SPUMANSQUE ORE LYMPHATICO BACCHABUNDUS. DANCING IN THE CHRISTIAN IBERIAN PENINSULA IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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ABSTRACT

For the Fathers of the Church there was nothing intrinsically wrong with dancing. Nevertheless, certain forms of choreutic gesture were often used with a negative connotation to highlight religious alterity. The results of this cultural construction can also be identified at a local level in some sources regarding the Iberian Peninsula. In addition to some conciliar norms, the article considers texts by Licinian of Cartagena, Isidore of Seville and Valerio of Bierzo.

KEY WORDS: ballationes; ballemania — ballimatia; dancing; Isidore of Seville; Licinian of Cartagena; Priscillian of Ávila; Valerio of Bierzo.

SPUMANSQUE ORE LYMPHATICO BACCHABUNDUS. BAILAR EN LA PENÍNSULA IBÉRICA CRISTIANA EN LA ANTIGÜEDAD TARDÍA

RESUMEN

Para los Padres de la Iglesia no había nada de intrínsecamente incorrecto en la danza. Sin embargo, algunas formas de expresión coreutica en un sentido negativo se utilizaron a menudo para marcar una alteridad religiosa. Los resultados de esta construcción cultural pueden identificarse localmente también en algunos testimonios relacionados con la península ibérica. Además de algunas actas de concilios, en el artículo se tienen cuenta los testimonios de Liciniano de Cartagena, Isidoro de Sevilla y, sobre todo, Valerio del Bierzo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: bailar; Isidoro de Sevilla; Liciniano de Cartagena; Prisciliano de Ávila; Valerio del Bierzo.

In his 1969 film *La Voie lactée*, Luis Buñuel depicts the followers of Priscillian, Bishop of Ávila, gathered together in a wood at night while chanting in prayer "cantare volo, saltate cuncti" (I want to sing, everybody dance).[2] These words are the Latin translation of a hymn from the *Acta Iohannis*, a Greek text which has been dated to between the mid-II and late III century, in which Christ sings and dances during the Last Supper while the Apostles form a circle around him and accompany him with choral responses.[3] Eusebius of Caesarea classed the text as non-divine scripture and the second Council of Nicaea in 787 judged it to be apocryphal and damned.[4] Augustine recounts that it was used by the

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[2] Luis Buñuel, *La Voie lactée*, screenplay by Jean-Claude Carrière, Greenwich Film Productions, 1969. For a general overview of the figure of Priscillian and Priscillianism, and with regard to the issues surrounding his conviction, see: Chadwick 1976; Escribano 2005; Gabrielli 2014.

[3] *Acta Iohannis* 95: Αὐλῆσαι θέλω, / ὀρχήσασθε πάντες. Ἀμήν. The Greek text refers to the *aulos* as the musical accompaniment to the dance. On the reception of this text and the complex issues regarding its dating, see Junod y Kaestli 1982. The text has not survived in its entirety and was reconstructed by Junod and Kaestli using different fragments dated between the X and XV century.

[4] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl*. 3, 25: ἢ ὡς Ἀνδρέου καὶ Ἰωάννου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀποστόλων πράξεις; *Concilium universale Ni-*

Priscillianists and mentions some passages of the hymn in a letter to a certain Ceretius before condemning it.[5] This led to the common opinion in historiography that the Priscillianists performed ritual dances, despite a lack of certainty about whether this was true.[6] Even Buñuel seems to focus on the lascivious and libidinous aspects of the community, features that have always been associated with choreutic performances, although no actual dancing is seen. Nevertheless, for the Fathers of the Church there was nothing intrinsically wrong or lascivious about dancing per se. Indeed, when he refers to the hymn used by the Priscillianists, Augustine's disapproval seems to be directed more at the close similarity of the text to the Gnostic Docetism and its darkness than at the potentially blasphemous nature of Christ supposedly dancing.[7] It could therefore be claimed that the most negative characteristic of the text was the fact that it was used by a group of Christians who were considered heretics.[8]

An examination of the Christian perception of choreutic gesture reveals that a certain type of dancing was often used by the Fathers of the Church to provide a more effective definition of religious alterity, whether pagan, Jewish or heretical.[9] The results of this cultural construction can also be seen at a local level in certain testimonies regarding the Iberian Peninsula. Firstly, however, some considerations of a more general nature need to be addressed.

