

SERVING THE GODS TOGETHER: GENDER IN ROMAN CULTS

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2017

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SIGNED: Catherine Schenck

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Date: May 9, 2017

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	Page 4
Introduction.....	Page 5
Chapter One: Its All About the Men: Gender and Politics in the Cult of Bacchus.....	Page 10
Chapter Two: The Cult of Magna Mater: Reaffirming and Redefining Gender.....	Page 31
Chapter Three: Veils and Virginity: Gender Tensions in 1 <i>Corinthians</i> .....	Page 55
Conclusion.....	Page 75
Bibliography.....	Page 78

## Abstract

Maintaining the *pax deorum* through worshipping the gods was essential for the survival and continuation of the Roman state. While many aspects of public, political, and social life were performed by elite men, religion offered the opportunity for all men and women, regardless of class and status to interact and contribute the welfare of their community. This thesis explores gender dynamics in three cults: the cult of Bacchus, the cult of the Magna Mater, and Paul's concept of Christianity in Corinth. While each cult is vastly different, they provide insight into the ways in which men and women could worship the gods together and the tensions and anxieties that arise in mix-gendered groups. In the case of the cult of Bacchus, gender was at the fulcrum of its suppression in 186 BCE, during which the Senate attempted to curb male participation in cultic worship but reaffirmed the authority of female participants. Moreover, the reaction to the presence of the *galli*, the eunuch priests of the Magna Mater, highlights Roman hostility towards non-gendered individuals, for whom there was no place in the binary gendered world of Rome. Finally, in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, the signifiers of gender, sexuality, and morality are at the forefront of his treatment of marriage, virginity, and veiling. In each case study, the issue of gender is the utmost importance and can even highlight the distribution of authority in cultic worship.

## Introduction

In the Roman world, religion permeated every aspect of daily life, whether it was in the form of a public festival on an official day, daily household rites, or the appointment of a new priesthood. In the private sphere, individual households celebrated numerous festivals. For instance, during the Compitalia, celebrated each year in late December or early January, families offered sacrifices by walking the *compita* (crossroad shrines) around the parameter of their property.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in February, families would perform the rituals of Parentalia, which entailed travelling to the tombs of their ancestors to make offerings.<sup>2</sup> In addition, daily offerings were made to household gods.<sup>3</sup> On a public level, the will of the gods was revealed through ritual sacrifice. Both priests and priestesses alike performed animal sacrifice in public, particularly during times of civic and military crisis. The distinction between public rites, those performed by publicly appointed officials on behalf of the Roman people, and private rituals, those performed in the home, are not always strictly defined.<sup>4</sup> Private rituals often had public aspects, such as the Parentalia, during which families moved from their homes into the public necropolis. The blurring of public and private worship by members of both sexes could show that religion offered all Romans the opportunity to become active participants in matters of the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.537-539; 2.677.

<sup>3</sup> C. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> M. DiLuzio, *A Place at the Altar: Priestesses in the Roman Republic*, (Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 6; Schultz (2006), 14.

The Roman ritual system was marked by meticulous attention to detail and respect for established traditions. Rites had to be performed on specific days, at a specific time, by specific people. The highly regimented procedures reflect religion's overall importance to Roman society; religion consumed both public and private life. By performing sacrifices and rites, the Romans hoped to ensure divine will and maintain the *pax deorum*. In exchange for scrupulous attention towards the gods, the Romans guaranteed the continuous prosperity for their families and the state. A disruption of the *pax deorum* meant trouble. In the same way, trouble within the Republic, whether military failure or political animosity, signaled a disruption of the *pax deorum*. This distinctly Roman approach to ascertaining the will of the gods and interacting with the divine meant that the Romans spent an ample amount of time on religious affairs. They reviewed their relationship with the gods before political assemblies, military campaigns, and during any situation of uncertain outcome. Just as religion pervaded public and private life, it also had uniquely political and social aspects. Unlike the modern American political system, there was no separation of church and state in Rome. Certain aspects of Roman religion, such as the legitimization of a foreign cult, were within the authority of the Roman senate. Moreover, senators and their family members held high ranking religious offices, such as that of the Pontifex Maximus, the Vestal Virgins, and as a member of the *decemvir*. Although there were many opportunities for Romans to participate in the worship of their gods, not all opportunities were available to all Romans: social status and gender often determined who could, or could not, participate in a particular observance.

This thesis explores the extent to which gender played a role in the worship or regulation of three different cults: the cult of Bacchus, the cult of the Magna Mater, and early

Christianity. All three cults are vastly different. Although both the cult of Bacchus and the cult of the Magna Mater were foreign cults adopted into the pagan Roman pantheon, they were received differently by the Roman people. While worshipped in Rome and throughout Italy, the Cult of Bacchus was suppressed and regulated by the Senate in 186 BCE. The Magna Mater was eagerly adopted by the Romans despite its foreign nature. In fact, the Magna Mater, with her connections to Rome's legendary Trojan history and proverbial arrival, quickly became part of the Roman's national identity. Christianity, on the other hand, was a new, monotheistic cult worshipped according to different doctrines and rituals. Despite their differences, however, each cult provides insight into the tensions and anxieties that surround gender in Roman religious practices.

The first chapter examines the gender dynamics of the cult of Bacchus, as it appeared before the senate suppressed Bacchic worship. Before 186 BCE, the cult attracted both men and women participants, however, as accusations of *stuprum* ("illicit sexual behavior") surfaced and the Senate grew increasingly suspicious of the group's night-time activities, the Senate intervened and passed a decree to limit participation. While scholars have asserted that the Senate's actions were meant to limit the growing influence of women in Roman society, a close examination of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, the extant official decree of the Senate, reveals that the restrictions placed on the cult of Bacchus were aimed to curb male participation in the cult, not constrain women.<sup>5</sup> In addition to impacting the gender dynamics of the cult, the Bacchanalian Affair was a watershed event that expanded the senate's judiciary

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<sup>5</sup> J. Scheid, "The Religious Roles of Roman Women", in *A History of Women in the West: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, (ed.) P. Pantel, (Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 393

authority to include jurisdiction over regulating foreign cults in both Rome and Italy. Through intervention in the cult of Bacchus, the senate received extraordinary powers that signaled Rome's growing dominance in Italy. Thus, both politics and the desire to restrict participation according to gender were motivating factors that contributed to the Senate's actions in 186 BCE. Accordingly, both factors should be considered with equal weight.

The second chapter examines the importation and adoption of the cult of the Magna Mater in Rome. The arrival of the Magna Mater in Rome made a lasting impression on the Romans, for the goddess' legendary advent is retold often by many authors spanning several eras. Gender, particularly the morality and virtue of men and women, is a focal point of every author's rendition. Roman men and women played a large role in the physical acceptance of the Magna Mater into the city; Scipio Nacisa, the *vir optimus*, and Claudia Quinta, the *matrona primoris*, were granted the honor of bringing the goddess into the city. In later retellings of the story, the two escorts become emblems of traditional Roman virtues. While in the stories surrounding the arrival of the Magna Mater both genders are praised for their quintessentially Roman characters, the *galli*, the self-castrating eunuch priests of the goddess, were condemned for their lack of gender. Anxiety and hostility towards the *galli's* ambiguous gender can be seen in the ancient authors' descriptions of the priests. The *galli* appeared to violate traditional gender categories and had no place within the binary gendered world of the Romans. By examining the cult of the Magna Mater, it is clear that the gender could be both a positive reflection of traditional gender ideals, or a source of tension and anxiety.

The final chapter examines the gender tensions that arose among early Christians in Corinth through the lens of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. While Paul's first letter contains

some of the New Testament's most puzzling passages, it provides evidence for complex gender tensions and sexual morality. Paul's motivation for writing his letter to the Corinthians is to address the problem of immorality that is dividing the congregation. He responds to both those who claim that "all things are permissible for me" (1 Cor 6:12) and those who champion the slogan "it is good for man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7:1). While he remains elusive in his guidance by proposing that both marriage and celibacy are valid options to combat potential sexual temptation, he makes it explicit that morality should be striven for by both groups. Moreover, Paul states that all women should wear veils in public and while worshipping. While veils are often interpreted as signaling the inferiority of women, veils served physical functions; they protected a woman's modesty and shielded her from the unwanted gaze of men. While the negative modern connotations of veils are clear, in light of Paul's concern with morality, it is possible to view female veiling as another precaution against temptation. A veil blocked the unwanted gaze of men and drew attention away from women in public. Through close examination of his treatment of marriage, virginity, and veiling, it is clear that Paul is concerned with the sexual morality of all Christians in Corinth, regardless of gender. He attempts to unify the community with a mutual mission to avoid immorality.

Although all three cults explored in this thesis had vastly different rituals and methods of worship, they provide insight into the gender dynamics of Roman religion. Participating in cult worship provided both men and women the opportunity to have a stake in the welfare of the state and to interact with each other. These interactions between genders help modern scholars understand the tensions and anxieties surrounding gender in the ancient world.

## Chapter One

### Its All About the Men: Gender and Politics in the Cult of Bacchus

The suppression of the cult of Bacchus spearheaded by the consul Spurius Postumius Albinus in 186 B.C.E. offers a rare glimpse of the gender dynamics and political nature of Roman religion. Although the events of this year have received much scholarly attention, the episode remains one of the most intractable questions in the study of Roman religion: what is going on with the cult of Bacchus? Was the suppression of the so-called Bacchanalian Conspiracy purely motivated by the Senate's need to curb the political classes' involvement in unregulated religious activity and an avenue for the Senate to assert their authority in religious affairs? Or was it strictly motivated by gender? Did the Senate have a problem with mixed-gender groups meeting and performing foreign religious rites under the *noctis licentia* (lawlessness of night)?<sup>6</sup> Both Celia Schultz and Sarolta Takacs argue that the Senate's intervention in the cult of Bacchus was strictly politically motivated.<sup>7</sup> Takacs, taking an intermediary approach, focuses her analysis on the political implications of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*. Rather than weighing in on the gender dynamics of the cult of Bacchus, Takacs asserts that the senatorial decree was simply a way to legitimize senatorial involvement in state religion as well as establish its authority over foreign cults. She concludes that the conspiracy offers valuable insight into the "mechanisms of religious control exercised by the Roman Senate".<sup>8</sup> Schultz, on the other hand, claims that gender was not as important a factor as some scholars have suggested. Instead, the

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<sup>6</sup> Livy, *Ad Urbe Condita*, 39.8.7.

<sup>7</sup> Schults (2006), 82-92; Takacs (2000), 301-310.

<sup>8</sup> Takacs (2000), 302.

root of the issue was class and social standing; the Senate was mainly concerned with eliminating participation in the cult by elite men and, by extension, their politically prominent families.<sup>9</sup>

While the actions taken by the Senate were clearly political, this chapter will argue that gender played an equally important role in the suppression of the cult of Bacchus. Gender is inherently political and should be evaluated with equal weight as the political motivations behind the restrictions placed on the cult. Rather than separate politics and gender, I will discuss how they were both factors that contributed to the actions taken by the Senate.

The Bacchanalian Conspiracy offers a rare opportunity to scrutinize literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence. The two main sources for the episode are Livy's account in book 39 of *Ad Urbe Condita* and the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, the extant paraphrase of the Senate's decree preserved in an inscription discovered at Tiriolo in Bruttium in 1640.<sup>10</sup>

While Livy's narrative provides a detailed description of the events, it is not without its problems. Livy, writing during Augustus' reign, is not only far removed from the time period in which he discusses, but is hostile towards the Bacchants themselves. Livy often misrepresents Bacchic ritual in order to present the cult as seditious, murderous, and fanatical. For instance, he alleges that the drums, cymbals, and shrieking that accompanied the cult's ritual only served to drown out the screams of rape and murder.<sup>11</sup> The use of noisy instruments, singing, and wailing, however, was a common practice in Dionysiac worship.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the episode in

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<sup>9</sup> Schultz (2006), 82-92.

<sup>10</sup> CIL 1<sup>2</sup>.581= ILLRP 511= ILS 18.

<sup>11</sup> Livy, 39.8.8; 39.10.7.

<sup>12</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae*, 680-715; Gruen (1990), 63.

which the matrons plunge fiery torches into the Tiber and pull them out still burning is presented with hostility when in fact the practice simply simulated a miracle to attest to the god's presence.<sup>13</sup> Livy describes the practice as a delusional and fanatical ceremony rather than a symbolic act. Livy does, however, have some historical basis. According to Flower, Livy's source is believed to be the historian A. Postumius Albinus, the consul of 151 B.C.E. and cousin of the Sp. Postumius Albinus the consul of 186 B.C.E. Thus, he seems to have access to the senatorial decrees passed by Sp. Postumius Albinus and familiarity with his propaganda against the cult not present in official documents.<sup>14</sup>

Livy begins his retelling of the events by stating that the consuls were diverted *ab exercitu bellorumque provinciarum cura ad instestinae coniurationis vindictam* (from the army and cares of the military and provinces to the punishment of internal conspiracy).<sup>15</sup> The narrative that follows centers around the mother and stepfather of young P. Aebutius, who wanted to cheat their son out of his inheritance by persuading him into undergoing the initiation rites of Bacchic worship. While the naïve youth agreed to become an active participant in the cult, he expressed his concerns to his devoted mistress, the courtesan Hispala Faecenia, who, in an attempt to dissuade him from participating, disclosed the lurid tales of Bacchic culture. Not knowing whom to believe, the young Aebutius sought the counsel of his

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> H. Flower, "Rereading the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 186 BC: Gender Roles in the Roman Middle Republic", *Oikistes: Studies in Constitutions, Colonies, and Military Power in the Ancient World*, (2002a), pp. 81.

<sup>15</sup> Livy, 39.8.1.

elderly aunt who then referred him to none other than the consul Postumius Albinus.<sup>16</sup> An investigation into the licentious behavior of both men and women in the cult soon followed.

Livy initially affirms that the Bacchic rites were first introduced to Etruria by an unimportant Greek (*Graecus ignobilis*) who then revealed the secret acts to both men and women.<sup>17</sup> Later, however, according to his informant Hispala, Livy asserts that the initiation rites had been restricted to women, who selected *matronae* to act as priestesses.<sup>18</sup> It was not until later that Paculla Annia, a priestess from Campania, was the first to initiate men into the cult.<sup>19</sup> Madness and impious behavior soon followed this mixing of genders. Livy and the senate were particularly outraged by reports that new initiates were forced to engage in *stuprum* (illicit sexual behavior).<sup>20</sup> Under the cover of darkness and after the consumption of wine both men and women committed all sorts of offensive behavior. Although there is ample evidence, both archaeological and literary, confirming that men and women performed Bacchic rituals together throughout Etruria and Southern Italy, Livy's Postumius states that a female majority was the source of the problem (*is fons mali huiusce fuit*).<sup>21</sup> Women were the driving force behind the scandalous behavior. In the end, the Senate acted swiftly to restrict the celebration of the cult and imprisoned or executed about seven thousand people.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Livy, 39.9.

<sup>17</sup> Livy, 39.8.5.

<sup>18</sup> Livy, 39.13.8.

<sup>19</sup> Livy, 39.13.9.

<sup>20</sup> *Stuprum* is defined by J.N. Adams as an illicit sexual act done to a freeborn adolescent.

<sup>21</sup> Livy, 39.15.9; Flower (2002a), 82; the whole city of Tarentum participated in the cult (Dio, fr. 39.5).

<sup>22</sup> Livy, 39.17.

