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Robert Parker

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THE *HYMN TO DEMETER* AND THE *HOMERIC HYMNS*[1]

By ROBERT PARKER

In any history of Greek mythological writing, the longer *Homeric Hymns* deserve a place of honour. They are the almost unique vehicle of a distinctive and important form of narrative about the divine world. As a *prooimion* to a discussion of the *Hymn to Demeter*, it may be worth sketching some general characteristics of the genre, to bring out its special interest for the historian of religion, and indeed for anyone who cares for the imaginative world of the Greeks.

Many more long *Hymns* doubtless once existed than now survive. Some vanished works have perhaps left tantalizing traces of themselves among the shorter *Hymns* that form the numerical bulk of our collection of 33. Of these, four have demonstrably been cut down from larger surviving works – *Hymn* 18, for instance, consists of two short extracts from the start and end of a version of the *Hymn to Hermes*[2] – and many more look like similar husks, introductions and conclusions from which the narrative core has been removed.[3] And whether or not individual short *Hymns* can rightly be claimed as fragments of longer lost originals, we know that creative work was done in the genre (if widely-accepted estimates are at all reliable) from the seventh century until late in the sixth and perhaps beyond.[4] A form that retained its vitality for so long was surely once represented by more than the handful of surviving examples.

When were the *Hymns* performed? In origin, they were certainly 'preludes', *prooimia*, to other poetry, probably epic, and such the shorter examples certainly remained.[5] The singer regularly ends by declaring that he will now 'pass to another song'. Some suppose that the longer *Hymns*, though retaining the name *prooimion* and even the concluding formula of transition, had grown into independent works that were sung in their own right.[6] In either case, the normal context of performance is likely to have been a festival, the obvious occasion in archaic Greece both for rhapsodic contests and for the recitation of independent narrative hymns. And so it is often assumed that the *Hymn* paid honour to the god of the festival concerned.[7] That is very probably true of the *Hymn to Delian Apollo*, which seems actually to allude to the circumstances of its performance on Delos itself (156–76). But this close relation between subject and occasion is not demonstrable in any other case, and sometimes is not even very plausible. In particular, it is not easy to name a public festival of Aphrodite, perhaps complete with a contest in *mousike*, at which the

fine *Hymn* to her could have been performed; and the same difficulty arises with lesser *Hymns* such as those to Selene or Hestia. We should surely wonder, at the least, whether the *Hymns*, works designed to entertain and needing no pious devotion to render them palatable, were necessarily any more occasional or context-bound than was epic itself.[8]

The traditional title, *Homeric Hymns*, is not a bad one if one can restore to it a certain feel of oxymoron, of dissonance between form and content. The style and manner of these poems are, in a very broad sense, those of Homer and heroic epic; the content – the attributes, powers, cults, and histories of gods – is rather that of prayers and hymns. Though the *Hymns* often touch and overlap with the subject-matter of heroic epic, the two genres are always quick to diverge.[9] Divine epiphanies, for instance, are often described in both, but with notably different emphasis. Where Homer is chiefly interested in the reaction of the affected mortals, for the *Hymn*-writers epiphany is a climactic revelation of divine power, which may lead to the foundation of a cult. The gods of epic serve above all as a foil to mortal suffering and achievement: the *Hymns* portray a divine world to which mortals are admitted only as a kind of witnesses. Even the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, in some ways the most anthropocentric and 'Homeric' of the collection, is studded with digressions not about heroic deeds but about the attributes and histories of gods (7–33; 202–38; 257–72).

The longer *Hymns* all recount myths about their god. Many tell how the god was born and (often) acquired his distinctive powers and honours: in the words of one *Hymn* they describe the gods, *ὡς τὰ πρῶτα γένοντο καὶ ὡς λάχε μοῖραν ἕκαστος* (*Hermes* 428). The *Hymn to Delian Apollo*, for instance, recounts the god's birth on Delos; the *Hymn to Hermes* goes on from Hermes' birth to tell how he developed his familiar tricky skills, and finally swapped certain *timai* with Apollo: he became a god of herds, and gained control of a minor form of divination, in exchange for the gift to Apollo of the lyre that he had just invented. The characteristic tone of these narratives is light, but they have a serious subject, the establishment of the present order of the divine world;[10] and we might reasonably extend a traditional term a little and categorize them all as 'theogonic'. They tell how gods came to be what mortals know them as. We find this theogonic interest expressed in a scene-type that is typical of the genre, the god of the *Hymn* seen on Olympus with Zeus and the other immortals: such scenes show the particular god's place within the broader pantheon.[11] So for instance the shortish *Hymn to Pan* (19) describes how Pan was born and how the proud father Hermes took this

strange-seeming baby to be viewed by Zeus on Olympus; 'all the immortals were delighted', we are told, especially Dionysus. The birth of a new god affects the total allocation of honours and powers on Olympus, and so the poet, a good polytheist, relates the new arrival to the whole by taking him to meet them. Similarly, the exchange of *timai* described in the *Hymn to Hermes* explains how Apollo and Hermes came to have powers that were in certain respects so similar and yet distinct.

Another popular theme (found, for instance, in both parts of the *Hymn to Apollo*) is that of how the god came to occupy one of his favourite sanctuaries on earth. If the *Hymns* were indeed occasional, it is natural to suppose that such myths were chosen to honour the shrine at which they were performed (as is certainly true in the case of Delos). But since the sacred places in question – Delphi, Delos, and Eleusis – were recognised throughout the Greek world as the ones best loved by the gods concerned, an alternative or additional explanation is available. Gods are so intimately associated with particular shrines that for us as mortals the story of how such an association arose is in effect another theogonic theme: one can no more imagine Apollo without Delphi than without his bow or lyre.

The myth of the *Hymn to Dionysus* is certainly not theogonic in any of these senses; it tells how the unrecognized god was captured by pirates, broke free, and finally transformed his captors into dolphins. But it is, as it were, a myth that contains the concentrated essence of Dionysus, a story of an attack on the god and his easy triumph over his tormentors. Are there then any myths about gods that would not have been suitable for hymns of this type? Probably there are, myths that fail to illustrate a god's honours and powers in any significant way. In the *Hymn to Pythian Apollo*, the poet turns over various possible subjects, in particular certain of the god's love affairs, before choosing in preference the story of how he settled at Delphi (209–15). His final choice was perhaps inescapable: an account however elegant of one of Apollo's amours would have revealed too little of the god's nature to be suitable for a poem of this type.