By regulating dancing, Christian intellectuals became spokesmen for an anthropology of gesture which demonised all forms of performative dancing but at the same time encouraged men to become the perfect imitators of an angelic *choreia* in the Platonic framework. This *choreia* was supposed to guide the behavioural movement and schemata of people's bodies; in addition to characterising a hypothetical Ideal City, it also had to be put into practice in life on earth, the anticipatory mirror image of the heavenly city.

Choreia is generally translated in modern languages as 'dance', in particular 'choral dancing'. However, this translation does not really reflect the meaning that the term held in the ancient Greek world, which persisted even after the spread of Christianity. For example, processional movement also belongs to the lexicon of the concept of *choreia* as well as the Latin *chorus*. The concept of *choreia* needs to be

seen as the expression of the amalgamation of many musically coordinated and harmonised actions. Furthermore, in ancient Greece the term *mousike* expressed more than the current connotation of the word music —it was always a combination of words, melody and choreutic gesture—.[10]

For Plato, *choreia* was an instrument of *paideia*, which refers not only to scholastic and/or physical education, but to the entire way of life.[11] According to his thinking, moral and civic virtues could be acquired by learning to dance in the right way and executing the appropriate constitutive schemata for the relevant role in society. The whole civic system would be affected by the absence of this role, as it would also cast doubt on everyone else's functions. The inclusion of legislation about musical activity in Plato's *Laws* shows the degree of power that he attributed to choral singing and dancing as an instrument of social control for the transmission and maintenance of the right feelings among citizens. The Greek term *nomos*, law, also indicates 'melody' or 'musical mode' and *nomoi* were called the first melodic repertoires because it was essential to remain within the established confines of intonation.[12] In this way, just as *nomos* in the sense of law is at the basis of social order, it is by following the musical *nomos* that the collective *choreia* should guide the social body harmoniously. The term *choreia* therefore indicates the combined actions of singing and dancing; according to Plato, the link between the two derives from the rhythm and movement of the body.[13] In choral and choreutic performances, just as in social life, voice and body must move in a harmonious way individually, collectively and in relation to their performance space. Only those who are trained to follow this harmony can live in the Platonic City. He who cannot dance is described as *achoreutos* and is excluded from the Ideal City, for he will not be able to socialise with the other citizens or move in harmony with the rest of the civic *choreia*. The *choreia* therefore plays a fundamental civic role in Plato's work, to the point where failure to move one's body in harmony with others is seen as immoral and depraved.

As we know that Christian authors in the early centuries were particularly steeped in Platonic culture, in all likelihood when someone like Basil of Caesarea invited Christians to imitate the *choreia* of angels on earth, he attributed the same Platonic value to the term.[14] As Christian society had to aspire to this musical harmony, frenetic dances were prohibited because they were associated with dancing by demons and non-Christians. It is therefore unsurprising that John Chrysostom stated in one of his homilies that Jews

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caenum secundum: 558: τὸ μιαρὸν τοῦτο βιβλίον. On this text, see also the bibliography cited in Tronca 2017a, 437-440.

[5]   Augustine of Hippo, *Ep.* 237, 7: 530-531: "quid ergo faciunt in canone clarius posita, per quae in isto hymno aperiantur obscura?". The identity of Ceretius, the recipient of this letter, is uncertain; he was probably a Spanish bishop (Chadwick 1976, 156).

[6]   See, for example, Pasquato 1976, 260-261.