The *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* is one of the most valuable sources pertaining to the Bacchanalian Conspiracy because it is contemporary to the event. This letter, drawn up at a meeting of the senate at which both consuls were present, displays only what the senate wanted the locals in Bruttium to read. Addressed to the allies (*foederatei*), it outlines the various decisions made about the cult, including specific instructions about how the decree should be publicized and about dismantling any Bacchic cult site within ten days of receiving the letter.<sup>23</sup> Most importantly, the decree demonstrates that the senate sought to regulate certain aspects of Bacchic worship in Rome and Italy, rather than eradicate the cult altogether. While some practices were banned entirely, exceptions to the absolute ban were possible in most cases.<sup>24</sup> When the worshippers are considered as a whole, however, it is clear that the structure of the cult groups and the roles of both genders within them, were the two main concerns of the senate and impacted the target of the decree. The language of the decree itself reveals the importance of gender in the Senate's actions. It specifically separates the participants by gender and imposes repercussions and exceptions to the ban accordingly.

The Senate began its decree by defining its male audience. While the *senatus consultum* uses the generic term *vir* throughout, it clarifies that the decree refers to every male participant, whether citizen (*cevis Romanus*), Latin (*nominus Latini*), or ally (*socium*).<sup>25</sup> The decree was all-inclusive and aimed at *all* men across geographic and, presumably, socio-economic boundaries.<sup>26</sup> According to Livy's account, slaves, freedmen, and *nobiles* participated

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<sup>23</sup> *SCdB*, 25-30.

<sup>24</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 101; *SCdB*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> *SCdB*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> See H. Mouritsen, *Italian Unification: A Study in Ancient and Modern Historiography*, (University of London, 1998), pp. 49-58.

in the Cult of Bacchus together. For instance, Hispala Faecenia, described as an *ancillula*, was not only an equal participant before her manumission but even asserted that there were *nobiles* among the Bacchantes.<sup>27</sup> The inclusive nature of the Cult of Bacchus contributes to the idea that religion defied class boundaries. There is ample evidence that men, women, freedmen and women engaged in religious rites together.<sup>28</sup> A stone from Aquileia, in the eastern region of Cisalpine Gaul, commemorating a gift offered to Bona Dea on behalf of two freeborn women and two freedwomen provides evidence that religious worship crossed status boundaries.<sup>29</sup> A similar group from Furfo, northeast of Rome, lists two freeborn women, two freedwomen, and one slave woman, all of whom bear the title *magistrae*.<sup>30</sup> Although there is regrettably little evidence for slave participation in religious rites, Livy's assertion that Hispala Faecenia participated in the Cult of Bacchus as a slave in addition to the *senatus consultum's* careful defining of the term *vir* provides little reason to believe that slaves or freedmen would not be subject to the same restrictions.<sup>31</sup>

When addressing women, the *senatus consultum* consistently refers to female participants using the term *mulier*. Although *mulier* begins to replace *uxor* as the typical word denoting a "wife" by the time of Jerome, it is commonly used by authors throughout the

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<sup>27</sup> Livy, 39.10.5; Livy, 39.13.14.

<sup>28</sup> See A. Richlin, "Carrying Water in a Sieve: Class and the Body in Roman Women's Religion", *Women and Goddess Traditions*, (1997).

<sup>29</sup> CIL 5.762.

<sup>30</sup> CIL 9.3518.

<sup>31</sup> Schultz (2006) states that, "presumably, male slaves and foreigners were not subject to the same restrictions". The language employed by the *senatus consultum* makes it clear that the decree addressed *all* men across class and status boundaries. There is no reason to believe that the decree targeted elite men.

Republic and early Empire as the universal, neutral word for woman.<sup>32</sup> By using the universal word for women, it is clear that the decree addressed *all* female participants, whether a wife, daughter, or sister, regardless of marital or class status. Furthermore, the word *mulier* is preferred by authors throughout the Republic when contrasting men (*vir*) and women. In fact, it is not until the Augustan Era that the preference shifts from *vir/mulier* to *vir/ femina*. This shift in terminology is evident in Livy's history. He not only uses the word *femina* emphatically but also in contrast with *vir*.<sup>33</sup> In his Bacchanalian episode, however, he appears to use both *mulier* and *femina* interchangeably. For instance, when referring to Sulpicia, a highly respectable woman of *antiqui moris*, he uses the word *femina*.<sup>34</sup> Later, when retelling the horrors of the female cult initiates, he uses both *femina* and *mulier*. First, he refers to Hispala Faecenia as a *mulier* but later describes all the wild Bacchantes as *feminae*.<sup>35</sup> In Livy it appears that his choice in term is not linked to morality or chastity. He uses the same word, *femina*, to describe Sulpicia, the epitome of a respectable, honorable Roman woman and women who behave badly. The words are interchangeable, but significant. They demonstrate the inclusive nature of the cult because they are not linked to status. Like the *senatus consultum*, Livy lumps all female participants together and makes no class or status distinctions in most cases. Livy does,

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<sup>32</sup> J.N. Adams, "Latin Word for 'Woman' and 'Wife'", *Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht*, vol. 50, (1972), pp. 235 and 249-250. The OLD defines "mulier" simply as (1) a general woman, (2) a woman who is married or has had a sexual experience (opp. *virgo*).

<sup>33</sup> Adams (1972), 243.

<sup>34</sup> Livy, 39.11.5. Livy repeatedly refers to Sulpicia's respectable character and always uses the word *femina* to introduce her (i.e. *tam nobilem et gravem feminam*, 39.12.2).

<sup>35</sup> For references to Hispala Faecenia as *mulier* see Livy, 39.12.6; 39.13.1. When Hispala Faecenia begins to describe the origins of the cult she describes it as a *sacrarium feminarum* (39.13.8). Later she describes the *supra feminarum* (39.13.11) and the mixing of men with *feminis* (39.13.10) at night.

however, make one possible differentiation between the classes. In his explanation of the punishment of Bacchic women, Livy poses two possible scenarios. First, women who had an authority over them (*manu*) were handed over to their guardian to be punished in private (*in private*); women who had no suitable punisher (*idoneus exactor*) were punished in public by the state (*in publico*).<sup>36</sup> This separation of women based on whether they had a proper authority figure to punish them might be viewed as an indication of class or marital status. The term *manus* (literally “hand”) denoted a married relationship in which the wife stood in the power of the husband.<sup>37</sup> Women who were not under the *manus* of their husband or the *patria potestas* of their father, were required to have a *tutor*, whose main responsibility was administering his ward’s property.<sup>38</sup> While it might be argued that Livy’s remarks show an attempt to distinguish between the classes, it is more likely that it is being used to distinguish between married and unmarried women rather than a marker of class. Freedwomen or slaves were often under the tutelage of their patron (former owner), owner, or a *tutor* assigned to her by the state.<sup>39</sup> Thus, despite Livy’s distinction between a woman being punished in private or public, it is clear that the historian’s account of the Bacchanalian Conspiracy did not separate the genders based on status or class.

Gender separation is most explicitly evident in the *senatus consultum* and plays a significant role in the regulation of the cult. The decree’s preoccupation with gender roles is embedded within the language of the text and the specific regulations. Some cult activities

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<sup>36</sup> Livy 39.18.6.

<sup>37</sup> J. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, (Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Gardner (1991), 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Gardner (1991), 14-17.

were suppressed without exception, others allowed under certain circumstances, and still others were tolerated without being openly endorsed. The senate outlines six situations that were subject to an absolute decree:

sacerdos nequis vir eset; magister neque vir neque mulier quisquam eset; / neve pecuniam quisquam eorum comoine [m h]abuisse ve[l]et; neve magistratum, / neve pro magistratu[d], neque virum [neque mul]ierem quisquam fecisse velet; / neve post hac inter sed coniura [se ne]ve comvovise neve conspondisse / neve compromississe velet, neve quisquam fidem inter sed dedisse velet. / Sacra in [o]quod ne quisquam fecisse velet.

Let no man be a *sacerdos*, let no man or woman be an official (*magister*), let none of them be willing to have money in a common fund, let no one be willing to appoint either a man or woman as an official (*magister*) or an acting official (*pro magister*), let no one be disposed to exchange oath or pledges or pacts or promises amongst each other, no let anyone consent to make a contract amongst themselves. Let no one consent to performing cult rituals in secret. (9-14)<sup>40</sup>

In addition to absolute bans, however, the senate included four situations during which exceptions could be made if special permission was obtained from the urban praetor at a meeting where at least a hundred senators were present: (1) a place of worship can be maintained if deemed necessary<sup>41</sup>; (2) a man can enter a meeting of Bacchic women<sup>42</sup>; (3) some

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<sup>40</sup> Translation by Flower (2002a), 95.

<sup>41</sup> *SCdB*, 3-4: *sei quis esent, qui sibi dicere[n]t necessus esse Bacchanal habere, eis uti ad pr. urbanum* ("if there is someone who declares that it is necessary for them to have a Bacchic cult site, let them come to the urban praetor").

<sup>42</sup> *SCdB*, 7-9: *Bacas vir nequis adiesse velet civis Romanus neve nomen Latini neve socium quisquam, nisi pr. urbanum adiesent* ("Let not any man whether a citizen of Rome or a Latin, or any ally approach a meeting of Bacchic women, unless he approaches the urban praetor").

cult activities can take place<sup>43</sup>; (4) mixed groups of men and women of no more than five participants can meet.<sup>44</sup> Fearful of potentially seditious activity, the senate prohibited any organizational structure that had the appearance and formality of a *collegium* or priestly college of the state religion.<sup>45</sup> The *senatus consultum* poses a sort of mixed message. On the one hand the restrictions imposed on cult activities were strict and enforced by capital sanctions.<sup>46</sup> On the other, there were exceptions to the mandated restrictions.

What the decree does not elucidate are the practices still allowed without asking permission or being subject to regulation. According to Flower, it seems clear that women could still hold the office and perform the duties of an official priest (*sacerdos*), while men could not under any circumstance.<sup>47</sup> A woman could be a *sacerdos*, but no one could be a *magister*. Similarly, the limitation on group size and composition only applies to groups of men and women meeting together. Mixed gender groups were envisioned to be small, no more than five participants, and consisting of a majority of women. In addition, the groups were presumably led by a female priest. Thus, such mixed gender groups could have up to two women and two men in addition to a female priestess without obtaining special permission.<sup>48</sup> The text leaves open the question of whether size restrictions were placed on exclusively female groups.

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<sup>43</sup> *SCdB*, 15-18: *neve in poplicod neve in preivatod neve edtrad urbem sacra quisquam fecise velet, nisei pr. urbanum adieset* ("let no one consent to perform cult rituals either in public or private or outside the city unless he approaches the urban praetor").

<sup>44</sup> *SCdB*, 19-22: *homines plous V oinvorsei virei atque mulieres sacra ne quisquam fecise velet* ("let no more than five individuals, men or women, consent to perform rituals").

<sup>45</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 101; Flower (2002a), 85.

<sup>46</sup> *SCdB*, 24: *ita senatus aiquom censuit* ("thus the senate declared this judgement").

<sup>47</sup> Flower (2002a), 86.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

The existence of such groups is attested in the second clause of the decree which forbids men from approaching a meeting of *Baccae* (Bacchic women) without special permission.<sup>49</sup> The text alludes to the fact that female only groups led by a priestess would continue to meet even after the destruction of formal cult sites. The continued existence of female worshippers and the closure of official cult sites bears a striking resemblance to the Bacchae of Greece, whose rites are often associated with open, outdoor spaces.<sup>50</sup>

Despite Livy's assertion that women were the root of the problem in 186 B.C.E., it is evident that the *senatus consultum* aimed to restrict male participation in the cult, not the female worshippers. While the decree is ambiguous about the continuation of all female groups and leaves room to presume that women continued to legally worship Bacchus and serve as official *sacerdotes*, it is explicit in its attempt to curb male participation and leadership. The focus of the *senatus consultum* on the activities of men suggests that the primary motivation behind the suppression was concern about the involvement of men in potentially seditious or subversive activities. Furthermore the need to appeal to the urban praetor and no fewer than one hundred senators indicates that the Senate wanted to be aware of exactly who was involved in the cult.<sup>51</sup> The Senate appears to have no problem with women performing Bacchic

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<sup>49</sup> *SCdB*, 3: see n.41

<sup>50</sup> R. Kraemer, "Ecstasy and Possession: The Attraction of Women to the Cult of Dionysus", *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 72, (1979), pp. 57. According to Kraemer, Dionysus was associated with various fertility motifs and one of several gods called upon to ensure the "fruitfulness of fields, flock, and human beings". Similarly, in Euripides (*Bac.* 680-768) most of the rituals invoking Bacchus take place outside in the mountains.

<sup>51</sup> Schultz (2006), 89.

rites, for it even granted them authority over male initiates.<sup>52</sup> In fact, this interpretation challenges the notion that the Senate suppressed the Bacchanalian cult in order to limit the growing influence of women in Roman society.<sup>53</sup>

Although gender was at the fulcrum of the Senate's decision to regulate the cult of Bacchus, the *senatus consultum* was not necessarily centered around female involvement. Further evidence indicating the Senate's ambivalent attitude towards women's worship of Bacchus lies in Rome's long tradition of female participation in Roman religion. Religion offered women the opportunity to become public members of society and contribute to the welfare of the state. The Vestal Virgins are an important example of the status and responsibility women would obtain through religious participation. They were members of the extended *Collegium Pontificum*, a body of priests that included the *pontifices*, *rex sacorum*, and the *flamines maiores*.<sup>54</sup> While the *pontifex maximus* exercised a certain degree of authority over the Vestals, such as overseeing the selection process of a new Vestal and leading the presiding over meetings of the pontifical college convened to try a Vestal suspected of *incestum*, he did not exercise *patria potestas* (paternal power) or *tutela* (guardianship) over them.<sup>55</sup> From the moment a young girl began her new life as a Vestal, she assumed an extraordinary position for

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<sup>52</sup> The position of *sacerdotes*, which the *senatus consultum* presumes women retained the right to, naturally puts them in an authoritative position of men. Women could serve as a *sacerdotes* over groups of up to three men.

<sup>53</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 102; Scheid (1992), 393, claims that, "the (real or alleged) role of women in the scandal of 186 BCE and the reaffirmation of the authority of fathers, husbands, and guardians point to a larger problem that Rome had to face since the end of the third century: matrons."

<sup>54</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 186.

<sup>55</sup> For details concerning the selection process of the Vestals see Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 1.12.1-8; For the legal status of the Vestals see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.*, 2.67.3, Plutarch, *Numa*, 10.3 and M.J. Johnson, *Pontifical Law of the Roman Republic*, (Rutgers, 2007).

a person her age and gender.<sup>56</sup> Whereas the legal status of an elite woman was defined by her relationship to the men in her life, a Vestal had no legal guardian.<sup>57</sup> A Vestal's unique legal status isolated her from traditional kinship structures and defined her position in relationship to the community as a whole.<sup>58</sup> In a broad context, the Vestals were seen as the guardians of Rome. They protected their community by maintaining their absolute virginity, praying for the welfare of the Roman people, by tending the sacred flame of Vesta, and guarding the *pignora imperii*, the sacred "pledges of the empire" that were kept in the *aedes Vestae*.<sup>59</sup> Most significantly, the Vestals participated in numerous public rites and rituals designed to cleanse the city of impurity, such as the sacrifices that took place at the Fordicidia, the October Horse, and the Bona Dea, as well as prepared the *mola salsa*, the salted grain used to consecrate sacrificial rituals. In short, the Vestals engaged in public rituals that were vital for maintaining the *pax deorum* and ensuring the welfare of the state. Often, especially during the Republic, the Vestal's prominence in the priestly community, the privileges their office offered, and their unusual legal status allowed these women to become political agents. For instance, in 143 BCE, the Vestal Claudia used her sacred status to protect her triumphing father from the tribune,

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<sup>56</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 135.

<sup>57</sup> J. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, (Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 5-26. A daughter was subject to the authority (*potestas*) of her *paterfamilias* and a wife might be under the control (*manus*) of her husband. During the Republic, a woman who became legally independent (*sui iuris*) after the death of her husband or father passed into the *tutula* (guardianship) of her nearest relative. Also see Gellius (N.A. 1.12.9) for the Vestal's relationship to her birth family.