The *Hymn to Aphrodite*, it is true, does have as subject her liaison with Anchises, but this is surely the proverbial exception that proves the rule. The loves of the goddess of love derive from the very centre of her being. And although this *Hymn* is unusually anthropocentric in its concern for the future fortunes of her mortal lover Anchises (hinted at in its allusive ending) and of his descendants, Anchises' particular fate is only partly separable from his exemplary status as a male who has tasted perilous intimacy with a goddess. Indeed, the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, long set down as a secularized perversion of the

genre, a courtly compliment to a putative dynasty of Aeneadae ruling somewhere in the Troad,[12] has come to seem much less worldly of late: structuralist critics have found in it a particularly rich vein of mythical speculation on the division, which even sexual contact cannot bridge, between mortals and the unaging gods.[13] However that may be, the hymn-writer acknowledges the conventions of the genre when he explains that Zeus' motive in inspiring Aphrodite's passion for Anchises was to prevent her boasting in future of her power to embroil gods with mortal women, untouched herself (45–52; 247–54). Thus his explicit justification for telling the myth is that these events permanently altered Aphrodite's relation to Zeus and the other gods.

A final distinctive feature of the *Hymns* is their manner. They treat everyday realism with a fine disregard. The *Hymn to Delian Apollo* introduces a talking island, Delos, who fears that she may be kicked down to the sea-bed by Apollo and become a home for seals and octopuses; the *Hymn to Pythian Apollo* likewise presents a speaking fountain, Telphusa, who proves herself devious and wheedling; the *Hymn to Hermes* is a series of marvels from start to finish, and though at one point the baby god uses all the arts of rhetoric to prove that he is far too young to have performed the thefts of which he is accused, he is in fact guilty, and we cannot help but notice with surprise that this fluent defence comes from the mouth of a one-day old orator. Greek legends, it has been argued, have a tamed quality in comparison with those of other pre-literate societies;[14] they lack that fine disregard for mere possibility that is almost a defining characteristic of 'myth'. But the *Hymns* surely do not deserve that praise or censure. They present divine myths, stories about the organization of power in the world, with all the freedom of fantasy that such serious subjects demand. Thence derives their special place and interest (which they share with certain portions of Hesiod) within the surviving corpus of Greek poetry.[15]

The *Hymn to Demeter* tells of the rape and recovery of Persephone, and of how Demeter came to earth during her daughter's absence and founded the Mysteries at Eleusis. It thus establishes an aetiological connection of great religious significance; for it is well known that in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries the association between rite and myth, often in Greek religion so slight and external, was by contrast close and basic. In all probability the initiates thought that at certain stages in the ritual they were in some sense re-enacting and participating in Demeter's grief for her lost daughter, and the joy of

her recovery.[16] But, of course, this was not the only context in which the rape of Persephone could be told. An influential tradition of criticism sees the *Hymn*-writer as the central figure, as it were, in a group of three, all of whom tell the story in their own way.[17] On one side stands a heroic poet, accustomed to narrate the divine drama of the rape and recovery without any significant interaction between gods and men, any founding of cults, at all: a cultivated, international figure, heir to a narrative tradition that goes back ultimately to the Hittite myth of Telepinu,[18] full of imagination, empty of local piety. On the other side stands a less suave figure, the mouthpiece of local Eleusinian tradition – let us call him the ordinary Eumolpid. He is interested in the myth only in so far as Eleusis enters into it, and his version is full of *campanilismo*; it is, of course, in prose, and telling a good story is the least of his concerns. The task of the critic is therefore to decide which of these two advisers the poet of the *Hymn* is listening to at a given moment. Sometimes they tell different stories, and the *Hymn*-writer must choose; sometimes the heroic poet suggests ways in which the Eumolpid's material can be made more elegant and respectable: the Eumolpid whispers a rather indelicate little tale about how vulgar Baubo made the mourning Demeter laugh, the heroic poet substitutes an inoffensive incident involving Iambe and her jokes.[19]

It is unfortunate, certainly, that the two alternative versions, of the heroic poet and of the Eumolpid, have first to be created by speculation before being used to interpret the *Hymn*: no Greek epic version apart from the *Hymn* survives at all, and though numerous local variants are known, both at Eleusis and elsewhere, they are not attested until very much later.[20] None the less, given the mixed character of the *Hymn* as a work which tells a panhellenic myth in a local, aetiological setting, one can scarcely look at its mythological content without adopting some variant of this approach. One assumption, however, ought to be challenged: the belief that there existed an agreed and semi-canonical Eleusinian version of the myth. The normal condition of any Greek myth was as a welter of variants, no one of which was more authoritative than any other; and though one might perhaps have expected the situation to be different, if anywhere, at Eleusis, with its influential priesthood, there is no sign that it was. Thus we find an extraordinary abundance of variants, even in Athenian authors, even for the genealogy of so central an Eleusinian figure as Triptolemus.[21] If there existed no semi-canonical local version, the *Hymn*-writer could never be merely inertly reproducing the local myth. On the contrary, he was probably constantly involved in choosing between variants, in giving shape and coherence to more

fragmented traditions, in creating his own myth, in short, as Greek poets normally had to do. The *Hymn*-writer, it will be argued in what follows, worked with Eleusinian themes, but put them into new combinations and gave them emphases that they had not received before, and which in fact they scarcely could have received except in a comparatively sophisticated, carefully-planned work such as the *Hymn* undoubtedly is. Of course, in a case such as this, proof is more than can be achieved; the most that can be hoped for is to establish a certain plausibility.

