

## CLAS109.04 REBIRTH

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- M** Maurizio ch.4.1 HISTORY—*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*  
before class: skim HISTORY context; refer to leading questions; focus on ancient texts  
Active Reading **FOCUS** • *H.Hom.2* & *Plut.Mor.*  
cf. **CR04** *H.Hom.Cer.* G. Nagy trans. (Maurizio p.163-174 is fine)  
use **CR04** *Plutarch Moralia: Isis & Osiris* 15-16 (*Plut.Mor.357A-D*)  
NB read for one hour, taking notes (fill in worksheets)

RAW notes & post discussion question @11h00

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- W** Maurizio ch.4.3 COMPARE—*In the Desert by the Early Grass*  
before class: skim COMPARE context; refer to leading questions; focus on ancient text  
Active Reading **FOCUS** • *Early Grass* (edin-na u<sub>2</sub> saĝ-ĝa<sub>2</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub>)  
use **CR04** Jacobsen 1987 translation (Maurizio p.188-194 is NOT fine)  
NB read for one hour, taking notes; finish previous as necessary

RAW notes & post discussion question @12h00

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- F** Maurizio ch.4.2 THEORY—Foley 1994  
before class: skim also modern 4.4 RECEPTION  
paragraph synopsis of Foley, H. 1994. "Question of Origins." *Womens Studies* 23.3:193-215  
NB read for one hour, practice summarizing; finish previous as necessary

tl; dr & post discussion responses @11h00

Q04 • QUOTE QUIZ

*Gen.6-11, Aesch.Prom., H.Hom.Cer., Plut.Mor.357A-D; Early Grass*

FINAL notes @23h59

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DRAFT 01 @23h59 • following guidelines

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## DEMETER & HADES

How does myth represent the natural world (e.g. pre-scientific explanation)?

How does myth represent religious ritual?

How does myth represent social order?

*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*<sup>1</sup>

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G. Nagy

- 1 I begin to sing of Demeter, the holy goddess with the beautiful hair.  
And her daughter (Persephone) too. The one with the delicate ankles, whom Hades<sup>2</sup>  
seized. She was given away by Zeus, the loud-thunderer, the one who sees far and wide.  
Demeter did not take part in this, she of the golden double-axe, she who glories in the harvest.
- 5 She (Persephone) was having a good time, along with the daughters of Oceanus, who wear their girdles slung low.  
She was picking flowers: roses, crocus, and beautiful violets.  
Up and down the soft meadow. Iris blossoms too she picked, and hyacinth.  
And the narcissus, which was grown as a lure for the flower-faced girl  
by Gaia. All according to the plans of Zeus. She was doing a favor for the one who receives many guests (Hades).
- 10 It (the narcissus) was a wondrous thing in its splendor. To look at it gives a sense of holy awe  
to the immortal gods as well as mortal humans.  
It has a hundred heads growing from the root up.  
Its sweet fragrance spread over the wide skies up above.  
And the earth below smiled back in all its radiance. So too the churning mass of the salty sea.
- 15 She (Persephone) was filled with a sense of wonder, and she reached out with both hands  
to take hold of the pretty plaything.<sup>3</sup> And the earth, full of roads leading every which way, opened up under her.  
It happened on the Plain of Nysa. There it was that the Lord who receives many guests made his lunge.  
He was riding on a chariot drawn by immortal horses. The son of Cronus. The one known by many names.  
He seized her against her will, put her on his golden chariot,
- 20 And drove away as she wept. She cried with a piercing voice,  
calling upon her father (Zeus), the son of Cronus, the highest and the best.  
But not one of the immortal ones, or of human mortals,  
heard her voice. Not even the olive trees which bear their splendid harvest.  
Except for the daughter of Persaeus, the one who keeps in mind the vigor of nature.
- 25 She heard it from her cave. She is Hecate, with the splendid headband.  
And the Lord Helios (Sun) heard it too, the magnificent son of Hyperion.  
They heard the daughter calling upon her father, the son of Cronus.  
But he, all by himself, was seated far apart from the gods, inside a temple, the precinct of many prayers.  
He was receiving beautiful sacrificial rites from mortal humans.
- 30 She was being taken, against her will, at the behest of Zeus,

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<sup>1</sup> [www.uh.edu/~cldue/texts/demeter.html](http://www.uh.edu/~cldue/texts/demeter.html)

<sup>2</sup> This name designates both the god of the underworld and the underworld itself.

<sup>3</sup> As we shall now see, the narcissus is the trigger for the “trap door.”

by her father's brother, the one who makes many *sêmata* (signs), the one who receives many guests,  
the son of Cronus, the one with many names. On the chariot drawn by immortal horses.  
So long as the earth and the star-filled sky  
were still within the goddess's view, as also the fish-swarming sea (*pontos*), with its strong currents,  
35 as also the rays of the sun, she still had hope that she would yet see  
her dear mother and that special group, the immortal gods.  
For that long a time her great *noos* (conscious mind) was soothed by hope, distressed as she was.  
The peaks of mountains resounded, as did the depths of the sea (*pontos*),  
with her immortal voice. And the Lady Mother (Demeter) heard her.  
40 And a sharp *akhos* (grief) seized her heart. The headband on her hair  
she tore off with her own immortal hands  
and threw a dark cloak over her shoulders.  
She sped off like a bird, soaring over land and sea,  
looking and looking. But no one was willing to tell her the truth (*etêtuma*),  
45 not one of the gods, not one of the mortal humans,  
not one of the birds, messengers of the truth (*etêtuma*).  
Thereafter, for nine days did the Lady Demeter  
wander all over the earth, holding torches ablaze in her hands.  
Not once did she take of ambrosia and nectar, sweet to drink,  
50 in her grief, nor did she bathe her skin in water.  
But when the tenth bright dawn came upon her,  
Hecate came to her, holding a light ablaze in her hands.  
She came with a message, and she spoke up, saying to her:  
"Lady Demeter, bringer of *hôrai* (seasons), giver of splendid gifts,  
55 which one of the gods who dwell in the sky or which one of mortal humans  
seized Persephone and brought grief to your *philos thûmos* (dear soul)?  
I heard the sounds, but I did not see with my eyes  
who it was. So I quickly came to tell you everything, without error."  
So spoke Hecate. But she was not answered  
60 by the daughter of Rhea with the beautiful hair. Instead, she (Demeter) joined her (Hecate) and quickly  
set out with her, holding torches ablaze in her hands.  
They came to Helios, the seeing-eye of gods and men.  
They stood in front of his chariot-team, and the resplendent goddess asked this question:  
"Helios! Show me *aidôs* (respect), god to goddess, if ever  
65 I have pleased your heart and *thûmos* (seat of emotion) in word or deed.  
It is about the girl born to me, a sweet young seedling, renowned for her beauty,

whose piercing cry I heard resounding through the boundless aether,  
 as if she were being forced, though I did not see it with my eyes.  
 I turn to you as one who ranges over all the earth and sea (*pontos*)  
 70 as you look down from the bright aether with your sunbeams:  
 tell me without error whether you have by any chance seen my *philon* (dear) child,  
 and who has taken her away from me by force, against her will,  
 and then gone away? Tell me which one of the gods or mortal humans did it.”  
 So she spoke. And the son of Hyperion answered her with these words:  
 75 “Daughter of Rhea with the beautiful hair, Queen Demeter!  
 You shall know the answer, for I greatly respect you and feel sorry for you  
 as you grieve over your child, the one with the delicate ankles. No one else  
 among all the immortals is responsible (*aitios*) except the cloud-gatherer Zeus himself,  
 who gave her to Hades as his beautiful wife.  
 So he gave her to his own brother. And he (Hades), heading for the misty realms of darkness,  
 80 seized her as he drove his chariot and as she screamed out loud.  
 But I urge you, goddess: stop your loud cry of lamentation: you should not  
 have an anger without bounds, all in vain. It is not unseemly  
 to have, of all the immortals, such a son-in-law as Hades, the one who makes many *sêmata* (signs)  
 85 He is the brother (of Zeus), whose seed is from the same place. And as for *tîmê* (honor),  
 he has his share, going back to the very beginning, when the three-way division of inheritance was made.<sup>4</sup>  
 He dwells with those whose king he was destined by lot to be.”<sup>5</sup>  
 So saying, he shouted to his horses, and they responded to his command  
 as they swiftly drew the speeding chariot, like long-winged birds.  
 90 And she was visited by *akhos* (grief) that was even more terrible than before: think of the Hound of Hades.  
 In her anger at the one who is known for his dark clouds, the son of Cronus,  
 she shunned the company of gods and lofty Olympus.  
 She went away, visiting the cities of humans, with all their fertile landholdings,  
 shading over her appearance, for a long time. And not one of men,  
 95 looking at her, could recognize her. Not one of women, either, who are accustomed to wear their girdles low-slung.<sup>6</sup>  
 Until, one day, she came to the house of bright-minded Celeus,  
 who was at that time ruler of Eleusis, fragrant with incense.<sup>7</sup>  
 She sat down near the road, sad in her *philon* (dear) heart,

<sup>4</sup> On the division of the world, to be shared by the three brothers Zeus, Poseidon, and Hadês, cf. *Iliad* XV 189-191.

