

the world of the dead to the upper world for a portion of each year. The compromise ends Demeter's conflict with Zeus and resolves the tension between mortal and immortal spheres which the hymn's narrative has brought into prominence. The poem ends, not with the goddess' gift of agriculture, but with Demeter establishing a rite through which mankind can achieve their own kind of blessed state, even within the bounds of mortality (480-482).

Although the Homeric hymn is the earliest text we have for the myth of Demeter and Persephone, the tradition(s) preserved in later literary accounts or artistic representations may be just as old or even older than that of the hymn. The myth itself is rich enough to include all the varied elements discussed above, and each poet or tradition was free to combine those elements in different ways to emphasize one over another with each retelling of the story. So the motifs of hospitality, abduction, marriage, the cycle of seasons, the challenge of one god's authority by another god, and even the tension between mortal and immortal spheres all coexist within the myth, like threads in a tapestry. The thread which appears most prominent, if any one does, will depend on the skill of the weaver and the eye of the beholder.

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## HYMN TO DEMETER

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Demeter,<sup>o</sup> fair-haired, holy goddess, I begin to sing,  
her and her slender-ankled daughter<sup>o</sup> whom Aidoneus<sup>o</sup>  
seized, and loud-thundering, far-seeing Zeus granted it,<sup>o</sup>  
without the knowledge of Demeter of the golden sword<sup>o</sup> and

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- 1-11 As often in early hexameter, the first word in the poem names its subject, Demeter. In the Greek text, lines 1-11 set the scene for this hymn in one long sentence which juxtaposes the peaceful and unknowing innocence of Demeter and her daughter against the willfulness and raw power of Zeus and his brother. The collusion of the young girl's great-grandmother, Gaia, in this forced marriage seems initially troubling, although her consent replaces that of the absent Demeter and provides a hint of the ultimate reconciliation with which the hymn will end.
- 2a Persephone, the daughter of Demeter and Zeus, is not actually named in the hymn until line 55. At line 8 she is called simply *kore*, "maiden," a term by which she is worshipped in cult as the Maiden Goddess.
- 2b Aidoneus is a lengthened form of the name Hades. The god of the underworld is called "lord of many," and "the one who receives many" (e.g. 9, 30) because all mortals eventually die and fall under his rule. Like Zeus, he is also called "son of Kronos" (e.g. 18).
- 3 This formula for Zeus' name combines the Homeric epithet "far- or wide-seeing" and the Hesiodic "loud-thundering" for the first time. It recurs three more times in the hymn.  
As Persephone's father, Zeus would appropriately have given her away in a lawful marriage, but the verb here ("give, grant") also indicates his power, as king of the gods, to allow Hades' abduction of Persephone. Line 9 suggests he not only granted the abduction but helped to plan it. In the Orphic and other versions of the myth, Zeus is a witness and sometimes a participant in the abduction. His granting of Persephone in marriage to Hades effects a formal link between Hades' realm of the dead and the upper world ruled by Zeus.  
In the Greek text, the word translated here (l. 4) as "without the knowledge of" also indicates that Persephone was playing at some distance from Demeter. It is impossible to capture both senses with one word in English. The same word is used of Zeus, who is far away when his daughter calls on him for help at line 27.
- 4 Why Demeter should be connected with a golden sword here is not at all

splendid fruit,  
 as the girl was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters of  
 Okeanos° 5  
 picking flowers, roses, and crocus, and beautiful violets  
 throughout the soft meadow, and irises, and hyacinth,  
 and the narcissus which Gaia° made grow as a trick for the  
 blushing maiden,  
 pleasing the one who receives many, by the will of Zeus  
 — a flower shining marvelously, a wonder for all to see, 10  
 both immortal gods and mortal men.  
 From its root a hundred blooms had grown forth  
 and their fragrance was very sweet, and the whole broad  
 heaven above  
 and all the earth laughed, and the salty swell of the sea.  
 Then, struck with wonder she reached out with both hands 15  
 to take the lovely toy. But the wide-pathed ground gaped open  
 along the plain of Nysa° where the lord who receives many  
 sprang out

clear. The epithet elsewhere describes Apollo, Artemis, Zeus and others, although its precise meaning is not always certain. Lycophron (*Alex.* 153) calls Demeter "sword-bearer" in connection with her cult in Boiotia.

- 5 The daughters of Okeanos and Tethys are called *korni* (pl.), a term which means both "maidens" and "daughters," and which echoes Persephone's own cult title *Kore* ("maiden" e.g. line 8). In the *Theogony* (346-370) they are said to help Apollo raise young men to adulthood, but here the nymphs appear simply as youthful playmates for Persephone who lists some of them by name later in the hymn (418-424).  
 The theme of a young girl (or girls) being carried off while playing is traditional. Such stories usually include a description of (1) the maidens—postponed in this hymn until 418-424, (2) the location—usually in a meadow or by a spring, (3) their activities—singing, dancing, playing, picking flowers, (4) any male companions—absent here, and (5) one maiden who stands out among the rest. The scene of Nausikaä and her companions in the fifth book of the *Odyssey* may originally have belonged to this type, although the intrusion of Odysseus did not result in an abduction as Hades' entrance does in the hymn.
- 8 Gaia, the goddess of the earth, is the grandmother of Zeus and Hades, who joins their plot to abduct Persephone by providing the magical flower (the narcissus) which will open up the earth. At Eleusis, worshippers gathered spring flowers in celebration of Persephone's return, but their actions also recall the scene of her abduction.
- 17 The location of the mythical "plain of Nysa" is uncertain. One site in Caria bearing this name had a cult of Demeter, Kore and Pluto, but there is no clear connection with that cult and this hymn. In other myths, Nysa is the birthplace of Dionysos (see hymn 1).

with his immortal horses, the son of Kronos, worshipped under  
 many names.°  
 He seized her against her will and on his golden chariot  
 carried her off wailing. And she cried aloud with a shrill voice, 20  
 calling on her father, the highest and best son of Kronos.  
 But no one either of the gods or mortal men  
 heard her cry, not even the olives with their splendid fruit.°  
 Only the youthful daughter of Persaios  
 heard from her cave, Hekate° of the shining veil, 25  
 and lord Helios, glorious son of Hyperion,°  
 as the maiden called her father, the son of Kronos. But he was far  
 away  
 sitting apart from the gods in his temple where many pray,  
 receiving beautiful sacrifices from mortal men.  
 So her father's brother, lord of many, the one who receives many,° 30

- 18 Hades is "worshipped under many names" in part because no one wants to risk displeasing him by omitting his favorite title. The listing of many titles for any god or goddess is a regular feature of prayers for this reason. In the case of Hades, whose name no one wanted to speak aloud in case it brought bad luck, the different titles or epithets had an added advantage.
- 23 The significance of the olives here is unknown. As a regular feature of the landscape in Greece they may be mentioned simply to represent a power of nature, especially since they share with Demeter the epithet "with/of splendid fruit". Whether they should be personified (as goddesses of the olive trees) or we are to believe the olives themselves could hear remains a puzzle. Olive-trees, along with fig-trees, barley, wheat, and vines were cited as witnesses in the oath of young Athenian ephebes beginning military service (Tod 1933-1948, II 204.20).
- 25 Hekate, the daughter of Persaios and Asteriê, is the subject of her own hymn in Hesiod's *Theogony* (409-452), although she does not appear in Homer. Her worship apparently originated in Caria but must have been well-established in Greece by the time of the hymn. In the cult at Eleusis she was an attendant of Persephone and Demeter, and she functions in the hymn primarily as Demeter's companion, providing the information which leads Demeter to Helios and the discovery of her daughter's fate. Hekate occasionally also appears in vase-paintings depicting the myth of Persephone's abduction and return (fig. 1).
- 26 According to Hesiod (*Th.* 374) the sun god Helios was the son of Titans Hyperion and Theia (see genealogical chart); in Homer "Hyperion" generally occurs as an epithet of Helios. The sun is often a witness to what happens on earth, perhaps because of his superior vantage point in the sky (cf. *Il.* 3.277; *Od.* 11.109; *h. H.* 381).
- 30 In the Greek text, this line (= line 31) stands out as unusual and

son of Kronos, worshipped under many names, with his  
immortal horses  
carried her off against her will at the prompting of Zeus.