A subsidiary purpose will be to re-state, against a forceful recent challenge,[22] the view that the Eleusinian cult is the nub around which the *Hymn* revolves. It would, certainly, be wrong to insist that the poet must have been composing for an Attic audience, plausible though that claim is. All that seems beyond question is that he was addressing potential initiates, since any other auditors would have had the singular frustration of hearing that their sole hope of blessedness in eternity lay in performing rites from which they were excluded by accident of birth. But at the date of the *Hymn's* composition (probably somewhere between 650 and 550) the Mysteries may already have been open to all, as they certainly were in the fifth century; and in that event any Greek could have listened to the *Hymn* with interest, and a very adequate measure of understanding. What must be resisted is the suggestion that the *Hymn* is in effect a standard epic account of the Rape of Kore, on to the surface of which a certain number of patches of local Eleusinian colour have been stitched. On the contrary, if one removes Eleusis, the poem falls to pieces. That, however, needs to be demonstrated. In an attempt to do so, we will go through the *Hymn*, highly selectively, trying to identify and interpret some of the crucial mythological decisions that the *Hymn*-writer had to make. Nicholas Richardson's invaluable commentary will, of course, be our guide.

The poem begins with a grim and impressive statement of a paradox: Persephone was seized by Aidoneus because her own father Zeus 'gave' her to him (3).[23] The hapless girl was therefore the victim of a plot between her father and her uncle; and Zeus' assent to the rape is one of the central themes of the first half of the *Hymn*, stressed four more times in what follows (9, 30, 78, 91). At one level, the Persephone of the myth is just Kore, 'Maiden' or 'Daughter': any maiden or daughter, that is to say, snatched away from her mother in marriage. The ugly complicity of the father, who arranges the marriage, might therefore appear bitterly appropriate. But this universal-human level of the myth is not stressed in the rest of the poem; and we should link the theme of Zeus' connivance rather with

the 'theogonic' aspect of the *Hymns*, their interest in how the present ordering of the divine world came about. Persephone was to be Queen of the Underworld for no other reason than because Zeus so willed it.[24]

In line 17 we are told that the rape occurred 'in the Nysian plain'. Where that is to be located is uncertain, but the essential significance is doubtless 'at the ends of the earth'.[25] Accordingly, there were no mortal witnesses to the deed, but only Hecate (who heard it only) and Helios. There did exist by contrast numerous localizations for the rape within the known Greek world. Often according to the story it had been observed by local inhabitants, who could therefore give information to the goddess; the grateful goddess might then in turn found a cult on the spot. Among the thirteen or so attested sites, Eleusis naturally appears; and in a version attributed by Pausanias to Orpheus we find that the local Eleusinian inhabitants duly put Demeter on the trail.[26] It is therefore regularly supposed that here the *Hymn*-writer has spurned the Eumolpid and heeded the heroic poet, rejecting the Eleusinian location of native tradition in favour of a more picturesque and exotic scene. But there is no reason to believe that the rape had already been located at Eleusis by the date of the poem – an Attic location is first attested in the Atthidographer Phanodemus, in whom a suspicious number of Athenian 'traditions' appear for the first time – and, even if it had, there is again no reason to think that this version was canonical at Eleusis, or that an Eleusinian would be offended by any divergence from it. What the *Hymn*-writer does, which is to locate Kore's return at Eleusis, is surely much more flattering to local feeling.

Demeter hears Kore's cry as she is carried off; and her first reaction is to roam for nine days with blazing torches in her hands (40–50). An actual ritual of 'Seeking for Kore' by torchlight, performed at the Mysteries, is perhaps hinted at; and we certainly have here an *aition* for the very common iconographic type of a torch-bearing Demeter, a type particularly common at Eleusis. During the nine days Demeter fasts and abstains from washing, details which may again have an aetiological as well as an immediate narrative significance.[27] She is then joined by Hecate, a goddess ever prominent in Eleusinian iconography.[28] Together the two learn from Helios the true facts of the case, and at the news 'grief more terrible and bitter seized her heart; and then, enraged with the son of Kronos, lord of black clouds, she shunned the assembly of the gods and far Olympus, and went for long through the cities and rich fields of men, disguising her form' (90–94). The poet brings her, abruptly and without any explanation – for this is a mythological poem – to Eleusis; he then

describes at length – for it is also a Homeric poem – how, disguised as an old woman, she is met by the daughters of king Celeus, makes a long deceptive speech to them, is courteously brought home, courteously received again by Celeus' wife Metanira, and employed by her as nurse to her young son Demophon. This section is the aetiological core of the poem, rich in allusions to the preliminary ritual of the Mysteries. Most notably, Demeter sits on a special stool covered by a fleece, she refuses wine but takes instead a drink of *kykeon*, and she is cheered up by Iambe's jests (192–211); these are allusions as clear as one could wish to aspects of the historical Mysteries,[29] and the connection is actually made explicit when we are told by the poet that 'later too' Iambe has been pleasing to Demeter, and that Demeter drank *kykeon* 'for the sake of the rite'. So we see that the initiate is reliving the experience of the grieving Demeter.

The following section, by contrast, is highly problematic; here lies the central uncertainty in the interpretation of the *Hymn*. Demeter is taken on as nurse to queen Metanira's baby son Demophon; and she sets to (for reasons that are not given, and cannot be guessed)[30] to make the boy immortal, anointing him with ambrosia by day, and laying him on the fire like a brand at night. His parents note with amazement how quickly he is growing. One night, however, Metanira is overcome by curiosity and spies on her nurse; and on seeing Demophon in the fire she cries out in alarm. Demeter, furious, denounces the folly of mortals, declares that her plan to make Demophon immortal has been frustrated – though a rite will still be celebrated in his honour each year at Eleusis 'because he rested on my lap and slept in my arms' (263–4) – and after revealing her godhead demands that a temple be built for her; she promises that later she will give instructions about rites by which she can be appeased. Demophon, screaming, is taken over by his mortal sisters, who bustle around him; but – a magic touch – 'his spirit was not softened: for worse nurses now had care of him'. Never was the fundamental inferiority of mortals, always a theme of the *Hymns*, more memorably evoked.