[7]   Augustine also made the connection between Priscillianists and Gnosticism elsewhere, as well as accusing them of Manichaeism: Augustine of Hippo, *De haeres.* 70, 1: 333: "priscillianistae, quos in hispania priscillianus instituit, maxime gnosticorum et manichaeorum dogmata permixta sectantur, quamuis et ex aliis haeresibus in eos sordes tamquam in sentinam quandam horribili confusione confluxerint". On this fairly widespread belief, see the sources cited in Vilella 1997, 518.

[8]   On the use of apocryphal texts by Priscillianists, especially well documented by their adversaries, see Vilella 1997, 509; see also Chadwick 1976, 77-78.

[9]   This issue is explored in depth in my doctoral research thesis entitled Christiana choreia. *Un'antropologia cristiana della gestualità coreutica nella Tarda Antichità,* defended at the University of Bologna in 2018. There are some reflections on dance as an instrument in the Christian cultural construction of religious alterity in Tronca 2017b.

[10]   On this, see for example Gentili 1988, 5.

[11]   On this issue, see the major contributions by Lonsdale 1993, 21-43 and Catoni 2008, 124-261 (the latter above all in relation to the importance of the concept of *schema* in Ancient Greece).

[12]   Pretagostini 1998, 45.

[13]   Plato, *Lg.* 2, 664e-665a: Εἴπομεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, κατ' ἀρχὰς τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἁπάντων τῶν νέων διάπυρος οὖσα ἡσυχίαν οὐχ οἵα τε ἄγειν οὔτε κατὰ τὸ σῶμα οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν εἴη, φθέγγοιτο δ' ἀεὶ ἀτάκτως καὶ πηδῷ, τάξεως δ' αἴσθησιν τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, τῶν ἄλλων μὲν ζῴων οὐδὲν ἐφάπτοιτο, ἡ δὲ ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἔχοι μόνη τοῦτο· τῇ δὴ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα εἴη, τῇ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκεραννυμένων, ἁρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο, χορεία δὲ τὸ συναμφότερον κληθείη.

[14]   Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 2: 225: Τί οὖν μακαριώτερον τοῦ τὴν ἀγγέλων χορείαν ἐν γῆ μιμεῖσθαι. Jaeger 1961 is still a seminal work on the connections between Christianity and Greek *paideia*.

danced barefoot in the square, bringing together camp dancing choruses and women of ill repute, and dragging the theatre along with all its actors into their place of worship, because in his eyes there was no difference between the theatre and the synagogue.[15]

The Christian intellectual aversion to dancing emerges above all in texts of a homiletic nature, namely those that had the precise aim of training and educating the faithful. The reasons for this antipathy also included the sometimes unintentional construction of a religious otherness that expressed the need to develop Christian religious self-representation. They immediately felt compelled to distance themselves from certain practices that had to be rejected, including customs attributed to pagans, Jews and heretics, collectively perceived as a single major threat.

Whether they did so consciously or not, the Fathers of the Church might have been conveying to the *societas christiana* the same values that Plato wanted in his Ideal City. Indeed, Plato did not allow all forms of dancing in his State: for example, the Bacchic dances of Nymphs and Satyrs were excluded.[16] In practice, there was no place for frenetic dancing that made individuals lose self-control, thereby interrupting the harmony of the civic *choreia*. This idea of always maintaining self-control and self-awareness is a vitally important concept throughout Christian culture. Frenetic gestures were not allowed in Plato's Ideal City or in the *civitas christiana* as they were a symptom of loss of self-discipline.