As long as the goddess saw the earth and starry heaven  
and the swift-flowing sea teeming with fish,  
and the rays of the sun, and still hoped to see her devoted  
mother and the race of the gods who are forever, 35  
so long did hope charm her great mind, though she was grieving.<sup>o</sup>

But the mountain peaks and the depths of the sea rang  
with her immortal voice, and her queenly mother heard her.  
And a sharp grief took hold of Demeter in her heart, and  
with both hands 40

she tore the veil on her immortal hair,  
and she cast her dark cloak down from both her shoulders,  
and she rushed like a bird over the nourishing land and sea  
searching. But no one either of gods or mortal men  
was willing to tell her the truth, nor 45  
did any of the birds come to her as a true messenger.

For nine days, then, over the earth queenly Deo<sup>o</sup>  
roamed about, holding blazing torches in her hands,

noteworthy since it contains only three words, each an epithet  
beginning with the letter p. This piling up of epithets is more natural  
in the Greek than it sounds in English.

37 There may be a lacuna (a break in the text where one or more lines are  
missing) after this line since the narrative as it stands (67-68) seems to  
contradict lines 23-24. The sense of the missing text would be  
something like, "but when she was entering the gaping earth and  
realized that she was being carried down to the underworld, then  
indeed she despaired and cried out still more vehemently than before"  
(Richardson 1974: 161). Such an addition would supply both a mention  
of Persephone's second cry, which is heard by her mother (39), and her  
actual descent below the earth, a regular feature in other accounts of  
the myth and an important part of the cult at Eleusis. In any case, lines  
33-37 imply what the lost lines might have made explicit: once  
Persephone entered the underworld she would not have been able to  
return to the upper world and would therefore have had no hope of  
seeing her mother (or the other gods) again.

47 Deo is probably a shortened form of Demeter. Her epithet, *potnia*, is  
translated here (and elsewhere) as "queenly," and in line 54 as  
"mistress." Neither English word quite captures the spirit of the Greek  
term, which conveys a sense of the august and holy power inherent in  
the goddess. For the nine day period, see below on line 50.

and she never tasted ambrosia or the sweet drink, nectar,<sup>o</sup>  
as she grieved, nor did she wash her skin with water.<sup>o</sup> 50  
But when indeed the tenth Dawn came bringing light,  
Hekate, holding a torch in her hands, met her  
and spoke to her, telling her the news,

"Mistress Demeter, bringer of seasons, giver of splendid gifts,  
who of the heavenly gods or mortal men 55  
seized Persephone and grieved your dear heart?  
For I heard her voice but did not see with my eyes  
who it was. I am telling you swiftly the whole truth."

So spoke Hekate. And the daughter of fair-haired Rhea<sup>o</sup>  
did not answer her with speech, but darted off with her 60  
swiftly, holding blazing torches in her hands.

And they came to Helios, who watches over both gods and men,  
and they stood in front of his horses<sup>o</sup> and the shining goddess spoke.  
"Helios, since you are a god, respect me as a goddess, if indeed

I have ever cheered  
your heart and spirit either by word or deed. 65  
The maiden whom I bore, a sweet young flower, glorious in form —  
I heard her wailing voice through the barren air  
as if she were being forced, but I did not see her with my eyes.

49 In early epic poetry ambrosia was the regular food of the gods and  
nectar was their drink. Some later authors (including Alcman and  
Sappho) reverse the two. Both were thought to impart strength or  
immortality, and for this reason Demeter anoints the baby Demophoön  
with them at 237 (see 242n.).

50 In the cult at Eleusis "mystic dramas" were performed at night re-  
enacting Demeter's grief-stricken search for her daughter by torch-light.  
The rite apparently ended with the "tossing" of these torches in  
thanksgiving when Persephone was found. Similarly, the Eleusinian  
ritual also included a period of fasting and, perhaps, a prohibition  
against bathing before the festival. The nine-day period mentioned here  
may simply be conventional; this number is common in Homer and  
elsewhere (e.g. Apollo's plague at *Il.* 1.53; Leto's period of labor at the  
birth of Apollo in *h. Ap.* 91).

59 The Titans Rhea and Kronos had three daughters (Hestia, Demeter,  
Hera) and three sons (Poseidon, Hades, Zeus); see genealogical chart.  
Here the "daughter of Rhea" is Demeter.

63 Homer does not speak of a chariot of the Sun, although Dawn's chariot  
is mentioned at *Od.* 23.244. The convention that the sun drove a horse-  
drawn chariot across the sky is common in other mythologies, and a  
Greek vase from ca. 670-660 BC showing the sun god Helios with a  
horse appears to support the view that it was popular in early Greek  
myth as well.

But since you look down from the shining air with your rays  
 over all the earth and sea, 70  
 tell me truthfully of my dear child, if anywhere you have seen  
 who either of gods or even of mortal men, in my absence,  
 took her by force against her will and went away?"  
 So she spoke, and the son of Hyperion answered her,  
 "Lady Demeter, daughter of fair-haired Rhea, 75  
 you will know, for I revere you greatly and I pity you  
 as you grieve over your slender-ankled child. No one else  
 of the immortals is responsible except cloud-gathering Zeus,  
 who gave her to Hades, his own brother, to be called his  
 youthful wife. He seized her and with his horses 80  
 led her wailing loudly down to the misty gloom.  
 But, goddess, put a stop to your great mourning — you should not  
 hold such boundless grief this way in vain. The lord of many  
 is not an unfit son-in-law among the immortals, Aidoneus,  
 your own brother and born of the same seed. And as for honor, 85  
 he received his share when the three-fold division was made  
 for the first time:<sup>o</sup>  
 he lives with those whose ruler he was allotted to be."  
 So speaking, he called to his horses, and at his shouting they  
 carried the swift chariot quickly like long-winged birds.  
 But a more terrible and savage grief came into Demeter's heart.<sup>o</sup> 90  
 Then, angered at the dark-clouded son of Kronos,  
 she avoided the assembly of the gods and lofty Olympos,  
 and went among the cities of men and their rich fields  
 softening her form<sup>o</sup> for a long while. No one of men

- 86 *Iliad* 15.189-192 describes how Zeus, Hades and Poseidon each received his own domain (the sky, the underworld, and the sea respectively) by lot. Hesiod preserves another tradition according to which the supreme rule and the power to distribute honor to the other gods went to Zeus at their insistence and that of Gaia after the battle between the Olympians and Titans (*Th.* 883-885).
- 90 Demeter's grief increases not because Hades is an unworthy son-in-law, but because she knows no return from the underworld is allowed, except to the messenger god Hermes. The marriage of the immortal Persephone becomes, in a very real sense, the girl's death. In her anger, Demeter withdraws from the immortal sphere herself and joins instead the world of mankind.
- 94 Demeter here literally "softens" or "effaces" her divine appearance to appear as an old woman so she will not be recognized. The theme of a disguised god wandering among men is common (e.g. Athena in the

and of deep-girded women recognized her when they  
 looked at her, 95  
 until she came to the house of thoughtful Keleos,<sup>o</sup>  
 who at that time was a lord of fragrant Eleusis.<sup>o</sup>  
 And she sat grieving in her dear heart near the road  
 by the Parthenian well,<sup>o</sup> whence the citizens were  
 accustomed to draw water,  
 in the shade where an olive bush grew above it. 100  
 She looked like a very old woman, one excluded from  
 childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite,  
 as are the nurses for the children of law-giving kings  
 and the housekeepers in their echoing homes.  
 And the daughters of Keleos, son of Eleusinos, saw her 105  
 as they came for the easily-drawn water, to carry it  
 in bronze pitchers to the dear home of their father,  
 four of them like goddesses having the bloom of youth,  
 Kallidike, and Kleisidike, and lovely Demo,  
 and Kallithoe, who was the eldest of them all.<sup>o</sup> 110