<sup>5</sup> That is, with the dead.

<sup>6</sup> Different locales had different traditions about where Demeter was first recognized and where her cult and her Mysteries were first established.

<sup>7</sup> Eleusis is the locale of the Eleusinian Mysteries; both Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries were eventually appropriated by the *polis* of Athens.

at the well called Parthenium (“Virgin Place”), where the people of the *polis* (city-state)<sup>8</sup> used to draw water.

100 She sat in the shade, under the thick growth of an olive tree,  
 looking like an old woman who had lived through many years and who is  
 deprived of giving childbirth and of the gifts of Aphrodite, lover of garlands in the hair.  
 She was like those nursemaids who belong to kings, administrators of *themistes* (judgements),  
 and who are guardians of children in echoing palaces.

105 She was seen by the daughters of Celeus, son of Eleusinus,  
 who were coming to get water, easy to draw (from the well), in order to carry it  
 in bronze water-jars to the *phila* (dear) home of their father.  
 There were four of them, looking like goddesses with their bloom of adolescence:  
 Callidicê, Clisidicê, and lovely Dêmô.

110 And then there was Callithoê, who was the eldest of them all.  
 They did not recognize her (Demeter). Gods are hard for mortals to see.  
 They (the daughters) stood near her and spoke these winged words:  
 “Who are you, and where are you from, old woman, old among old humans?  
 Why has your path taken you far away from the *polis* (city-state)? Why have you not drawn near to the palace?”

115 There, throughout the shaded chambers, are women  
 who are as old as you are, and younger ones too,  
 who would welcome you in word and in deed.”  
 So she spoke.<sup>9</sup> And the Lady Goddess spoke with the following words:  
 “*Phila* (dear) children! Whoever women you are among the female kind of humans,  
 120 I wish you *kharis* (pleasure and happiness). I shall tell you. It is not unseemly,  
 since you ask, for me to tell you *alêthea* (truth).  
 Dôsô<sup>10</sup> is my name. It was given to me by my honored mother.  
 But that was then. I am from Crete, having traveled over the wide stretches of sea  
 against my will. Without my consent, by *biâ* (force), by duress,  
 125 I was abducted by pirates. After a while,  
 sailing with their swift ship, they landed at the harbor of Thoricus. There the ship was boarded by women  
 of the mainland, many of them. They (the pirates)  
 started preparing dinner next to the prow of the beached ship.  
 But my *thûmos* did not yearn for food, that delight of the mind.

130 I stole away and set out to travel over the dark earth of the mainland, fleeing my arrogant captors. This way, I stopped them  
 from drawing any benefit from my worth without having paid the price.

<sup>8</sup> That is, the *polis* of Eleusis.

<sup>9</sup> Evidently the oldest sister was speaking on behalf of the others as well.

<sup>10</sup> The name suggests somebody who is a ‘giver of gifts’.

That is how I got here, in the course of all my wanderings. And I do not know what this land is and who live here.

135 But I pray to all the gods who abide on Olympus that you be granted vigorous husbands and that you be able to bear children, in accordance with the wishes of your parents. As for me, young girls, take pity.

To be honest about it, what I want is for you to name for me a house to go to, the house of someone, man or woman, who has *phila* (dear) children to be taken care of.<sup>11</sup> I want to work for them,

140 honestly. The kind of work that is cut out for a female who has outlived others her own age.

I could take some newborn baby in my arms, and nourish him well. I could watch over his house.

I would make his bed in the inner recesses of well-built chambers, the royal bed. And I could see to a woman's tasks."

145 So spoke the goddess. And she was answered straightaway by the unwed maiden, Callidicê, the most beautiful of the daughters of Celeus:

"Old Mother, we humans endure the gifts the gods give us, even when we are grieving over what has to be.<sup>12</sup> They (the gods) are, after all, far better than we are.

What I now say will be clear advice, and I will name for you

150 the men who have the great control, divinely given, of *tîmê* (honor) here:

the men who stand at the forefront of the *dêmos* (populace) and who protect the citadel of the *polis* (city-state) with their wise counsel and their straight *dikai* (justice).

And then there are the wives too: of sound-minded Triptolemus, of Dioclus, of Polyxenus, of faultless Eumolpus as well,

155 of Dolichus, and of our splendid father (Celeus).

The wives of all of these manage the palace.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The textual transmission is garbled here, and my translation of this line is tentative (the key, I propose, is in the connections with lines 149-150).

<sup>12</sup> The "gifts of the gods" can be good fortune or bad fortune, making people rejoice or grieve. This theme is relevant to the *ad hoc* name of Demeter at line 122.

<sup>13</sup> All this is an exercise in religious hindsight. The temple of "today" is the palace of "yesterday," the age of heroes. The priest of "today," descended as he is from an influential aristocratic family, is the king of "yesterday." At a complex cult-center or "temple" like that of Eleusis, which is run by an accretive hierarchy of hereditary priesthoods, the religious hindsight requires that the accretion of priestly offices in the temple be retrojected as an aggregation of kings in the "palace," who are also the cult-heroes in the "temple." Notice that, although Kallidikê promises Demeter a catalogue of the kings, what she says turns out to be a catalogue of queens, who are named in terms of their husbands. The husbands are in the foreground, but the wives in the background are the ones who manage the palace. The kings are all special cult-heroes connected with the worship of Demeter. Triptolemos, the primeval Ploughman, is a local hero of Athens. Dioklos is a local hero of Megara (according to Megarean tradition, he was the Megarean ruler of Eleusis who was expelled by the Athenian hero Theseus: Plutarch Theseus 10; the Megarean character in Aristophanes Acharnians 774 swears by him as a cult-hero). We know less about Polyxenos, but here too we have evidence for his cult in symbiosis with the cult of Demeter; keeping in mind the theme of god-hero antagonism, I note that poluxenos 'he who has many guests' is a

Of these women, not a single one of them, when they first look at you,  
 would deprive you of *tîmê* (honor), the way you look, and turn you away from the palace.  
 Rather, they will receive you. For, right now, you look like the gods.

160 If you wish, wait for us, while we go to the palace of our father  
 and tell our mother, Metanira with the low-slung girdle,  
 all these things from beginning to end, in the hope that she will tell you  
 to come to our house and not to seek out the houses of others.<sup>14</sup>  
 She has a treasured son, growing up in the well-built palace.

165 He was born late, after many a prayer for the birth of a son: a great joy to his parents.  
 If you nourish him to grow till he reaches the crossing-point of life, coming of age,  
 I can predict that you will be the envy of any woman who lays eyes on you.  
 That is how much compensation she (Metanira) would give you in return for raising him.”  
 So she (Callidicê) spoke. And she (Demeter) nodded her assent. So they,

170 filling their splendid jars with water, carried it off, looking magnificent.  
 Swiftly they came to the great palace of their father, and quickly they told their mother  
 what they saw and heard.<sup>15</sup> And she told them  
 quickly to go and invite her (Demeter) for whatever wages, no limits,  
 and they, much as deer or heifers in the *hôrâ* (season) of spring

175 prance along the meadow, satiating their dispositions as they graze on the grass,  
 so also they, hitching up the folds of their lovely dresses,  
 dashed along the rutted roadway, their hair flowing  
 over their shoulders, looking like crocus blossoms.

They found the illustrious goddess sitting near the road, just the way  
 180 they had left her. Then they led her to the *phila* (dear) palace of their father.  
 She was walking behind them, sad in her *philon* (dear) heart.  
 She was wearing a veil on her head, and a long dark robe (*peplos*)  
 trailed around the delicate feet of the goddess.<sup>16</sup>  
 Straightaway they came to the palace of sky-nurtured<sup>17</sup> Celeus.

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conventional epithet of Hadês. As for Eumolpos ‘he who sings and dances well’, he is the hero-ancestor of the ultimately dominant priestly family at the cult-center of Eleusis; he represents the most current tradition in Eleusis itself. Dolikhos was a cult-hero connected with the Eleusinian Games (Richardson commentary p. 199). Keleos seems to be a figure parallel to Eumolpos (cf. Richardson commentary p. 303).

<sup>14</sup> Note the roles of the father and the mother.

<sup>15</sup> Again, note the roles of the father and the mother.

<sup>16</sup> Note the diametrical oppositions between Demeter and the girls, both in movement and in appearance. In the cult of Demeter, such diametrically opposite movements and appearances are suitable for ritual re-enactment, in song and dance, by ensembles of specially-chosen girls and women.

<sup>17</sup> An epithet appropriate to kings, reflecting a myth-pattern that connects royal sovereignty with dew from heaven.