With regard to ancient perspectives on dancing, late antique and medieval Christianity was most significantly influenced by the confluence of views about the practice held in the Greek and Roman traditions, especially in the early imperial period. There was a somewhat ambiguous idea of the profession of actor and dancer in Rome that differed considerably from the Greek concept. Although the Romans were keen theatregoers, actors and dancers were included in the category of *infames* in Roman law: *infamia* entailed the loss of political rights and the restriction of civil rights. *Infamia* was an ethical and social stigma expressing the disapproval of the dominant part of the civic body. The marginal status of *infames* attributed to actors in the Roman world was due to the act of *prodire in scaenam* or performing on stage.[17] We know that this feature remained intact in the reasoning of most Christian authors. For example, Augustine praises

the ancient Roman constitution for having assigned the lowest social ranking to actors and distinguished them from respectable people.[18] His words also show the fear of contamination that we often find in Christian polemics against performance and dancing: when speaking out against the Donatist ritual, for instance, he mentions *pestilentia saltatorum* (the pestilence of dancers) at the basilica dedicated to the martyr Cyprian.[19] When Christians accused pagans of idolatry for celebrating feasts in honour of demons, they also accused them of holding ridiculous celebrations and the figure of the dancer/actor was held up as non-human and ferine because of ambiguity of the mask worn and his characteristic depraved gesturing, acting almost as if possessed.[20]

The fact that the church hierarchy and councils in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (and beyond) frequently spoke out against dancing and *cantica turpia* (depraved singing) shows the level of importance attributed to controlling these phenomena.[21] Some of these conciliar texts can be used to shift the focus of analysis to the Iberian Peninsula. The Council of Braga in 572 forbids *ballationes* in front of the church and it is interesting to note that this prohibition is placed alongside a ban on cross-dressing.[22] In the same way, the Council of Toledo in 589 prohibits *ballematiae* during festivities dedicated to the saints and defines them as irreligious.[23] In order to avoid the frequent mistake of treating these displays as mere continuations of pagan practices, it is useful to concentrate on the terms used to refer to choreutic gesture in such contexts. To the extent that the terms *ballationes* and *ballematiae* are direct precursors of the modern Spanish verb *bailar*, it seems plausible to claim that they were already used at the time to indicate practices associated with the people or, as the text of the Council of Toledo specifies, the *vulgus*. However, the Greek verb *ballo*,

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[15]   John Chrysostom, *Adv. Iud.* 1, 2: 846-847: Οὗτοι δὲ χοροὺς μαλακῶν συναγαγόντες, καὶ πολὺν πεπορνευμένων γυναικῶν συρφετὸν, τὸ θέατρον ἅπαν καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐπισύρουσι· θεάτρου γὰρ καὶ συναγωγῆς οὐδὲν τὸ μέσον.

[16]   Plato, *Lg.* 7, 815c-d: ὅση μὲν βακχεία τ' ἐστὶν καὶ τῶν ταύταις ἑπομένων, ἃς Νύμφας τε καὶ Πᾶνας καὶ Σειληνοὺς καὶ Σατύρους ἐπονομάζοντες, ὥς φασιν, μιμοῦνται κατῳνωμένους, περὶ καθαρμούς τε καὶ τελετάς τινας ἀποτελούντων, σύμπαν τοῦτο τῆς ὀρχήσεως τὸ γένος οὔθ' ὡς εἰρηνικὸν οὔθ' ὡς πολεμικὸν οὔθ' ὅτι ποτὲ βούλεται ῥᾴδιον ἀφορίσασθαι· διορίσασθαι μήν μοι ταύτη δοκεῖ σχεδὸν ὀρθότατον αὐτὸ εἶναι, χωρὶς μὲν πολεμικοῦ, χωρὶς δὲ εἰρηνικοῦ θέντας, εἰπεῖν ὡς οὐκ ἔστι πολιτικὸν τοῦτο τῆς ὀρχήσεως τὸ γένος, ἐνταῦθα δὲ κείμενον ἐάσαντας κεῖσθαι, νῦν ἐπὶ τὸ πολεμικὸν ἅμα καὶ εἰρηνικὸν ὡς ἀναμφισβητήτως ἡμέτερον ὂν ἐπανιέναι.

[17]   On this issue, see the works by Lanza 1992; Neri 1998, 197. The important work by Lugaresi (2008, 406-411) stresses that Christianity introduced the responsibility of the gaze to supplement the shame that any Roman citizen felt when making a spectacle of himself; for a Christian, theoretically speaking, he who watches a theatrical performance is no less deplorable —we could even say *infamis*— than the performer.