<sup>58</sup> A. Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins*, (Routledge, 1998), 143-145; H. Parker, "Why were the Vestals Virgins? Or the Chastity of Women and the Safety of the State", *AJP*, vol. 125, (2004), pp. 571-573; DiLuzio (2016), 136.

<sup>59</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 185.

who attempted to forcibly remove her father from his chariot.<sup>60</sup> Although her interference in this potentially explosive political situation appears unprecedented, later Vestals followed in her footsteps.<sup>61</sup> In 123 BCE the Vestal Licinia dedicated an altar and small shrine to the Aventine temple of Bona Dea that included an inscription identifying her as the benefactor and advertised her wealth and status within the community. The dedication immediately became a political issue that resulted in its removal.<sup>62</sup> Finally, like Claudia, who used her sacrosanctity to protect the political campaign of her father, another Vestal named Licinia used her status and the visible public platform it offered, to campaign for a political candidate.<sup>63</sup>

Through close examination of the Vestals' religious, and often political, role in society, it is evident that female participation in religious rites was not unusual in Rome. The exclusively female group was vital to the maintenance of the *pax deorum*. In fact, women, such as the *flaminicae* and *regina sacrorum*, were part of a priestly pair. They shared their office jointly with a male counterpart. For instance, the *flaminica Dialis*, the priestess of Jupiter, served alongside her husband, the *flamen Dialis*. The occupants of this office were bound by a number

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<sup>60</sup> Valerius Maximus, 5.4.6.

<sup>61</sup> R. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, (Routledge, 1992), pp. 52; H. Flower, "Were Women ever 'Ancestors' in Republican Rome?", in *Images of Ancestors*, (ed.) J. Munk Hojte, (Aarhus, 2002b), pp. 164.

<sup>62</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 228-229. The urban praetor, Sex. Julius Caesar, challenged Licinia's right to made a dedication without the permission of the people. Licinia had violated the terms of the *lex Papiria*, which forbids the dedication of an alter, piece of property, or shrine without the approval of the people.

<sup>63</sup> Cicero, *Pro Murena*, 73; B. Rawson, "Finding Roman Women" in N. Rosenstein and R. Morstein-Marx (eds.), *A Companion to the Roman Republic*" (Blackwell, 2006), pp. 328-329. Licinia offered her seat at the gladiatorial games to her relative L. Licinius Murena, who was campaigning for the consulship. According to Rawson this would have made a statement, seeing as the Vestals sat in a prestigious, highly visible section of the amphitheater alongside other high ranking women.

of social and religious sanctions. The marriage could not lawfully be dissolved except by death and if the *flaminica* died, the *flamen* had to immediately resign his office, and vice-versa.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, there is ample evidence that they performed public, state-mandated rituals and oversaw sacrificial rites together, such as the feast day of Fides on October 1, the Lupercalia, and the twin Vinalia, a pair of wine festivals held in honor of Jupiter in April and August.<sup>65</sup> Thus, there are several cases in which men and women worshipped and engaged in religious ritual together.

In addition to occupying significant roles in official Roman religion, women could be active participants in foreign initiation cults besides the cult of Bacchus. The Bona Dea, for example, was believed to be an exclusively female cult that spread to Rome from Greece and received a temple on the Aventine. While epigraphic evidence has surfaced attesting to male participation in the cult, this fact does not diminish the importance of the December festival to the goddess, which was celebrated by only women. The December festival was undoubtedly part of civic religion.<sup>66</sup> The most comprehensive account of the December festival is written by Cicero. Cicero describes the festival of 62 BCE, which was conducted in Caesar's home, and focus on the accusation that P. Clodius Pulcher disguised himself as a flute-girl and gained

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<sup>64</sup> Gellius, *N.A.*, 10.15.23: *matrimonium flaminis nisi morte dirimi ius non est*. DiLuzio (2016), 42. The *flamen* and *flaminica* *Dialis* served the gods together and their position depended on their joint appointment.

<sup>65</sup> According to DiLuzio (2016), the *flaminica* likely accompanied the *flamen* on most occasions and may have often played an important role. In addition, according to Macrobius the *flaminica* was required to perform an expiatory sacrifice whenever she heard thunder and sacrificed a ram to Jupiter in the *regia* on market days (*Satires*, 1.16.8; 1.16.30). Thus, the *flaminica* was a highly public figure and played an active role in religious rituals.

<sup>66</sup> H.H.J Brouwer, *Bona Dea: The Sources and a Description of the Cult*, (Brill, 1989), pp. 15; Staples (1998), 14.

access to the rites in order to seduce Caesar's wife Pompeia.<sup>67</sup> Clodius' actions were clearly *nefas* and a potential threat to the cosmic order desired by the gods. The Bona Dea was not only a traditionally female cult, but also a cult for the masses. Although Cicero states that the rites of Bona Dea were celebrated by *nobilissimae feminae* ("the most elite women"), other authors, including Plutarch and Ovid, indicate that participation in the cult was extended across socio-economic boundaries. Indeed, Plutarch claims that it was a slave girl who initially discovered and revealed Clodius' identity.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Ovid states that freedwomen and courtesans frequented the temple of the goddess and it is reasonable to believe that they also participated in the December festival.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in the Cult of Venus Verticordia (the Changer of Hearts), wives and prostitutes alike participated together in a single ritual designed to celebrate a common sexuality.<sup>70</sup> Like the Cult of Bacchus, the Cults of Bona Dea and Venus Verticordia were most likely celebrated by all women regardless of status. Religion not only offered women the opportunity to engage and have a stake in their community but also united all women across social boundaries.

It is clear that gender played a significant role in the actions taken by the Senate in 186. The language of the *senatus consultum* demonstrates that the Senate sought to suppress male participation in the cult, not women. Female participation in both civic religion and cult rituals was accepted, expected, and mandated in certain cases. Women could gather in female-exclusive orders or groups, such as the Vestals and the December festival for the Bona Dea, or

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<sup>67</sup> Cicero, *De Haruspicum Responso*, 17; Bauman (1992), 62; Staples (1998), 13.

<sup>68</sup> Plutarch, *Caesar*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, 3.243-244.

<sup>70</sup> Staples (1998), 98, 103-113.

as part of a priestly pair alongside men, as is the case for the *flaminicae*. Men alone could also occupy state appointed offices or priesthoods in countless aspects of civic religion and cult worship. Thus the most elusive question remains: why did the Senate care about the Cult of Bacchus? What did it gain by restricting male worship? As Gruen states, the actions taken against the Bacchants were a spring-board for later interference in cult worship by the Senate. The Bacchanalian Conspiracy was a watershed event that marked the expansion of the Senate's authority to regulate and govern foreign religions when they were believed to impinged upon the interests of the commonwealth.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the episode reflects Rome's growing political power in the aftermath of the Punic Wars and victories in the east.

After decades of political and military intervention in the east, by the 189, Rome had crushed one of its most persistent enemy, the Aetolian Confederacy, and brought mainland Greece to submission. Furthermore, Rome successfully defeated Antiochus III, the greatest of the Seleucid kings. In doing so, Rome extended its power across the Aegean and Asia Minor. In addition to Antiochus surrendering all his land, cities, and holdings beyond the Taurus mountain range, according to the Peace of Apamea of 188, Aetolia pledged its allegiance and respect for the majesty of Rome. The Peace of Apamea proclaimed an *amicitia* between Rome and Antiochus thereby making Antiochus an associate in the maintained stability in the east.<sup>72</sup> At about the same time, Rome also enacted a treaty agreement with The Achaean League, which ensured peace and order throughout all of Greece.

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<sup>71</sup> Gruen (1990), 77.

<sup>72</sup> Gruen (1990), 66; Livy 38.11.2; Polybius, 21.32.3.

With all quiet on the eastern front, Rome was able to turn its attention to the affairs of Italy. Solidifying dominion in northern Italy and security in the peninsula was Rome's top priority, especially in the wake of the Second Punic War. When Hannibal crossed the Alps into Italy, his strategy was simple: march into Italy and disturb its alliance system.<sup>73</sup> Italy in the late third century consisted of a collection of autonomous, competitive states dominated by the hegemonic power of Rome. Rome bound these states to itself through a series of bilateral treaties and was able to keep its control in part by its overwhelming military advantage.<sup>74</sup> While the Italian states were technically the sovereign allies of Rome, they were unable to enact their own foreign policy. After Rome's defeat at Cannae in 216 BCE, Hannibal's aggressive military success led to the defection of several of Rome's allies in southern Italy, such as Bruttium, Campania and Apulia. As Hannibal's strength grew, Rome's authority over Italy began to slip. Although Rome treated the defections as a betrayal, the cities were gradually recaptured.<sup>75</sup> Some scholars have argued that the recapturing of the defected southern cities was important for defeating Hannibal, for he wasted an immense amount of resources suppressing rebellions in Campania and warding off Rome's advancements.<sup>76</sup> In light of Rome's loss of control over its southern allies during the Punic War, reestablishing its authority and dominance was of the utmost importance. In the years following the defeat of the Boii in 191, Rome enacted an extensive settlement policy and expanded its road throughout Italy.<sup>77</sup> This

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<sup>73</sup> Fronda (2010), 36.

<sup>74</sup> Fronda (2010), 33.

<sup>75</sup> Gruen (1990), 43-44.

<sup>76</sup> Fronda (2010), 256-259.

<sup>77</sup> Mouritsen (1998), 40: over the course of less than two decades, Rome built settlements on the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts, as well as key inland sites, such as Bononia, Mutina, and Parma. In addition, Rome extended the Via Aemilia and Via Flaminia to join the new colonies.

expansion into Italy helped Rome consolidate its hold on northern Italy and demonstrates the systematic tightening of the state's control.<sup>78</sup> While the formal structure of Italy remained unaffected until c. 90 BCE, the Italians had surrendered much of their internal sovereignty over to Rome.<sup>79</sup> The changing political dynamics between Rome and Italy throughout the 180s reflects a period of unification. Rome became increasingly interested in consolidating its power and affirming its influence throughout all of Italy.

The Bacchanalian episode dovetails with Rome's growing authority. Since certain aspects of the cult worship, such as mixed gendered groups and female participation in religious activities, were not viewed by the Romans as either shocking or progressive, it is likely that the campaign against Bacchic worship was merely a demonstration—a way for the Senate to expand its authority over foreign cults and its dominion in Italy. The cult of Bacchus was the perfect “test-case”, since the nature of its rituals (taking place in the dark with mixed-gender participants) and the accusations surrounding it (corruption, *stuprum*, and murder) provided “just” cause for intervention. As Livy's own narrative demonstrates, the Senate gained exceptional judicial authority through the Bacchanalian affair. The installation of a *quaestio extraordinaria* by senatorial decree, for example, and the appointment of consuls to carry out senatorial instructions, such as the arrest and punishment of around seven thousand people, without popular sanction or review were unusual powers that were extended to the Senate after the Bacchanalian affair.<sup>80</sup> In fact, Polybius affirms by the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century that crimes in Italy requiring public investigation, such as treason, conspiracy, and assassination, fell under the

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<sup>78</sup> Gruen (1990), 67.

<sup>79</sup> Mouritsen (1998), 40.

<sup>80</sup> Gruen (1990), 73. Livy, 39.13.6; 39.17.

direct jurisdiction of the senate.<sup>81</sup> Later, Cicero reminds his readers that the Bacchanalian episode served as the precedent and model for this judiciary procedure.<sup>82</sup> Cicero praises the *severtatem maiorum* (“strictness of their ancestors”) and the *senatus vetus auctoritas de Bacchanalibus* (“old authority of the senate concerning the Bacchanalia”). The suppression of the cult of Bacchus was viewed by Cicero as a reminder of the Rome’s strong stance against illicit behavior and the Senate’s praiseworthy investigation and enactment of warranted punishment.

The Senate’s expanded judiciary powers and the restrictions placed on the cult of Bacchus were also sanctioned against Bacchic worshipers throughout Italy. As argued above, the *senatus consultum* applied to citizens, Latins, and allies across geographical and status boundaries. Moreover, Livy notes that the task of destroying all forms of Bacchic worship (*omnia Bacchanalia*) throughout all of Italy (*per totam Italiam*) was entrusted to the consuls.<sup>83</sup> Livy’s statement makes it clear that Italy fell within the jurisdiction of the Roman senate and under the authority of the consuls. Whether the *senatus consultum* was legally mandated or merely a highly regarded suggestion, the inclusion of Italy in Livy’s account and the mention of the Latins and allies in the decree demonstrate an expansion of Rome’s political authority in Italy the Bacchanalian affair.

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<sup>81</sup> Polybius, 6.13.4; Livy, 45.16.4. Gruen (1990), 73-74.

<sup>82</sup> Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.15: *quo in genere severtatem maiorum senatus vetus auctoritas de Bacchanalibus et consulum exercitu adhibito quaestio animadversioque declarat* (The strictness of our ancestors in matters of this character is shown by the ancient decree of the Senate with respect to the Bacchanalia, and the investigation and punishment conducted by the consuls with the assistance of a specially-enrolled military force. Translation by Clinton Walker Keyes)

<sup>83</sup> Livy, 39.18.7.

The suppression of the Cult of Bacchus in 186 BCE had clear political and gender motivations. On the one hand, the Senate received extraordinary power, such as the authority to conduct a *quaestio* and to appoint consuls to carry out senatorial instructions. Such powers were not only able to be enforced in Rome but also throughout Italy, thus signaling Rome's growing dominion over the region. On the other hand, gender played a significant role in the actions taken by the senate. The language of the *senatus consultum* and Livy's account of the events makes it clear that the senate was concerned with the participation of both genders across socio-economic and geographical boundaries. Upon close examination of restrictions placed on the Bacchants, however, it appears that the senate was particularly concerned with curbing male participation in the cult. While the *senatus consultum* explicitly forbids men from taking on authoritative roles in the cult and restricts the number of men who can worship together, the decree is ambiguous in its restrictions on women. It can be presumed that all-female Bacchic groups continued to legally worship the god and women could serve as an official *sacerdotes*. The fact that women continued to serve as a *sacerdotes* reveals that participation in the cult of Bacchus was an avenue for women to gain authority. As noted above, religion and serving the state as a priestess afforded women the opportunity to interact with the community on a public level. Within the cult of Bacchus, despite the restrictions placed on worship, women not only retained their ability to serve in an official role, but their authority over men was solidified. With men no longer able to serve the god in that capacity, a path for women to gain visibility was forged, and even acknowledged by the state.

## Chapter Two

### The Cult of Magna Mater: Reaffirming and Redefining Gender

The importation and adoption of foreign deities into the official pantheon had a long and honored tradition in Roman religious practices. In the ancient sources, foreign practices that found a home in Rome were known collectively as *sacra peregrina*, however, as Orlin has argued, the distinction between *sacra Romana* and *sacra peregrina*, cannot be simply categorized.<sup>84</sup> Verrius Flaccus, a scholar of the Augustan period, attempted to classify the two type of rites. He is quoted by Festus as defining *sacra peregrina* as:

*peregrina sacra appellantur, quae aut evocatis dis in oppugnandis urbibus Romam sunt coacta aut quae ob quasdam religiones per pacem sunt petita, ut ex Phrygia Matris Magnae, ex Graecia Cereris, Epidauro Aesculapi, quae coluntur eorum more, a quibus sunt accepta.*

those rights are called foreign that have been called to Rome after the gods were evoked at a time when their cities were under siege, or which were sought on account of various religious motivations during peacetime, such as those of the Magna Mater from Phrygia, of Ceres from Greece, and of Aesculapius from Epidaurus, which are worshipped according to the custom of those from whom they were received. (Festus 268L)

Some cults were naturalized upon their importation while others remained ideologically foreign. The cult of Venus Erycina, a goddess from Mt. Eryx in Sicily, for example, received a temple on the Capitoline in 215 BCE. The Sibylline Books advised that the man with the *maximum imperium in civitate* (greatest *imperium* in the state) be granted the honor of

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<sup>84</sup> E. Orlin, "Foreign Cults in Republican Rome: Rethinking the Pomerian Rule", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol. 47 (2002), pp. 3-4.

dedicating the temple.<sup>85</sup> Upon the arrival of Venus Erycina at Rome, however, the cult was immediately stripped of its Punic elements and reshaped to conform to traditional Roman practice.<sup>86</sup> The cult became “more Roman” as it came under the control of the senate and Venus Erycina’s unusual, mysterious nature was curbed.