185 They went through the hall, heading for the place where their mistress, their mother,  
 was sitting near the threshold of a well-built chamber,  
 holding in her lap her son, a young seedling. And they ran over  
 to her side. She (Demeter) in the meantime went over to the threshold and stood on it, with feet firmly planted, and her head  
 reached all the way to the ceiling. And she filled the whole indoors with a divine light.

190 She (Metanira) was seized by a sense of *aidôs* (respect), by a holy wonder, by a blanching fear.  
 She yielded to her (Demeter) the chair on which she was sitting, and she told her to sit down.  
 But Demeter, the bringer of *hôrai* (seasons), the giver of splendid gifts,  
 refused to sit down on the splendid chair,  
 but she stood there silent, with her beautiful eyes downcast,

195 until *Iambê*, the one who knows what is worth caring about (*kednon*) and what is not, set down for her  
 a well-built stool, on top of which she threw a splendid fleece.<sup>18</sup>  
 On this she (Demeter) sat down, holding with her hands a veil before her face.  
 For a long time she sat on the stool, without uttering a sound, in her sadness.  
 And she made no approach, either by word or by gesture, to anyone.

200 Unsmiling, not partaking of food or drink,  
 she sat there, wasting away with yearning for her daughter with the low-slung girdle,  
 until *Iambê*,<sup>19</sup> the one who knows what is dear and what is not, started making fun.  
 Making many jokes, she turned the Holy Lady's disposition in another direction,  
 making her smile and laugh and have a merry *thûmos*.

205 Ever since, she (*Iambê*) has been pleasing her (Demeter) with the sacred rites.  
 Then Metanira offered her (Demeter) a cup, having filled it with honey-sweet wine.  
 But she refused, saying that it was divinely ordained that she not  
 drink red wine. Then she (Demeter) ordered her (Metanira) to mix some barley and water  
 with delicate pennyroyal, and to give her (Demeter) that potion to drink.

210 So she (Metanira) made the *kukeôn*<sup>20</sup> and offered it to the goddess, just as she had ordered.  
 The Lady known far and wide as *Dêô*<sup>21</sup> accepted it, for the sake of the *hosia* (pious).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> We know from other sources that such a stool with a fleece on it was a "prop" for the purification ritual at Eleusis.

<sup>19</sup> *Iambê*, as we shall now see, is a personification of the iambic tradition, which reflects a ritual discourse that provokes laughter and thereby promotes fertility. This discourse, which makes fun of its targets, is often obscene in nature. The obscenity, it goes without saying, is ritual obscenity.

<sup>20</sup> The name of a ritual potion in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

<sup>21</sup> Another name for Demeter.

<sup>22</sup> The *hosia* is whatever can be considered specific to the sphere of humans, not gods, in a ritual. For example, *hosia* is when humans take a drink at a ritual, whereas the god involved does not. From the standpoint of myth, however, when the ritual is founded, the god has to show the way by doing it first, so that humans will have precedent. In such a case, the god does it "for the sake of *hosia*" (cf. Richardson commentary p. 225).



Then well-girded Metanira spoke up in their midst:

“Woman, I wish you *kharis* (pleasure and happiness). I speak this way because I think you are descended not from base but from noble parents. You have the look of *aidôs* (respect) in your eyes,

215 and the look of *kharis*, just as if you were descended from kings, who uphold the *themistes* (judgements).

We humans endure the gifts the gods give us, even when we are grieving over what has to be.

The yoke has been placed on our neck.

But now that you have come here, there will be as many things that they give to you as they give to me.

Take this little boy of mine and nourish him. He is late-born, and it was beyond my expectations

220 that the immortals could have given him to me. I prayed many times to have him.

If you nourish him to grow till he reaches the crossing-point of life, coming of age,

I can predict that you will be the envy of any woman who lays eyes on you.

That is how much compensation I (Metanira) would give you in return for raising him.”

Then Demeter, with the beautiful garlands in her hair, addressed her:

225 “Woman, I wish you *kharis* (pleasure and happiness) back, and then some. May the gods give you good things.

With positive intentions, I will take your little boy as you tell me to.

I will nourish him, and I do not expect that, through the inadvertence of her nursemaid,

he would perish from a pestilence or from the Undercutter.<sup>23</sup>

I know an antidote<sup>24</sup> that is far more powerful than the Woodcutter;<sup>25</sup>

230 I know a genuine remedy for the painful pestilence.”

Having so spoken, she took the child to her fragrant bosom,

in her immortal hands. And the mother (Metanira) rejoiced in her mind.

And thus it came to pass that the splendid son of bright-minded Celeus,

Dêmophôn,<sup>26</sup> who was born to well-girded Metanira,

235 was nourished in the palace, and he grew up like a *daimôn* (divine one).

not eating grain, not sucking from the breast. But Demeter

used to anoint him with ambrosia, as if he had been born of the goddess,

and she would breathe down her sweet breath on him as she held him to her bosom.

At nights she would conceal him within the *menos* (strength) of fire, as if he were a smoldering log,

240 and his *philloi* (beloved) parents were kept unaware. But they marveled

at how full in bloom he came to be, and to look at him was like looking at the gods.<sup>27</sup>

Now Demeter would have made him ageless and immortal

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<sup>23</sup> With reference to the cutting of roots: this riddling euphemism designates extracts that serve as ingredients for magic potions.

<sup>24</sup> Literally, an ‘anti-cutting’.

<sup>25</sup> Apparently the same threat as the Undercutter.

<sup>26</sup> Literally, ‘he who shines for the *dêmos*’.

<sup>27</sup> Commentary in Nagy *Best of the Achaeans* pp. 181-182.

if it had not been for the heedlessness of well-girded Metanira,  
who went spying one night, leaving her own fragrant bedchamber,  
245 and caught sight of (what Demeter was doing). She let out a shriek and struck her two thighs,<sup>28</sup>  
afraid for her child. She had made a big mistake in her *thûmos*.

Weeping, she spoke these winged words:

“My child! Demophon! The stranger, this woman, is making you disappear in a mass of flames!  
This is making me weep in lamentation (*goos*). This is giving me baneful anguish!”

250 So she spoke, weeping. And the resplendent goddess heard her.

Demeter, she of the beautiful garlands in the hair, became angry at her (Metanira).

She (Demeter) took her *philos* (dear) little boy, who had been born to her mother in the palace, beyond her expectations,  
—she took him in her immortal hands and put him down on the floor, away from her.<sup>29</sup>

She had taken him out of the fire, very angry in her *thûmos*,

255 and straightaway she spoke to well-girded Metanira:

“Ignorant humans! Heedless, unable to recognize in advance  
the difference between future good fortune (*aisa*) and future bad.

In your heedlessness, you have made a big mistake, a mistake without remedy.

I swear by the Styx,<sup>30</sup> the witness of oaths that gods make, as I say this:

260 immortal and ageless for all days

would I have made your *philos* (dear) little boy, and I would have given him *tîmê* (honor) that is unwilting (*aphthitos*).<sup>31</sup>

But now there is no way for him to avoid death and doom.<sup>32</sup>

Still, he will have a *tîmê* (honor) that is unwilting (*aphthitos*), for all time, because he had once sat  
on my knees and slept in my arms.

265 At the right *hôrâ* (season), every year,

the sons of the Eleusinians will have a war, a terrible battle

among each other. They will do so for all days to come.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> With downturned palms: a ritual gesture, described also in the *Iliad*.

<sup>29</sup> In other versions, Demeter just leaves the baby in the fire, letting him perish right then and there (cf. Richardson commentary 244).

<sup>30</sup> Styx (the word *stux* conveys the nervous reaction of recoiling at something that is chillingly ice-cold) is a river in Hadês, and the gods swear by it when they guarantee the absolute truth of what they are saying.

<sup>31</sup> Commentary in Nagy *Best of the Achaeans* p. 184.

<sup>32</sup> In the present version of the Demeter myth, Metanira’s mistake thus causes the boy’s eventual death. In other versions, as already mentioned, it causes the boy’s immediate death in the fire.

<sup>33</sup> This refers to a ritual mock-battle at Eleusis, a quasi-athletic event known as the Ballêtus, which was officially held on a seasonally-recurring basis to compensate for the death of the baby cult-hero Demophon. This mock-battle seems to have been the ritual kernel of a whole complex of events known as the Eleusinian Games (cf. Richardson commentary p. 246). Parallels: the Nemean and the Isthmian Games, pan-Hellenic athletic events, were held on a seasonally-recurring basis to compensate for the deaths of the baby cult-heroes Archemorus and Melicertes respectively.

I am Demeter, the holder of *tîmai* (honors). I am the greatest boon and joy for immortals and mortals alike.

270 But come! Let a great temple, with a great altar at its base,  
be built by the entire *demos* (populace). Make it at the foot of the acropolis and its steep walls.  
Make it loom over the well of Callichorum,<sup>34</sup> on a prominent hill.  
And I will myself instruct you in the sacred rites so that, in the future,  
you may perform the rituals in the proper way and thus be pleasing to my *noos*.”

