

Reading Response 3

In chapter 13 of W.F. Otto's *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* chapters, Otto discusses Dionysus's association with vegetative nature. Otto identifies many plants that represent Dionysus and his conflicting nature. The grapevine, ivy, myrtle, pine tree, and fig tree are some vegetation referred to in this chapter which are related to Dionysus. The grapevine and ivy were the most significant. The grapevine is said to be the principal symbol of Dionysus as it is his favorite plant and he is very commonly known as the god of wine. The vine is said to be the best way to guarantee his presence because those who drank wine made from grapes would experience the madness of Dionysus's nature. Like the vine, the ivy was also a favorite plant of Dionysus. Those who worshipped him used ivy to design and decorate. The myths say that the ivy is what protected Dionysus from the lightning bolts that charred his mother. The vine and the ivy represented Dionysus because they were so similar yet so different. Although they both undergo stunning growth patterns, they differ in life cycle and need. The ivy begins blooming in the autumn whereas the grapes of the vine are harvested at this time. The vine requires an abundance of warmth and light to flourish whereas the ivy can do with little light and can grow green in the shade and cold.

In chapter 14 of W.F. Otto's *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* chapters, Otto describes the presence of Dionysus in moisture. Otto states that, like Dionysus, water exhibits dual nature. It can display a bright, joyous and vital aspects as well as a dark, mysterious, dangerous and deathly one. Water is said to be the the element in which the primal mysteries of life are contained. It gives life, causes death and has

experienced the past, is in the present, and will be in the future. These qualities are what correlate water with madness and the powers of prophecy, both which are attributed to Dionysus. Water is also able to shape shift like Dionysus. In Pagasae, Dionysus was worshipped as the "god of the sea" and in Chios, as the "god of the seacoast".

Reading these chapters helped me better understand the nature of Dionysus and the ideas that his character represents. I found it very interesting how Otto used Dionysus's associated symbols and elements to describe his nature and why they were significant to his character. Particularly, I found Dionysus's relation to the element of moisture the most notable. Understanding the significance that moisture has for life allowed me to truly grasp the nature of Dionysus. Contained in moisture are all of the possibilities and mysteries of life. All living things need moisture to live and without moisture, procreation would not be possible. Moisture must be absorbed by plants in order for them to be able to grow and produce. When humans consume moisture, we are essentially refueling and replenishing our liveliness and capabilities. Despite being essential for life, moisture can also have negative and destructive associations. For example, water also has the ability to flood and drown. With this comprehension I have come to understanding that Dionysus is the personification of the dual nature of life. He is the explanation that for every life experience, there is a polar opposite. He is synonymous to the concept of yin and yang in Chinese culture and is the embodiment of the madness associated with the mysteries and possibilities life.