- Odyssey*) and it was not an uncommon practice to address strangers as though they were gods (e.g. Odysseus to Nausikaä *Oid.* 6.149). This practice is explained by one of the suitors at *Oid.* 17.483-487: "... the gods do take on all sorts of transformations, appearing / as strangers from elsewhere, and thus they range at large through the cities, / watching to see which men keep the laws, and which are violent." (translation by Lattimore)
- 96 Keleos was the son of Eleusinos, the eponymous hero of Eleusis. At 153-155 and 474-475 he is listed with other lords of the city, so it is not clear who among them was the chief ruler. He was a recipient of sacrifices at Eleusis where his wife and daughters also had a cult.
- 97 Eleusis is regularly called "fragrant," an epithet which looks forward to the sacrifices which were made there in Demeter's cult. Its use here, before the establishment of that cult in the myth, is formulaic.
- 99 The location of the Parthenian ("Maiden") well remains disputed. Some say this well is the same as one called Kallichoron ("Beautiful chorus") which was near the entrance of the Eleusinian sanctuary (and is still visible today). According to Pausanias (1.38.6), the Kallichoron was the spot where the Eleusinian women danced and sang in honor of the goddess. As Richardson (1974: 326) notes, the double name of the well would make sense if there were *choruses of maidens* around it. See 270-272n.
- 110 In other versions of the myth there are only three daughters whose names vary according to the source, (e.g. in the Orphic hymn Kalliope, Kleisidike, and Damonassa fetch water, with the queen as a fourth companion). Pausanias (1.38.3), citing Homer and Pamphos (a writer of hymns), names Diogeneia, Pammerope, and Saisara. While these names

They did not know her; gods are hard for mortals to recognize.  
 But standing near, they addressed her with winged words,<sup>o</sup>  
 "Who are you, old woman, of men born long ago? Where are you  
 from?  
 Why have you wandered away from the city and do not approach  
 the houses? There, in the shady halls, are women 115  
 the same age as you and younger ones,  
 who would welcome you both in word and in deed."  
 So they spoke, and the queenly goddess answered,  
 "Dear children, whoever you are of tender women,  
 greetings; I will tell you my story. Surely it is not unfitting 120  
 to tell you the truth, since you ask.  
 Doso<sup>o</sup> is my name, for my queenly mother gave it to me.  
 Now from Crete over the broad back of the sea  
 I have come, unwilling, but by brute force  
 pirate men carried me off against my will. Then they 125  
 landed in their swift ship at Thorikos,<sup>o</sup> where the women  
 set foot on the shore all together and the men  
 prepared a meal by the stern-cables of the ship.  
 But my heart was not longing for the sweet evening meal,  
 and, starting off secretly through the dark land, 130  
 I fled my arrogant masters, so they would not sell me,  
 whom they had not bought, and have enjoyment of the price  
 paid for me.<sup>o</sup>  
 So I have come wandering here, and I have no idea  
 what land this is and what men live here.

may belong to local legend, those in the Demeter hymn are more likely invented by the poet, especially since the repeated k and l sounds seemed designed for poetic effect. The meanings of the names (e.g. Kallidike "Beautiful justice") are probably not significant here; Demo ("People"), which is used elsewhere of Demeter may have been chosen to stress the future connection between the goddess and this family (cf. the note on her brother Demophoön at 234).

112 On "winged words" see h. *Aph.* 184n.

122 Like Odysseus, Demeter tells a false tale about herself to protect her true identity. The name Doso ("I will give") is an appropriate pseudonym for the goddess who gives crops to mankind. The inclusion of Crete is a common feature in tales of this sort (e.g. *Od.* 13.256, 14.199, 19.172; h. *Ap.* 469), as is the capture by pirates (e.g. *Od.* 14.334, 15.427; h. 7.6).

126 At the site of Thorikos, south of Athens on the north-east coast of Attica, are the remains of a 5th-century BC cult building which may have been dedicated to Demeter and Persephone and used for mystery rites like those of Eleusis.

131-132 The Greek here is as awkward as the English.

But may all who have their homes on Olympos grant 135  
 you men for husbands and children to bear  
 just as parents wish; but in turn, maidens, pity me<sup>o</sup>  
 .....  
 seriously, dear children, to whose house should I go,  
 a man's or woman's, in order that I may perform for them  
 eagerly those tasks which are fitting for an old woman? 140  
 Holding a new-born child in my arms  
 I would nurse him well and watch over the house  
 and make the master's bed in the innermost part  
 of the well-built chamber and I would oversee the women's work."  
 So spoke the goddess, and at once the unmarried maiden  
 answered her, 145  
 Kallidike, most beautiful of the daughters of Keleos,  
 "Dear mother, we mortals endure the gifts of the gods by necessity,  
 even though we are grieved, for indeed they are much stronger.<sup>o</sup>  
 But I will give you this advice clearly and name  
 the men who have great power of authority here 150  
 and are preeminent among the people, and they protect  
 the towers of the city with their counsels and straight judgements.  
 They are Triptolemos,<sup>o</sup> shrewd in counsel, and Dioklos  
 and Polyxeinos and blameless Eumolpos  
 and Dolichos and our own brave father, 155  
 who all have wives to manage affairs in the house.

137 A lacuna occurs here in the text. Similar breaks occur at lines 211 and 236 which, like line 137, fall at the end of the manuscript page. Whatever else is missing here, the sense of the existing text requires a verb asking for the information detailed in 138.

148 This sentiment is common in ancient Greek thought, e.g. Achilles speech to Priam at the end of the *Iliad* (24.518ff.) or Nausikaä to Odysseus at *Od.* 6.187-190, and is repeated by Metaneira at 216-217. The opposite view, that mortals are responsible for their own actions, is argued by Zeus at *Od.* 1.32-43. Cf. h. *Dem.* 256-258, with note.

153-155 Triptolemos became an important hero in later Athenian legend, which said that he received the gift of grain from Demeter and was sent out by her to teach the art of agriculture to mankind. Scenes of his departure in a chariot first appear ca. 550-525 B.C. and by ca. 450-430 BC he appears as a boy on the "Grand Relief" at Eleusis, perhaps replacing Demophoön (see on line 234) as Demeter's charge in the myth. In Apollodorus (1.5.1) he is the eldest son of Keleos and Metaneira. The derivation of his name is unsure, but ancient etymology connected it with the Greek word for "plough": "Thrice-ploughed" or "God of the triple ploughing."