275 So saying, the goddess changed her size<sup>35</sup> and appearance,  
shedding her old age, and she was totally enveloped in beauty.  
And a lovely fragrance wafted from her perfumed robes.  
The radiance of her immortal complexion  
shone forth from the goddess. Her blond hair streamed down her shoulder.

280 The well-built palace was filled with light, as if from a flash of lightning.  
She went out of the palace, and straightaway her (Metanira’s) knees buckled.  
For a long time she was speechless. She did not even think of  
her treasured little boy, to pick him up from the floor.  
But his sisters heard his plaintive wailing,

285 and they quickly ran downstairs from their well-cushioned bedrooms. One of them  
picked up the child in her arms, clasping him to her bosom.  
Another one rekindled the fire. Still another one rushed, with her delicate feet,  
to prop up her mother as she was staggering out of the fragrant room.  
They all bunched around the little boy, washing him as he gasped and spluttered.

290 They all kept hugging him, but his *thûmos* could not be comforted.  
He was now being held by nursemaids who were far inferior.  
All night they prayed to the illustrious goddess,  
trembling with fear. And when the bright dawn came,  
they told Celeus, who rules far and wide, exactly what happened,

295 and what the goddess Demeter, the one with the beautiful garlands in the hair, instructed them to do.  
Then he (Celeus) assembled the masses of the people, from this end of the public place to the other,  
and he gave out the order to build, for Demeter with the beautiful hair, a splendid temple,  
and an altar too, on top of the prominent hill.

And they obeyed straightaway, hearing his voice.

300 They built it as he ordered. And the temple grew bigger, taking shape through the dispensation of the *daimôn* (divine).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Meaning: ‘the beautiful place of dancing’.

<sup>35</sup> Gods are larger-than-life-size.

<sup>36</sup> I see here a veiled reference to the ultimate development of the entire religious complex of Eleusis.

When the people had finished their work and paused from their labor,  
they all went home. But blond-haired Demeter  
sat down and stayed there, shunning the company of all the blessed ones (the gods).  
She was wasting away with yearning for her daughter with the low-slung girdle.

305 She made that year the most terrible one for mortals, all over the Earth, the nurturer of many.  
It was so terrible, it makes you think of the Hound of Hades. The Earth did not send up  
any seed. Demeter, she with the beautiful garlands in her hair, kept them (the seeds) covered underground.  
Many a curved plough was dragged along the fields by many an ox—all in vain.  
Many a bright grain of wheat fell into the earth—all for naught.

310 At this moment, she (Demeter) could have destroyed the entire race of *meropes*<sup>37</sup> humans  
with harsh hunger, thus depriving of their *tîmê* (honor)  
the dwellers of the Olympian abodes—the *tîmê* of) sacrificial portions of meat for eating or for burning,<sup>38</sup>  
if Zeus had not noticed with his *noos* (seat of thought), taking note in his *thûmos* (seat of emotion).  
First, he sent Iris, with the golden wings, to summon

315 Demeter with the splendid hair, with a beauty that is much loved.  
That is what he told her to do. And she obeyed Zeus, the one with the dark clouds, the son of Cronus,  
and she ran the space between sky and earth quickly with her feet.<sup>39</sup>  
She arrived at the city of Eleusis, fragrant with incense,  
and she found in the temple Demeter, the one with the dark robe.

320 Addressing her, she spoke winged words:  
“Demeter! Zeus, the one who has unwilting (*aphthita*) knowledge, summons you  
to come to that special group, the company of the immortal gods.  
So then, come! May what my words say, which come from Zeus, not fail to be turned into action that is completed.”  
So she spoke, making an entreaty. But her (Demeter’s) *thûmos* was not persuaded.

325 After that, the Father sent out all the other blessed and immortal gods.  
They came one by one,  
they kept calling out to her, offering many beautiful gifts,  
all sorts of *tîmai* (honors) that she could choose for herself if she joined the company of the immortal gods.  
But no one could persuade her in her thinking or in her intention (*noêma*),

330 angry as she was in her *thûmos*, and she harshly said no to their words.  
She said that she would never go to fragrant Olympus,

<sup>37</sup> The meaning of this word is opaque; it probably conveys some mythological theme of anthropogony.

<sup>38</sup> There were two ways of offering meat to the gods: as portions to be set aside and eaten (e.g. by the priests) or to be burned on the altar. The gods give vegetation to humans, who give their meat-offerings to the gods. If humans get no vegetation in order to sustain their life, the gods cannot get meat-offerings to sustain their *tîmê*.

<sup>39</sup> Her golden wings are on her heels.

that she would never send up the harvest of the earth,  
 until she saw with her own eyes her daughter, the one with the beautiful looks.  
 But when the loud-thunderer, the one who sees far and wide, heard this,  
 335 he sent to Erebus (Hades) the one with the golden wand, the Argus-killer (Hermes),<sup>40</sup>  
 so that he may persuade Hades, with gentle words,  
 that he allow holy Persephone to leave the misty realms of darkness  
 and be brought up to the light in order to join the *daimones* (divine ones), so that her mother may  
 see her with her own eyes and then let go of her anger.  
 340 Hermes did not disobey, but straightaway he headed down beneath the depths of the earth,  
 rushing full speed, leaving behind the abode of Olympus.  
 And he found the Lord inside his palace,  
 seated on a funeral couch, along with his duly acquired bedmate,  
 the one who was much under duress, yearning for her mother, and suffering from the unbearable things  
 345 inflicted on her by the will of the blessed ones.<sup>41</sup>  
 Going near him (Hades) and stopping, the powerful Argus-killer said to him:  
 “Hades! Dark-haired one! King of the dead!  
 Zeus the Father orders that I have splendid Persephone  
 brought back up to light from Erebus back to him and his company, so that her mother  
 350 may see her with her own eyes and let go of her wrath and terrible *mênis* (rage)  
 against the immortals. For she (Demeter) is performing a mighty deed,  
 to destroy ( $\sqrt{phthi-}$ ) the tribes of earth-born humans, causing them to be without *menos* (strength),  
 by hiding the seed underground—and she is destroying ( $\sqrt{phthi-}$ ) the *tîmai* (honors)  
 of the immortal gods.<sup>42</sup> She has a terrible anger, and she refuses  
 355 to keep company with the gods. Instead, far removed, she is seated inside  
 a temple fragrant with incense. She has taken charge of the rocky citadel of Eleusis.”  
 So he spoke. Hades, King of the Dead, smiled  
 with his brows,<sup>43</sup> and he did not disobey the order of Zeus the King.  
 Swiftly he gave an order to bright-minded Persephone.  
 360 “Go, Persephone, to your mother, the one with the dark robe.  
 Have a kindly disposition and *thûmos* in your breast.  
 Do not be too upset, excessively so.

<sup>40</sup> Hermes was the killer of a monster called Argus, who was himself a Hermetic figure. The form *argos* conveys swiftness and brightness, and the form *Argei-phontês* may well convey both ‘Argus-killer’ and ‘he who kills with swiftness and brightness’

<sup>41</sup> The text of lines 349-350 is garbled, and the translation here is merely an approximation.

<sup>42</sup> Commentary on lines 351-354 in Nagy *Best of the Achaeans* pp. 186-187.

<sup>43</sup> This is conventionally said about a “knowing” smile: Hadês knows more than he lets on.

I will not be an unseemly husband to you, in the company of the immortals.  
 I am the brother of Zeus the Father. If you are here,  
 365 you will be queen of everything that lives and moves about,  
 and you will have the greatest *tîmai* (honors) in the company of the immortals.  
 Those who violate *dike* (justice)—will get punishment for all days to come  
 —those who do not supplicate your *menos* (strength) with sacrifice,  
 performing the rituals in a reverent way, executing perfectly the offerings that are due.”  
 370 So he spoke. And high-minded Persephone rejoiced.  
 Swiftly she set out, with joy. But he (Hades)  
 gave her, stealthily, the honey-sweet berry of the pomegranate to eat,  
 peering around him.<sup>44</sup> He did not want her to stay for all time  
 over there, at the side of her honorable mother, the one with the dark robe.  
 375 The immortal horses were harnessed to the golden chariot  
 by Hades, the one who makes many *sêmata* (signs).  
 She got up on the chariot, and next to her was the powerful Argus-killer,  
 who took reins and whip into his *philai* (dear) hands  
 and shot out of the palace (of Hades). And the horses sped away eagerly.  
 380 Swiftly they made their way along the long journey. Neither the sea  
 nor the water of the rivers nor the grassy valleys  
 nor the mountain peaks could hold up the onrush of the immortal horses.  
 High over the peaks they went, slicing through the vast air.  
 He came to a halt at the place where Demeter, with the beautiful garlands in the hair,  
 385 was staying, at the forefront of the temple fragrant with incense. When she (Demeter) saw them,  
 she rushed forth like a maenad<sup>45</sup> down a wooded mountain slope.  
 387-400<sup>46</sup>  
 But when the earth starts blossoming with fragrant flowers of springtime,  
 flowers of every sort, then it is that you must come up from the misty realms of darkness,  
 once again, a great thing of wonder to gods and mortal humans alike.  
 But what kind of ruse was used to deceive you by the powerful one, the one who receives many guests?”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Hadês is acting furtively (Richardson commentary p. 277).