This development, central to its whole structure, takes the poem off familiar paths. In the local traditions mentioned earlier, the founding of rites by Demeter, in person, is an extremely common motif. It always takes place while the goddess is wandering on earth in search of Kore; and it is normally a benefit conferred in gratitude either for information about Kore's whereabouts, or for hospitality that she has received.[31] The narrative of the *Hymn* develops as if here too Demeter were going to establish rites in gratitude for a kind reception. Elderly lady though she is, and thus a person in Greek

terms of the lowest possible value,[32] the disguised Demeter is received with notable graciousness, and the household of Celeus passes the famous 'entertaining a god in disguise' test with flying colours. We happen to know that some such explanation was later current at Eleusis, because Isocrates says that Demeter founded the Mysteries 'in gratitude for benefits that only the initiates may hear'.[33] Whatever those benefits were, the foundation of the Mysteries was seen as an act of gratitude; and clearly this was an explanation that would have had a strong psychological appeal for Athenians. Instead, in the *Hymn*, the episode of Demophon intrudes; the goddess is enraged, and the Mysteries are first mentioned as a way of appeasing her.

What are we to make of the episode? The starting-point must be that it is an Eleusinian story. This emerges from the convergence of several items of evidence: a hero Threptos, 'nursling', received offerings at Eleusis, as we see from a sacrificial calendar; the same story was later attached to another Eleusinian hero, Triptolemus;[34] and in a passage of *Oedipus Coloneus* Demeter and Kore are said to 'nurse the rites' of Eleusis[35] – a metaphor unusual enough to suggest a reference to the values of the cult. From the *Hymn* itself we learn that a commemorative ritual was performed at Eleusis in honour of Demophon (263–7). So it is clear that, even if a typical Eleusinian account of the foundation of the Mysteries might not have included Demophon, this added material with which the poet has expanded and complicated his account is not an importation from epic tradition, but homegrown at Eleusis.

But what is the significance of the incident? As we have noted, the *Hymn* itself reveals that Demophon was commemorated in an Eleusinian rite, distinct from the Mysteries. And various points of aetiological contact between the story and details of the Mysteries themselves can be suggested, with more or less plausibility.[36] But one is reluctant to give the incident, the centrepiece of the *Hymn*, no other function than to provide an *aition* for rites of secondary importance. Anyone who approaches it simply within the narrative of the Hymn will surely be struck above all by the sombre emphasis that it places upon the necessary limits of human existence. A goddess had been willing to confer the supreme blessing of immortality on a human child. The child lost the gift through a mistake by his own mother; but it was a mistake that sprung out of the human mother's concern for the child, a mistake that almost any mother would necessarily have made. (Would mortal parents in fact want their children to become gods?[37]) There is an obvious attraction in making a connection – one that is, however, not quite explicit in the poem – with the subsequent foundation of the Mysteries. Deprived of all hopes of

immortality (Demophon stands for us all), we are reduced to seeking to improve our prospects for the afterlife by rites.[38]

Such seems the obvious interpretation of the incident within the narrative of the poem. If one looks away from the narrative towards cult, a different emphasis may suggest itself. What is the point of worshipping a divine figure 'Nursling', as we know the Eleusinians did? Surely, one would think, not to stress how little the goddess could do for her charge, but how much: and in later accounts of Demeter's relations with Triptolemus, her second nursling, we duly find that he continues to be her favourite despite her failure to immortalize him.[39] In speaking of the goddesses 'nursing' the Mysteries Sophocles too surely wishes to suggest their helpful care. Thus in cult the figure of the Nursling is likely to have been an emblem of divine concern for man,[40] while in the poem the same motif seems to stress the gap between mortals and gods. How then should we explain the apparent pull of the motif in one direction in the poem, in another in cult? This perhaps is the poet's contribution. He has taken up from Eleusinian cult and story the motif of the nursling whom the goddess failed to immortalize but still cherished, and given it an unusually sombre emphasis; he may also have given it a new context by making it the immediate motive for the foundation of the Mysteries. These were possibilities open to a poet but not to an ordinary Eumolpid: this greater emotional depth, these more complicated juxtapositions and contrasts, could only readily be achieved within a carefully-planned literary work. The thoughtful theological perspective too, in which the Mysteries are seen as a second best for those inevitably bound over to death, is much more appropriate in Greece to a poet than to a priest.

But is the work in truth 'carefully-planned'? An underlying incoherence has often been thought to reveal itself precisely in what follows. Analytic critics in the nineteenth century dissected the poem; Wilamowitz declared it to be an artificial amalgam, though one which we could no longer break down into original distinct works; and even the latest editor declares 'it is easy to see that the narrative thread lacks logical coherence', and suggests that the incoherence is due to a non-Eleusinian poet's attempt to bring together as many Eleusinian traditions as possible into a single narrative.[41] The difficulty is as follows. At the conclusion of the Demophon episode, the temple that Demeter in her anger has demanded is built for her. She takes her seat in it, 'away from all the immortals', and in grief for her daughter causes all crops to fail for a year. Zeus is eventually forced to intervene and to instruct Hades to send Kore back. So Demeter's tactics prove highly effective (as in mythology such divine strikes always do).[42] Why then, critics ask, did she not employ them earlier?

Why fritter away all that time in Celeus' palace during which, it seems, Kore's fate had been forgotten? Would it not have been more sensible to hide the crops back at line 92? All these objections clearly have some force, provided that a great goddess in a *Homeric Hymn* can be expected to display the pellucid motivation of the heroine of a realistic novel; but equally clearly, that expectation is based on a mistake about the character of the genre. These *Hymns*, as we saw, are profoundly mythological in their disregard for everyday realism. Why has Zeus betrayed his daughter to Hades? What was Kore doing in the Nysian plain? Why is it to Eleusis that Demeter directs her steps? Why does she want to make Demophon immortal?[43] Such questions can easily be multiplied. The attentive reader of a poem such as this quickly realizes that he is being led through a world of mysteries, because gods are gods, not men, because Olympus is hidden from mortal eyes. Demeter would cease to be Demeter if she had to explain herself to Wilamowitz.

But, it may be objected, can such an 'attentive reader' abandon so readily the natural impulse to try to make sense of the narrative that is recounted to him? Are unmotivated actions tolerable? The answer is that, in a 'theogonic' and aetiological poem, the reader can indeed make sense of the narrative, but in terms less of motives than of results. Demeter naturally turns her steps to Eleusis, because there she is worshipped; it is comprehensible that she seeks to make Demophon immortal, and fails, because that failure leads to the establishment of her *Mysteries*. The 'cause' of the event lies partly in the inscrutable mind of the god, more clearly in the consequence.

