ναός. With this appellation the hymn challenges our conception of the divinity of Dionysus. How then can we account for the text?

In the context of cult a hero was a dead man worshipped at his grave, from which he was thought to exert his influence for good or ill. The difficulty of fitting Dionysus into this framework is obvious,
and accordingly some scholars have sought to avoid the usual implications of the term.

Wide argued that 'chthonian' was the radical meaning of ηρως and of Ἡρα, which he saw as its feminine counterpart, and that the women of Elis call upon Dionysus in his chthonian aspect. Although seemingly supported by the cult-connection between Dionysus and Hera at Elis, this theory relies on a doubtful understanding of Hera’s name and does not account for the Homeric usage of ηρως. Moreover, the appeal to the chthonian aspect of the god can shed no light on the cult at Elis, for the evidence suggests that the chthonian Dionysus was not the god of conventional Greek religion, but the Orphic Dionysus-Zagreus, the son of Zeus and Persephone. In regular cult Dionysus does not seem to have been seen in close connection with the dead. It is noteworthy that in the Anthesteria at Athens, a rite similar to the Thyia at Elis, the offering of πανσπερμία was made to chthonian Hermes, not to Dionysus.

A more convincing, though by no means compelling, attempt is that of Pfister who held that ηρως was originally an honorific title; on
DIONYSUS AND THE WOMEN OF ELIS

this interpretation, then, the first line of the hymn would mean something like "Come, lord Dionysus."17 This view suits the Homeric evidence, but its correctness as far as the present passage is concerned is, as Nock remarks, "open to doubt,"18 since there is no parallel for the usage alleged in the hymn. Jeanmaire attempted to relieve Dionysus from bearing the burden of the epithet by suggesting that 'hero Dionysus' referred not to the god but to a local ἄρως (in the Homeric sense of a warrior or prince) who acted as ritual substitute for the god.19 This suggestion, however, is difficult to reconcile with the evidence of the hymn: Dionysus' appearance in bull-form along with the Charites indicates the divinity.

It has proved more profitable to attempt in some way to reconcile the address of the hymn with the more conventional concept of a ἄρως. Dionysus' similarity to Heracles has been appealed to as grounds for seeing him as a ἄρως.20 Both share similar parentage (Zeus and a mortal woman), death at the hands of enemies in some versions, and late admission to Olympus; in addition they are often depicted together on vases.21 Yet this similarity does not allow us to postulate a heroic origin for Dionysus.

For Heracles there is abundant evidence to illustrate his dual nature, for he is truly the ἄρως θεός, as Pindar so strikingly calls him.22 The original form of worship paid him was almost certainly heroic, his deification being a later development.23 Heracles' divinity seems unknown to the poets of the Iliad and the Hesiodic Shield;24 the first certain references to it are found in the Nekuia of the Odyssey and the Hesiodic Theogony and Catalogue.25 For Dionysus, however, there is no indication that he ever received heroic worship. The only extended reference to him in the Iliad recounts his conflict with Lycurgus and is told to illustrate why Diomedes refuses to fight

17 Pfister (supra n.10) 547f, cf. RE 11 (1922) 2131. This view of ἄρως was applied to the address of the hymn by Wilamowitz, Der Glaube der Hellenen II (Basel 1956) 9.
19 H. Jeanmaire, Dionysos (Paris 1951) 46.
20 Burkert 315 and A. Brelich, Gli eroi greci (Rome 1958) 362–72. On the basis of the address of the hymn and Heracles' dual nature Brelich (362) finds in these figures a "convergenza quasi totale tra la forma divina e la forma eroica."
21 Cf. Brelich (supra n.20) 362 n.131.
22 Nem. 3.22. The phrase was striking enough to prompt P. Maas, MusHelv 11 (1954) 199, to emend unnecessarily to ἄρως θεός.
24 Cf. especially ll. 18.117ff.
CHRISTOPHER BROWN

against ἐπουράνιον θεοί.26 That Dionysus’ mother was considered mortal does not seem to have been taken as an indication of hero-status.27 This is clear from the Hesiodic account of his birth:28

Καθμήσ δ᾽ ἄρα οἱ Σεμέλη τέκε φαίδμοι νῦν
μυχθείον ἐν φιλότητι, Διώνυσον πολυγηθέα,
ἀθάνατον θυτή νῦν δ᾽ ἀμφότεροι θεοί εἴσιν.