<sup>45</sup> Maenads are frenzied devotees of Bacchus = Dionysus.

<sup>46</sup> These lines are incomplete: the gaps in the text are caused by a tear in the manuscript (the Hymn to Demeter is preserved in only one medieval manuscript). The reconstructed context: Persephone also runs to her mother. Demeter finds out that Persephone has eaten of the pomegranate that had been offered her by Hadês. It is determined that Persephone must therefore stay in Hadês for one-third of the year, even though she may spend the other two-thirds with her mother.

<sup>47</sup> Demeter is asking Persephone this question.

405 She (Demeter) was answered by Persephone, the most beautiful:

“So then, Mother, I shall tell you everything, without error.

When the messenger came to me, the swift Argus-killer,  
with the news from my father, the son of Cronus, and from the other dwellers in the sky,  
that I should come from Erebus, so that you may see me with your own eyes

410 and let go of your wrath and terrible *mênis* (wrath) against the immortals,

then I sprang up for joy, but he, stealthily,  
put into my hand the berry of the pomegranate, that honey-sweet food,  
and he compelled me by *biâ* (force) to eat of it.

As for how it was that he (Hades) snatched me away, through the *mêtis* (wise counsel) of the son of Cronus,  
415 my father, and how he took me down beneath the depths of the earth,

I will tell you and relate in order, as you ask.

We were, all of us, going along the lovely meadow, I and  
Leucippê, Phaenô, Electra, Ianthê,  
Melitê, Iachê, Rhodia, Callirrhoê,

420 Mêlobosis, Tychê, and flower-faced Ocyrrhoê,

Chryseis, Ianeira, Acastê, Admêtê,  
Rhodopê, Ploutô, and lovely Calypsô,  
Styx, Urania, and lovely Galaxaura.

Also Pallas (Athena), the one who rouses to battle, and Artemis, who delights in arrows.

425 We were playing and gathering lovely flowers in our hands,

an assortment of delicate crocus, iris, and hyacinth,  
rosebuds and lilies, a wonder to behold,  
and the narcissus, which is grown, like the crocus, by the wide earth.<sup>48</sup>

I was joyfully gathering the flowers, and then the earth beneath me

430 gave way, and there it was that he sprang out, the powerful lord who receives many guests.

He took me away under the earth in his golden chariot.

It was very much against my will. I cried with a piercing voice.

These things, grieving, I tell you, and they are all *alêthea* (truth).”

In this way did the two of them spend the whole day, having a like-minded *thûmos*,<sup>49</sup>

435 and they gladdened greatly each other’s heart and *thûmos*,

hugging each other, and their *thûmos* (seat of emotion) ceased having *akhos* (grief),  
They received joy from each other, and gave it.

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<sup>48</sup> As we know from external sources, both the crocus and the narcissus are sacred to Demeter and Persephone.

<sup>49</sup> It is a religious principle that Demeter and Persephone, on the occasion of their mother-daughter reunion, are “like-minded.”

Then Hecate approached them, the one with the splendid headband.  
 And she welcomed back the daughter of holy Demeter with many embraces.  
 440 And from that day forward, the Lady (Hecate) became her (Persephone's) attendant and substitute queen.  
 Then the loud-thundering Zeus, who sees far and wide, sent to them a messenger,  
 Rhea with the beautiful hair, to bring Demeter, the one with the dark robe,  
 to join the company of the special group of gods. And he promised *tîmai* (honors)  
 that he would give to her (Demeter), which she could receive in the company of the immortal gods.  
 445 He (Zeus) assented that her daughter, every time the season came round,  
 would spend a third portion of the year in the realms of dark mist underneath,  
 and the other two thirds in the company of her mother and the other immortals.  
 So he spoke, and the goddess (Rhea) did not disobey the messages of Zeus.  
 Swiftly she darted off from the peaks of Olympus  
 450 and arrived at the Rarian Field,<sup>50</sup> the life-bringing fertile spot of land,  
 in former times, at least. But, at this time, it was no longer life-bringing, but it stood idle  
 and completely without green growth. The bright grain of wheat had stayed hidden underneath,  
 through the mental power of Demeter, the one with the beautiful ankles. But, from this point on,  
 it began straightaway to flourish with long ears of grain  
 455 as the springtime was increasing its power. On the field, the fertile furrows  
 began to be overflow with cut-down ears of grain lying on the ground, while the rest of what was cut down was already  
 bound into sheaves.  
 This happened the moment she (Rhea) arrived from the boundless aether.  
 They (Demeter and Rhea) were glad to see each other, and they rejoiced in their *thûmos*.  
 Then Rhea, the one with the splendid headband, addressed her (Demeter):  
 460 "Come, child, Zeus the loud-thunderer, the one who sees far and wide, is summoning you  
 to come to the company of that special group of gods. And he promised *tîmai* (honors)  
 that he would give you, which you could receive in the company of the immortal gods.  
 He (Zeus) assented that your daughter, every time the season comes round,  
 would spend a third portion of the year in the realms of dark mist underneath,  
 465 and the other two thirds in your company and that of the other immortals.  
 He has assented to all this with the nod of his head.<sup>51</sup>  
 So come, my child! Obey! Do not be too  
 stubborn in your anger at the dark-clouded son of Cronus.  
 Straightaway make the harvest grow, that life-bringer for humans."

<sup>50</sup> A cult-place associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries and with the myth about the first ploughing. Demeter is here, at the time: see lines 457-458.

<sup>51</sup> There is a lacuna in the first part of this line.



470 So she spoke, and Demeter, she with the beautiful garlands in her hair, did not disobey.  
 Straightaway she sent up the harvest from the land with its rich clods of earth.  
 And all the wide earth with leaves and blossoms  
 was laden. Then she went to the kings, administrators of *themistes* (judgements),  
 and she showed them—to Triptolemus, to Diocles, driver of horses,  
 475 to powerful Eumolpus and to Celeus, leader of the people (*lâoi*)—  
 she revealed to them the way to perform the sacred rites, and she pointed out the ritual to all of them<sup>52</sup>  
 —the holy ritual, which it is not at all possible to ignore, to find out about,  
 or to speak out. The great awe of the gods holds back any speaking out.

480 Olbius among earth-bound mortals is he who has seen these things.  
 But whoever is uninitiated in the rites, whoever takes no part in them, will never get a share (*aisa*) of those sorts of things,  
 once they die, down below in the dank realms of mist.  
 But when the resplendent goddess finished all her instructions,  
 they (Demeter and Persephone) went to Olympus, to join the company of the other gods.

485 And there they abide at the side of Zeus, who delights in the thunderbolt.  
 Holy they are, and revered. Olbius is he whom they,  
 being kind, decide to love among earth-bound mortals.  
 Straightaway they send to such a man, to reside at his hearth, in his great palace,  
 Plutus (Wealth personified), who gives riches to mortal humans.

490 But come, you goddesses, who have charge of the *dêmos* (populace) of Eleusis, fragrant with incense.  
 and of Parus the island and rocky Antrum.  
 Come, O lady resplendent with gifts, queen Dêô (Demeter), bringer of *hôrai* (seasons),  
 both you and your daughter, the most beautiful Persephone.  
 Think kindly and grant, in return for this song, a rich means of livelihood that suits the *thûmos*.

495 And I will keep you in mind throughout the rest of my song.

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<sup>52</sup> Editors tend to skip the next line, which repeats the names of some, but not all, of the recipient

15. Thereafter Isis, as they relate, learned that the chest [or ark, containing Osiris] had been cast up by the sea near the land of Byblus and that the waves had gently set it down in the midst of a clump of heather. The heather in a short time ran up into a very beautiful and massive stock, and enfolded and embraced the chest with its growth and concealed it within its trunk. The king of the country admired the great size of the plant, and cut off the portion that enfolded the chest (which was now hidden from sight), and used it as a pillar to support the roof of his house. These facts, they say, Isis ascertained by the divine inspiration of Rumour, and came to Byblus and sat down by a spring, all dejection and tears; she exchanged no word with anybody, save only that she welcomed the queen's maidservants and treated them with great amiability, plaiting their hair for them and imparting to their persons a wondrous fragrance from her own body. But when the queen observed her maidservants, a longing came upon her for the unknown woman and for such hairdressing and for a body fragrant with ambrosia. Thus it happened that Isis was sent for and became so intimate with the queen that the queen made her the nurse of her baby. They say that the king's name was Malcander; the queen's name some say was Astartê, others Saosis, and still others Nemanûs, which the Greeks would call Athenaïs.