The second half of the poem can be only very briefly treated here. It tells how Kore's release was secured, but how Hades ensured by a trick that she should return to him for a third of each year. Kore's unique career as a commuter, here inaugurated, has a significance both agricultural and eschatological. On the one hand she 'comes up' each year with the spring flowers, a symbol of the annual re-birth of vegetation (401–3). On the other, it is surely the ambiguity of her status as a traveller between the two worlds that makes her so fit both to condemn and to pardon mortals after death (cf. 364–9[44]), and to preside over rites that prepare us for the afterlife. Thus the story of Kore's only partial escape from Hades turns out to interlock with Demeter's failure to immortalize Demophon in a way that unites the two halves of the poem: because mortals cannot in fact be made immortal, rites to aid them in death are necessary, and because Kore did not in fact escape from the Underworld, they are possible. This is not the place, however, to do more than mention this important 'theogonic' theme of Kore's unique destiny.[45]

Just two points can be stressed about the second half of the poem, concerning its other great 'theogonic' theme, the foundation of the Mysteries. The first is the concentration of action at Eleusis. Demeter never stirs from there, and so it is to Eleusis that Persephone returns, from Eleusis that the famine both begins and, more important, ends. In lines 450–5 we are carefully reminded that the famous Rharian plain at Eleusis, though 'all-leafless' during the goddess' wrath, would soon

> be covered with fine corn-stalks like hair
> at the coming of spring, and on the ground the rich furrows
> will be heavy with corn, and it will be bound in bundles.
> (453–6)

The poetic effect is to imply that the re-birth of corn began at the Rharian plain. Later there was to be a myth that not the re-birth but as it were the birth of corn occurred there: it was given to the Eleusinians, for the first time, by the grateful Demeter, first sown in the Rharian plain, and later distributed throughout the world by Triptolemus on his winged chariot.[46] If the *Hymn*-writer already knew that myth, which became so important a part of the Athenians' self-image as civilizers of Hellas, he chose to ignore it in favour of the more dramatic motif of Demeter's anger; and to that extent epic poet prevailed over Eumolpid. But our poet has none the less in his own way created an unmistakable sense of a special association between the blessings of agriculture and the temple of Demeter at Eleusis. And that is the solution to the structural problem that troubled analysts. If the motif of crop-failure and crop-restoration is to be associated as closely as possible with Eleusis, the goddess must not hide the corn until she has reached the town and been safely installed in her temple.

The second point to be stressed is the culmination of the poem. One might have expected the actual return of Kore to be a climactic moment. Instead, it is dealt with a hundred lines before the end, with no sense of completion; nor is completion reached with Demeter's important prediction of Kore's annual return along with the spring flowers, a 'great wonder to gods and mortal men' (401–3). Crucially significant though agricultural symbolism was to the Mysteries, they were in fact celebrated in autumn, at the start and not the finish of the farming year.[47] The real climax comes when, in rapid succession, Demeter releases the hidden crops in 471, and, in 474, reveals her Mysteries to the Eleusinian princes – those Mysteries that allow their initiates hope of a better lot in the afterlife. There follows the *makarismos*, an impressive statement of the blessedness of the initiate. The passage 'draws together the two themes of the hymn, the

foundation of the mysteries and the restoration of vegetation after the famine':[48] two themes that are, of course, far from being unconnected. According to the Gnostic who violated the Eleusinian secret, the sacred object revealed at the climax of the Mysteries was a cut ear of corn.[49] Let us not accuse the *Hymn*-writer of profaning the Mysteries by his revelation of fields of corn; but many readers must have felt that the *Hymn* ends with a kind of poetic *epopteia*, a viewing of Mysteries, in which the association of corn with a revelation and a promise about the afterlife is fundamental. The poem reaches a climax parallel to that of the Mysteries themselves.

Adventurous spirits might indeed like to push this parallel between the structure of the poem and of the Mysteries a little further. The rites which are finally revealed by Demeter in line 474 have as we saw first been mentioned in line 273, a year earlier, when Demeter promises to teach rites by which her wrath can be appeased. As it happens, the Mysteries themselves were revealed to new initiates in two stages: first the candidate went through *myesis*, first stage initiation, and only a year later was he admitted to the final revelation, *epopteia*.[50] One might see Demeter's first mention of the rites at 273 as the poem's equivalent to *myesis*, the final revelation at 474 as *epopteia*. At all events, there is a striking contrast between the two passages in mood. In the first, Kore is missing, the attempt to immortalize Demophon has failed; Demeter is furious and stern, the women of the household are 'trembling with fear', and the stated aim of the rites is to appease the goddess' wrath. In the second, Kore has returned, Demeter is mellow, and the fields are golden with corn. Above all, we now learn for the first time that the rites will secure a better lot for the initiate in the afterlife. (Since it is only in the second half of the poem that Kore acquires the mediating status on which the Eleusinian promise appears to depend, that promise could not properly have been made earlier.) Such accounts as we have of the psychological experience of initiates at Eleusis – admittedly all date from much later in antiquity – all stress the mixture of emotions that were undergone, the alternation of terror and hope and joy.[51] Terror we had earlier in the poem, in the Demophon episode, with Demeter's anger against Metanira and the need to appease her; but after all its variety of moods the poem ends with a joyful revelation, like the Mysteries themselves. If the argument is just, this use of literary form, this shaping of a fairly long and complex narrative to enact, in a sense, the emotional experience of initiation,[52] is something well beyond the scope of the ordinary Eumolpid. But of course the result is something that he could only have applauded.

NOTES

1. The following works are cited by author's name alone: F. Càssola (ed.), *Inni omerici* (Milan, 1975); J. S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus, Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns* (Princeton, 1989) (which appeared after this article was substantially completed; some account of it has been taken in the notes); L. H. Lenz, *Der homerische Aphroditehymnus und die Aristie des Aineias in der Ilias* (Bonn, 1975); N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974).