Not one of these women at first sight would exclude you  
 from the house, dishonoring your appearance,  
 but they will receive you, for indeed you are godlike.  
 But if you wish, wait, so we may go to our father's 160  
 house and tell our mother, deep-girded Metaneira,  
 all these things right through, in the hope that she may bid you  
 come to our house and not search out the homes of others.  
 Her only son is being raised in the well-built hall,  
 born late, much prayed for and a joy. 165  
 If you should nurse him and he should reach the measure of his  
 youth,  
 easily would any of the tender women, seeing you,  
 feel envy, such payment would she give you for raising him."  
 So she spoke, and the goddess nodded her head, and they,  
 walking proudly,  
 carried the shining vessels full of water. 170  
 Soon they came to the great house of their father, and quickly told  
 their mother what they had seen and heard. And she bid them  
 to go quickly and invite her to come for a boundless wage.  
 Like deer or heifers in the season of spring  
 leap along the meadow, satisfying their hearts with food, 175  
 so they, holding up the folds of their lovely garments,  
 darted along the low-lying road, and their hair

**Dioklos** (called Diokles at 474 and 477), was a Megarian hero whom later Megarian legend said was a king of Eleusis driven out of that city by Theseus. This detail points to the domination of Megara over Eleusis before Athenian influence became prominent. He received sacrifices with other heroes at Eleusis.

**Polyxeinos** ("Entertaining many guests") was also included among the heroes who received sacrifices at Eleusis, but nothing else is known of him. His name appears elsewhere as an epithet of Hades.

**Eumolpos** ("Good singer") held an important position in the cult as the eponymous father of the family of priests (*Eumolpidae*) who spoke (sang?) the sacred words of the rite. He is credited as founder of the Mysteries in several sources, and is identified in some as the son of Musaeus, a mythical singer closely related to the Thracian Orpheus. Euripides, in the lost play *Erechtheus*, refers to another legend of his birth in which he was thrown into the sea by his mother (Chione), and rescued by Poseidon to be raised by the Ethiopians and become a king of Thrace. Different versions of the myth in the hymn were ascribed to the poets Orpheus, Musaeus, and Eumolpos.

**Dolichos** had a temple outside the Eleusinian sanctuary, but is not otherwise an important figure. In some later sources he is called a son of Triptolemos.

streamed about their shoulders like a crocus flower.<sup>o</sup>  
 They found the glorious goddess near the road where they had  
 left her  
 before, and they led her to the dear house 180  
 of their father. She went behind with grief in her heart  
 and her head covered, and her dark robe  
 swirled around the goddess' slender feet.  
 Soon they came to the home of Keleos, cherished by Zeus,  
 and they went through the colonnade to where their queenly  
 mother 185  
 sat by a pillar of the strongly-built roof  
 holding her child, her young offspring, in her lap. They ran to her,  
 but the goddess stood on the threshold, and her head  
 touched the roof-beam, and she filled the doorway with a divine  
 radiance.<sup>o</sup>  
 Reverence and awe and pale fear seized Metaneira. 190  
 And she yielded her chair and bade her sit.<sup>o</sup>  
 But Demeter, bringer of seasons, giver of splendid gifts,  
 was unwilling to sit on the shining chair.

178 The description of the maidens, with robes held up and their yellow hair falling loose, is in stark contrast to that of the veiled Demeter whose dark robe trails on the ground (182-184). Since the combination of the trailing robe and free-flowing hair is often connected with cult practices, some have detected in this scene a reflection of the cult at Eleusis. If so, the daughters of Keleos act in the hymn as the prototypes of the Eleusinian priestesses who, also dressed in long robes, with their hair unbound, would have led the initiates in the ritual procession.

189 When gods or goddesses assume a disguise to visit men on earth, they often reveal themselves either at their entrance (e.g. *Il.* 4.75) or, more commonly, at their departure (e.g. *Od.* 1.319). Such revelations, or epiphanies, are characterized by (1) the deity's supernatural size, (2) a divine radiance, often accompanied by a divine fragrance, (3) the awe and fear inspired in the onlookers. In spite of these very signs in 188-190, Demeter is evidently *not* recognized as a god until her second epiphany at 275-280; cf. Aphrodite's appearances to Anchises in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (84-85, 171-190).

191-210 The following passage is a typical scene showing the proper treatment of a guest: the offer of a seat of honor, food and drink and, only afterwards, an inquiry as to the stranger's identity. At the same time it also provides a mythic explanation (*aition*) for some elements of the ritual at Eleusis (1) **ritual purification**—expressed here by Demeter's sitting, veiled and in silence, on the fleece (194-201), (2) **fasting and**

She stayed silent, her beautiful eyes downcast,  
 until devoted Iambe° set out for her 195  
 a well-pieced seat and threw over it a silver-white fleece.  
 Then sitting down, she held her veil before her with her hands.°  
 For a long time she sat on the chair speechless in her grief,  
 nor did she greet anyone by word or gesture,  
 but unsmiling, tasting no food or drink, 200  
 she sat wasting away with longing for her deep-girded daughter,  
 until devoted Iambe, intervening with jokes  
 and many jests, moved the holy lady  
 to smile and laugh and have a propitious heart;°  
 indeed in later times too she used to please her in her moods. 205

Metaneira offered her a cup filled with honey-sweet wine,  
 but she refused it, for she said it was not right  
 to drink the red wine. But she bid Metaneira to give her  
 a drink of barley-meal and water mixed with fresh pennyroyal.

**abstention from food** (200, 206-208), (3) **ritual jesting**, here in the form of an obscene joke by Iambe (202-205), and (4) **kykeon**, the mixture of barley and water.

- 195 Iambe is the eponym for iambic meter, the regular rhythm used for blame poetry and comic jesting or insults. This meter may originally have been connected with religious contexts and was often accompanied by dancing. Aristophanes' *Frogs* (396ff.) provides a description of the sort of scene which might have taken place in the ritual at Eleusis with a procession of the chorus (initiates) and iambic jesting. The details of the ritual at Eleusis are not fully known. In the Orphic version of the myth, Iambe's place is taken by Baubo, the queen of Eleusis, who induces Demeter to laugh, apparently by lifting her skirt to expose herself. See 204n. below.
- 196-197 Both written and pictorial evidence indicates that a preliminary ceremony in which the veiled initiate sat on a skin-covered stool was a regular part of the ritual. In the hymn Demeter takes the part of the initiate in this *thronôsis* (sitting ceremony).
- 204 The hymnist is not specific about what Iambe actually says or does, but the parallel with Baubo (and many similar figures in other myths), suggests her jokes were obscene. This kind of sexual jesting (*aischrologia*) was an especially typical element of festivals to Demeter and to Dionysos, both deities associated with fertility. In the present context, the rude jokes help relieve Demeter's grief over the loss of her daughter (cf. Loki's obscenities which distract Skadi from his grief over his father's death in Norse mythology), while at the same time providing a mythic *aition* for the Eleusinian ritual. The hymnist thus weaves together the two apparently distinct parts of his story.

And she, having made the potion, gave it to the goddess as she  
 had asked.  
 Taking it to show respect, the great mistress Deo° 210  
 .....  
 and among them well-girded Metaneira began to speak,  
 "Greetings, lady, since I expect you are not from base parents,  
 but good ones; reverence is in your eyes  
 and grace, as if you were born from law-giving kings. 215  
 But we mortals endure the gifts of the gods by necessity  
 even though we are grieved, for a yoke lies on our neck.  
 But now, since you have come here, whatever I have will be  
 yours.  
 Nurse this child for me whom the immortals bestowed on me  
 late-born and beyond my hopes, though I wished for him  
 so often. 220  
 If you should raise him and he should reach the measure of his  
 youth,  
 surely any of the tender women, seeing you, would  
 feel envy, such payment will I give you for raising him."