16. They relate that Isis nursed the child by giving it her finger to suck instead of her breast, and in the night she would burn away the mortal portions of its body. She herself would turn into a swallow and flit about the pillar with a wailing lament, until the queen who had been watching, when she saw her babe on fire, gave forth a loud cry and thus deprived it of immortality. Then the goddess disclosed herself and asked for the pillar which served to support the roof. She removed it with the greatest ease and cut away the wood of the heather which surrounded the chest; then, when she had wrapped up the wood in a linen cloth and had poured perfume upon it, she entrusted it to the care of the kings; and even to this day the people of Byblus venerate this wood which is preserved in the shrine of Isis. Then the goddess threw herself down upon the coffin with such a dreadful wailing that the younger of the king's sons expired on the spot. The elder son she kept with her, and, having placed the coffin on board a boat, she put out from land. Since the Phaedrus river toward the early morning fostered a rather boisterous wind, the goddess grew angry and dried up its stream.

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Pluto fell in love with Persephone and with the help of Zeus carried her off secretly.<sup>54</sup> But Demeter went about seeking her all over the earth with torches by night and day, and learning from the people of Hermion that Pluto had carried her off,<sup>55</sup> she was wroth with the gods and quitted heaven, and came in the likeness of a woman to Eleusis. And first she sat down on the rock which has been named Laughless after her, beside what is called the Well of the Fair Dances;<sup>56</sup> thereupon she made her way to Celeus, who at that time reigned over the Eleusinians. Some women were in the house, and when

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<sup>53</sup> Frazer, J. G. 1921. *Apollodorus, The Library*, vol.1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>54</sup> This account of the rape of Persephone and Demeter's quest of her is based on the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. The opening passage, including the explanation of the Laughless Stone, is quoted verbally by Zenobius (*Cent.*i.7) and the *Scholiast on Aristoph.*Kn.785, but without mention of their authority. For other accounts of the rape of Persephone and Demeter's quest of her, see Diod.5.4.1-3, Diod.5.68.2; Cicero *In Verrem* 2.4.48; Ovid *Fasti* IV.419ff.; *Ov.Met.* 5.346ff.; Hyginus *Fab.*146; Lactantius Placidus on Statius V.347; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* Bode I. 106-108 (*Second Vatican Mythographer* 93-100. All these writers agree in mentioning Sicily as the scene of the rape of Persephone; Cicero and Ovid identify the place with Enna (or Henna), of which Cicero gives a vivid description. The author of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* says (*HH Dem.*16ff.) that the earth yawned "in the Nysian plain," but whether this was a real or a mythical place is doubtful (see T. W. Allen and E. E. Sikes *The Homeric Hymns* p.4 (on Hymn I.8. It was probably the luxuriant fertility of Sicily, and particularly the abundance of its corn, which led later writers to place the scene of the rape in that island. In Ovid's version of the visit of Demeter to Eleusis (*Ovid Fasti* IV.507ff., Celeus is not the king of the place but a poor old peasant, who receives the disguised goddess in his humble cottage.

<sup>55</sup> This visit paid by the mourning Demeter to Hermion, when she was searching for the lost Persephone, is not mentioned by the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, nor, so far as I know, by any other ancient writer except Zenobius (*Cent.* I.7) and the *Scholiast on Aristoph.* (Kn. 785), both of whom, however, merely copied Apollodorus without naming him. But compare Paus. 2.35.4-8, who mentions the sanctuary of Subterranean Demeter at Hermion, and describes the curious sacrificial ritual observed at it. At Hermion there was a chasm which was supposed to communicate with the infernal regions, and through which Herakles was said to have dragged up Cerberus (Paus. 2.35.10). The statement of Apollodorus in the present passage suggests that according to local tradition Pluto dragged down his bride to hell through the same chasm. So convinced were the good people of Hermion that they possessed a private entrance to the nether regions that they very thriftily abstained from the usual Greek practice of placing money in the mouths of their dead (Strab. 9.6.12). Apparently they thought that it would be a waste of money to pay Charon for ferrying them across to hell when they could get there for nothing from their own backdoor.

<sup>56</sup> Compare *HH Dem.* 98ff., who says that Demeter, sad at heart, sat down by the wayside at the Maiden's Well, under the shadow of an olive tree. Later in the poem (*HH.Dem.*270ff.) Demeter directs the people of Eleusis to build her a temple and altar "above Callichorum"—that is, the Well of the Fair Dances. Apollodorus identifies the well beside which Demeter sat down with the Well of the Fair Dances. But from Paus.1.38.6 we learn that the two wells were different and situated at some distance from each other, the Well of the Fair Dances being close to the Sanctuary of Demeter, and the Maiden's Well, or the Flowery Well, as Pausanias calls it, being outside Eleusis, on the road to Megara. In the course of the modern excavation of the sanctuary at Eleusis, the Well of the Fair Dances was discovered just outside the portal of the sacred precinct. It is carefully built of polygonal stones, and the mouth is surrounded by concentric circles, round which the women of Eleusis probably tripped in the dance. See Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρίας, Athens, 1892, pp. 33ff. In antiquity solemn oaths were sworn by the water of the well (Alciphron III.69)

they bade her sit down beside them, a certain old crone, lambe, joked the goddess and made her smile.<sup>57</sup> For that reason they say that the women break jests at the Thesmophoria.<sup>58</sup>

But Metanira, wife of Celeus, had a child and Demeter received it to nurse, and wishing to make it immortal she set the babe of nights on the fire and stripped off its mortal flesh. But as Demophon—for that was the child's name—grew marvelously by day, Praxithea watched, and discovering him buried in the fire she cried out; wherefore the babe was consumed by the fire and the goddess revealed herself.<sup>59</sup> But for Triptolemus, the elder of Metanira's children, she made a chariot of winged dragons, and gave him wheat, with which, wafted through the sky, he sowed the whole inhabited earth.<sup>60</sup> But Panyasis affirms that Triptolemus was a son of Eleusis, for he says that Demeter came to him. Pherecydes, however, says that he was a son of Ocean and Earth.<sup>61</sup>

But when Zeus ordered Pluto to send up the Maid, Pluto gave her a seed of a pomegranate to eat, in order that she might not tarry long with her mother.<sup>62</sup> Not foreseeing the consequence, she swallowed it; and because Ascalaphus, son of

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<sup>57</sup> As to the jesting of the old woman with Demeter, see *HHDem.*194-206; *Scholias on Nicander*, Alex. 130, who calls Demeter's host Hippothoon, son of Poseidon.

<sup>58</sup> The jests seem to have been obscene in form (Diod. 5.4.6), but they were probably serious in intention; for at the Thesmophoria rites were performed to ensure the fertility of the fields, and the lewd words of the women may have been thought to quicken the seed by sympathetic magic. See *Scholia in Lucianum* (Rabe 1906: 275ff.); *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* (Frazer 1912: I.62ff., 116; II.17ff.).

<sup>59</sup> See Frazer's Appendix, "Putting Children on the Fire."

<sup>60</sup> Compare Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 28; Ovid *Fasti* liv.559ff.; Ovid *Tristia* III.8.(9) 1ff.; Hyginus *Fab.*147; Hyginus *Ast.*II.14; Serv. *Verg.G.*1.19, 163; Lactantius Placidus on *Stat.Theb.*II.382; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* (Bode. pp. 3, 107, *First Vatican Mythographer* 8; *Second Vatican Mythographer* 97). The dragon-car of Triptolemus was mentioned by Sophocles in his lost tragedy *Triptolemus* (Nauck *TGF* F539; Pearson *The Fragments of Sophocles*, F 596). In Greek vase-paintings Triptolemus is often represented in his dragon-car. As to the representations of the car in ancient art, see Stephani, in *Compte Rendu* (St. Petersburg 1859, pp. 82ff.); Frazer, note on Paus.VII.18.3; and especially Cook (*Zeus* 1914: 211ff.), who shows that on the earlier monuments Triptolemus is represented sitting on a simple wheel, which probably represents the sun. Apparently he was a mythical embodiment of the first sower. See *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* (Frazer 1912: 72ff.).

<sup>61</sup> The accounts given of the parentage of Triptolemus were very various (Paus.1.14.2ff), which we need not wonder at when we remember that he was probably a purely mythical personage. As to Eleusis, the equally mythical hero who is said to have given his name to Eleusis (Paus.8.38.7). He is called Eleusinus by Hyginus *Fab.*147 and Serv. *Verg.G.*1.19.