*Sacrae peregrinae*, on the other hand, retained their foreign nature even after they had been formally consecrated as public rites by the Romans. The cult of the Magna Mater (Cybele) is a perfect case in point. Along with her aniconic black stone, the goddess’s priests and priestesses were imported to Rome to oversee the Magna Mater’s traditional rites. In addition, her public worship was delegated to the aediles who organized the newly established, quintessentially Roman *ludi Megalenses*. Unlike the cult of Venus Erycina, the cult of the Magna Mater was accepted without any changes to her rituals and given a highly visible home on the Palatine. Despite her enthusiastic welcome, however, certain aspects of the Magna Mater’s worship, such as the erratic dancing and ceremonial begging during the procession of the *ludi Megalenses*, were assigned to the foreign priests and priestesses that were imported along with the cult.<sup>87</sup> For instance, the *galli*, eunuch priest officiants of the Magna Mater, were even separated from the Roman population and confined to the temple except during the procession on the *dies natalis* (foundation day) of the temple on the Palatine and for the *ludi Megalenses*,

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<sup>85</sup> Livy 22.10.10.

<sup>86</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 102; E. Orlin, *Foreign Cults in the Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* (2010, Oxford), pp. 71-76; Orlin (2002), 4,7. In Sicily, the cult was connected to sacred prostitutes and the annual ritual of *anagogia* and *katagogia*, during which sacred pigeons were released and then returned nine days later. In Rome, however, there is no indication that the goddess was worshipped in this capacity. Similarly, one could argue that the cult of Bacchus was neutralized in 186 BCE after being suppressed and regulated by the senate.

<sup>87</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 103.

the festival devoted to the goddess which were inaugurated in 194 BCE.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Dionysius of Halicarnassus states that these religious offices were off-limits to Roman citizens, who were not allowed to participate in the procession or worship the goddess according to her Phrygian rites.<sup>89</sup> In his description of the public aspects of the Magna Mater's worship, Dionysius of Halicarnassus draws a strong difference between the games as being conducted according to τούς Ῥωμαίων νόμους (Roman custom) and the Phrygian priests (ἄνῆρ Φρύξ) and Phrygian priestesses (γυνή Φρυγία) who carry the goddesses' image in the procession and worship her according to their customs (ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος). The Magna Mater remained acutely foreign in the manner in which she was worshipped, but she was celebrated in a public setting according to the Romans ways.

While it can be argued that the Romans were unaware of the Magna Mater's more foreign aspects when she was brought to Rome, recent scholarship has illustrated that the Romans were well aware of the cult when they brought it to Rome. In this chapter I will examine the ways in which the importation of Magna Mater reaffirmed the traditional gender roles and national identity of republican Rome while still retaining many of its foreign characteristics and rituals.

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<sup>88</sup> L. Roller, *In Search for the God of the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (1999, University of California), pp. 279. The *Iudi Megalenses* were inaugurated with a showing of Plautus' play *Pseudolus*.

<sup>89</sup> Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.19.4-5. Dionysius of Halicarnassus draws a strong difference between the games celebrated every year in honor of Magna Mater as being conducted according to τούς Ῥωμαίων νόμους (Roman custom) and the Phrygian priests (ἄνῆρ Φρύξ) and Phrygian priestesses (γυνή Φρυγία) who carry Magna Mater's image in the procession and worship her according to their customs (ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος). After her arrival in Rome, Magna Mater continued to be worshiped in the traditional manner, but was celebrated in a public setting according to the Roman ways.

First, from the moment the adoption of the cult was foretold by the Sibylline Books and affirmed by the Delphic Oracle, the arrival of Magna Mater was celebrated with patriotic and moral symbolism. Both religious instruments made it clear that Magna Mater should be received by some combination of the *vir optimus civitate* and the *matronae primores civitatis* and her importation would help bring the defeat of Hannibal during the Punic War.<sup>90</sup> By granting the best man and first women the honor of accepting the new deity on behalf of the Roman people, the state was able to bolster a sense of morality and virtue among its citizens. Secondly, the Romans were able to renew a sense of pride and devotion to the state by connecting the securement of a new goddess to their success in the war. This newly enhanced *pietas* and patriotism were accentuated by the connections between the Magna Mater and Roman heritage at Troy. By doing so, the Romans were able to symbolically illustrate the continuation of Roman lineage and adopt the foreign aspects of the cult into Roman worship without much scrutiny. Moreover, although the foreign aspects of the Magna Mater were embraced by the Romans, a differentiation between Roman and foreign identity remained evident. The *galli*, the Magna Mater's eunuch priests, for example, stood outside of normative Roman gender ideals.<sup>91</sup> Republican ancient sources have remarked heavily on the *galli* because of their dress, behavior, and sexual proclivities that violated traditional gender categories.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Livy, 29.14.6-12.

<sup>91</sup> See M. Beard, "The Roman and the Foreign: The Cult of the "Great Mother" in Imperial Rome" in *Shamanism, History, and the State*, ed. N. Thomas and C. Humphrey, (1994, Ann Arbor), pp. 164-190; J Latham, "'Fabulous Clap-Trap: Roman Masculinity, the Cult of Magna Mater, and the Literary Construction of the *galli* at Rome from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity", *The Journal of Religion* (2012), pp. 82-122.

<sup>92</sup> DiLuzio (2016), 104; Catullus, 63; Varro, *Eumenides*, 140B, 119B; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 6.

Regardless of the cult's "un-Roman" nature and practices, the Romans fully embraced the Magna Mater into the heart of their religion rather than relegating her to the fringe of Roman society. By accepting the goddess, with her foreign nature and all, the Romans were able to reaffirm their gender ideals and national identities.

The arrival of the Magna Mater in Rome made a lasting impression on Romans, judging from the frequency with which it is discussed by Latin and Greek authors. Unfortunately, there are no extant contemporary accounts of the advent of the Magna Mater, which appears only in later literature, most often poetry and historical prose. The earliest accounts come from Cicero and Diodoros Siculus and date to the first century BCE; the most complete testimonies, however, are from the Augustan period, particularly the descriptions of Livy and Ovid.<sup>93</sup> Although all accounts place the Magna Mater's arrival in Rome in 204 BCE, they differ on several key points, specifically the place from which the goddess came and how she was brought to the city. In the year 205 BCE, a surge of religious activity, activated by frequent showers of stones from the sky, motivated the Romans to consult the Sibylline Books. Several ancient authors connect this religious anxiety directly to Hannibal's presence in Italy, however, modern scholars have now successfully argued that the advent of the Magna Mater had little to do with fear of losing the Punic War.<sup>94</sup> In fact, when the goddess arrived, Rome was on the brink of victory, not defeat. The Romans had successfully wiped out a major Punic relief army at Metaurus in 207 BCE that isolated Hannibal in Italy. During that same year, the Romans won several victories in Spain that ensured that no additional troops could reinforce Hannibal in that

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<sup>93</sup> Roller (1999), 264.

<sup>94</sup> Appian, *Hannibal*, 7.9.56; Cicero, *De harus. res*, 13.27. Gruen (1990), 7; Roller (1999), 264-267.

region.<sup>95</sup> Polybius and Livy note that the victories were met with great joy and relief in Rome, where the implications were fully understood. Moreover, the restoration of farmers to their property in 206 BCE alludes to the confidence the Romans might have felt towards their military advancement.<sup>96</sup> If the Romans were anxious about the outcome of the war, the *decemvirs* did not let it show. Instead, they proclaimed that divine favor had already lifted the war from Rome and Latium, for the safety and possible destruction of the heartland were no longer their main concern.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the idea that mass hysteria caused by the fear of Hannibal's presence in Italy motivated the Romans to import the Magna Mater can be discounted

Nonetheless, in 205 the Romans consulted the Sibylline Books and received assurance that a foreign enemy would be expelled from Italy if the Magna Mater were brought to Rome.<sup>98</sup> The Romans received further confirmation from the Delphic Oracle who instructed them to seek help from King Attalus I of Pergamum.<sup>99</sup> At this point the ancient sources provide contrasting stories detailing the origin of the Magna Mater. A majority of the sources name Pessinous, the Phrygian sanctuary of the Mother in central Anatolia, as the original location of the goddess.<sup>100</sup> Contrasting traditions, however, do exist. Varro proposes that the goddess was brought from a shrine called the Megalesion in the city of Pergamum.<sup>101</sup> Ovid, on the other hand, places the Magna Mater on Mount Ida near the ancient city of Troy, which was under

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<sup>95</sup> Polybius, 11.3.4-6; Livy, 27.50.2- 27.51.10.

<sup>96</sup> Gruen (1990), 6-7.

<sup>97</sup> Livy, 28.11.8-11: *deum benignitate summotum bellum ad urbe Romana et Latio esse* (by the favor of the gods the war had been removed from the city of Rome and Latium).

<sup>98</sup> Livy 29.10.4-6.

<sup>99</sup> Livy 29. 11.5-6.

<sup>100</sup> Cicero, *De Harus. Res*, 13.28; Livy 29.10.6; Diodoros 34.33.1-3; Strabo 12.5.3; Appian, *Hannibal*, 7.9.56.

<sup>101</sup> Varro, *De. Ling. Lat.*, 6.15.

Pergamene control at the time.<sup>102</sup> Livy combines both stories by stating that the goddess was obtained from Pessinous with the help of King Attalus. Although Mount Ida is less frequently cited as the Magna Mater's home, it is a stronger candidate than Pessinous for the location on both political and cultural grounds. When the Romans were directed by the Delphic Oracle to seek help from Attalus in 205 BCE, they had no formal relationship with the Attalid monarchy or Pergamum.<sup>103</sup> Yet, divine guidance led them to Asia Minor, a region where the cult of *Μητήρ*, the Greek Magna Mater, was already established.<sup>104</sup> Pergamum itself was an important center for the worship of Meter, both in the sanctuary of Megalesion and in rural shrines around the urban center and Mount Ida.<sup>105</sup> Attalus had to look no further than his own territory to help the Romans.

The placement of the Magna Mater's home near Mt. Ida is fitting, considering the Roman's historical connections with Troy. Rome's legendary foundation story was not just a creation of Augustan writers. In fact, the connection between Aeneas, Rome, and Troy was already well known in the late third century BCE.<sup>106</sup> The territory around Mount Ida was important to the Romans because it was the birthplace of their legendary ancestor Aeneas.<sup>107</sup> Mount Ida itself was the stronghold where Aeneas and his followers retreated between the fall of Troy and beginning of their journey to Italy.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, it was Mater Magna Idaea, the

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<sup>102</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.263-264.

<sup>103</sup> Livy, 29.11.5-6; Roller (1999), 270.

<sup>104</sup> See Roller (1990).

<sup>105</sup> Roller (1999), 209-212, 270.

<sup>106</sup> Gruen (1990), 18-20. The earliest connection between Aeneas, Rome, and Troy may have been Hellanikos, writing in the fifth century, places Mount Ida as Aeneas' starting point. It is likely that the legend had taken shape in the late fourth century.

<sup>107</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 2.820-821.

<sup>108</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, 2.693-697; 2.788; 3.111-114.

goddess of Mount Ida, who helped guide their voyage from Troy.<sup>109</sup> Placing the Magna Mater's home at Mount Ida helps explain the Romans' enthusiasm for welcoming this foreign goddess. She was not merely a foreign nonentity imported by the Romans during a wartime crisis, but could be viewed as their own ancestral protector coming home to her people and taking her rightful place in the Roman pantheon. By making this connection, the Romans could tie the Magna Mater to the legendary foundation myth of Rome that was already circulating. They could easily have seen her arrival as a way to boost morale under the sentiment that if the Magna Mater had helped their ancestors persevere after the fall of Troy, she could help again by quickly ending the war.

The ancestral connection between the Magna Mater, the Trojans, and the Romans also helps explain why her arrival was met with such pomp and vigor and why she received such a prestigious *aedes*- not only inside the *pomerium*, the religious boundary of Rome, but on the already exclusive Palatine. In contrast, the Aventine lies outside the *pomerium* and was home to the highest concentration of foreign cults in Rome.<sup>110</sup> Orlin rightfully argues that the Aventine attracted so many foreign cults because it was outside the *pomerium* but still inside the city walls, therefore a welcoming place for foreigners and projecting the Roman ideology of religious openness to foreigners. The placement of the Magna Mater on the Palatine was surely symbolic.<sup>111</sup> If the goddess had been imported from Mount Ida near Troy, which is highly plausible, then the Magna Mater was not as un-Roman as was previously believed. Since her

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<sup>109</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.179-372.

<sup>110</sup> Orlin (2002), 5.

<sup>111</sup> Orlin (2002), 2; L. Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (1992, Baltimore). Temples to Diana, Mercury, Ceres, Liber, and Libera, Juno Regina, Summanus, Vortumnus, and Minerva are all found on the Aventine according to Richardson.

legendary ties with the Romans made her more of a long-lost ancestor rather than a complete foreigner, the Romans would have had no problem placing her temple within the sacred boundary of the city.<sup>112</sup> The Romans had previously used this logic in 215 BCE when building the temple to Venus Erycina on the Capitoline, which was also located inside the *pomerium*. The cult originated in Sicilian Eryx, a site where, according to legend, Aeneas had dedicated a shrine to his mother.<sup>113</sup> When the goddess was transferred to Rome, she was given a temple on the Capitoline near the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, a clear signal that she was represented in Rome's national history.<sup>114</sup> Like Venus Erycina, the establishment of the Magna Mater was not presented as a transfer of a foreign deity, but rather as a public display of Rome's antiquity and cultural origins that could be a visual reminder of pride in their legendary history.

The process of physically bringing the Magna Mater into Rome is also inconsistently retold by the ancient authors. The overall message of Roman morality, however, remained a focus in each version. When the Sibylline Books advised the adoption of the Magna Mater, they were quite specific about how the goddess was to be received into Rome. The Romans were directed to grant the best man in the city, the *vir optimus*, the honor of receiving her.<sup>115</sup> The man chosen out of all the possible Roman *virī boni* to fill the role of *vir optimus* was Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, the son of Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus who died in 211 BCE in Spain. Scipio Nasica was not yet a major political player in 204 BCE. At the age of twenty-four years

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<sup>112</sup> Orlin (2002), 7.

<sup>113</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.759-760.

<sup>114</sup> E. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, (1992, Cornell), pp. 46-47; G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, vol. 2, (1970, Chicago), pp. 472-473.

<sup>115</sup> Livy, 29.14.6-14.

old, he was an *adulescens* rather than a *vir* and was not yet old enough to hold office (*nondum quaestorium*).<sup>116</sup> He was, however, a member of a prestigious family in which he served in an authoritative role as *paterfamilias* after the death of his father.<sup>117</sup> His familial connections, rather than his own merits, was main factor in his selection.<sup>118</sup> Scipio Nasica was the younger cousin of Publius Cornelius Scipio, soon to be known by his cognomen Africanus.

