

**Das Institut für Klassische Philologie lädt ein zu einem Gastvortrag  
im Rahmen der Internationalen Diversity-Gastprofessuren 2022**

**Donnerstag, 19. Januar 2023  
18 Uhr c.t., Raum U5/01.22**

**Dr. Laura Swift**  
(Magdalen College, Oxford)

## **Gender Fluidity in Euripides' *Bacchae***

The tragedy *Bacchae* is based on the Greek myth of King Pentheus of Thebes and his mother Agave, and their punishment by the god Dionysus (who is Pentheus's cousin). In human disguise, Dionysus arrives in Thebes to avenge the slander that he is not the son of Zeus. In response, he intends to introduce Dionysian rites into the city, and he induces Pentheus to cross-dress as a woman in order to take part at the Bacchic rites on the mountains outside the city. At the end of the play, Pentheus is torn apart by the women of Thebes and his mother Agave bears his head on a pike to her father Cadmus.

The play exploits Dionysus' ability to blur gender boundaries, and both his androgyny and the chorus' use of erotic imagery to describe their ideal ritual space encourage the audience to think about Dionysus' perceived threat to normative male gender identity and female sexual morality. Thus the *Bacchae* help us to think about to what extent gender is normative and binary: Pentheus reflects a traditional belief in a clear binary opposition between 'male' and 'female' roles and attitudes, while Dionysus challenges this and presents a spectrum of gender identities, a concept that is highly threatening to Pentheus' vision of how a society should be ordered. This topic is highly relevant to debates and tensions today surrounding the fluidity of gender identity. As always, myth provides a safe space in which to think through what is still today a controversial and highly emotive topic.

Dr. Laura Swift, Tutorial Fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford, has widely published on Greek tragedy, lyric and choral song. She is currently preparing a commentary on Euripides' *Bacchae* (to be published in 2023).

Hierzu ergeht herzliche Einladung

Prof. Dr. Markus Schauer

Prof. Dr. Sabine Vogt