The juxtaposed formulation ἀθάνατον θυτή effectively underlines the paradox of Dionysus’ birth.29 Here the difficulty is overcome by according Semele divine status; she was either deified by the lightning that destroyed her or brought to Olympus from the Underworld by the fully grown Dionysus.30 In other versions the myth of the double birth, constructed on analogy with the birth of Athena from Zeus’ head, gives Dionysus in effect a single divine parent.31

It is the death of Dionysus and his grave that place him in the closest approximation to the condition of a ἠρώς. His death is found in the Orphic myth of anthropogony:32 Dionysus-Zagreus is slaughtered by the Titans, who then boil, roast, and eat his flesh. For their crime the Titans are killed by the lightning-stroke of Zeus, and from their ashes the race of men arises. In some versions the remains of

27 Although recognized, as early as the Διώνυσον ἄγαθόν (ll. 14.323ff) as a Theban princess, she was probably in origin a Lydian goddess: see Dodds (supra n.4) 63. Her true identity was divined in antiquity: cf. Apollod. FGrHist 244F131 and Diod. 3.62. It is far from certain, however, that she was an Earth-goddess: see Burkert 253.
28 Theog. 940–42. Cf. also Eur. Bacch. 42 (of Semele), δαίμον ὑπ τίκτει Δί. A similar juxtaposition was used by Heracl. fr.47 Marcovich (= DK 62) to express an even more overwhelming paradox.
29 See West on Hes. Theog. 942. The katabasis of Dionysus was probably a later invention: see Lesky (supra n.14) 31 = 466. It is unlikely that Dionysus’ trip to the Underworld in Frogs owes anything to the katabasis myth, since Aristophanes fashioned his play after a traditional epic version of Heracles’ descent: see H. Lloyd-Jones, Maia 19 (1967) 219–21, and N. Robertson, Hermes 108 (1980) 274–300.
30 Burkert 257. The earliest attestations are Hdt. 2.146.2 and Eur. Bacch. 94ff (see Dodds ad loc. for artistic representations). On the birth of Athena see Hes. Theog. 924–26 (cf. fr.343 M-W); West (supra n.23) 401–03.
31 The evidence is set out and thoroughly discussed by I. M. Linforth, The Arts of Orpheus (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1941) 307–64; cf. also A. Henrichs, Die Phoinikika des Lollianus (Bonn 1972) 63–73, and M. Detienne, Dionysos mis à mort (Paris 1977) 170–90. Linforth’s conclusions are largely negative, supporting Wilamowitz’s view (supra n.17) 182–204 that the myth is a Hellenistic construct (the earliest explicit references are Callim. fr.643 P. and Euphor. fr.13 Powell). But more recent scholarship has accepted oblique references as early as Pindar, fr.133 Snell/Maehler: see H. J. Rose in C. Bailey, Greek Poetry and Life (Oxford 1936) 79–96, and HThR 36 (1943) 247–50 (replying to Linforth’s criticism). Further references are collected by W. Burkert, Homo Necans (Berlin/New York 1972) 249 n.43.
DIONYSUS AND THE WOMEN OF ELIS

Dionysus are taken to Delphi by Apollo and kept by his tripod. If there were evidence to show that Dionysus received some form of worship in death or that honours were paid to his resting place, then we might find grounds for understanding the use of ήρως in the hymn. Yet there is no such evidence. The violence of the Titans does not leave Dionysus a permanent occupant of a grave but only a temporary one, for the myth concludes with his return to life. In death the ήρως achieves a degree of potency which is denied to mortals in life, but for Dionysus in the Orphic myth death represents a temporary cessation of power.