At the time of the Magna Mater's arrival in Rome, the Senate was embroiled in a debate over how to proceed against Hannibal. One faction, spearheaded by Scipio Africanus, wanted to extend the war into Carthage and force Hannibal to retreat from Italy and defend his own territory.<sup>119</sup> The other faction, led by Fabius Maximus Cunctator, argued that sending Rome's remaining army to Africa would leave the city undefended. If Hannibal chose to renew his campaign in Italy, the city would be an easy target. The selection of Scipio Nasica was more closely related to struggle between Scipio Africanus and Fabius Maximus Cunctator than to his own exceptional qualities. Scipio Africanus won the debate in the senate; having his cousin accept the Magna Mater would have projected the image of divine support. It showed the Romans that the Scipiones had the new goddess on their side.<sup>120</sup>

The goddess was also received by the women of Rome, either a group of Roman *matronae* or the best woman in the city.<sup>121</sup> Claudia Quinta was named the best woman.

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<sup>116</sup> Livy, 29. 14.8.

<sup>117</sup> Livy, 29.14.8; Cicero, *Brutus*, 20.79; Dio Cassius, 17.61.

<sup>118</sup> K. Burns, *The Magna Mater Romana: A Sociocultural Study of the Cult of Magna Mater in Republican Rome* (ProQuest, 2015), pp. 69.

<sup>119</sup> Gruen (1990), 21-24.

<sup>120</sup> J. Lazenby, *Hannibal's War: A Military History of the Second Punic War*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), pp. 200.

<sup>121</sup> Livy 29.14.12; Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 14.34; Propertius, 4.11.51; Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.305-348.

Although no contemporary sources survive that describe her historical life, Claudia Quinta became a major figure in the Magna Mater's mythic tradition. It is clear from her name that she was a member of the *gens Claudia* and was one of at least five sisters, but no source ever provides her with a father or husband. It is impossible to know exactly how she was related to the *Claudii*.<sup>122</sup> In most versions of her story, Claudia Quinta is a Roman *matrona* with a questionable reputation because she was outspoken and obtained unwanted attention for her ostentatious clothing. The character of Claudia Quinta is first mentioned in literature by Cicero in his work *Pro Caelio*, written in 56 BCE.<sup>123</sup> Cicero neither references her famous role in the advent of the Magna Mater nor mentions her questionable reputation. Instead, Claudia Quinta assumes the role of a perfectly virtuous and chaste woman, a part that she often plays in literary depictions.<sup>124</sup> In later sources, Claudia Quinta is identified as a Vestal Virgin who was accused of *incestum*.<sup>125</sup> The only source to deviate drastically from the traditional story is Diodorus Siculus, who names Valeria as the best woman, but gives no further details.<sup>126</sup> He is the only source who names a woman other than Claudia Quinta, and for this reason this detail is usually dismissed.<sup>127</sup> Regardless of the paucity of historical background, Claudia Quinta is

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<sup>122</sup> Burns (2015), 80.

<sup>123</sup> Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 14.34.

<sup>124</sup> Livy, 29.14.12; Appian, *Hannibal*, 7.9.56;

<sup>125</sup> Herodian (1.11.4-5) and Statius (*Silvae*, 1.2.245-246) both identify Claudia Quinta as a Vestal. Accusing a Vestal of *incestum* was not unusual in Republican Rome. In 230 BCE, the Vestal Tuccia was accused of improper behavior and proved her innocence by carrying water from the Tiber to the Temple Vestal in a sieve without spilling a drop (Valerius Maximus, 8.1.6). Both Tuccia and Claudia Quinta were said to have performed miracles to test their innocence. Other Vestals, such as Postumia (Livy, 4.44.11-12) and Minucia (Livy, 8.15.7-8), were accused of dressing too fancily for her religious office.

<sup>126</sup> Diodorus Siculus, 34-35 frag. 33.

<sup>127</sup> Burns (2015), 79.

attested in the ancient sources and remained a dominant figure in the story of the Magna Mater's arrival in Rome.

The sources begin to vary in their retelling of how the Magna Mater was brought into the city. According to Livy, when Marcus Valerius Falto, the ambassador to Pergamum, announced that the ship carrying the Magna Mater had arrived in Ostia, a mob of people rushed to greet her. Scipio Nasica then went on board the ship, retrieved the aniconic black stone representing the goddess, and immediately turned it over to the *matronae*, who then passed the goddess in an unbroken chain to Rome and placed her in the Temple of Victory on the Palatine.<sup>128</sup> Ovid, however, preserves a more spectacular story. According to Ovid, the Romans intended to bring the whole ship containing the image of the goddess into Rome via the Tiber River. As it was being towed up the Tiber, however, the ship became stuck in the sand and could not be moved. At that moment, a miracle was performed. Claudia Quinta, who had previously been accused of *incestum* and had appealed to the Magna Mater to redeem her reputation and reveal her chastity, unfastened her belt and used it as a rope. Miraculously she was able to dislodge the ship and tow it into Rome. In doing so, she proved her chastity and was rewarded for her honesty.<sup>129</sup>

The morality and *pietas* of the two attendants is of central concern. Both are chosen and described in terms of their virtue and social standing. While the terms *optimus* and *primoris* are often used in reference to an individual's elite status, when the fact that both Scipio Nasica and Claudia Quinta are revered for their virtue by later authors is taken to account, it is possible

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<sup>128</sup> Livy, 29.14.12-14.

<sup>129</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.260-348.

that the pair helped reaffirm republic morality through their actions and legacy. Scipio Nasica and Claudia Quinta's reputations became proverbial and set a standard for others to look up to and emulate. Scipio Nasica's name became legendary and was frequently praised by later authors as a symbol of Republican virtue.<sup>130</sup> Claudia too was seen as the epitome of feminine virtue by later Roman authors in terms of her *castitas* and *pudicitia*. The later imperial descriptions of Claudia Quinta as a Vestal Virgin, for example, amplify her status by representing her as the ultimate symbol of official chastity.<sup>131</sup>



Figure One  
Capitoline Museum

A marble relief in the Capitoline Museum, dating to the first or second century CE, illustrates the figure of Claudia Quinta towing a ship containing a personified Magna Mater (figure one). Claudia Quinta, shown on the right, wears the costume of a Vestal Virgin (a *palla* flung over her left arm and covering her head with *vittae* peeking out), a clear indication that the depiction had been influenced by the elaborate retelling of the story. The inscription

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<sup>130</sup> Nasica served as aedile in 197, praetor in 194 and consul in 191. However, he lost the election for censor in 189 and 184 (*OCD*). He later becomes a hero of Republican virtue. Cicero, *De harus. res*, 13.27, *De Finibus*, 5.64; Valerius Maximus, 7.5.2, 8.15.3; Cassius Dio, 17.61; Juvenal, 3.137. Roller (1999), 267.

<sup>131</sup> Roller (1999), 313-314.

underneath the relief identifies Claudia, the Magna Mater, and the ship of salvation (*navisalvae*). When paired with Ovid's legend of the woman who proved her chastity by performing a miracle, it is clear that Claudia fits in with Augustan morality propaganda.<sup>132</sup> She became an exemplar of Republican virtue and old-fashioned morality. Moreover, the juxtaposition of a young, authoritative man and virtuous married woman is interesting. The combination not only illustrates the continuation of the Roman state through noble, Roman blood, but perhaps also comments on a next generation of leaders. Scipio Nasica is at the cusp of his physical and political prime. He is coming of age and just beginning his political career and was a young *paterfamilias*, the authoritative head of the Roman household. In a way, he becomes the symbolic embodiment of the next generation of Roman leaders and an example for other young men to emulate. Likewise, Claudia Quinta, being a woman of child-bearing age or having already borne children, represents the body through which the next generation will be born. She projects the image that the best Roman women produce the best Roman men. Together, Scipio Nasica and Claudia Quinta represent posterity. More specifically, they represent posterity that is contingent on continued morality.

Despite the Magna Mater's connection to the Rome's legendary history and her later association with republican values, the cult had acutely foreign characteristics that the Romans struggled to accept, such as the idea of the *galli*, the eunuch priests to the goddess. Most modern scholars, such as Gruen, formerly assumed that the Romans were ignorant of the cult's exotic practices, such as the use of the *galli*, when the cult was first brought to the city.<sup>133</sup> Once

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* In addition Propertius (4.11.51-52) tells of Claudia's miraculous actions and praises her chastity.

<sup>133</sup> Gruen (1990), 5.

the cult arrived they were shocked by the flamboyant, dancing, self-castrating priests that came with it and introduced the new Megalensian rites to retain some control over the practices.<sup>134</sup> After establishing the goddess in Rome, the Romans supposedly did their best to mitigate the effects of the *galli* by keeping them separated from the rest of the population and ignoring Attis altogether, the consort of the Magna Mater whom they believed to be the originator of the self-castration of the *galli*.<sup>135</sup> According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, it was illegal for citizens to become *galli* or even mimic the *galli*'s behavior in the public procession.<sup>136</sup>

It is highly unlikely, however, that the Romans were unaware of the nature of the Magna Mater's cult when they imported it.<sup>137</sup> The cult of Magna Mater had a strong presence throughout the Hellenistic Mediterranean and votives dedicated to her archaic Greek counterpart, Μητηρ, have been found in Sicily and southern Italy.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, references to the ecstatic worship of the cult, such as the ritual dancing and music associated with the goddess, frequently appear in Greek literature. Most notably, in the first chorus of Euripides' *Bacchae*, the rites of Dionysus that are performed by the maenads, specifically the shaking of the Bacchic thyrsus (θύρσον τε τινάσσων), are equated to the sacred rites (οργια) of the Magna

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<sup>134</sup> M.J. Vermaseren, *The Legend of Attis in Greek and Roman Art*, (1966, Leiden), pp. 96.

<sup>135</sup> Burns (2015), 160. The *galli* lived in the temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine and were not allowed in public except during the *ludi Megalenses*.

<sup>136</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.19.5.

<sup>137</sup> Burns (2015), 160; S. Satterfield, "Intention and Eroticism in Magna Mater's introduction into Rome", in *Latomus* (2012), pp. 373-391.

<sup>138</sup> Burns (2015), 160; Roller (1999), 133,281. The rock sanctuary at Acrae in Sicily is one of the best examples of Cybele's presence in Sicily before 204 BCE. Evidence of her worship has also been found in southern Italy at Tarentum, Locri Epizephyrii, and Thurii and at Luna in Etruria.

Mater.<sup>139</sup> It is certain that the Romans were aware of details of the cult when they adopted it in 204 BCE, and possibly understood that the benefits of its importation outweighed the disadvantages. The Romans must have welcomed, or at least anticipated, the *galli* and their practices before the cult even arrived in the city. Evidence for Roman hostility towards the *galli* is drawn predominantly from imperial authors, so it is difficult to determine how the eunuchs were initially received in Rome. Dionysius of Halicarnassus asserts that the Romans were not permitted to participate in the foreign rites of the goddess.<sup>140</sup> In addition, Valerius Maximus provides a description of a trial in 77 BCE at which a *gallus* defendant named Genucius was denied his inheritance on the grounds that he was neither a man nor woman (*genitalibus corporis partibus neque virorum neque mulierum*).<sup>141</sup> Genucius was not even allowed to plead to his case because it was believed that he might pollute the court with his *obscena praesentia inquinataque voce* (obscene presence and corrupt voice).<sup>142</sup> It is clear that the *galli* were separated from the rest of the Roman population both socially and legally. Like the Greek, the Romans displayed a deep distaste for a eunuch's effeminacy, but, carried it a step further by declaring that the eunuch's lack of male sexual organs made him not a woman but a "non-person" in the eyes of the law.<sup>143</sup> The *galli's* divergent sexuality placed them strictly outside of traditional gender roles.

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<sup>139</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae*, 78-79; L. Roller, "The Mother of the Gods in Attic Tragedy" in *Cybele, Attis, and Related Cults*, ed. Eugene Lane, (Brill, 1996), 308.

<sup>140</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.19.3-5.

<sup>141</sup> Valerius Maximus 7.7.6

<sup>142</sup> Valerius Maximus, 7.7.6.

<sup>143</sup> L. Roller, "The Ideology of the Eunuch Priest", in *Gender and History*, vol. 9, ed. Maria Wyke, (1997), 549.

The ambiguity of the *galli's* gender and the anxiety it caused for the Romans is most explicitly seen in Catullus 63. Catullus uses the figure of Attis, a young devotee of the Magna Mater who consciously adopts the identity of a eunuch priest, to illustrate the social constraints which define the Roman world.<sup>144</sup> The poem starts with a sense of eagerness (*citato*) as Attis reaches the Phrygian woodlands of the Magna Mater (63.1-3). There, while under the trance of wild music and the orgiastic excitement of the goddess' rituals, he castrates himself with a sharp flint (*stimulatus ibi furenti rabie, vagus animi, devolsit ili acuto sibi pondera silice*, 63.4-5). Initially, Attis is thrilled with his transformation as he leads a band of the goddess' followers deeper into the forest.<sup>145</sup> In the first few lines of the poem, Catullus draws attention to the gender of Attis and his peers. His gender change is reflected in a switch from masculine to feminine participles and adjectives. After Attis' limbs were left without their manhood (*virgo*), Catullus describes the newly castrated young man as *citata* ("quick"), a feminine singular adjective, and his fingers as *niveis*.<sup>146</sup> *Niveis*, like *tener*, is an attribute typically attributed to females.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Catullus uses the feminine *gallae* to describe the companions of Attis and worshipers of Magna Mater.<sup>148</sup> The high price of initiation, the forsaking of his manhood and ability to procreate, is made clear. Attis' blood does not nourish the ground, as might be expected from performing a sacred act, but rather stains it (*maculans*). The negative connotations of his actions hover in the background of the text. His self-performed

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<sup>144</sup> Roller (1997), 549.

<sup>145</sup> Catullus, 63.1-17.

<sup>146</sup> Catullus, 63.6-11.

<sup>147</sup> S. Takacs, "Magna Deum Mater Idaea, Cybele, and Catullus' Attis" in *Cybele, Attis, and Related Cults*, ed. Eugene Lane, (Brill, 1996), 377-378.

<sup>148</sup> Catullus, 63.12.

emasculatation pollutes society.<sup>149</sup> Attis, however, does snap out of his frenzied trance and is forced to confront the reality of his new state; he is no longer a man but is not a woman. Instead, he is a pseudo-woman (*notha mulier*).<sup>150</sup> He bitterly laments his actions and reflects upon their effect: his loss of homeland, property, friends, family, and all the structures that constitute a civilized life.<sup>151</sup> Ultimately, his life is reduced to serving the goddess as a handmaid (*famula*).<sup>152</sup>

Catullus' poem not only speaks to Roman anxieties about Attis and the *galli* but also sheds light on the tensions surrounding a eunuch's place in Roman society. A eunuch's asexuality clearly placed him beyond the limits of normative gender roles. Eunuchs were neither men nor women and therefore had no place socially or legally in Rome. In fact, castration seemed to pollute society rather than purify it. Moreover, Catullus' Attis highlights the social tensions surround a eunuch's presence in Rome. Attis, and by extension a *gallus*, is depicted as an individual completely estranged from his social milieu.<sup>153</sup> He is physically separated from his homeland after his journey to Phrygia; culturally separated from normative life after trading the cultivated world of his previous world for the wild, dark forest world of the goddess; bodily he is separated from life as a whole person after his self-castration.<sup>154</sup> Attis is stuck between the two genders. He can play the feminine role, for once he castrates himself there is a shift in the gender of the adjectives, as the narrator speaks in a feminine voice. As a

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<sup>149</sup> Catullus, 63.12.

<sup>150</sup> Catullus, 63.27.

<sup>151</sup> Catullus, 63.59-60.

<sup>152</sup> Catullus, 63.90.

<sup>153</sup> Roller (1997), 552.