[18]   Augustine, *Ser.* 313A (= Denis 14): "Optime fecit, omnino optime fecit antiqua disciplina romana, quae omne genus histrionum in infami loco deputauit. Non illis ullus honor in curia, non saltem in plebeia tribu: undique ab honestis remoti, et honesti uenales propositi".

[19]   Augustine, *Ser.* 311, 5: "Istum tam sanctum locum, ubi iacet tam sancti martyris corpus, sicut meminerunt multi qui habent aetatem; locum, inquam, tam sanctum inuaserat pestilentia et petulantia saltatorum. Per totam noctem cantabantur hic nefaria, et cantantibus saltabatur".

[20]   On this, see Saggioro 1996, 115-119.

[21]   This can also be found for example in penitentials such as the one attributed to a pseudo-Theodorus, which prohibits "ballationes et saltationes et circum uel cantica turpia et luxoria uel lusa diabolica"; in this case, it is a text of probable Frankish origin dated to the IX century and considered by specialists as the result of a combination of canons from other penitentials and quotations from the Bible and the Fathers of the Church (*Paen. ps.-Theod.,* 89). For a list of conciliar canons and papal letters that banned certain forms of dance between the IV and VII century, see Resta 2015.

[22]   *Syn. Brac. II*, 20: "Si qui ballationes ante ecclesias sanctorum fecerit, seu qui faciem suam transformaverit in habitu muliebri, et mulier in habitu viri, emendatione pollicita tres annos poeniteat". On the importance also attributed to controlling supposedly pagan practices at this Council, see Díaz y Torres 2000, 237ss.

[23]   *Conc. Tol. III*, 23, *Ut in sanctorum nataliciis ballematiae prohibeantur:* "Exterminanda omnino est irreligiosa consuetudo, quam vulgus per sanctorum sollemnitates agere consuevit; ut populi, qui debent officia divina attendere, saltationibus et turpibus invigilent canticis; non solum sibi nocentes, sed et religiosorum officiis praestrepentes. Hoc etenim ut ab omni Spania depellatur, sacerdotum et iudicum a concilio sancto curae committitur".

from which these terms derived, was related to *pallo*, which means shake and agitate. Therefore, *ballo* is connected with the actions of throwing and hurling rather than the harmonious Platonic notion of *choreia* which the Fathers of the Church reworked and encouraged people to imitate. These were therefore terms which immediately had an extremely strong gestural connotation that labelled them with negative traits pertaining to the realm of violence, insults and hubris. Indeed, all of these characteristics had already been rejected by pagan intellectuals. It was therefore these gestural forms which were banned by the conciliar norms rather than choreutic practice per se, which had even been accepted by the Fathers of the Church in the form of the Davidic *honesta saltatio*.[24]

The negative connotation of the terms derived from *ballo* is closely linked to noise, clamour and raucous frenzy. Isidore of Seville makes the same connection with the action of *ballematia* by outlining the etymology of cymbals, "quia cum ballematia simul percutiuntur; cum enim Graeci dicunt σύν, βαλά".[25] The association with pagans —and indeed heretics or Jews— is merely a secondary detail, perhaps designed to make this practice even more negative. The fact that this connection had also become commonplace in the Iberian Peninsula is confirmed by the almost literal quotation of patristic texts on the matter, such as a letter from Licinian, Bishop of Cartagena, to Bishop Vincentius of Ibiza, which encourages Christians not to *ballare* and *saltare* on Sunday, just as Augustine had done in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* when criticising the Jews.[26] However, the association with specific pagan rituals is clear in cases such as a further passage by Isidore, where he rages against dancing during the celebration of the kalends of January.[27] Here too, it is not dancing that is rejected but the reason for dancing, which takes on a negative connotation because its main aim is idolatry. It is therefore idolatry that is repudiated and refuted rather than dancing.