33 The main authorities are Callim. fr.643 P., Euphor. fr.13 Powell, Philochor. FGrHist 328 & 7, Plut. Mor. 365. For a full collection of testimonia see Pfister (supra n.10) 387ff.
34 Plut. Mor. 365A mentions a secret sacrifice in the precinct of Apollo “whenever the Thyiades wake Liknites” (όταν αἱ θυιάδες έγείρονται τῶν Λυκητίων). This rite, however, cannot be seen as hero worship, since it appears to mark Dionysus’ return to life.
35 Linforth (supra n.32) 314 remarks: “Generally the culmination of the fortune of Dionysus after the tragedy of his dismemberment is the reunion of his severed limbs and his restoration to life.” The only source to suggest that Dionysus did not return to life is Firm. Mat. Err.prof.rel. 6 (Kern Orph.fr. 214).
36 This is the most probable explanation of gods with graves. In addition to Dionysus, Zeus was said to have a grave in Crete (cf. Callim. Jov. 8–9; the tradition is rejected because of the implications of death: σική δ’ οὐθένες, ἵστην γαρ ἀεί); and there is some evidence to suggest a tradition in which Apollo had a grave at Delphi: see J. Fontenrose, Python (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1959) 381ff. In late antiquity, under the influence of Euhemerus, graves are recorded for Uranus, Cronus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Ares, Hades, Helios, and Hermes: the relevant passages are set out by Pfister (supra n.10) 385–93. It is highly unlikely that before Euhemerus those who believed in such graves conceived of their occupants as dead; at least in the cases of Dionysus and Apollo their occupancy was only temporary. I suggest that these gods were thought to be affected by χώμα, which in its earliest occurrences refers to a magical sleep that produces a state of complete inactivity: cf. E. Risch, MusHelv 19 (1962) 197–201. More recently P. Wiesmann, MusHelv 29 (1972) 1–11, has argued that it is more accurate to interpret the word as “die Wirkung eines Zaubers” or “Benommensein”; and, though this may suit post-Homeric passages like Sappho fr.2.8 Voigt and Pind. Pyth. 1.12, in earlier passages the word refers to a death-like sleep. Hesiod describes the god who breaks a Stygian oath as covered by χώμα (Theog. 793–98): this condition approximates death closely; the god lies νήπιος for a full year and is ἀνάπνευστος καὶ ἀνανδὸς (cf. Od. 18.201ff, where χώμα is equated with death). Moreover, the verb (καλύπτειν: Il. 14.359, Od. 18.201, Hes. Theog. 798) used of the working of χώμα is often used of death: see R. B. Onians, The Origins of European Thought2 (Cambridge 1954) 421ff. That this death-like sleep is common to deities in graves is suggested by a passage of Alcman, PMG 7.2ff (curiously overlooked by Wiesmann), which seems to speak of the Dioscuri held by χώμα σιών during the periods in their grave at Therapne (Page aptly quotes schol. Eur. Tro. 210 [II 353 Schwartz]: οὐκέτινον φασι τὰς θεράπτινας τῶν Διοσκοῦρων παρέσουν ὑπὸ τὴν γῆν τῆς θεράπτης εἶναι λέγονται ἑώνες, ὡς Ἀλκαῖοι φησί). Underlying this is the close connection between sleep and death: in myth they are brothers (cf. Hes. Theog. 212, and E. Vermeule, Aspects of Death [Berkeley/Los Angeles 1979] 147–54); sleep is used metaphorically for death at Il. 11.241; death could be viewed as a sleep without dreams (cf. Pl. Ap. 40c); more rationally sleep could be seen as an intermediate state between life and death (Arist. Gen.An. 778b20ff).
Dionysus seems to be associated strikingly with a hero in a passage of Herodotus concerning the anti-Argive policies of Cleisthenes at Sicyon. The historian records that the Sicyonians accorded Adrastus singular honour and celebrated him with tragic choruses; in attempting to expel the Argive hero Cleisthenes gave the choruses to Dionysus. It would be tempting to suppose that there existed a continuity of cult, the transfer of worship suggesting an equation of the two figures. It would follow that Dionysus was regarded as a hero or, at least, that his cult was compatible with heroic worship. Yet it seems decisive against such a view that it was only the choruses which were given to Dionysus; the rest of the cult was transferred to the Theban hero Melanippus. Cleisthenes seems merely to have brought the tragic choruses into conformity with the practice common elsewhere in the Greek world.

A further obstacle to our understanding of the address of the hymn lies in the site of the epiphany: the women of Elis summon hero Dionysus to a ναός. A god was worshipped at a ναός, but a hero received worship at a τύμβος or ἡρώων. Underlying this is a basic distinction of Greek religious practice, namely that between chthonian and Olympian worship. This distinction is clearly evidenced in the terminology employed for sacrifice: for an Olympian god θύειν is used, for a hero the verb is ἐναγιζεῖν. The mode of sacrifice implied by these terms is appropriate to the site of worship. Generally at the hero’s shrine sacrifice was conducted at night; the victim was slaughtered with its throat held downwards, either over a low altar (ἐσο-χάρα) or the blood was allowed to flow directly into a trench (βόθ-
DIONYSUS AND THE WOMEN OF ELIS

ροσ). At an Olympian's temple morning was the proper time for sacrifice; the victim was killed at a high-built altar with throat turned upwards. Such exceptions to these practices as we know of take the form of Olympian worship infringing on heroic.42 The hymn of the Elean women, however, suggests the reverse situation: heroic worship at a ναός. Worship in this manner is unparalleled and would likely have been considered an act of profanation.43

The difficulties posed by the address of the hymn seem insurmountable; no satisfactory way of understanding Dionysus as ηρως has been found. Consequently, we are left with two possible positions to adopt. One is to accept it as an anomaly;44 the other is to suspect the text. The latter is made more attractive by considering the transmitted form of ηρως. The vocative ηρω is read unanimously by the paradosis, but is elsewhere unattested.45 In all other early occurrences the vocative singular is ηρως and in none of these cases do the mss. offer any variant.46 The hymn is quoted by Plutarch without any trace of local dialect, and even if ηρω were a local form, one would expect it to have been regularized to ηρως. Moreover, if ηρω stood in the text as Plutarch quoted it, he would certainly have remarked on it.47 It seems reasonable to conclude that the text is defective.