<sup>154</sup> Catullus, 63.69: Attis calls himself *pars mei* (part of myself) after he comes out of his trance and realizes his actions.

woman, however, he is stripped of any benefits of masculinity. He loses his connections to the forum, palestra, stadium, and gymnasium, the social places tied to a man's place in society.<sup>155</sup> Not only has Attis lost his civil identity, he has also lost his freedom. The Romans held manhood to be an achieved state.<sup>156</sup> In Latin, *virtus* ("manliness") denotes the essential qualities of being a "real man" which can be both physical and related to character. A man not only has the proper genitalia but also possesses courage and devotion to the fatherland.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, masculinity was defined by a man's sexual preference. A good Roman man was expected to be the penetrator in the relationship, not the penetrated. The Romans conceptualize sex as a hierarchical relationship in which the penetrator assumed the dominant role.<sup>158</sup> Thus, performing the proper sexual acts was reflective of a man's authority and control. A eunuch, who no longer has the proper equipment, is unable to perform this act and thereby does not meet the criteria of Roman masculinity. Yet Attis is not a woman but a *notha mulier*. As such he has no place in the gendered world of normal Roman society. Thus, being stuck below the status of either a man or a woman, the eunuch becomes a "non-person" and complete outcast in Roman society. Catullus' Attis not only highlights the hostility or anxiety about the *galli* in Rome, but also explores the complex gender of a eunuch.

The Romans not only struggled to place the *galli* within normal gender behaviors, they were most vocal about the unusual appearance and practices of the eunuch priests. Dionysius

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<sup>155</sup> Roller (1997), 552.

<sup>156</sup> Skinner (2014), 271.

<sup>157</sup> Skinner (2014), 270.

<sup>158</sup> Skinner (2014), 274.

of Halicarnassus offers a vivid account of the festivities associated with the Magna Mater during the *ludi Megalenses*:

Θυσίας μὲν γὰρ αὐτῇ καὶ ἀγῶνας ἄγουσιν ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος οἱ στρατηγοὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους, ἱεῖται δὲ αὐτῆς ἀνὴρ Φρύξ καὶ γυνὴ Φρυγία καὶ περιάγουσιν ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν οὗτοι μητραγυρτοῦντες, ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος, τύπους τε περικείμενοι τοῖς στήθεσι καὶ καταυλούμενοι πρὸς τῶν ἐπομένων τὰ μητρῶα μέλη καὶ τύμπανα κροτοῦντες.

For the praetors celebrate sacrifices and games in her honor every year according to the Roman customs, but a Phrygian man and a Phrygian woman serve as priests of the goddess and lead her procession through the city, playing the part of begging priests (μητραγυρτῶν), as is their custom, wearing carved images upon their breasts and striking their tambourines while their attendants accompany them, playing music in honor of the goddess on a flute. (*Ant. Rom.* 2.19.4)

Tambourines, music, and the procession of the goddess accompanied by her begging priest and priestess are the main components of the public worship of the Magna Mater.<sup>159</sup> The *galli* were highly public figures in the celebration of the Magna Mater. Their presence was marked by loud noises, exotic music, and engagement with the crowd. It was impossible to ignore the *galli* when they were engaging in their religious rituals. In a similar account by Lucretius, the sound aspect is amplified.<sup>160</sup> As the *galli* approach the crowd, drums thunder (*tympana tenta tonant palmis*, 2.618), cymbals clash (*cymbala circum concave*, 2.618-619) and horns blow

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<sup>159</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.183-1.86, offers a similar description: *ibunt semimares et inania tympana tudent, / aeraque tinnitus aere repulse dabunt; / ipsa sedens molli comitum cervice feretur / Urbis per medias exululata vias* (the half men will go and beat hollow tympana and the struck bronze cymbals will give their ringing to the air; the goddess herself, seated, celebrated with exultations will be carried on the soft neck of her companions through the middle of the city.

<sup>160</sup> K. Summers, "Lucretius' Roman Cybele" in *Cybele, Attis, and Related Cults*, ed. Eugene Lane, (Brill, 1996), 342-347. Summers effectively argues that Lucretius is describing a real processes of Magna Mater during the Megalesia as he witnessed it during his lifetime (c. 60 BCE).

(*raucisonoque minantur cornua cantu*, 2.619). Armed men jump around the sacred image of the goddess dripping with blood (*ludunt in numerumque exultant sanguine laeti, / terrificas capitum quatientes numine cristas*, 2.631-632). Lucretius' language communicates a sense of almost menacing tension among the spectators.<sup>161</sup> The *galli*, with flashing weapons and dripping with blood as if just having performed the act of castration, "terrify the ungrateful minds and impious hearts of the vulgar with fear through the goddess' majesty" (*ingratos animos atque impia pectora volgi conterrere metu quae possint numine divae*, 2.622-623). Lucretius describes the *galli* as a source of fear rather than entertainment. As Roller notes, the asexual condition of the eunuch priests seems inconsistent with the militaristic environment that Lucretius describes.<sup>162</sup> On the one hand, he depicts the *galli* as shameful men:

Gallos attribuunt, quia, numen qui violarint  
Matris et ingrati genitoribus inventi sint,  
significare volunt indignos esse putandos,  
vivam progeniem qui in oras luminis edant.

They assign the *galli* to her, because, those who violate the divinity of the Mother and are ungrateful to their parents are thought unworthy to bring living progeny into the life. (2.614-617)

On the other hand, Lucretius describes the *galli* as an armed troop ready to defend their fatherland and protect their parents (*patriam defendere terram / praesidioque parent decorique parentibus esse*, 2.642-643). Roller explains this paradox as the poet's contrived way of explaining the eunuch's castrated state as incentive for Romans to live prosperous lives and obey their parents; in other words, to follow traditional Roman values and not be like the *galli*.<sup>163</sup> By

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<sup>161</sup> Roller (1997), 550

<sup>162</sup> Roller (1997), 550.

<sup>163</sup> Roller (1997), 550.

describing the *galli* in this way Lucretius highlights the foreign characteristics of the eunuchs, in a way shameful, while also praising them for their devotion to the goddess. Yet Lucretius is in no way saying that it is acceptable for Roman men to behave in this way.

In his description of the *galli*, Varro gives a small indication of the priest's exotic dress. His narrator describes the priest's appearance as *teneris* ("delicate") and describes the priest's headdress carefully: "he wears a crown shining with gold and gems" (*coronam ex auro et gemmis fulgentem gerit, Eumenides 150*).<sup>164</sup> In his description of the overall appearance of the *galli*, Varro states, "for what charm is present in the *galli*! What chaste dress! What an age of youth! What a delicate appearance! (*nam quae uenustas hic adest gallantibus! quae casta uestis! aetas quae adulescentium! quae teneris specie, Eumenides 121B*).<sup>165</sup> The unusual, possibly alarming, behavior and appearance of the *galli* in a public setting contrasts strongly with the highly regulated and systematized rituals of other Roman religious festivals. These uncomfortable aspects enunciated the foreign nature of the cult's worshippers and set them apart in society.

The *galli*, with their self-castration, unusual behavior, and unique appearance, were difficult for the Romans to absorb into their culture. While it is hard to believe that they were unaware of the eunuch priests of the Magna Mater when the cult was imported in 204 BCE, the Romans did not necessarily welcome the *galli* with open arms. Hostility and anxiety about their presence in Rome can be seen in the literary sources, as has been shown, above. The *galli* did not socially or legally fit within traditional Roman gender roles. The Romans simply had no

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<sup>164</sup> For reconstruction of this satire, see Lantham (2012), 95-97.

<sup>165</sup> Translation by Burns (2015), 172.

place for them in their binary gendered world and did not react positively to their implicit and potential threat to society. To add fire to the flame, the *galli* did not behave or dress like a Romans. Their “delicate” appearance, ornate headdress and unique worship practices alienated them from the rest of the population to the point that they retained their foreign identity.

The cult of the Magna Mater offers modern scholars an interesting opportunity to examine the gender ideals and national identity within a *sacrae peregrinae*. When the cult first arrived in Rome, the Romans were quick to connect the Magna Mater with their Trojan ancestors. In doing so, the Romans were able to portray the goddess as the protector of Roman ancestry and give her a home within the *pomerium* on the Palatine. Moreover, the legendary Claudia Quinta and Scipio Nasica were epitomized as emblems of traditional Roman morality and embodiments of the continuation of the state for their role in the advent of the Magna Mater. Although Magna Mater was a vital member of the Roman pantheon, not all of her practices and rituals were readily accepted. The *galli*, with their self-castration and usual behavior, remained an acutely foreign aspect of the cult. Her eunuch priests, the *galli* had no place within the strict gender categories of the Roman world. They stood beyond the limits of normative masculinity seeing as they were no longer physically male and were not entitled to the civic benefits of that gender. By the same logic, they were not entirely feminine, although they could take on the persona of a woman in literature. While the *galli* did not fit into any gender category and were not accepted into mainstream Roman society, they were acknowledged as an essential aspect of the cult. They were accepted as a mandatory

component of the Magna Mater's public worship and continued to be highly visible in Rome, as evident from the ample amount of evidence describing the *galli* in the imperial period.<sup>166</sup>

The cult of Magna Mater, with its prestige and uniquely foreign nature remains a perfect a perfect candidate for examining identity within Roman religion. It not only demonstrates how the gender and sexuality of a cult's officiants are scrutinized and perceived in its new city, but also how the Romans were able to incorporate a foreign goddess into their legendary history.

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<sup>166</sup> See Beard (1994); Lantham (2012).

## Chapter Three

### Veils and Virginity: Gender Tensions in 1 *Corinthians*

Around the year 51 CE, the apostle Paul arrived for the first time in Corinth, the seat of Roman power in Achaëa. In the wake of Rome's increasing interest in the Hellenistic world, Corinth was seized and decimated by the Romans in 146 BCE. Within a decade, however, the city was resurrected by its destroyers and refounded as *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis* ("the Colony of Corinth in Honor of Julius"). By the time Paul entered Corinth, the city was a booming center of pagan worship. The Acrocorinth, the acropolis housing the city's most ancient temples, and the forum, which housed the sanctuaries of Tychē, Aphrodite, Artemis, and Demeter, would have overwhelmed anyone walking through the city.<sup>167</sup> Into this religiously plural setting Paul claimed to have ("laid a foundation like a wise contractor", 1 Cor 3:10) as though for a new temple, a spiritual edifice he calls ναὸς θεοῦ ("the temple of God", 1 Cor 3:16) in which the τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ ("spirit of God, 1 Cor 3:16) resides. Paul himself asserts that he was the first to bring the Christian cult to Corinth during his inaugural mission.<sup>168</sup>

The community of Christians Paul founded in Corinth can be observed through the prism of the letters he wrote, known in their present form as 1 and 2 *Corinthians*, six years after his

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<sup>167</sup> N. Bookidis, "Religion in Corinth: 146 BCE to 100 CE" in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth*, eds. Daniel Schowalter and Steven Friesen, (Harvard, 2005). Bookidis provides a survey of the sanctuaries in Corinth throughout its Roman occupation. Paul himself observes that εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί "there are many gods and many lords", 1 Cor 8:5) in Corinth when he arrived.

<sup>168</sup> 1 Cor 3:6; 2 Cor 10:14.

first visit.<sup>169</sup> At that time, word had reached Paul in Ephesus about a rising conflict among the Corinthian Christians concerning a range of problems, such as marriage, manumission, and sacrificial meat. In Paul's first response, *1 Corinthians*, gender tensions and disagreement over proper sexual behavior are evident. It is not surprising that dissent arose in Corinth, considering the city's reputation. In the words of a second-century witness, Corinth was a city "more dear to Aphrodite than all cities that exist or had existed".<sup>170</sup> The moral expectations of Paul's teachings stood in stark contrast against the lifestyle of its community. Even within the Christian sect attitudes towards sexuality seem contradictory. On the one hand, the prevalence of prostitution alluded to in *1 Cor* 6:15-17 demonstrates one faction's liberal attitude towards sexuality. It indicates that, in light of the Corinthians' newfound freedom in Christ, all sexual activities were permissible.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, some Corinthians saw their spirituality reflected in total abstinence from sex. They believed in both the avoidance of sexual relations within marriage and the rejection of marriage altogether.<sup>172</sup> These Corinthians championed the slogan, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman".<sup>173</sup> The polarizing attitudes towards sexuality among the Corinthians sets the tone for the entirety of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

This chapter examines the gender tensions evident in *1 Corinthians*, specifically how they arise in Paul's discussion of virginity and head coverings in churches. Paul's words, when

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<sup>169</sup> K Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*, (Harvard, 2013), pp. 87.

<sup>170</sup> Pseudo Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*, 37.34: translation by Harper (2013), 87.

<sup>171</sup> *1 Cor* 4:8; *1 Cor* 15:12; M. MacDonald, "Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of *1 Corinthians* 7", *New Testament Studies*, vol. 36, 1990, pp. 162.

<sup>172</sup> *1 Cor* 7:1-9.

<sup>173</sup> *1 Cor* 7:1: Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι.

taken at face value, can lead to an array of interpretations concerning his views on gender equality in the early Corinthian church. Scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, during the height of second wave feminism, were eager to defend Paul against charges of male chauvinism by distinguishing his views in the Corinthian letters from those of deuterio-Pauline authors.<sup>174</sup> Robbin Scroggs concluded his analysis of 1 Cor 11:2-16, a problematic passage about head coverings during worship, by establishing that, despite the passage's complex issues with gender, Paul remains "the one clear voice in the New Testament asserting the freedom and equality of women in the eschatological community".<sup>175</sup> Yet to modern readers, it is difficult to look past verses that state, "a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God; but a woman is the glory of man" (1 Cor 11:7)<sup>176</sup> and that "women should remain silent in the churches" (1 Cor 14:34).<sup>177</sup> Verses such as these are often viewed as sexist and indicative of a certain gender hierarchy akin to "the head of every man is Christ and the head of every woman is man".<sup>178</sup> My aim in this chapter is neither to condemn Paul as a chauvinist or apologize for his words. Instead, I will analyze the ways in which these regulations allude to tensions between the genders.

Paul's concern with virginity and celibacy is addressed to the entire Christian community, both men and women. Although he does pay careful attention to the virginity of

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<sup>174</sup> G.W. Trompf, "On Attitudes Towards Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and its Context", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 42, 1980, pp. 196.

<sup>175</sup> R. Scroggs, "Paul: Chauvinist or Liberationist", *The Christian Century*, vol. 89, 1972, pp. 302.

<sup>176</sup> 1 Cor 11:7: ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν, "εἰκὼν" καὶ δόξα "θεοῦ" ὑπάρχων: ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστίν.

<sup>177</sup> 1 Cor 14:34: Αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν, οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν.

<sup>178</sup> 1 Cor 11:3: Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ὅτι παντὸς ἀνδρός ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ χριστός ἐστιν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, κεφαλὴ δὲ τοῦ χριστοῦ ὁ θεός.

female members, he intends his comments on marriage and celibacy to guide the behavior of the whole community in order to combat the spread of immorality. Likewise, Paul's assertion that woman should remain veiled during worship speaks to the community's problem with immorality. While it has been rightfully argued that veils or head coverings consistently represented women's inferiority, more attention should be paid to the veil's connection with modesty, morality, and the public gaze. Within the context of Corinth's sexual environment, it is possible that Paul's regulation of female headdress is meant to add a level of protection against the disease of immorality. Throughout Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, sexuality and gender remain at the forefront of the conversation.