- 210 The potion (*kykeon*) described here was a variation on the simple mixture of grain, liquid and herbs which was often given to visitors: Patroklos and Nestor drink a mixture of wine, cheese and barley in the *Iliad* (11.624-641), while Kirke offers Odysseus' men a similar potion containing honey and magical drugs as well (*Od.* 10.234-236). Later sources indicate the drink came to be used by poor or country people, and sometimes also for medicinal purposes. The *kykeon* was also the drink taken by participants after their period of fasting in the initiation ritual at Eleusis. For this reason, commentators usually understand the phrase translated here as "to show respect" as meaning "for the sake of the rite." But Demeter's actions at this point could hardly be motivated by a rite which has not yet been established (at 273-274 Demeter says clearly that she will establish her rites *after* a temple has been built to propitiate her). The key word here (*hosie*) comes to refer, in later Greek, to things done according to divine law, and thus to "ritual," but here it more likely refers to the proper respect shown one another by host and guest in the relationship of guest-friendship. Demeter's refusal to drink the wine offered previously may be explained by her unwillingness to drink wine while in a state of mourning, just as Achilles refused to bathe until the body of his friend Patroklos had been buried. In order not to offend the honor of her hostess, Demeter does accept a more modest drink in place of the wine and, whatever else is missing in the lacuna (probably of two lines) following 210, Metaneira's next words make it clear that Demeter has indeed proved herself civilized by these actions.

Fair-wreathed Demeter answered her in turn,  
 "and to you many greetings, lady, and may the gods grant you  
 good things. 225  
 Happily will I take your son as you bid.  
 I will raise him and, nor do I expect, a spell or the undercutter  
 will harm him through the ignorance of his nurse.  
 For I know an antidote far stronger than the herb-cutter,  
 and I know a good safeguard against baneful attacks."° 230  
 So she spoke and took the child to her fragrant bosom  
 in her immortal hands, and his mother rejoiced in her heart.  
 So the splendid son of thoughtful Keleos,  
 Demophoön,° whom well-girded Metaneira bore,  
 she nursed in the halls, and he grew like a god 235  
 not eating grain, nor sucking [his mother's milk].°  
 ..... [by day] Demeter  
 used to anoint him with ambrosia as if he had been born from a  
 god,  
 breathing on him sweetly and holding him to her bosom.  
 But night after night she used to bury him in the force of the fire,  
 like a firebrand,°  
 in secret from his dear parents. And to them it was a great  
 marvel 240  
 how he kept growing before his time and how he had become  
 like the gods to look at.

- 230 The Greek word for "spell" and "attack" in these lines is the same, and implies an attack of pain caused by magic. The meaning of "undercutter" is not clear; one conjecture links it with a worm said to cause toothaches, while another suggests it is a poisonous root. Demeter's speech here is carefully vague and, in the Greek, is phrased as a magic incantation itself would be.
- 234 Demophoön's name, "Shining for the people," sounds like an invention by the poet (cf. his sister, Demo, at 109). It does not appear in art or in inscriptions from Eleusis and, in later versions of the story, Triptolemos takes the place of Demophoön. In some versions, the child is killed in the fire.
- 236 Once again a line has been lost from the text, probably (again) at the foot of the manuscript page. The angled brackets in the translation suggest the sense of the lost words.
- 239 Many parallels for this story exist both in Greek literature and other sources, e.g. Isis and the son of the king of Byblos (Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 15). Apollodorus (3.13.6) tells of Thetis' attempt to make Achilles immortal, also by hiding him in fire at night and anointing him with ambrosia by day. In that story the baby's father, Peleus, intervenes before she can protect Achilles' ankle bone. Apollonius

And she would have made him ageless and immortal,°  
 if well-girded Metaneira in her foolishness  
 had not watched all night long from her fragrant chamber  
 and seen her. But she cried out and struck both thighs, 245  
 afraid for her child, and blindness covered her mind.  
 Wailing she spoke winged words,  
 "My child, Demophoön, the stranger buries you  
 in a great fire and brings me sorrow and wretched pain."  
 So she spoke, weeping, and the shining goddess heard her. 250  
 In anger at her, fair-wreathed Demeter  
 with her immortal hands snatched from the fire  
 the dear child, whom Metaneira had borne in the halls beyond  
 her hopes,  
 and thrust him away from her to the ground, terribly  
 angry in her heart.  
 At the same time she spoke to well-girded Metaneira, 255  
 "Humans are foolish and without the sense to know their  
 destiny  
 ahead of time, when good comes, or evil,  
 and you too were hopelessly blinded by your own folly.°

- Rhodijs (4.869ff.) preserves an account of the same story which is very close to the description in the Demeter hymn and may have been modelled on it (or on another account also known to the hymnist). In that version, Apollonius explains that the fire will burn away Achilles' mortal parts (869-870), while the ambrosia will make him immortal (871-872); see next note.
- 242 The hymn gives no reason for Demeter's wish to make Demophoön immortal. Some have argued that, having lost her own daughter through the girl's marriage to the god of the dead, she wishes to replace her with a male child who will not be lost to her through marriage. Others have seen a motive of revenge leading Demeter either to deprive Hades of a mortal life owed to him, by making Demophoön deathless, or to defy Zeus himself by "producing" a male to challenge his authority. While her attempt to grant immortality to a mortal does challenge the natural order in a general way, the tone and focus of the hymn suggest an additional motive: that in her grief, Demeter wants simply to ensure that a mortal mother, who has showed her kindness, will not suffer the pain she has herself suffered through the loss of a child. This benevolence toward mankind lies at the heart of the mysteries she will eventually offer to all. For the use of ambrosia to impart immortality or divine strength, cf. h. *Ap.* 123-25, where the baby Apollo is fed nectar and ambrosia by Themis. In the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (220ff.) ambrosia makes Tithonos immortal, but not ageless.
- 258 Like Zeus at *Od.* 1.32-43, Demeter complains that humans don't have the

May the oath of the gods, the pitiless water of the Styx,<sup>o</sup> know  
 that I would have made your dear child immortal and ageless 260  
 all his days, and I would have granted him unfailling honor.  
 Now there is no way for him to avoid death and a mortal fate.  
 But unfailling honor will be his forever, because  
 he climbed up on my knees and slept in my arms.  
 And in due season, as the years revolve for him, 265  
 the children of the Eleusinians will always wage war  
 and bitter strife with each other all their days.<sup>o</sup>  
 I am Demeter holder of honor, who is the greatest  
 help and joy to immortals and mortals.  
 But come, let all the people build me a great temple 270  
 and below it an altar, beneath the acropolis and its sheer wall  
 overlooking Kallichoron on a jutting hill.<sup>o</sup>  
 I myself will teach my rites, so that hereafter  
 you may propitiate my heart by performing them reverently."  
 So speaking, the goddess changed her size and form, 275  
 thrusting away old age. Beauty breathed around and about her,<sup>o</sup>  
 and a lovely scent spread from her fragrant  
 robes, and from the goddess' immortal skin a light  
 shone far off, and her golden hair spread down over  
 her shoulders,  
 and the well-built house was filled with a bright light, as  
 if from lightning. 280  
 She went out of the house and at once Metaneira's knees went  
 slack

sense to recognize or accept the favors of the gods when they come.  
 This inability to recognize good or evil at its appearance is  
 characteristic of humans in Greek literature.