This article was first drafted as a contribution to a London University seminar series on literature and religion, organized by Professor P. E. Easterling; a version has also been delivered in Oxford, and to the Cambridge Philological Society. I am grateful to participants on all three occasions for their criticisms, and especially to Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood for many discussions of Eleusinian topics.

2. *Hymn* 13 consists of 3 lines based on the *Hymn to Demeter*; 17 is 5 lines most of which occur, differently arranged, in *Hymn* 33; 25 is a scrap based on Hes. *Theog.* 94–97. That the short versions are secondary is clear from *Hymn* 25.4, where an allusion to kings has been inappropriately imported from Hesiod, and from 18.5–9, the expansiveness of which is only suitable as introduction to a longer narration.

3. Cf. for earlier discussions Lenz, pp. 278–86, and now especially Càssola, pp. xvii–xxi. It is *a priori* highly unlikely that the only such instances of cutting down that occurred are the four we happen to be able to detect. I regard as almost certainly abbreviated (in addition to those already mentioned) the following very short *Hymns* (of fewer than 15 and usually than 10 lines): 9 (where the details of Artemis' activities in 3–6 are too specific for a generalizing proem), 12 (which lacks an ending), 21 (which lacks a beginning), 24 (where the detail of line 3 is ridiculously over-emphasized), and 26 (where a developing narrative breaks off pointlessly at 10); these should doubtless take with them 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 22, and 23, which are similarly tiny. 27–33 (which average 15–20 lines) are harder to judge. Càssola considers them incomplete because mythless (and certainly the main section of 32 ends abruptly at 16); but it is not proven that a *Homeric Hymn* had to contain a narrative, and about Hestia, for instance (subject of 29), there were virtually (but cf. *Hymn* 5.24) no stories to tell. *Hymn* 19, of 48 lines, is very probably complete (despite Càssola's reservations, p. xix), as 7, of 59 lines, certainly is.

4. R. Janko, for instance, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 140–2, 228–31, ranges the major *Hymns* from the first half of the seventh century (*Delian Apollo*) to the end of the sixth (*Hermes*; but it is unnecessary to see any influence of proto-rhetoric on *Hermes*, as Dr Doreen Innes kindly advises me); on the lesser *Hymns*, cf. ibid. p. 276 n. 27. Contrast Càssola, p. lviii: 'gl'inni rimangono estranei alla dimensione temporale.' Proems were still sung before epic recitations (whether or not they were still composed) in the fifth century (Pind. *Nem.* 2.1–3); the practice of recitation continued much longer (Càssola, pp. lxi–lxii). As for origins, the genre of the hexameter hymn evidently in some form long antedates the first surviving examples (cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.499; the evidence of Hesiod, n. 5 below; and the suggestion of M. L. West, *Glotta* 67 (1989), 135–8, that the Indo-European 'injunctive' survived within this genre).

5. Cf. Richardson, pp. 3–4; Càssola, pp. xii–xvi. For hymns introducing epic recitations, cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.499 (?); Pind. *Nem.* 2.1–3; *Hymn* 3.158–61 (?); 31.18–19, 32.18–20 (the latter two conceivably post-classical); on the other hand, it is clear from Hesiod (see West's notes on *Op.* 1–10; *Theog.* 1–115) that hexameter poems of every kind required hymnic proems. The formula *μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον* in 5.293 and elsewhere reveals nothing about the character of the following song: on the sense of *ὕμνος* see West on Hes. *Op.* 657.

6. So e.g. T. W. Allen, W. R. Halliday, E. E. Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford, 1936), pp. xciv–xcv; R. Wünsch, *RE* s.v. *Hymnos*, 149, 151. Contrast Richardson and Càssola, as cited in n. 5; Lenz, pp. 278–86.

7. So e.g. Lenz, pp. 10, 17; H. Herter in C. Brillante, M. Cantilena, C. O. Pavese (edd.), *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale* (Padova, 1981), p. 196: unlike epic, the *Hymns* 'non erano utilizzabili in qualsiasi maniera, ma destinati per determinati occasioni in certe feste, di cui glorificavano le divinità'. That the *Hymns* were in fact re-utilized is fairly clear from their textual history (cf. Janko [n. 4], pp. 2–3), although Herter might counter that subsequent performances were confined to appropriate festivals.

8. Clay, p. 7, probably goes too far in postulating the symposium/feast as context of performance in the archaic period: contrast *Hymn* 6.19, δὸς δ'ἐν ἀγῶνι/νίκην τῷδε, and the *Hymn to Delian Apollo* (which she seeks, pp. 46–52, to dissociate from a Delian festival). But she may well be right that *Hymns*, like epic, had once been performed at banquets (cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.499, and Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite), and thus that the genre was not occasional in origin. (*Hymn* 24.4, exceptionally, summons Hestia τόνδ' ἀνὰ οἶκον – the character of the οἶκος is uncertain.)

9. See the admirable monograph of Lenz, esp. pp. 9–22, from which I borrow the example of epiphanies.

10. See J. Rudhardt's important study, 'À propos de l'hymne homérique à Déméter', *Mus. Helv.* 35 (1978), 1–17, also in his *Du mythe, de la religion grecque et de la compréhension d'autrui* (Geneva, 1981), pp. 227–44; cf. Clay, passim. To a large extent *Homeric Hymns* stand to *Theogonies* as do monographs to works of synthesis; for the similarity of the two genres, cf. *Hymn* 4.57–61 with 427–33; 19.27–8; and the hymn (1–115) which introduces Hesiod's *Theogony*.

11. Cf. Lenz, pp. 20–21, who refers to 1.10–16; 2.460–9, 483–6; 3.2–13, 186–206; 4.319ff.; 6.14–18; 28. As he observes, these good-humoured and harmonious gatherings are very different from the fraught Olympic scenes often found in Homer.

12. For criticism see Lenz, passim, e.g. pp. 273–4; and especially P. M. Smith, *HSCP* 85 (1981), 17–58, who shows that even the strongest external evidence for historical Aeneadae (Demetrius of Skepsis ap. Strabo 13.1.52–53) is inconclusive; the Homeric passage *Il.* 20.300–8 proves only that Aeneadae had an important *mythological* existence.