Within the first several chapters of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes his intentions clear:

Οὐκ ἐντρέπων ὑμᾶς γράφω ταῦτα, ἀλλ' ὡς τέκνα μου ἀγαπητὰ νουθετῶ[v]. ἐὰν γὰρ μυρίους παιδαγωγοὺς ἔχητε ἐν Χριστῷ, ἀλλ' οὐ πολλοὺς πατέρας, ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα. παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε. Διὰ τοῦτο ἔπεμψα ὑμῖν Τιμόθεον, ὃς ἐστίν μου τέκνον ἀγαπητὸν καὶ πιστὸν ἐν κυρίῳ, ὃς ὑμᾶς ἀναμνήσει τὰς ὁδοὺς μου τὰς ἐν Χριστῷ [Ἰησοῦ], καθὼς πανταχοῦ ἐν πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ διδάσκω. (1 Cor. 4:14-17)

I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. For even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Certainly I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I have sent you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

He writes to reaffirm the parameters of Christian ideology that have clearly become blurred among the Corinthians. While he promises not to shame his followers, he lays out strict guidelines as to how Christianity should be practiced. One of the most pressing matters of this

discussion is immorality, specifically a “kind of immorality that even pagans do not tolerate, that a man is sleeping with his father’s wife”.<sup>179</sup> Instead of denouncing the couple’s incest by going into mourning and expelling the man, Paul proclaims that the Corinthians are proud of this immorality; they see no moral issue with this situation.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, in the following chapter, Paul condemns men who unite themselves with prostitutes. He reminds his followers that their bodies are “members of Christ himself” and that “he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body”.<sup>181</sup> In these two verses, Paul draws a clear connection between the physical body of a Christian and the spirituality of Christ. He declares that an illicit sexual union, whether between a step-mother and step-son or a man and a prostitute, constitutes a destructive sin against the body; to become one with a prostitute is to violate

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<sup>179</sup> 1 Cor 5:1: ολωσ ἀκούεται ἐν ὑμῖν πορνεία, καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία ἣτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὥστε γυναικῶν τινῶν τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν.

<sup>180</sup> 1 Cor 5:2: καὶ ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστέ, καὶ οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἐπενθήσατε, ἵνα ἀρθῆ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας; (“and you are proud and should you have not rather gone into mourning so that he who has been doing this deed be removed from the middle of you all”). Sexual relations between a step-mother and step-son was considered incest in both Jewish and Roman culture. According to Jewish Law, such a relationship was considered a dreadful sin (Lev. 18:8) and punishable by death (Lev 20:11). For more on the Judeo-Christian view on incest and the nature of the relationship in this episode see C. DeVos, “Stepmothers, Concubines and the Case of Πορνεία in 1 Corinthians 5”, *New Testament Studies*, vol. 44, 1998, pp 104-107.

According to Roman Law, incest was complicated. It was handled under a different law than adultery, but could have been treated as adultery depending on the situation or if they were living together. For more on adultery and incest, see S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 281.

<sup>181</sup> 1 Cor 6:15-16: οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστίν; ἄρα οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; μὴ γένοιτο. ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνη ἐν σώματι ἐστίν; Ἔσονται” γάρ, φησὶν, “οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν”. (“do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then unite the members of Christ with a prostitute? May it never happen! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘the two will become one body in the same’”).

one's own body and Christ.<sup>182</sup> Paul's concern with the moral state of his followers not only highlights the prevalence of immorality among the citizens of Corinth, it also sheds light on the polarizing views of morality within the Christian community. In 1 Cor 6:12 Paul addresses his issues directly to those who claim that πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν ("all things are permissible for me"). He makes explicit to this group that sexual morality was a presumptive requirement for all members of the Christian community and implores the entire congregation to φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν ("flee from immorality") and δοξάσατε δὴ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν ("honor God with your body").<sup>183</sup>

In light of Paul's concern with morality, it is not surprising that he precedes to lay out guidelines for marriage and praises those who retain their virginity. He begins his discussion of marriage by addressing those who proclaim that it is "good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman".<sup>184</sup> Paul agrees with this group. In a perfect world, it would be ideal for men and woman to practice abstinence. Since sexual immorality was so prevalent in Corinth, however, he argues that complete abstinence may not be possible for everyone. For those who could easily fall into temptation, Paul proposes that they should marry and remain faithful to one partner and fulfil their marital duties "so that Satan will not tempt [them] because of [their] lack of self control".<sup>185</sup> It is clear from Paul's word choice that he was equally concerned with

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<sup>182</sup> B. Fisk, "Πορνευειν as Body Violation: The Unique Nature of Sexual Sin in 1 Cor 6:18", in *New Testament Studies*, vol. 42, 1996, pp. 541.

<sup>183</sup> 1 Cor 6:18; 1 Cor 6:20. Harper (2013), 91.

<sup>184</sup> 1 Cor 7:1: Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἔγραψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεισθαι ("Concerning what you wrote, that it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman").

<sup>185</sup> 1 Cor 7:2; 1 Cor 7:5: Ἴνα μὴ πειράζη ὑμᾶς ὁ Σατανᾶς διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν.

the marriage practices of both men and women.<sup>186</sup> Paul is gender inclusive in his solution. He places the responsibility of upholding sexual morality and curbing illicit relations on both genders, rather than placing the blame for such regulations on only the men or only on the women.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, Paul uses the second person, plural ὑμῶν (“you”) to describe the couple’s mutual lack of self-control; they are both subject to temptation.<sup>188</sup> In Paul’s view of marriage, both the husband and wife bear the responsibility of keeping each other away from sexual immorality.

While Paul explicitly links marriage, which must include a physical union, with the avoidance of sexual immorality, it is clear in his view that virginity is the most holy state. He claims that it is best for a man to remain as he is: if he is pledged to be married, he should keep his engagement; if a man is already married, he should remain married; if he is single, he should remain single.<sup>189</sup> Likewise, it is not a sin if a virgin woman marries.<sup>190</sup> Paul’s views on marriage are elusive. On the one hand, he asserts that marriage is a valid option for a man or woman who does not have sexual self control. On the other hand, he claims that an unmarried or virgin woman is free from the θλιψις (“trouble”) of marriage and therefore “her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in body and spirit”.<sup>191</sup> While Paul is careful to include men in his exaltation of celibacy and virginity, he is primarily concerned with the virginity of women. His use of the term παρθένος throughout 1 Cor 7:25-38 suggests that female virginity was particularly important.

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<sup>186</sup> M. MacDonald, “Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7”, *New Testament Studies*, vol. 36, 1990, pp. 161.

<sup>187</sup> A. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, (Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 80.

<sup>188</sup> Wire (1990), 83.

<sup>189</sup> 1 Cor 7:26-28.

<sup>190</sup> 1 Cor 7:28.

<sup>191</sup> 1 Cor 7:34: καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἵνα ᾗ ἅγια [καὶ] τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι.

Although there is no indication of gender in the first occurrence of the term (1 Cor 7:25) during his introduction of the topic, the other three uses of παρθένος in the passage refer to women (1 Cor 7:28;34;36).<sup>192</sup> When Paul refers to an unmarried man, however, in 1 Cor 7:32-33, he uses the term ὁ ἄγαμος (“unmarried” in the masculine), he does not make clear whether the man is a virgin or not. In contrast, the term παρθένος has specific sexual connotations for women.<sup>193</sup> Paul certainly seeks to embrace both men and women who remain unmarried, but his use of the term παρθένος implies that the virginity of women was significant and a cause for concern.<sup>194</sup>

Before even discussing virginity, Paul makes his authority on the subject clear. He clarifies to his audience that what is about to say are his own opinions; they are not commandments from the Lord, but rather a γνώμην (“judgment”) from one who is πιστός (“trustworthy”).<sup>195</sup> Paul draws a strict differentiation between what he characterizes as the ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου (“command of the Lord”) and his own judgment. Where as in 1 Cor 5:3 Paul passes judgment on the man who commits incest with his step-mother σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ (“through the authority of our Lord Jesus”). Paul is merely stating his

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<sup>192</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (London, 1968), pp. 173-185); M. MacDonald, “Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7”, *New Testament Studies*, vol. 36, 1990, pp. 171. In 1 Cor 7:25, Paul introduces the subject of virginity with the term παρθένος; in 7:28, however, he makes explicit that a girl woman who chooses to marry has not sinned. Similarly, in 7:34 he asserts that a παρθένος is devoted in body and spirit to the Lord in contrast with a married woman who is concerned with earth affairs. Finally, in 7:36, he refers to a man who is engaged to a παρθένος.

<sup>193</sup> Liddell and Scott and LSJ list “virgin” and “chaste” as common definitions.

<sup>194</sup> MacDonald (1990), 171.

<sup>195</sup> 1 Cor 7:25: Περὶ δὲ τῶν παρθένων ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω, γνώμην δὲ δίδωμι ὡς ἡλεημένος ὑπὸ κυρίου πιστὸς εἶναι.

opinion about virginity. It is *his* belief that a virgin is more devoted than a married women, for a married woman is consumed with “how she can please her husband” in the same way that a married man is consumed with “how he can please his wife”.<sup>196</sup> He is simply drawing from his own experience as a celibate man and his belief that he has the Spirit of God within him.<sup>197</sup> In his ambiguous discussion concerning marriage and virginity, Paul appears to be taking a middle ground approach.<sup>198</sup> While he vehemently preaches sexual morality, he leaves enough “wiggle room” to placate both groups: those who believe that “all things are lawful for me” and the others who insisted that “It is good for a man not to touch a woman”. For those who cannot practice celibacy, marriage is acceptable; for those can, that is even better. Paul is attempting to bridge the gap and unify the Christian community.

By posing two possible options, however, Paul inadvertently comments on the anxiety that can stem from being devoted to God in body and spirit. A sense of anxiety can be seen throughout Paul’s eschatology based teachings. Eschatology encompasses the death and resurrection of Christ, the last judgment, the end or dissolution of the world, eternal death (hell) and eternal life (heaven).<sup>199</sup> The precise meaning of eschatology, however, is often unclear and varies between the ancient authors. New Testament scholars are now accustomed to distinguishing between a “future-oriented” and a “present-oriented” type of eschatology, i.e. between an expectation of remote acts or dispensations, on the one hand, and the conviction

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<sup>196</sup> 1 Cor 7:34: ἡ δὲ γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ ἀνδρὶ; 1 Cor 7:33: ὁ δὲ γαμήσας μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῆς γυναίκας, καὶ μεμέρισται.

<sup>197</sup> 1 Cor 7:40

<sup>198</sup> Harper (2013), 88.

<sup>199</sup> J. Frey, “New Testament Eschatology-an Introduction: Classical Issues, Disputed Themes, and Current Perspectives”, in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan Watt, (Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 6.

that the events are presently at hand or even fulfilled.<sup>200</sup> Paul, in his letters, uses a combination of future and present-oriented eschatology, known as inaugurated eschatology, as his organizing framework.<sup>201</sup> Inaugurated eschatology, as explained by G.E. Ladd, describes the future as already broken into the reality of the present world; the events have already begun but are not yet completed.<sup>202</sup> In 1 *Corinthians*, Paul believes that the end will come soon. The final stages are near.<sup>203</sup> This type of apocalyptic thinking can instill a sense of anxiety among followers. Moreover, in light of the extremist tendencies of some Corinthians, it is possible that Paul refuses to make an arbitrary rule about marriage and celibacy because he understands the anxiety that can come from devotion to the Lord in an eschatological environment.<sup>204</sup> In fact, Paul uses the notion of “anxiety” (μεριμνάω) throughout 1 Cor 7:32-34. He poses two situations that could bring anxiety to both men and women: marriage and celibacy. According to Paul, an unmarried man or woman could experience μεριμνάω τὰ τοῦ κυρίου (“anxiety or concern for the affairs of the Lord”) while a married man or woman could experience μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου (“anxiety or concern for the affairs of the world”), meaning earthly worries. Both scenarios have the potential for negative anxiety, which is why he says to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 7:35, “I am saying this for your own benefit, not so that I put a restraint on you, but to

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<sup>200</sup> Frey (2011), 7.

<sup>201</sup> D. Wenkel, “Kingship and Thrones for All Christians: Paul’s Inaugurated Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 4-6”, *The Expository Times*, vol. 128(2), pp. 64.

<sup>202</sup> G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, (Eerdmans, 2000).

<sup>203</sup> W. Kraus and M. Kraus, “On Eschatology in Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians”, in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan Watt, (Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 199.

<sup>204</sup> MacDonald (1990), 173-174: MacDonald claims draws attention to the anxiety that can stem from devotion to the Lord but does not draw a connection to eschatological thinking.

promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord”.<sup>205</sup> Paul refuses to impose an arbitrary rule upon the Corinthians based on his own opinion concerning marriage and celibacy, but rather places the choice on them to do what is best in relation to their own circumstance.<sup>206</sup> While Paul is explicit in his condemnation of sexual immorality, he poses two possible solutions to the problem.

Although Paul is clear that his comments on marriage and virginity are merely his opinions, he is less clear as to with what authority he states that women should cover their heads during worship. He simply commends the Corinthians for maintaining the παραδόσεις (“traditions”) just as he passed down to them. Among the traditions passed down is the idea that “any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraced his head”.<sup>207</sup> Continuing on this topic, Paul states that “any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head, for it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved.”<sup>208</sup> Paul continues with vague logical reasoning to explain why women should cover their heads. He states that if a woman refuses to veil herself, she might as well cut off her hair, for it is just as shameful for a woman to have a shaven head as it is to refuse to cover it up.<sup>209</sup> Despite his elusive reasoning, Paul makes his point explicit: women should cover their heads while praying

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<sup>205</sup> 1 Cor 7:35:

τοῦτο δὲ πρὸς τὸ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν σύμφωρον λέγω, οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβάλω, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ εὖ σκημον καὶ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως.

<sup>206</sup> MacDonald (1990), 174.

<sup>207</sup> 1 Cor 11:4: πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.

<sup>208</sup> 1 Cor 11:5: πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτω τῇ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς, ἐν γὰρ ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐξυρημένῃ.

<sup>209</sup> 1 Cor 11: 6: εἰ γὰρ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται γυνή, καὶ κείρασθω: εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν γυναικὶ τὸ κείρασθαι ἢ ξυρᾶσθαι, κατακαλυπτέσθω.

and prophesying. It is widely agreed that these verses are some of the most difficult to interpret in the New Testament.<sup>210</sup>

One of the first questions raised by scholars is deciphering whose behavior Paul is addressing: that of women only or of both genders. Paul mentions the head coverings of men first in vs. 4; he openly condemns men who cover their heads during worship. It is often asserted, however, that there is no reason to assume that men were committing this unseemly mistake in church.<sup>211</sup> It is important to note that nowhere in the context of the passage is a “veil” mentioned. In most modern English translations, however, the term κάλυμμα (“veil” or “cover”) is supplied to make clear that a textile veil.<sup>212</sup> Some scholars have even proposed that “something on the head” of a man in vs. 4 could be hair.<sup>213</sup> This interpretation could serve as a prelude to vs. 14 in which Paul takes a second jab against men’s public appearance by stating that wearing long hair is degrading.<sup>214</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor asserts that if Paul is in fact referencing long hair this passage could also be an indication of his feelings towards homosexuality, for pathic men are often described as having long hair, a traditionally

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<sup>210</sup> D.R. MacDonald, “Corinthian Veils and Gnostic Androgynes” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, (ed.) Karen King, (Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 276; G. Townsley, “Gender Trouble in Corinth: Que(e)rying Constructs of Gender in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16”, *Bible and Critical Theory*, vol. 2.2, 2006, pp.1.

<sup>211</sup> Townsley (2006), 3.

<sup>212</sup> J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 42, 1980, pp. 484.

<sup>213</sup> Murphy-O’Connor (1980), 484; J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting Major Issues*, (Oxford, 2009), pp. 268. In his compilation of republished essays, Murphy-O’Connor responds to J. Delobel’s critique of his 1980 essay. He states that “‘having something on the head’ is an unacceptable translation of *kata kephalês echôn* and why we are forced to adopt the only grammatical alternative, ‘having something hanging down from the head’. If this cannot be a headdress, it can only refer to long hair, which is precisely what is mentioned in v.14”.

<sup>214</sup> 1 Cor 11: 14: οὐδὲ ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διδάσκει ὑμᾶς ὅτι ἀνὴρ μὲν ἐάνκομῃ, ἀτιμία αὐτῷ ἐστίν,

effeminate marker.<sup>215</sup> Thus, Paul has remarks about the head coverings of both men and women.