- 259 The Styx ("the hated one") was a river in the Underworld which  
 became the most powerful oath of the gods. See h. *Ap.* 85n.  
 267 These lines refer to a ritual mock battle performed at Eleusis in honor  
 of Demophoön, either at a separate festival for him or as part of the  
 Mysteries. Whether the origin of this "war" lay in a historical battle  
 remains uncertain.  
 272 Archaeologists have found Classical remains of a temple, the  
 Telesterion, on a terraced slope below the acropolis at Eleusis. There is  
 also evidence of earlier buildings on the same site from the Mycenaean  
 and early Archaic periods, but whether either served a religious  
 function has not been proved.  
 276 Demeter's second epiphany is unambiguous and more fully detailed  
 than her first (188-190), but here too her appearance and stature  
 change, and she gives off a radiance and fragrance which inspire fear

and for a long time she remained speechless and completely  
 forgot  
 to pick up her only son from the floor.  
 His sisters heard his piteous crying  
 and leapt down from their well-spread beds; then one 285  
 picked up the child in her arms and put him to her breast,  
 another stirred up the fire, and another rushed on tender feet  
 to rouse their mother from her fragrant chamber.  
 Gathering around him they washed him as he struggled<sup>o</sup>  
 though they handled him lovingly. But his heart was not  
 soothed, 290  
 for indeed inferior nurses and attendants were holding him.  
 All night long, shaking with fear, they propitiated  
 the glorious goddess<sup>o</sup> and, as soon as dawn appeared,  
 they told mighty Keleos truthfully,  
 what Demeter, the goddess of the lovely garland, had  
 commanded. 295  
 Then he called the people from all districts to an assembly,  
 and ordered them to build a rich temple to fair-haired Demeter  
 and an altar on the jutting hill.  
 They obeyed at once and heeded his words,  
 and they built it as he had ordered, and it grew by the decree  
 of the goddess. 300  
 When they had finished and quit from their toil,  
 each man went home. But golden-haired Demeter  
 remained sitting there, apart from all the blessed ones,  
 wasting away with longing for her deep-girded daughter.  
 And she caused a most terrible and savage year for men<sup>o</sup> 305

and awe in those around her. These reactions are the same as those  
 aroused in the initiates during the later cult of the goddess.

- 289 The Greek verb here (*aspaire*) is used in Homer always of the dying, who  
 are gasping out their last breath. It is possible that the hymnist intended  
 an allusion here to the tradition in which the baby dies in the fire.  
 Equally, he may have wanted to emphasize the pain of Demophoön's  
 removal from the immortal sphere and the consequent inevitability of  
 his death.  
 293 This night-long ritual of propitiation may reflect an historical part of the  
 rite at Eleusis conducted by women apart from the men. If so, it may  
 have included the maidens' dance around the well mentioned earlier. A  
 similar night ritual, the *pamnychis*, was also part of the women's festival,  
 the Thesmophoria  
 305-333 As lines 303-304 make clear, the loss of Persephone, not the foolishness  
 of the Eleusinians, is the cause of Demeter's grief and anger. Just as

on the much-nourishing land, and the earth did not sprout  
 any seed, for fair-wreathed Demeter buried it.  
 Many curved ploughs did the oxen drag in the soil in vain,  
 and much white barley fell to no avail on the earth.  
 And now she would have destroyed the whole race of  
 mortal men 310  
 with painful famine, and she would have deprived  
 the Olympians of the splendid honor of gifts and sacrifices,  
 if Zeus had not noticed and pondered in his heart.  
 First he roused golden-winged Iris<sup>o</sup> to summon  
 fair-haired Demeter, lovely in form. 315  
 So he spoke,<sup>o</sup> and she obeyed Zeus, the dark-clouded son  
 of Kronos,  
 and she ran swiftly on her feet between earth and heaven.  
 And she came to the city of fragrant Eleusis  
 and found the dark-cloaked Demeter in her temple,  
 and she addressed her with winged words, 320  
 "Demeter, father Zeus, who has unfailing knowledge,  
 calls you  
 to join the race of the gods who are forever.  
 So come, do not let my message from Zeus be unaccomplished."  
 Thus she spoke, begging, but the other's heart was not  
 persuaded.  
 Then again the father sent, one after another, all the blessed 325  
 gods who are forever and, coming in succession,  
 they kept calling her and offering many beautiful gifts,

Poseidon stirred up a sea-storm in anger at Odysseus, Demeter here punishes both mankind and the gods (310-313) by withholding from them those things which lie in her domain: grain and wheat. The theme of famine brought about by the withdrawal of a god (through anger or other causes) is common in many cultures. The suffering of mortals here is a necessary result, but not a primary purpose, of Demeter's plan to punish the gods by making sacrifices to them impossible.

- 314 Iris, a granddaughter of Okeanos, was the personification of the rainbow which stretched from sky to earth and, as such, was a natural messenger of the gods (cf. h. *Ap.* 102). Like other winged figures in Archaic art, she was portrayed with wings on her ankles.
- 316 The use of this Homeric formula, which regularly follows a direct speech, seems odd here since Zeus' actual words to Iris are not given. Similarly, Iris' speech to Demeter at 320-322 ends abruptly ("But come, ...") without giving the details of Zeus' message. In Homer, Zeus' original speech to Iris would probably have been reported in full and repeated again by Iris to Demeter.

and whatever honors she might choose among the immortals.<sup>o</sup>  
 But no one could persuade her mind or intent  
 since she was angry in her heart, and she steadfastly spurned  
 their words. 330  
 She said she would never set foot on  
 fragrant Olympos, nor sprout seed from the earth  
 until she saw with her own eyes her fair-faced daughter.  
 When loud-thundering, far-seeing Zeus heard this,  
 he sent Argeiphontes<sup>o</sup> of the golden wand to Erebos<sup>o</sup> 335  
 in order to persuade Hades with gentle words,  
 and bring back from the misty gloom to the light among the gods  
 holy Persephone, so that her mother, seeing her  
 with her own eyes, might cease from her anger.  
 And Hermes did not disobey, but leaving his Olympian seat 340  
 he rushed quickly down to the hiding-places of earth.  
 He found the lord inside his house  
 sitting on a bed with his shy wife  
 very reluctant in her longing for her mother, [and ...  
 ....]<sup>o</sup> 345  
 Standing near, the mighty Argeiphontes said,  
 "Dark-haired Hades, lord of those who have died,  
 father Zeus bids me bring noble Persephone  
 out of Erebos among the gods, so that her mother,  
 seeing her with her own eyes, might cease from her anger 350  
 and her terrible wrath at the immortals. For she is devising  
 a great plan

328 Like Agamemnon's offers to Achilles through various messengers in book nine of the *Iliad*, Zeus' offer of gifts and honors cannot soothe the anger of Demeter.

335a Argeiphontes is another name for Hermes (see h. *H.* 73). While Hermes and Iris both served as messengers of the gods to men, only Hermes travelled to the underworld.

335b Erebos ("Darkness") is another common name for the underworld. In Hesiod's *Theogony* (123-125) Erebos and his sister, Nyx ("Night"), were the offspring of Chaos, who mate with each other to produce their opposites, Aither ("Brightness") and Day. See genealogical chart.

344-345 The Greek in the manuscript here does not make sense and to date has not been emended satisfactorily. The original text may have continued the image of the unhappy Persephone, but the lines as transmitted and emended suggest that "Demeter, far away, contemplates a plan in revenge for the deeds of the blessed gods." The corruption may be linked to mention of Demeter's plan at line 351.

to destroy the feeble tribes of earth-born men  
 by burying the seed under the earth and utterly destroying  
 the honors  
 of the immortals.<sup>o</sup> She is terribly angry and does not mingle  
 with the gods, but aloof in her fragrant temple 355  
 she sits, dwelling in the rocky city of Eleusis.”

So he spoke, and Aidoneus, lord of those below the earth, smiled  
 with his eyebrows, nor did he disobey the commands of Zeus  
 the king.

Quickly he ordered thoughtful Persephone,  
 “Go, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother, 360  
 keeping a gentle spirit and temper in your heart,  
 and do not be too despondent beyond the others.  
 Among the immortals I shall not be an unfitting husband,  
 you know,  
 since I am father Zeus’ own brother. And when you are here<sup>o</sup>  
 you shall be queen of all that lives and moves, 365  
 and you shall have the greatest honors among the immortals.  
 And there will always be punishment for those who have  
 wronged you,  
 those who do not propitiate your spirit with sacrifices,  
 performing holy rites and offering proper gifts.”

