

***Sobria Ebrietas* and Spiritual Authority in Chrysostom's First Homily at Drypia**

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At the opening of a homily (PG 63.469-72) delivered in the presence of the empress Eudoxia after a vigil and procession to the suburban *martyrium* of St. Thomas at Drypia, John Chrysostom (bishop of Constantinople, 398-407 CE) launched into a description of his mental state which owes much to the language of Bacchic ritual and myth. As can be determined by comparison with passages from Euripides' *Bacchae* and Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, this language retained its specificity and force into the first quarter of the fifth century CE, according to the testimony from Chrysostom's contemporary, Asterius of Amaseia, in his *Hom. 10 On All the Martyrs*. This paper considers Chrysostom's self-conscious, ironic use of komastic vocabulary in his homily at Drypia and in the similarly worded opening to his homily *De Lazaro* (PG 48.963 ff.) which he preached at Antioch on Jan 2 following the celebration of the Kalends. I argue that while in the latter instance Chrysostom is anxious about the extent of his flock's participation in polytheistic rites which have been "secularized" in the process of the Christianization of the old calendar, he does not present the revival of polytheistic cult apparatus on a civic scale as a major concern. Rather, his employment of Bacchic language is intended primarily to underline his displeasure at the extent of public inebriation which accompanied such festivals as the Kalends and Brumalia at Antioch and elsewhere. However, I suggest that his self-presentation as spiritually intoxicated at Drypia responds to the rapid growth of suburban monasteries established at Constantinople by Syrian ascetics, whose own mystical and eschatological language frequently drew upon imagery drawn from the symposium and wedding-feast. Accordingly, I trace the paradox of *sobria ebrietas* as a liminal state from the Macarian corpus back to Philo, Origen, and Plato's *Phaedrus*. I conclude that Chrysostom's adoption of Dionysiac formulas speaks both to this tradition of anti-rational, charismatic spirituality as well to the traditional values and tastes of the elites at court who patronized this Hellenized form of Syrian Christianity on their own shore-front estates, and which themselves formed the backdrop to the nine-mile procession to Drypia.