13. See Smith's attractive study, *Nursling of Mortality: a Study of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (Frankfurt, Bern, Cirencester, 1981); also e.g. C. Segal, *CW* 67 (1973/4), 205–12; H. King, *Arethusa* 19 (1986), 15–36; and for qualifications Clay, pp. 186–8. For Smith, p. 5, 'The underlying concern . . . is the limitation in time of mortal life'; for King, 17–18, this is only part of the true central theme, 'the separation of gods from mortal men'. These themes are certainly present; but it seems questionable to declare them central to a *Hymn to Aphrodite*. Clay argues, p. 166, that the poem shows the last sexual contact between mortals and immortals, and thus the twilight of the heroic age; but this is scarcely in the text (for Zeus' stated aims see 45–52; 247–54). The post-structuralist reading by A. L. T. Bergren, *Classical Antiquity* 8 (1989), 1–41, reaches a strange conclusion, p. 41: 'the Hymn is unequivocal in this element of its aetiology, its proclamation that any virgin bride might be Aphrodite in disguise, and that no man "seized by eros" for the bride can possibly know the difference.'

14. See G. S. Kirk, *Myth* (Berkeley, 1970), pp. 240–1; cf. e.g. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, 1988 ed., s.v. 'Myth and Mythology', 710: 'there is no attempt to justify mythic narratives or render them plausible.'

15. In the fifth century, 'theogonic' myths appear, more briefly treated, in two Euripidean choruses, just the ones that have long been suspected of being *embolima* (*Hel.* 1301–68; *I.T.* 1234–83); subsequently they have a precarious survival in lyric hymns (a genre where they must always have been found) such as *PMG* 934–6, and of course reappear when Callimachus revives the hexameter hymn.

16. See e.g. E. D. Kearns, *CR* 39 (1989), 61–62.

17. Cf. F. Wehrli, *ARW* 31 (1934), 77–104; K. Deichgräber, 'Eleusinische Frömmigkeit und homerische Vorstellungswelt im homerischen Demeterhymnos', *Abh. Ak. Wiss. Mainz*, 1950, 6, pp. 501–37; Richardson, pp. 74–86.

18. On the near eastern parallels to the motif of Demeter's wrath, and its disastrous consequences, see e.g. Richardson, pp. 258–9; W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, 1979), ch. 6.

19. So Wehrli (n. 17), 80; Deichgräber (n. 17), p. 529: the *Hymn*-writer 'homerisierte nicht nur als Techniker des Wortes und des Verses'.

20. See Richardson, pp. 74–86. On Ovid's Greek sources see F. Montanari, *ASNP* ser. iii.4 (1974), 109–37; S. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 51–57.

21. See Richardson, pp. 195–6. Eumolpus is little less mutable.

22. From Kevin Clinton, 'The Author of the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*', *Opuscula Atheniensia* 16 (1986), 43–49, who concludes 'the author was not from Attica and he was not writing for an Athenian audience. The story of the Rape was no doubt a standard one, sung all

over the Greek world. Our author gave it a partly Eleusinian setting; he may have been an initiate, but he was not deeply interested in Eleusis.' Clinton's expert knowledge of Eleusinian antiquities gives that conclusion great weight. But his argument that the poet was ill-informed about details of Eleusinian cult and organization is much weakened by the chronological gap, probably of at least a century, between the *Hymn* and the other, chiefly inscriptional, evidence to which he appeals; and the instances of good local knowledge which he acknowledges weigh against him more heavily than he allows. The text presents a counter-case in general and in part (on the site of the rape, and the role of Triptolemus) in specific terms. As for further specific points: Attic poets (e.g. Eur. *Suppl.* 271; Arist. *Ran.* 337, 671) and pot-painters (cf. G. Schwarz, *Triptolemos* [Grazer Beiträge Supp. II, 1987] nn. 58, 61 on p. 39, cf. p. 102) did not treat the name 'Persephone' as taboo in an Eleusinian context; Hecate is certainly prominent in Eleusinian iconography (Schwarz, p. 253, index s.v. *Hekate*), even if cult of her happens not to be attested.

23. Zeus' involvement is traditional, unless Hes. *Theog.* 913f., where the motif also appears, is post-Hesiodic and itself based on the *Hymn*. It is standard in later accounts.

24. Cf. Lenz, pp. 58–69. Zeus is not, by contrast, explicitly said to have willed the events subsequent to the rape, which led to the final compromise whereby Kore divided her time between upper and lower worlds; but he did approve that compromise (445–7).

25. So, tentatively, Richardson, p. 149.

26. Cf. Richardson, p. 150. For Attic locations see Phanodemus, *FGrH* 325 F 27 (Attica); Paus. 1.38.5 (Eleusis); *Σ* Soph. *O.C.* 1590, 1592 (Colonus). Orpheus: frs. 50–52 Kern, esp. fr. 51 (=Paus. 1.14.3): an Eleusinian setting for the Descent (if not necessarily – cf. below – for the rape itself) is implied by the 'information' motif, and by the story of Eubouleus' pigs. The 'information' motif is also found in an Eleusinian context in Tzetzes ad Hes. *Op.* 32, *Σ* Vet. Tr. ad Ar. *Eq.* 698, *Σ* Ael. Arist. *Panath.* p. 53 Dindorf, but Celeus (with whom in *Σ* Ael. Arist. Demeter co-habits) is here in contrast to the Orphic version father of Triptolemus, and the rape itself is set in Sicily – presumably an air flight must have intervened between rape and descent as in *Hymn Orph.* 18.12ff. and in the *Homeric Hymn* (cf. Richardson, p. 159).

27. See Richardson, pp. 162, 165–6; for the iconographical type see e.g. the illustrations to K. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis* (Zurich, 1962), passim. The exact extent of aetiological allusions in the *Hymn* cannot be definitely established (for a review of possibilities cf. Clay, pp. 203–4); this one is certain, as Ovid confirms: *hinc Cereris sacris nunc quoque taeda datur, Fasti* 4.494.