So he spoke, and wise Persephone rejoiced, 370  
 and jumped up quickly in delight. But he himself,  
 in secret, gave her the honey-sweet seed of a pomegranate  
 to eat,  
 peering around him,<sup>o</sup> so she would not remain all her days  
 again with revered Demeter of the dark cloak.

354 If no crops grow on earth, no sacrifices can be made to honor the gods.

364 The Greek is ambiguous here and has been interpreted to mean either “while you are here [in the underworld with me]” or “when you are there [in the upper world, with your mother].” Those who accept the latter view see in Hades’ speech a reference to Persephone’s powers in the underworld (367-369), on earth (365), and in heaven (366). See 400n. below.

374 The meaning of this phrase is not certain, but it seems to reinforce the secrecy of Hades’ action: he peers around to make sure no one (especially Hermes?) is watching as he slips the seed into her mouth. In other versions she eats three seeds (Ovid *Fasti* 4.607), or seven seeds which she herself picked from a tree in a garden (Ovid *Met.* 5.535). The pomegranate was associated with blood and death, perhaps because of the red color of its fruit; Clement of Alexandria records the

Then the ruler of many, Aidoneus, harnessed 375  
 his immortal horses in front of the golden chariot.  
 And she mounted the chariot, and beside her the strong  
 Argeiphontes,  
 taking the reins and whip in his own hands,  
 hastened from the halls, and the two horses flew readily.  
 Swiftly they finished their long journey, and neither the sea 380  
 nor the water of rivers nor the grassy glens  
 nor the mountain-peaks held back the onrush of the  
 immortal horses,  
 but above these they cut through the high air as they went.  
 Hermes brought them to a stop where fair-wreathed  
 Demeter waited  
 in front of the fragrant temple. Seeing them, 385  
 she darted forth like a maenad<sup>o</sup> down a mountain  
 shaded with trees.  
 And Persephone, for her part,<sup>o</sup> when she saw the beautiful eyes  
 of her mother, left the chariot and horses, and jumped down  
 to run to her, and fell upon her, embracing her neck.

And as Demeter was still holding her dear child in her arms, 390  
 suddenly her mind suspected a trick, and she shrank back,  
 terribly afraid,  
 stopping her embrace, and at once questioned her.  
 “My child, when you were below you didn’t eat any  
 food, did you? Speak up, don’t hide it, so that we may  
 both know.

belief that the pomegranate tree sprang from the blood of Dionysos Zagreus at his death. But it was also associated with fertility and marriage, and so here probably symbolizes the marriage of Persephone and Hades, acting symbolically for the feast which would have ended a formal marriage ceremony between the two.

The notion that eating any food in the underworld would prevent one from returning to the land of the living is common in many cultures; there are similar stories from Finland, South Africa, New Zealand, the Sioux Indians and elsewhere. The flower of the Lotos-Eaters, which causes Odysseus’ men to forget their own return home in Homer’s *Odyssey*, probably belongs to this world of the folk-tale.

386 A maenad was a female worshipper of Dionysos, characterized by her frenzied behavior, which included running wildly in the mountains and fields as if intoxicated or in a state of madness. See fig. 10.

387 There is a tear in the manuscript at this point so that only the first few words in each line from 387-401 remain. The translation here accepts supplements by early editors of the text which are only “best guesses” at the lost material. Text has also been lost at 462-479 due to the same tear.

For, if not, you will come up from dreadful Hades, 395  
 and live with me and your father, the dark-clouded son  
 of Kronos,  
 being honored by all the immortals.  
 But if you ate anything, you will go back beneath the depths  
 of the earth  
 and live there for a third part of the seasons every year,  
 but for two parts with me and the other immortals.° 400  
 And whenever the earth blossoms with fragrant spring-flowers  
 of every sort, then from the misty gloom  
 you will rise up again, a great wonder for gods and mortal men.°  
 With what trick did the mighty lord who receives many  
 deceive you?°

And beautiful Persephone addressed her again in response, 405  
 "Then, mother, I will tell you everything truthfully.

400 Many versions of the myth have Persephone spending six months each below and above the ground (e.g. Ovid *Met.* 5.564ff.) while others agree with the division of four and eight months made here (e.g. Apollodorus 1.5.3). While the oldest division of the year was evidently into winter and summer, the existence of three seasons was already accepted in Homer and Hesiod. It has been noted that the three-fold division of the seasons in the hymn recapitulates the three-fold division of the cosmos into heaven, earth, and underworld and, perhaps, the tripartite division of Persephone's powers in those spheres (cf. 364n.).

401-403 Although the myth of Persephone/Kore is a good example of a nature allegory in which her descent to the underworld represents the planting of the seed, and her return the growth of the grain in the spring, it does not accurately represent the agricultural year in the Mediterranean area. In Greece, grain is sown in the autumn, germinates under the earth only for a few weeks, then sprouts and grows steadily through the winter. This discrepancy led one scholar of Greek religion, Martin P. Nilsson, to another interpretation which equates Kore's time in the underworld with the storage of seed grain in underground granaries during the dry summer months, and her return with the retrieval of the seed when the rains of autumn arrive. However consistent with fact, this interpretation is unlikely to be valid since, for the Greeks themselves, the association of Persephone's return with the fertility of the earth at spring-time was fundamental to the myth. It is important, however, to note that Persephone's return will not *cause* the earth to bloom, but that the flowers of spring will precede her arrival. See introductory note to hymn.

404 The trick referred to here is probably Hades' deceit in forcing Persephone to eat the pomegranate, not, as some have argued, his deceit in abducting Persephone (which she describes at 414ff.). Although Demeter began by asking Persephone if she had eaten anything in the underworld (393), it is clear that she already feared Hades' deceit (391) and, after explaining the consequences of having eaten in the underworld (395-403), she comes full

When the swift° messenger, Argeiphontes, came to me  
 from my father, Kronios,° and the other heavenly gods,  
 and told me to go from Erebos so that, seeing me with your  
 own eyes,  
 you would cease from your anger at the immortals and  
 your dreadful wrath, 410  
 at once I jumped up in joy. But Hades secretly  
 put in my mouth the seed of a pomegranate, honey-sweet food,  
 and, though I was unwilling, he made me eat it by force.  
 How, having snatched me up according to the shrewd plan  
 of Kronos' son,  
 my father, he departed carrying me below the depths  
 of the earth, 415  
 I will tell and recount everything you ask.  
 We were all playing in the delightful meadow,  
 Leucippe,° Phaino, Elektra, Ianthe,  
 Melite, Iache, Rhodeia, Kallirhoe,  
 Melobosis, Tyche, Okyrhoe, with a face like a flower, 420  
 Chryseis, Ianeira, Akaste, Amete,  
 Rhodepe, Plouto, lovely Kalypso,  
 Styx, Ourania, charming Galaxaura,  
 Pallas, who rouses battle, and Artemis, rainer of arrows,  
 and we were picking lovely flowers with our hands: 425  
 soft crocus mingled with irises and hyacinth  
 and rose-blooms and lilies, a wonder to see,  
 and narcissus, which the wide earth grew like a crocus.°  
 And I began to pick it with joy, but the earth below  
 gave way, and the mighty lord who receives many sprang  
 out from it. 430  
 He carried me off below the earth in his golden chariot,  
 much against my will, and I cried aloud with my voice.

circle to ask about the trick as a certainty. Thus, after promising to tell the whole story (406), Persephone answers this question first (407-413) before going on to describe the rest of her ordeal (414ff.).

407 For "swift messenger" see h. *H.* 3n. The translation here follows the text of the papyrus which was altered in the later manuscript, probably when the gloss "Hermes" supplanted "Argeiphontes" in the text.