This brings us to the source —a chapter of the *Ordo querimonie* by Valerio of Bierzo— that provided the title of this article, "spumansque ore lymphatico bacchabundus".[28] Written in the second half of the VII century, it is an ex-

tremely interesting text because it seems to provide many insights regarding the acceptance, rejection and above all conceptual reworking of ancient religious and cultural motifs in the Iberian Christian framework. It is one of Valerio's so-called autobiographical works, although this is an extremely anachronistic definition, especially considering the fact that the author seems to have fabricated this edifying work to provide the monks for whom it was intended with an *exemplum* by narrating his personal struggles with the devil.[29] Indeed, it seems to be more of a self-hagiography than an autobiography. In the most relevant passage for our purposes, the ascetic monk describes one of the false presbyters who are also documented by Isidore.[30] These figures are also defined in extremely revealing terms in conciliar norms that always underline their *ignorantia*. This should not only be read as lack of education, but the opposite of the concept of biblical wisdom, which is defined in relation to conduct in life where the ignorant are placed on the same level as the impious and the insane.[31] The *insipiens* is comparable to the Platonic *apaideutos*, which specifically refers to he who did not move in harmony with the rest of the civic *choreia*, namely the *achoreutos*.[32]

I think that Valerio's text should also be read in this light, as the output of an aristocratic intellectual who had access to a myriad of classical and patristic references that he used to define the controversial figure of a false presbyter as absolute evil and the devil in person.[33] Valerio does this by placing particular emphasis on the gestures that are directly related to physical appearance, namely schemata, which were also one of the most immediate means to define alterity in the ancient world.

Ironically, the name of the man in question was Justus, as in Valerio's eyes he was totally unjust. Indeed, Valerio underlines the element of deceit that characterises the man and his name by defining him as a "nequissimus vir" and completely opposes his ordination as a presbyter.[34] Valerio provides a physical description of Justus: the false presbyter is literally a horrid little black man, or to be precise he has the "colore barbaricae nationis Aethiopum".[35] This image, which featured in the *Vita Antonii* by Athanasius, which was certainly on Valerio's reading list, was a constituent element of the demonic imaginary in his milieu, so much so that Isidore also defined the Ethiopians as "monstruosa specie horribiles".[36] For Valerio, Justus is the devil in disguise and the entire passage offers a rich array of references that include the world of theatre, an aspect which immediately leads us back to paganism and the late antique Christian po-

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[24]   Ambrose of Milan, *Exp. in Lc*. 6, 8: "Est sane, est quidam proprius bonorum actuum factorumque plausus, cuius sonus in orbem exeat et bene gestorum resultet gloria, est honesta saltatio, qua tripudiat animus, et bonis corpus operibus eleuatur, quando in salicibus organa nostra suspendimus".

[25]   Isidore of Seville, *Etym*. 3, 22. With all due caution, a good starting point to identify the contexts in which this term appears is the entry *balare* in Du Cange 1883-1887, t. 1, 531c. <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/BALARE> [06-09-2019]; however, further studies and indepth analysis of these contexts are needed using modern and better documented critical editions of the sources.

[26]   Licinian of Cartagena, *Ep*. 3: "Meliusque erat viro hortum facere, iter agere, mulieri colum tenere, et non, ut dicitur, ballare, saltare, et membra a Deo bene condita saltando male torquere, et ad excitandam libidinem nugatoribus cantionibus proclamare"; Augustine of Hippo, *En. in Ps*. 91, 2: "melius est enim arare, quam saltare". On the figure of Licinian and for an overview of the context in which this letter was drafted, see: González Salinero 2000; Alberto Cánovas 2008, 55-57. On the ways in which Licinian was influenced by Augustine's works, see: Madoz 1948, 73-75; Masino 1980; González Fernández 1995, 297.

[27]   Isidore of Seville, *De eccl. off*., 41 (40), *De ieiunio kalendarum ianuariarum*: "perstrepunt omnia saltantium pedibus, tripudiantium plausibus".