<sup>62</sup> The Maid (Kore) is Persephone. As to her eating a seed or seeds of a pomegranate, see *HHDem.*371ff., 411ff.; *Ov.Met.*5.333ff.; *Ov.Fasti* IV.601ff.; Serv. *Verg.G.*1.39 and Serv. *Aen.*4.462; Lactantius Placidus on *Stat.Theb.* iii.511; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* (Bode pp.3, 108, *First Vatican Mythographer/Second Vatican Mythographer* 100). There is a widespread belief that if a living person visits the world of the dead and there partakes of food, he cannot return to the land of the living. Thus, the ancient Egyptians believed that, on his way to the spirit land, the soul of a dead person was met by a goddess (Hathor or Nut) who offered him fruits, bread, and water, and that, if he accepted them, he could return to earth no more. See *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient Classiques, les Origines* (Maspero 1895: 184). Similarly, the natives of New Caledonia, in the South Pacific, say that when a man dies, messengers come from the other world to guide his soul through the air and over the sea to the spirit land. Arrived there, he is welcomed by the other souls and bidden to a banquet, where he is offered food, especially bananas. If he tastes them, his doom is fixed for ever: he cannot return to earth. See the missionary (Gagniere 1860 *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* 32: 439ff. The Eastern Melanesians believe that living people can go down to the land of the dead and return alive to the upper world. Persons who have done so relate how in the nether world they were warned by friendly ghosts to eat nothing there, see *The Melanesians* (Codrington 1891: 277, 286). Similar beliefs prevail and similar tales are told among the Maoris of New Zealand. For example, a woman who believed that she had

Acheron and Gorgyra, bore witness against her, Demeter laid a heavy rock on him in Hades.<sup>63</sup> But Persephone was compelled to remain a third of every year with Pluto and the rest of the time with the gods.<sup>64</sup>

Pseudo-Hyginus (2<sup>nd</sup> CE) *Fables* 220 (Roman mythographer C2nd A.D.) :

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When Cura (Gk. Kore/Persephone) was crossing a certain river, she saw some clayey mud. She took it up thoughtfully and began to fashion a man. While she was pondering on what she had done, Jove (Gk. Zeus) came up; Cura asked him to give the image life, and Jove readily grant this. When Cura wanted to give it her name, Jove forbade, and said that his name should be given it. But while they were disputing about the name, Tellus (Gk. Gaia) arose and said that it should have her name, since she had given her own body. They took Saturnus (Gk. Cronus) for judge; he seems to have decided for them: “Jove, since you gave him life [*text missing, presumably he was given control of the fate of men*] let her receive his body [after death]; since Cura fashioned him; let her (Gaia) possesses him as long as he lives, but since there is controversy about his name, let him be called *homo*, since he seems to be made from *humus*.”

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died and passed to the spirit land, related on her return how there she met with her dead father, who said to her, “You must go back to the earth, for there is no one now left to take care of my grandchild. But remember, if you once eat food in this place, you can never more return to life; so beware not to taste anything offered to you.” *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders* (Shortland 1856: 150-152). Again, they tell of a great chief named Hutu, who performed the same perilous journey. On reaching the place of departed spirits he encountered a certain being called Hine nui te po, that is, Great Mother Night, of whom he inquired the way down to the nether world. She pointed it out to him and gave him a basket of cooked food, saying, “When you reach the lower regions, eat sparingly of your provisions that they may last, and you may not be compelled to partake of their food, for if you do, you cannot return upwards again.” *Te Ika A Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants* (Taylor 1870: 271). And the same rule holds good of fairyland, into which living people sometimes stray or are enticed to their sorrow. “Wise people recommend that, in the circumstances, a man should not utter a word till he comes out again, nor, on any account, taste fairy food or drink. If he abstains he is very likely before long dismissed, but if he indulges he straightway loses the will and the power ever to return to the society of men.” *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Campbell 1900: 17), cf. *The Science of Fairy Tales* (Hartland 1891: 40ff).

<sup>63</sup> As to the talebearer Ascalaphus, below, Apollod.2.5.12. According to another account, Persephone or Demeter punished him by turning him into a screech-owl. See *Ov. Met.* 5.538ff.; *Serv. Verg. G.*1.39 and *Aen.*IV.462; Lactantius Placidus on *Stat. Theb.*III.511; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* (p.108, Second Vatican Mythographer 100).

<sup>64</sup> Apollodorus agrees with the author of the *HH Dem* (398ff., 445ff.) that Persephone was to spend one-third of each year with her husband Pluto in the nether world and two-thirds of the year with her mother and the other gods in the upper world. But, according to another account, Persephone was to divide her time equally between the two regions, passing six months below the earth and six months above it. See *Ovid Fasti* IV.613ff.; *Ov. Met.*5.564ff.; Hyginus *Fab.*146; *Serv. Verg. G.*1.39; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* (Bode p.108, Second Vatican Mythographer 100).

APPENDIX I<sup>65</sup>  
Putting Children on the Fire

(Apollodorus I.5.1)

The story that Demeter put the infant son of Celeus on the fire to make him immortal is told by other ancient writers as well as by Apollodorus,<sup>66</sup> and while there is a general resemblance between the various versions of the legend, there are some discrepancies in detail. Thus, with regard to the child's parents, Apollodorus and Ovid agree with the Homeric hymn-writer in calling them Celeus and Metanira. But Hyginus calls them Eleusinus and Cothonea; while Servius in one passage<sup>67</sup> names them Eleusinus and Cyntinia, and in another passage<sup>68</sup> calls the father Celeus. Lactantius Placidus names them Eleusius and Hioma; and the Second Vatican Mythographer calls them Celeus and Hiona. Then, with regard to the child who was put on the fire, Apollodorus agrees with the Homeric hymn-writer in calling him Demophon and in distinguishing him from his elder brother Triptolemus. But Ovid, Hyginus, Servius, Lactantius Placidus, and the First Vatican Mythographer call the child who was put on the fire Triptolemus, and make no mention of Demophon. The Second Vatican Mythographer wavers on this point; for, after saying<sup>69</sup> that Demeter received the child Triptolemus to nurse, he proceeds<sup>70</sup> to name the child who was put on the fire Eleusius. As to the fate of the child who was put on the fire, the Homeric hymn-writer merely says that Demeter, angry at being interrupted, threw him on the ground; whether he lived or died the author does not mention. Apollodorus definitely affirms that the child was consumed in the fire; and the Second Vatican Mythographer says that Demeter in her rage killed it. On the other hand, the writers who call the child Triptolemus naturally do not countenance the belief that he perished in the fire, for they record the glorious mission on which he was sent by Demeter to reveal to mankind her beneficent gift of corn (i.e. grain). Lastly, the writers are not at one in regard to the well-meaning but injudicious person who interrupted Demeter at her magic rite and thereby prevented her from bestowing the boon of immortality on her nursling. Ovid, in agreement with the Homeric hymn-writer, says that the person was the child's mother Metanira; Apollodorus calls her Praxithea, an otherwise unknown person, who may have been the child's sister or more probably his nurse; for Praxithea is not named by the Homeric hymn-writer among the daughters of Celeus.<sup>71</sup> Some critics would forcibly harmonize Apollodorus with the hymn-writer by altering our author's text in the present passage.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Hyginus, Servius, Lactantius Placidus, and the Second Vatican Mythographer say that it was the child's father who by his exclamation or his fear distracted the attention of the goddess and so frustrated her benevolent purpose.

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<sup>65</sup> Frazer, J. G. 1921. *Apollodorus, The Library*, vol.2 (p.311-317). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>66</sup> See *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 231–274; Ovid *Fasti* IV.549–562; Hyginus *Fab.*147; Servius on *Virg. Georg.*I.19 and 163; Lactantius Placidus, on *Stat.Theb.* ii. 382; *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini* (Bode, i. pp.3, 107, *First Vatican Mythographer* 8; *Second Vatican Mythographer* 96 ff.).

<sup>67</sup> On *Georg.*I.19.

<sup>68</sup> On *Georg.*I.163.

<sup>69</sup> *Fab.*96.

<sup>70</sup> *Fab.*97.

<sup>71</sup> vv.105 ff.

<sup>72</sup> See critical note, vol.1, p.38

Just as Demeter attempted to make Demophon or Triptolemus immortal by placing him on the fire, so Thetis tried to make her son Achilles immortal in like manner,<sup>73</sup> and so Isis essayed to confer immortality on the infant son of the king of Byblus.<sup>74</sup> All three goddesses were baffled by the rash intervention of affectionate but ignorant mortals. These legends point to an ancient Greek custom of passing newborn infants across a fire in order to save their lives from the dangers which beset infancy, and which, to the primitive mind, assume the form of demons or other spiritual beings lying in wait to cut short the frail thread of life. The Greek practice of running round the hearth with a child on the fifth or seventh day after birth may have been a substitute for the older custom of passing the child over the fire.<sup>75</sup> Similar customs have been observed for similar reasons in many parts of the world. Thus, in the highlands of Scotland, "it has happened that, after baptism, the father has placed a basket filled with bread and cheese on the pot-hook that impended over the fire in the middle of the room, which the company sit around; and the child is thrice handed across the fire, with the design to frustrate all attempts of evil spirits or evil eyes."<sup>76</sup> In the Hebrides it used to be customary to carry fire round children in the morning and at night every day until they were christened, and fire was also carried about the mothers before they were church'd; and this "fire-round was an effectual means to preserve both the mother and the infant from the power of evil spirits, who are ready at such times to do mischief, and sometimes carry away the infant."<sup>77</sup> Customs of this sort prevailed in Scotland down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sometimes the father leaped across the hearth with the child in his arms; "moreover, every person entering the house was required to take up a burning fire-brand from the hearth, and therewith cross himself, before he ventured to approach a new-born child or its mother. It was also customary to carry a burning peat sun-wise round an unbaptised infant and its mother, to protect them from evil spirits."<sup>78</sup> The custom of leaping over a hearth or carrying a child round it, implies that the fireplace is in the middle of the floor, as it used to be in cottages in the highlands of Scotland. Miss Gordon Cumming describes from her own observation such a cottage in Iona, "with the old-fashioned fireplace hollowed in the centre of the earthen floor, and with no chimney except a hole in the middle of the roof."<sup>79</sup> Ancient Greek houses must similarly have had the fireplace in the middle of the floor, and probably in them also the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof.