408 Kronios = Zeus.

418-424 Hesiod lists 41 daughters of Okeanos in his catalog (*Th.* 349ff.), but Persephone mentions only 16 here. Some of those listed here are not in the Hesiodic catalogue (e.g. Leucippe, Phaino, Tyche).

428 The meaning of this phrase is not certain, but the narcissus is like the crocus both in its yellow color and its scent. Both flowers were sacred to Demeter and Persephone.

I am telling you the whole truth, though it grieves me.”  
 So then all day with one mind  
 they comforted each other’s heart and soul with many 435  
 embraces, and their spirits ceased from sorrow.  
 In delight they took joy from one another and gave it in return.  
 Then Hekate of the shining veil came near,  
 and many times embraced the daughter of holy Demeter;  
 from that time the lady Hekate became her attendant and  
 companion. 440  
 And loud-thundering, far-seeing Zeus sent them a messenger,  
 fair-haired Rhea,<sup>o</sup> to lead dark-robed Demeter  
 among the tribes of the gods, and he promised to give her  
 whatever honors she might choose among the immortal gods,  
 and agreed<sup>o</sup> that the maiden would [spend] 445  
 the third part of the circling year beneath the misty gloom,  
 but two parts with her mother and the other immortals.  
 So he spoke and the goddess did not disobey the commands  
 of Zeus.  
 Quickly she rushed down from the peaks of Olympos  
 and straightway came to Rharion,<sup>o</sup> a life-giving, fertile land 450  
 before, but then not fertile at all, instead it stood  
 idle, completely stripped of leaves. For the white barley  
 was hidden  
 by the designs of fair-ankled Demeter. But afterwards  
 it was soon to grow tall with long ears of grain  
 as spring-time came. Then in the ground rich furrows 455  
 would be laden with wheat to be bound into sheaves.  
 There first she set foot from the barren upper air.  
 Gladly they saw each other and they rejoiced in their hearts,  
 and Rhea of the shining veil addressed her thus,  
 “Come here, child. Loud-thundering, far-seeing Zeus calls you 460  
 to come among the tribes of the gods, and he has promised  
 to grant

442 The Titan Rhea was not normally a messenger goddess but, as the mother of Demeter and Zeus, would have been a logical choice to effect the final reconciliation between the two.

445 The verb in the Greek is “to nod”; Zeus’ nod is the sign of his agreement and promise.

450 Rharion was a plain near Eleusis which was sacred to Demeter. Prizes of grain from this field are recorded for the Eleusinian games, and Pausanias (1.38.6) says cakes made from this grain were used in sacrifices there.

whatever honors you wish among the immortal gods.  
 And he has agreed that your daughter would [spend]  
 the third part of the circling year beneath the misty gloom,  
 but two parts with you and the other immortals. 465  
 He said it would be accomplished thus, and with his head  
 he nodded assent.  
 But come, child, and obey me, and do not rage too much  
 without end at the dark-clouded son of Kronos.  
 But make the life-giving seed grow for men, at once.”  
 So she spoke and fair-wreathed Demeter did not disobey, 470  
 but at once made the seed rise up from the fertile soil.  
 All the wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers.<sup>o</sup>  
 Then, going to the kings who give laws,  
 she revealed to Triptolemos and Diokles, driver of horses,  
 and mighty Eumolpos and Keleos, leader of the people, 475  
 the performance of her sacred mysteries and taught her  
 rites to all —  
 [to Triptolemos and Polyxeinos and, in addition to them,  
 Diokles —]<sup>o</sup>  
 holy rites that are not to be transgressed, or asked about,  
 or discussed; for a great reverence for the gods restrains  
 one’s speech.  
 Blessed is he of men on earth who has seen these things, 480  
 but whoever is uninitiated in the mysteries, whoever has  
 no part in them, never  
 has a share of the same joys when he is dead below the  
 dank gloom.<sup>o</sup>  
 When indeed the shining goddess had taught them all these  
 things,  
 the goddesses went to Olympos to join the gathering of  
 the other gods.

470-472 In a later version of the myth Demeter grants the gift of agriculture to the Eleusinians in thanks for their hospitality to her and/or their help in finding Persephone. Here the return of her daughter leads her to restore crops to a people who already knew the art of agriculture. These distinctions reflect two separate traditions of the Demeter/Persephone myth, both of which may have been known to the poet.

477 This line probably does not belong in the text, since it repeats two of the kings already mentioned in 474. It may have been added as a gloss on “all” in 476, or could have belonged to a variant version.

482 The “joys” implied here are not specified, perhaps because they belong to the deeper Mysteries which are not to be divulged to non-initiates.

- There they dwell beside Zeus, who delights in thunder, 485  
 holy and revered goddesses. Greatly blessed is he  
 of men on earth whom they love freely.  
 At once they send to his great house, by the hearth,  
 Ploutos,<sup>o</sup> who gives riches to mortal men.
- But come, you who hold the land of fragrant Eleusis 490  
 and sea-girt Paros and rocky Antron,<sup>o</sup>  
 queenly Deo, giver of gifts, bringer of seasons,  
 you yourself and your daughter, beautiful Persephone,  
 in return for my song, kindly grant me heart-pleasing  
 livelihood.
- And I will remember you and another song.<sup>o</sup> 495

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- 488 Ploutos ("Wealth") was the son of Demeter and Iasion (*Th.* 969ff.; cf. *Od.* 5.125-128). He is one of a group of deities known as the *theoi ephestioi* ("gods of the hearth") who were thought to bring good luck and prosperity to the house. Some scholars identify him with the unnamed divine child whose birth was announced as part of the mysteries at Eleusis, and as a god of agricultural prosperity, he was also later associated with the god Dionysos.
- 491 The island of Paros (Map 1) was an important center of Demeter's cult, but Antron, in Thessaly (Map 2), is not connected with Demeter elsewhere.
- 495 This line is a regular formula for the end of a hymn. At 490-494 the singer calls directly on the goddesses, asks them to reward his devotion by granting him prosperity, and promises to remember them as he moves on to a new song.

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### 3. HYMN TO APOLLO

#### Introduction

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is one of the oldest hymns in the corpus, and the second longest after the *Hymn to Hermes*. According to the 3rd-century BC chronicler, Hippostratus, the hymn was composed by a man named Kynthaios from the island of Chios (Map 1), who "first recited the poems of Homer at Syracuse in the sixty-ninth Olympiad [= 504-501 BC]." If this evidence is true, the hymn must have been composed at least by 570 BC (given a generous estimate of Kynthaios' likely lifespan). But most scholars reject this date as too late, especially given the prominence in the poem of the Ionian assembly at Delos (see note on lines 146-164).

Another, related problem also confronts students of the *Hymn to Apollo*, namely whether it is one or two hymns. Lines 165-178 seem to bring to an end the first part of the hymn, which is devoted to praise of Apollo and his cult on Delos while the rest of the hymn is concerned with the worship of Apollo and the establishment of his oracle at Delphi (Pytho). This has led many scholars to suggest that the text we have now is a composite of two originally distinct hymns. One modern study of the language and diction of the hymn (Janko 1982) provides linguistic evidence that the two portions were composed by different poets at different times, and supports a date of ca. 690-640 BC for the Delian portion, and ca. 585 BC for the Pythian. Another study of the hymn's structure and content (Miller 1986) argues convincingly for the unity of the composition. Despite cogent arguments on both sides of the question, however, the poem's authorship and unity remain a matter of debate. My own suspicion is that the extant hymn is an intentional blend of two separate traditions which has kept the language of each (Delian and Pythian) distinct in many places, yet consciously structured the narrative to connect the most important themes and events of the two.

Whether or not the poem as we have it was originally composed by different authors, the narrative does represent a unified whole which celebrates two important events in the life of the god: his birth at Delos