[28]   Valerio of Bierzo, *Or. quer*. 6 (*Op*. 34).

[29]   On this matter, see Collins 1986; Martín 2009; Díaz 2013.

[30]   Isidore of Seville, *Sent*. 3, 38. On this matter, see Frighetto 1999.

[31]   See, for example, *Conc. Tol. VIII*, 8: "ignorantiae caecitate uexantur".

[32]   Plato, *Lg*. 2, 654a-b: Οὐκοῦν ὁ μὲν ἀπαίδευτος ἀχόρευτος ἡμῖν ἔσται, τὸν δὲ πεπαιδευμένον ἱκανῶς κεχορευκότα θετέον;

[33]   The influence of classical culture in Valerio's works, especially through the late antique and patristic legacy, can also be found in his poetic output; see Mordeglia 2011.

[34]   Valerio of Bierzo, *Or. quer*. 5 (*Op*. 33): "Elegit namque nequissimum virum falsae nuncupationis nomine Justum".

[35]   Valerio of Bierzo, *Or. quer*. 5 (*Op*. 33).

[36]   Athanasius of Alexandria, *V. Ant*. 6; Isidore of Seville, *Etym*. 14, 5. On the strong influence of the *Vita Antonii* on Valerio's demonic imaginary, see Henriet 2014.

lemic against performance, based around the issue of duplicity, falsity and therefore deceit. It is important to note that the figure who provides a contrast to the false presbyter Justus is called Simplicius, the embodiment of the perfect Christian. Valerio stresses that the merits of his conduct correspond to his name, which evokes the *simplicitas* which should characterise the life of every Christian against the duplicity of theatrical milieu.[37] In the light of these considerations, it does not seem inappropriate to claim that Valerio's work contains several fictional expedients, which might also include the names of certain figures, fabricated in order to provide edifying examples. This would not make the source any less significant, as it would help us to understand the full cultural range of Valerio's narrative creativity, which was so original that it has been seen as a precursor to the picaresque novel.[38]

The image that Valerio provides of Justus is of an illiterate and uncultured individual, just like the Platonic *apaideutos*, which is directly related to his repugnant physical appearance. Justus is prone to lust, scurrility, shouting and speaking in an agitated voice, all unacceptable characteristics in anyone who considers himself Christian.[39] John Chrysostom had already denounced empty and meaningless speech in church, defining it as *boe* like the cry of animals, clamour, musical racket and even the ritual shrieking of the Bacchae.[40]

With regard to this latter crucial aspect, Justus is also seen to be a keen lyre player, using the instrument to perform lascivious songs.[41] It is improbable that anyone in the antique world would have associated the lyre with the Bacchic realm, which was typically tumultuous, disorderly and chaotic. Indeed, the instrument always suggested noble thinking and behaviour, but it is clear in this instance that there was a reworking of ancient motifs that were no longer understood even by an intellectual like Valerio. For his part, Isidore seems to limit himself to associating the lyre with the pagan figures of Mercury and Orpheus.[42] It is therefore not as important to establish exactly which instrument Valerio is referring to as to highlight the reworking and attribution of new meaning to an antique pagan motif in a now

Christianised context. This framework did not condemn the instrument or indeed music per se, but associated it with a generally non-Christian milieu.

The clearly negative references to the ancient theatrical world in Valerio's text are highlighted by the use of terms like *hypocrisis* and *simulatio*; the most negative thing is Justus's simulation of the *habitus*.[43] In Valerio's monastic culture, this term was loaded with meanings directly connected with bodily attitudes and gestural schemata, as it concerns ways of being and behaving related to morality. The Greek term *schema* defined the monastic habit, thereby connoting the perfect Christian.[44] In Valerio's cultural and religious heritage there is no worse characteristic than pretending to be able to wear the *habitus*, which is not simply an external garment but most importantly represents the internal predisposition of a good Christian.[45]