Sometimes the motive for putting the child on the fire was different, as will appear from the following accounts. In the north-east of Scotland, particularly in the counties of Banff and Aberdeen, "if the child became cross and began to dwine, fears immediately arose that it might be a 'fairy changeling,' and the trial by fire was put into operation. The hearth was piled with peat, and when the fire was at its strength the suspected changeling was placed in front of it and as near as possible not to be scorched, or it was suspended in a basket over the fire. If it was a 'changeling child' it made its escape by the lum [chimney], throwing back words of scorn as it disappeared."<sup>80</sup> Similarly in Fife we hear of "the old and widespread superstitious belief that a fairy changeling, if passed through the fire, became again the person the fairies had stolen . . . believed but not acted on by the old women in Fife in an earlier part of this [19th] century."<sup>81</sup> Among the miners of Fife, "if a child cries continuously after being dressed at birth, the granny or some other wise elder will say, 'If this gangs on we'll hae to pit on the girdle' (the large circular flat baking-iron on which scones and oatcakes are

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<sup>73</sup> Apollodorus III.13.6, with note.

<sup>74</sup> Plutarch *Isis et Osiris* 16.

<sup>75</sup> *Suidas s.v. Ἀμφιδρόμια*; *Scholiast on Plato Theaetetus* 160E.

<sup>76</sup> T. Pennant (1811: III.383) *Second Tour in Scotland*, in J. Pinkerton *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*.

<sup>77</sup> M. Martin (1811: III.612) *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, in J. Pinkerton *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*.

<sup>78</sup> C. F. Gordon Cumming 1886:101 (*In the Hebrides*), cf. J. Ramsay 1888: II.423 (*Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*).

<sup>79</sup> C. F. Gordon Cumming 1886:100.

<sup>80</sup> W. Gregor 1881: 8ff. (*Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland*).

<sup>81</sup> J. E. Simkins 1914: 7.32 (Fife, in *County Folk-Lore*)

'fired'). Sometimes this is actually done, but the practice is rare now, and very few can give the true meaning of the saying. The idea is that the crying child is a changeling, and that if held over the fire it will go up the chimney, while the girdle will save the real child's feet from being burnt as it comes down to take its own legitimate place."<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in the Highlands one way of getting rid of a changeling was to seat him on a gridiron, or in a creel, with a fire burning below.<sup>83</sup> This mode of exchanging fairy changelings for real children by putting the changelings on the fire appears to be also Scandinavian; for a story relates how, in the little island of Christiansö, to the south-east of Sweden, a mother got rid of a changeling and recovered her own child by pretending to thrust the changeling into the oven; for no sooner had she done so than the fairy mother rushed into the room, snatched up her child, which was a puny, dwindling little creature, and gave the woman her own babe back again, saying, "There is your child! I have done by it better than you have by mine." And indeed the returned infant was a fine sturdy child.<sup>84</sup>

A similar custom has been observed by the Jews, for Maimonides writes that "we still see the midwives wrap newborn children in swaddling bands, and, after putting foul-smelling incense on the fire, move the children to and fro over the incense on the fire."<sup>85</sup> Similarly, of the Jakuns, a wild people of the Malay Peninsula, "it is reported that, in several tribes, the children, as soon as born, are carried to the nearest rivulet, where they are washed, then brought back to the house, where fire is kindled, incense of kamunian wood thrown upon it, and the child then passed over it several times. We know from history that the practice of passing children over fire was in all times much practised amongst heathen nations, and that it is even now practised in China and other places."<sup>86</sup> In Canton, in order to render a child courageous and to ward off evil, a mother will move her child several times over a fire of glowing charcoal, after which she places a lump of alum in the fire, and the alum is supposed to assume the likeness of the creature which the child fears most.<sup>87</sup> In the Tenimber and Timorlaut islands (East Indies), "in order to prevent sickness, or rather to frighten the evil spirits, the child is, in the first few days, laid beside or over the fire."<sup>88</sup> In New Britain, after a birth has taken place, they kindle a fire of leaves and fragrant herbs, and a woman takes the child and swings it to and fro through the smoke of the fire, uttering good wishes. At the same time a sorcerer pinches up a little of the ashes from the fire, and touches with it the infant's eyes, ears, temples, nose, and mouth, "whereby the child is thenceforth protected against evil spirits and evil magic."<sup>89</sup> In Yule Island, off British New Guinea, "the child at birth is passed across the flames. It seems probable that in this there is the idea of purification by the fire."<sup>90</sup> In Madagascar a child used to be twice carefully lifted over the fire before he was carried out of the house for the first time.<sup>91</sup>

Among the Kafirs of South Africa "the mother makes a fire with some scented wood which gives off an abundance of pungent smoke. Over this smoke the baby is held till it cries violently. It is believed that some people at death become wizards or wizard-spirits, and that these evil beings seek malevolently to injure small babies; they cannot abide the smell of the smoke from this scented wood,

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<sup>82</sup> J. E. Simkins 1914: 7.398

<sup>83</sup> J. G. Campbell 1900: 39 (*Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*).

<sup>84</sup> B. Thorpe. 1851-1852: II.174ff. (*Northern Mythology*).

<sup>85</sup> Maimonides, in D. Chwolsohn 1856: II.473 (*Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*).

<sup>86</sup> P. Favre 1865: 68 (*An Account of the Wild Tribes inhabiting the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and a Few Neighboring Islands*).

<sup>87</sup> F. Warrington Eastlake 1880-1881 (Cantonese Superstitions about Infants, in *China Review* 9.303).

<sup>88</sup> J. G. F. Riedel 1886: 303 (*De sluik- en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*).

<sup>89</sup> J. Parkinson 1907: 70ff. (*Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*), cf. J Parkinson 1887: 94ff. (*Im Bismarck-Archipel*), A. Kleintitschen (1885: 204 (*Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*), *Les Missions Catholiques* 1885 17: 110; and Hahl 1897: 81 (*Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel*).

<sup>90</sup> Navarre 1887: 185 (*Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* 59).

<sup>91</sup> W. Ellis (n.d.) 151ff (*History of Madagascar*).



which they meet as they wander round seeking for prey, and trying to take possession of babies. The wizard is therefore repelled by the odour, and goes on its journey, hunting for a baby which is not so evil-smelling. When the baby cries in the smoke the mother calls out, 'There goes the wizard.' This smoking process has to be performed daily with closed doors for several weeks, while the mother sings special chants."<sup>92</sup> So among the Ovambo, a Bantu people of South Africa, when the midwife or an old female friend of the mother has carried a newborn baby out of the hut for the first time, she finds on her return a great fire of straw burning at the entrance, and across it she must stride, while she swings the infant several times to and fro through the thick smoke, "in order to free the child from the evil magic that still clings to it from its birth. According to another version, this swinging through the smoke is meant to impart courage to the child; but the first explanation appears to me to tally better with the views of the natives."<sup>93</sup> At a certain festival, which occurred every fourth year, the ancient Mexicans used to whirl their children through the flames of a fire specially prepared for the purpose.<sup>94</sup> Among the Tarahumares, an Indian tribe of Mexico, "when the baby is three days old the shaman comes to cure it. A big fire is made of corn-cobs, the little one is placed on a blanket, and with the father's assistance the shaman carries it, if it is a boy, three times through the smoke to the four cardinal points, making the ceremonial circuit and finally raising it upward. This is done that the child may grow well and be successful in life, that is, in raising corn (i.e. grain)."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> D. Kidd 1906: 18ff (*Savage Childhood, a Study of Kafir Children*).

<sup>93</sup> H. Schinz.(n.d.): 307 (*Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika*).

<sup>94</sup> H. H. Bancroft 1875-1876: III.376, n.27 (*The Native Races of the Pacific States*), quoting Sahagun, "rodearlos por las llamas del fuego que tenian aparejado para esto," which I translate as above. Bancroft translates, "passed the children over, or near to, or about the flame of a prepared fire." The French translators turn the words "conduisaient autour d'une flamme qu'on avait préparée pour cet objet." See B. de Sahagun 1880: 166 (*Histoire Générale des choses de la Nouvelle-Espagne*), cf. C. F. Clavigero 1807: I.317 (*History of Mexico*).

<sup>95</sup> C. Lumholtz 1903: I.272 (Unknown Mexico).