As seen in his statements about celibacy, in which Paul demonstrates that the virginity of women was particularly important, the apostle pays more careful attention to the head coverings of women. Although not explicitly stated, it is likely that the head covering Paul refers to is a traditional veil, considering the prevalence of veils throughout the Mediterranean. Since the custom of veiling in public was conventional in Greek, Roman, and Jewish fashion, this passage begs the question of why Corinthian women uncovered their heads in the first place? Moreover, why do scholars so often interpret this verse as a representation of the inferiority of women in the Christian church?

It is proposed that by removing their veils completely Corinthian women were simply resisting Paul's attempt to introduce Jewish fashion to his Christian followers.<sup>216</sup> While the veils of Greek women covered the top of the head, hair, neck, and shoulders, they did not cover their faces. In addition, married women's heads were usually covered in public, but unmarried women and slaves remained uncovered.<sup>217</sup> The veils of Jewish women, on the other hand, often covered their entire face as well as their head and were worn by married women in public. Even unmarried women wore the full-face veil.<sup>218</sup> Paul would have been accustomed to seeing

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<sup>215</sup> Murphy O'Connor (1980), 484-487. Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 3:36) criticizes homosexual men for the way they curl and dress their hair; Juvenal (*Sat.* 2.88) depicts a group of men gathered to venerate Cotys as having full locks of golden hair; Horace (*Epodes* 11:28) describes a homosexual man who has hair long enough to be tied up in a knot.

<sup>216</sup> D.R. MacDonald (1988), 276.

<sup>217</sup> L. Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman in Ancient Greece*, (Classical Press of Wales, 2004).

<sup>218</sup> D.R. MacDonald (1988), 277.

women in public dressed in this way, for Dio Chrysostom, a younger contemporary of Paul, notes that women in Tarsus, the hometown of the apostle, followed this Eastern practice of covering both the head and face.<sup>219</sup> The possible resistance in Corinth could parallel the situation in northern Africa at the end of the second century that compelled Tertullian to write *De Virginibus Velandis*.<sup>220</sup> In his treatise Tertullian insisted that all women after puberty, virgins and matrons, be veiled in public according to the Jewish custom.<sup>221</sup> Perhaps Corinthian women resisted the imposition of new Jewish clothing restrictions while Paul, a Jewish man from Tarsus, would have expected all holy women to dress in this way. Paul, however, makes no indication that women are walking in public without a veil. His primary complaint is that women are not covered while praying and prophesying.<sup>222</sup> D.R. MacDonald proposes that this removal of the veil blurred the distinction between men and women.<sup>223</sup> By removing this outward sign of femininity, women were able to transcend sexual differentiation. They returned to a state of primordial androgyny where men and women were equal in the eyes of God.<sup>224</sup> In short, they removed their outward signs of inferiority.

MacDonald's argument hinges on the commonly attested view that a veil in antiquity consistently represented a woman's subordination and was used by Greek, Roman, Christian, and Jewish communities as an agent for social control.<sup>225</sup> The fourth century comedian Menander writes in his play *Perikeiromene* that women intrinsically veil their faces in presence

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<sup>219</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse*, 33.48.

<sup>220</sup> D.R. MacDonald (1988), 277.

<sup>221</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 2.

<sup>222</sup> 1 Cor 11:5.

<sup>223</sup> D.R. MacDonald (1988), 278.

<sup>224</sup> MacDonald (1988), 287-290.

<sup>225</sup> MacDonald (1988), 281.

of men: ἡ μὲν αὐσχ[υνη]ε[ἴτ' ἐ]πειδὰ[ν] εἰσῴμεν δηλαδή, / παρακαλύ[ψεται] τ', ἔθο[ς] γὰρ  
τ[ο]ῦ[τ]ο ("she'[II] be embarrassed when we go in, that is clear, and she'[II] veil herself, for that's  
[quite normal]).<sup>226</sup> Menander asserts that the reason for women's veiling lies in their sense of  
embarrassment, self-consciousness, alienation, and, possibly, modesty.<sup>227</sup> In rabbinic Judaism,  
women in public without veils were seen as a sense of:

Why does a man go about bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head  
covered? She is like one who has done wrong and is ashamed of people:  
therefore, she goes out with her head covered (*Bereshith Rabbah* 17:8)<sup>228</sup>

Although veiling practices were more liberal among non-Jews, veiling can be seen as an  
emblem of shame according to Tertullian:

oro te, sive mater sive soror sive filia virgo... vela caput, si mater,  
propter filios, si soror, propter fratres, si filia, propter patres:  
omnes in te aetates periclitantur. Indue armaturam pudoris,  
circumduc vallum verecundiae murum sexui tuo strue,  
qui nec tuos emittat oculos nec admittat alienos.

I pray you, be you a mother, or sister, or virgin-daughter...veil your head: if a  
mother, for your sons' sakes; if a sister, for your brothers' sakes: if a daughter,  
for your fathers' sakes. All ages are periled in your person. Put on your armor of  
modesty; surround yourself with a rampart of chastity, cover your sex with a  
wall which neither allows your eyes beyond it nor admits other in. (*De Virginibus  
Velandis*, 16.4-5)<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Menander, *Perikeiromene*, 313-314. Translation by Arnott (Loeb, 1996) and Llewellyn-Jones (2004), 211 n.43. These lines are spoken by the long-lost son Moschion to himself, day-dreaming about his plans to visit his estranged mother and the girl of his dreams. He imagines himself and his slave calling on the women within their house. Moschion asserts that women are accustomed to veil their faces in front of strangers (Llewellyn-Jones (2004), 197).

<sup>227</sup> Llewellyn-Jones (2004), 3; 197.

<sup>228</sup> Quotes and translated by MacDonald (1988), 281.

<sup>229</sup> Translation by Llewellyn-Jones (2004), 133.

Tertullian, however, is writing in response to a growing problem. In Carthage of the early third century CE, it was still customary for virgins to remain unveiled in public and Tertullian takes issue with this practice. Although Tertullian claims that Greece and other unnamed barbarian communities “hide” (*abscondunt*) their virgins under veils, not all other places do the same.<sup>230</sup> In fact, the practice of unveiling a virgin in public had ritual significance to those communities that practiced it: the virgin removed her veil that she normally wore outside,<sup>231</sup> so that she could enter “distinct and distinguished” (*notabilis et insignis*) into the assembly, so that she might show off the “honor of sanctity” in the freedom of her head.<sup>232</sup> The practice clearly had the approval of the community and the ecclesiastic authorities, who saw it as a form of glory for the virgin to go unveiled in public.<sup>233</sup>

While the distinction between women and virgins can be seen in other passages of 1 Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor 7), Tertullian believes that this distinction is not present in Paul’s discussion of veiling in 1 Cor 11:3-16.<sup>234</sup> Instead, married women and virgins should be held to the same standard. Moreover, Tertullian is deeply offended by the idea that virgins should be honored by the church and receive glory from having their heads uncovered. In his view, for a virgin to be seen or distinguished by any type of honor nullified her virginity.<sup>235</sup> What others perceived as a sign of holy liberty, such as the liberty of being unveiled in public, is a gateway

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<sup>230</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 2.1; M D’Angelo, “Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels” in *Off with her Head!: The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, (eds.) W. Doniger and H. Eilberg-Schwartz, (University of California Press: 1994), pp. 143.

<sup>231</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 13.1.

<sup>232</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 9.1.

<sup>233</sup> D’Angelo (1994), 143.

<sup>234</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 4.2-5; D’Angelo (1994), 147.

<sup>235</sup> D’Angelo (1994), 145.

for licentiousness (*libido*, 2.4; *licentiam*, 3.2). He summarizes his contention in one simple statement: “every publication of the good of a virgin is a suffering (*passio*) of *stuprum*”.<sup>236</sup> Contrary to the ecclesiastic authorities of Carthage, Tertullian believes that virgins going unveiled in public is an act of illicit behavior.

While Tertullian’s statements on the necessity of veiling for all women affirm the view that women were inferior to men, they also hint at the physical functions of veils: they preserve a woman’s modesty and help shield women from men’s gazes. Tertullian describes the veil as a “armor of modesty” (*armaturam pudoris*) and a “rampart of chastity” (*vallum verecundiae*). The veil clearly serves as a protector of female chastity and a means for women to remain modest in public by covering the face and head of a woman. Tertullian fears that the male gaze could violate a woman’s virginity. A virgin, like any other woman, for this reason, should strive to not be seen at all. But, if she must be in public, she should not draw attention to herself.<sup>237</sup> It is not difficult, however, to see the negative connotations of a veil. Veils visualized the idea that women had to be hidden from view in public, that women were not public figures, nor did they necessarily belong in public. Tertullian is not expressing shocking opinions about veiling and its connotations for the time and place he was writing in.

Veils, by their nature, were also used to avert the gaze and portray a woman’s modesty.<sup>238</sup> It is likely that they served these functions for the Corinthians as well. In light of the immoral atmosphere of Corinth, which was the primary concern of Paul, it would not be a stretch to assume that female veiling was another way to project morality. Paul states that both

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<sup>236</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 3.4: *Omnis publicatio virginis bonae stupri passio est.*

<sup>237</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 17.1-3; D’Angelo (1994), 145.

<sup>238</sup> Llewellyn-Jones (2004), 7;104-105.

men and women suffered from a lack of self control (τὴν ἀκρασίαν).<sup>239</sup> By blocking a women's physical features, a veil might limit temptation for both genders. Tertullian asserts that a veil should obstruct a man's view of a woman, but also make it difficult for a woman to look at a man.<sup>240</sup> Veils, especially those that covered a woman's face, served a dual function.<sup>241</sup> They blocked the gaze of both the wearer and the observer. Since Paul places the responsibility on both men and women to help their spouses avoid immorality, a veil could be a beneficial tool to promote modesty and avert the unwanted gaze from both genders. While it is not my intent to minimize the negative connotations of female veiling, such as the fact that veils can restrict movement, alienate women in public, and, if the veil covers her face completely, make a women reliant on others as a guide, I argue that the outward, physical functions of the veil should be considered, especially since Paul seems particularly concerned with the sexual morality of the Corinthians. Perhaps Paul is striving to protect women from the gaze while prophesying and praying in order not to distract from the religious acts being performed. The focus of the congregation should be on glorifying God through their actions, not the physical features of others.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians offers insight into the complex gender dynamics present in early Christianity in Corinth. As the city became a venue for wealth and mixed cultural groups, Paul attempted to set guidelines for both men and women so that they not fall into temptation. The apostle appears to be equally concerned with the sexual morality of both

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<sup>239</sup> 1 Cor 7:5.

<sup>240</sup> Tertullian, *De Virginibus Velandis*, 17.1-3; D'Angelo (1994), 145.

<sup>241</sup> Although Paul is not specific about whether the veil should cover a woman's face, veils worn by Jewish women, which Paul was accustomed to seeing, covered their entire head.

men and women. While Paul is explicit in his condemnation of immorality, he remains ambiguous about how to curtail this behavior. Instead of passing a concrete commandment from the Lord to the Corinthians, he proposes two possible options, based on his own judgment, to help guide his followers from immorality: either marry and be devoted to a single spouse, or remain celibate. This choice is directed to both men and women. Although he openly praises those who remain celibate as being more devoted to the Lord in body and spirit, he asserts that marriage is not sinful and just as valid of an option.<sup>242</sup> Paul remains elusive in his judgment so as to not alienate anyone in the Christian community. His objective is to unify his followers with a shared interest in maintaining sexual fidelity. In order to do so, he must correct the actions of both men and women. Although Paul is clear in his motivation behind imposing guidelines for marriage and celibacy, he does not explicitly state a reason for ordering women to cover their heads while praying and prophesizing. Female veiling was not an unusual practice within ancient cultures, but it often interpreted as signaling the social and economic inferiority of women. The negative impact of veils cannot be denied, but veils could serve positive functions. They could help protect and convey a woman's modesty, as well as shield her from the unwanted gaze of men. Within the context of Paul's letter concerning morality, it is possible that his treatment of female veiling could be interpreted as another way for the Corinthians to avoid the temptation of sexual immorality. Throughout Paul's letter, the signifiers of gender and sexuality remain at the forefront of the conversation. He maintains that both men and women played significant roles in the church, whether by actively participating in religious

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<sup>242</sup> 1 Cor 7:32-34; 1 Cor 7:28.

activities, such as praying and prophesizing, or by maintaining visual reminders of a common goal of morality.

## Conclusion

Although the cults examined in this thesis are vastly different in their practices, structure, and the geographical location in which they were worshipped, each case study provides insight into the ways men and women could interact with each other in a religious setting. Roman religion offered both men and women across socio-economic bounds the opportunity for engagement, leadership, and even authority, all in the plight of maintaining the *pax deorum*. While religion was not without any form of social hierarchy, in a recent study of religion in Republican Rome, Jörgen Rüpke has stressed that “the complex topographic and calendrical structure of Roman religion necessitated a large number of priesthoods and agents that were coordinated rather than subordinated.”<sup>243</sup> Religious officials and participants could be an individual man or woman, member of a *collegium* or congregation, or priestly couple.

Upon close examination of all three cults, it is clear that men and women could worship alongside each other, whether they were worshipping a single, monotheistic God, or one of the many gods in the Roman pantheon. Although both genders interacted within the religious sphere together, tensions between the two groups can be observed. In the case of the cult of Bacchus, as it was worshipped at the time of its suppression in 186 BCE, the Senate strove to curb male participation, but continued to allow women to meet and serve the god in an authoritative role. While the reasons behind the Senate’s curbing of male participation is less clear, this interference in cultic worship had a lasting effect. This event was not only a spring-

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<sup>243</sup> J. Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 37.

board for later involvement in the worship of foreign cults, but also expanded the Senate's judiciary authority further into Italy. The worship of the Magna Mater demonstrates similar gender tensions. On the one hand, the arrival of the Magna Mater reaffirmed traditional gender roles by casting Scipio Nasica and Claudia Quinta as the paradigms of republican virtue through their participation in the goddess' advent. Together, the *vir optimus* and the *matrona primoris* brought the goddess to her prestigious home on the Palatine Hill. Anxiety, however, can be seen in the Rome's reactions to the *galli*. While Rome embraced the foreign nature of the goddess' worship, the self-castrating, eunuch, *semivirs*, had no place in Roman society. The negative response to the *galli* is attested by many authors, who demonize the priest's non-binary genders and ambiguous sexuality. Concern with sexuality and morality can also be clearly analyzed within Christianity through the lens of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul attempts to guide the Corinthians to salvation by the stressing the importance of morality through his treatment of marriage and proper veiling. He places the responsibility of avoiding temptation on both genders, thereby illuminating the gender-inclusive nature of early Christianity.

While the three cults are vastly different they shed light into the ways in which men and women interacted. In all three cases, participation in cultic worship was a venue for women in particular to gain authority and become active, public members of their community. Within the cult of Bacchus, women retained the right to become a *sacerdos*, thus giving them authority over the male participants. In Corinth, despite Paul's declarations that women were the glory of men (1 Cor 11:7) and should be veiled in public, female participants were actively worshipping God. Paul refers to women praying, prophesying, and even speaking in tongues (1 Cor 11:5;

14:39). Like their male counterparts, women could speak directly to God and interpret his laws, thereby making women highly visible in the church and an ambassador of God's will. In the cult of the Magna Mater women were not only given an authoritative role in the advent of the goddess into the city, but the *galli*, although neither a man nor woman, presided over the goddess' public worship. In Roman religion, authority and power did not always lie in the hands of men. Authority, visibility, and power could be obtained by women and "non-gendered" individuals. In these three cult cases, the authority of non-elite, non-male individuals was accepted, celebrated, and even expected. Religion was a venue for men and women to serve the gods together have an equal opportunity to gain authority.

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