The fact that Justus is unsuited to wearing the *habitus* is directly related to his frenetic gestures. Justus dances, or rather performs the hubristic *ballematiae* previously forbidden by the councils. Valerio thus refers to this type of frenetic gesture and indeed Justus is described as accustomed to drunkenness, showing a lack of self-awareness typical of an individual defined as *bacchabundus*, with the full Dionysian connotation of this term, which took on demonic overtones in the Christian context.[46] Just as Dionysus was associated with the realm of alterity in ancient Greek mythology due to his Oriental origins and the rituals of possession that characterised his cult, Valerio's *bacchabundus* is an invader who abruptly intervenes to interrupt the harmony of the Christian *choreia*.

The Christian *choreia* is therefore the result of the patristic conceptual reworking of an ancient Platonic model. The thinking of Licinian of Cartagena, Valerio of Bierzo, Isidore of Seville and the authors of the Iberian conciliar texts analysed above is both the result of and a further step in the implementation of this theoretical processing. This *choreia* was a cognitive instrument and a control device which aimed to make the *civitas christiana* become the anticipatory mirror of the heavenly city by rejecting certain models and certain ancient practices and reworking others. The only type of dancing allowed here was the harmonious gesturing characteristic of the angelic *choreia*; *ballematiae* performed by *bacchabundi* individuals were most definitely off limits.

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[37] Valerio of Bierzo, Or. *quer.* 6 (*Op.* 34): "Post novissimum itaque subversionis commonitionisque meae naufragium ad omnibus relictus sum solus, et a nullo capiens consolationis auxilium, nisi unum tantummodo reperi levitam Domini Christianum fidelissimum, cujus meritum vocabulum comitabatur suum, nomine Simplicium". On the concept of *simplicitas* contrasted with theatrical duplicity in Christian polemics against performances, see Bino 2015, 59-63, 91-96.

[38] This opinion attributed to Jacques Fontaine can be found in Polara 2002, 37-38.

[39] Valerio of Bierzo, Or. *quer.* 5 (*Op.* 33): "Qui pro nulla alia electione ad hunc pervenit honorem, nisi quia per ipsam multifariae dementiae temeritatem, propter joci hilaritatem, luxuriae petulantis diversam assumpsit scurrilitatem".

[40] John Chrysostom, *In ill., vidi Dom.* 1, 3: Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἡμεῖς τὸν τοιοῦτον διακωλύομεν ἀλαλαγμόν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἄσημον βοήν. On the word *boe*, see Crippa 2015, 65.

[41] Valerio of Bierzo, Or. *quer.* 5 (*Op.* 33): "musicae comparationis lyrae mulcente perducitur arte. Per quam multorum domorum convivia voragine percurrente lascivia, cantilenae modulamine plerumque psallendi adeptus est celebritatis melodia".

[42] Isidore of Seville, *Etym.* 3, 22: "Mercurius lyram fecit et Orpheo tradidit, qui eius rei maxime erat studiosus". On the musical lexicon used by Valerio, in particular in connection with the *Etymologiae*, see Udaondo Puerto 1993.

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[43] Valerio of Bierzo, Or. *quer.* 5 (*Op.* 33): "Post tanti honoris insana temeritate injuste adeptam ordinationem, ausus est etiam per hypocrisin simulationis, sanctam temerare religionem. Nam publice in oculis hominum per simulatum habitum proferens sanctitatem, in occultis vero diabolicam operabatur iniquitatem".

[44] See for example Evagrius Ponticus, *pract., prol.*: τὸ συμβολικὸν σχῆμα τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μοναχῶν; Serapion of Thmuis, *ep. mon.* 8: τὸ ἅγιον καὶ ἱερὸν ὑμῶν σχῆμα!

[45] On the monastic *habitus*, see the considerations by Agamben 2011, 24-28.

[46] For an analysis of the Latin verb *bacchari* used to connote demonic possession, see Canetti 2013.

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