28. See Richardson, p. 155, and above n. 22.

29. See Richardson, pp. 211–7.

30. It is sometimes suggested that she adopts Demophon as a substitute for lost Persephone (so e.g. M. Arthur, *Arethusa* 10 (1977), 22 [in a Freudian/feminist reading]; H. Deal and N. Rubin, *QUCC* 34 (1980), 8); Clay proposes, p. 226, that the attempt to confound the line of demarcation between man and god is a first, unsuccessful act of defiance against Zeus. But it is wrong to try to peer into the goddess' mind: cf. p. 11 above.

31. See Richardson, pp. 81 and 174 (note on 75ff.).

32. Cf. J. N. Bremmer, 'The old women of ancient Greece' in J. Blok and P. Mason (edd.), *Sexual Asymmetry. Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 193–215; M. S. Silk, *BICS* 34 (1987) (=B. Gredley (ed.), *Studies in Greek Drama*), 93: 'for Aristophanes, old women do not attract pathos; old men do.'

33. *Paneg.* 28.

34. 'Threptos': F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplement* (1962), no. 10.69–70 (cf. A. Körte, *Glotta* 25 (1936), 137–9, who identifies him with Triptolemus). Triptolemus: Ov. *Fasti* 4.550–60; Hyg. *Fab.* 147 etc. (cf. H. J. Rose ad loc.; for the view that the Hyginus tradition derives from Panyassis, see N. Robertson, *Hermes* 108 (1980), 278 n. 10, with his references); *Σ* Nic. *Ther.* 484c; 5th-c. iconography strongly implies that Triptolemus was already the nursling (cf. Körte, op. cit.; H. Herter, *Rh. Mus.* 90 (1941), 266; M. Robertson in *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 3, 1986, 86–88; Schwarz, *Triptolemos* [n. 22], p. 247). I know no exactly parallel myths outside Attica, although at Sicyon Demeter nursed the child Orthopolis (Paus. 2.5.8; and cf. Richardson, pp. 234–8, on Erichthonius and Apollonius Rhodius' Achilles). The argument does not in fact require that the 'failed immortalization' motif be exclusive to Eleusis, but only that it had already been adopted there in the seventh

century. Even this, of course, is not strictly demonstrable, given the date of our evidence; if it was in fact taken up later, the argument about the episode's function within the poem can still stand, while that about the relation of poet and cult is reversed (with effects still, though differently, damaging for Clinton's thesis [n. 22 above]: the poet adopts, indeed, a non-Eleusinian motif, but then succeeds, it seems, in causing it to be accepted at Eleusis).

35. 1050–2, *Πότνιαι σεμνὰ τιθηνοῦνται τέλη/θνατοῖσιν.*

36. Cf. Richardson, pp. 231–6.

37. Cf. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1159a 5–7. Ovid's Demeter nicely brings out Metanira's innocence of intention: *cui dea 'dum non es' dixit 'scelerata, fuisti'* (*Fasti* 4.557). Cf. W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic* (Baltimore, 1984), pp. 92–94.

38. Cf. J. Rudhardt, *Mus. Helv.* 35 (1978), 11; G. Sfameni Gasparro, *Misteri e culti mistici di Demetra* (Rome, 1986), p. 194 (cf. for other views pp. 67–77); Clay, p. 244 (with further references). The tragic aspect of the story is stressed still more in the variant in which the child immediately dies (Apollod. 1.5.1, ? Orph. fr. 49.100–1). When Triptolemus becomes the nursling, a new balance appears, potentially at least (Sfameni Gasparro, p. 73): in place of immortality, he receives corn, the characteristic food of mortals (Ov. *Fasti* 4.559–60).

39. See e.g. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.559–60; Hyg. *Fab.* 147.

40. Cf. Richardson, p. 236; but I am much less ready than him to transfer this good cheer in any simple way into the *Hymn* – though doubtless by an indirect route Demeter's fine promise of 227–30 continues to assert her credentials as a divine 'nurse', despite the sad outcome in Demophon's case.

41. Cf. Càssola, pp. 33f. (whence the quotation); Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, ii. 50 (in the pagination of the edition Darmstadt, 1959). Richardson's discussion, pp. 258–60, is more cautious.

42. Cf. n. 18 above.

43. Cf. n. 30 above.

44. Richardson is surely right to see an eschatological reference in these lines (cf. W. Burkert, *Gnomon* 49 (1977), 445–6), despite the doubts of Clay, p. 252.

45. On the 'theogonic' aspect of this *Hymn* cf. n. 10 above, and L. J. Alderink, *Numen* 29 (1982), 1–16. On the relation of the Demophon incident to Kore's return see the (rather over-schematic) paper of N. F. Rubin, H. M. Deal, *QUCC* 5 (1980), 7–21.

46. Cf. Schwarz (n. 22), passim. The Triptolemus myth first appears on vases around 540, when Eleusinian themes in general first enter vase-painting (cf. J. Boardman, *JHS* 95 (1975), 7). We can only speculate whether it already existed at the date of the *Hymn*'s composition. The stories of the rest of Greece tend to tell of Demeter founding rites, not making a gift of corn; and the myth of Triptolemus may seem to imply an untraditional view of the gradual growth of human culture. Thus it is perhaps a secondary, Attic development. But it can be objected (cf. Richardson, p. 259) that particular myths about the coming of particular gods or skills do not imply a general theory of progress: the gift of corn is as legitimate a subject for traditional myth as is the gift of wine (with which it is in fact sometimes paired on vases: M. Robertson in *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 3, 1986, 71–90; Schwarz, p. 112) or the theft of fire.

47. Cf. M. H. Jameson's review of Richardson, *Athenaeum* 54 (1976), 441–6. He reminds us how loosely associated are myth, rite, and agricultural reality: for in Attica the seed germinates in autumn and thus, in contrast to Kore, is not hidden underground all winter.

48. Richardson, p. 301.

49. Hipp. *Ref.* 5.8.39: cf., e.g., W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley, 1983), p. 290.

50. The distinction between the two grades is already clearly drawn in our first substantial epigraphic text concerning the Mysteries, *IG* I^3 6 (b) (of *c.* 460). Further complications (over the 'Lesser' Mysteries, and the nature of *myesis*) need not concern us here.

51. Cf. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987) ch. 4, on, particularly, Plutarch fr. 168 Sandbach.

52. Cf. Deichgräber (n. 17), p. 522.