A. B. Cook sought to remove ηρω by reading ἐλθεῖν ηρ' ὁ Διόνυσε, which is said to mean "Come in springtime, O Dionysus."48

42 Cf. the honours paid to Philippus the son of Butacides: Hdt. 5.47.2 (cited as an exceptional case). See Pfister (supra n.10) 478 and Nock (supra n.18) 141ff = II 575ff. At Pind. Pyth. 5.86 and Nem. 7.46θυρία are referred to in relation to the worship of heroes; the poet, however, may be placing the hero-worship within the larger context of a religious festival to the gods (the scholiast to Nem. 7.46f [III 125 Drachmann] remarks λέγεται γάρ, δι' μετὰ τὸ θυσία ἑναγαμμόν ἐπέστηνοι): cf. L. Woodbury, Phoenix 33 (1979) 130 n.158.

43 We have no evidence to prove that this would be the case, but it seems a reasonable inference. We may note that those who ate of the sacrifice to Pelops at Olympia were not permitted into the precinct of Zeus (Paus. 5.13.3). Behind this rule there seems to lie the notion that Olympian rites could be profaned by the intrusion of chthonian elements. In this connection it is interesting to remark Xenophanes' objection to the rites of Ino-Leucothea at Elis, which combined lamentation (appropriate to chthonian worship) with Olympian sacrifice; the basis of his objection seems to be that lamentation is incompatible with Olympian worship (Arist. Rh. 1400b5 = DK 21A13).

44 As Nilsson (supra n.10) 571 n.3 does: "Da keine Emendation überzeugend ist, muss man es jedoch hinnehmen, dass die archaisierende Anrede in einem Kult hymnus gebraucht wird."

45 The reading of the paradosis is accepted as a vocative in an addendum to Schwyzer, Gr. Gramm. 1 838, but no justification for the form is offered.

46 Il. 10.416, 11.819, 838, 20.104; Od. 4.423, 7.303, 10.516; [Hes.] Scut. 78, 118; Bacchyl. 17.22; Pind. Ol. 8.42.

47 This point was made by A. D. Nock apud Halliday (supra n.1) 157.

48 J. J. Hartman, Mnemosyne 41 (1913) 217 n.1, suggests ἐλθεῖν ὁ Διόνυσε. But the intrusion of ηρ' is difficult to explain. Similarly Schneidewin's ηρως ("too easy a cor-
CHRISTOPHER BROWN

Palaeographically his emendation is very easy; it won the approval of Jane Harrison⁴⁹ and was printed by Halliday and Titchner in their texts of Plutarch. It is, however, impossible and has rightly been ignored by Page: the elision of the iota would render the form meaningless. Harrison attempted to support it by referring to instances of elided iota in the dative singular of third declension nouns in Homer,⁵⁰ but these examples serve only to underline the difficulty of the proposed emendation, since in the Homeric passages the force of the word is never left in doubt. There is always some element in the sentence that clarifies the meaning of the word; usually it is governed by a verb or preposition requiring the dative case or is modified by an adjective. If the women of Elis had wished to summon Dionysus in springtime, ἤρω would have been emphasized sufficiently to make its meaning clear, as in the famous passage of Ibycus.⁵¹

It is unlikely that the problem can be convincingly solved by emendation; the passage must stand obelized. The reading ἤρω may represent an attempt to make sense of the line after it had been obscured by some accident of transmission. Such an accident must have befallen the text late enough that the strangeness of the usage and form did not trouble the scribes, but early enough to be read in the archetype of the tradition. It is possible that ἤρω conceals a more conventional element of the cletic hymn, such as ἤμυν, and that the line may originally have read ἐλθ’ ἤμυν, ὁ Διόνυσε. The formula consisting in a form of ἐρχέσθαι governing a dative pronoun is attested in other cletic hymns.⁵² If this reconstruction were correct, the parallel with Sappho fr.2 would be striking:⁵³ δεῦρυ μ’, αἱ Κρήτεσ<σ>
314  DIONYSUS AND THE WOMEN OF ELIS

π[ερ, ελθ]ε ναϊν / ἄγνον ... This passage exhibits all the elements of invocation found in the hymn of the Elean women: the imperative, the dative pronoun, and the site of the epiphany, a temple described as ἄγνος.54

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October, 1982


54 For comment and advice I am indebted to Professor L. Woodbury and, especially, Professor E. Robbins.