

THE MYSTERIES OF THE SEED

Rodney Collin



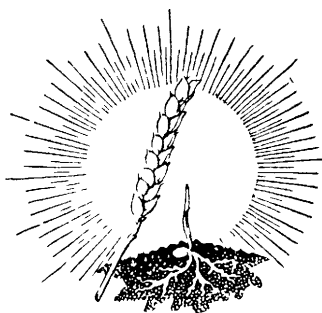


THE TIME AND PLACE

THE LESSER and Greater Eleusinian Mysteries, in the form that became famous all over the ancient world as from Pisistratus, were founded sometime around the 13th Century B. C. The tradition is that Orpheus and his followers instituted them. According to other sources they are older still, and were given to the Pelasgian women by the Danaids, initiates from Egypt, subsequently destroyed by the Dorian invaders, and reformed by Orpheus.

The account of the Myth of Demeter and Kore follows a sixth century homeric hymn.

The following dialogues and scenes take place about 800 B. C. The Achaean kingdoms have vanished. Athens has ceased to be a kingdom: it is an aristocratic Republic. Eleusis has made a treaty with a late king or early archontes of Athens, and has been merged into the Attic state.



THE ELEUSINIAN MYTH OF DEMETER AND THE RAPE OF KORE¹

ALL-MOTHER Demeter whose hair is blown wherever winds carry the wheat and chaff from swinging swingle to the sound of threshing, whose gold-red cloak unrolls its border by the summer path, wide-breasted, crowned with the holy diadem of wall and towers, Demeter dwelt at peace amongst the gods.

One day her daughter Kore descended to earth to meet the Okeanides in the plain of Nysa where they used to play.² While they danced and sang Zeus watched them and with cunning lie sprinkled the deep grass with flowers, violets and the wild orchid in the green shade, saffron and blue irises behind large boulders, the briar rose on the forest wall.³

The young girls began to pick flowers; Kore, her arms already filled, went far afield, and now she saw a golden daffodil with its multiple bells on a straight stem.⁴ One, ten, a hundred more. The plant exhaled a sweet hypnotic scent. The Maid knelt down; joy turned to breathless desire and wonder to obsession.

Intent on the flower of death, she was seen by the Cronide, Lord of many Names, the Dark One, Spirit of Gravity and Ruler of the Deep. A child of heaven, through forgetfulness, had come too near the radius of his power.

The ocean swelled, the earth was rent, infamous vapours veiled the light of day. The ground split open; on his chariot drawn by two immortal steeds Aidoneus halted, framed in smoke and flames. He ravished Kore and carried her away in a fast flight. She cried out loudly to her fattier Zeus but neither god nor men heeded her voice. She struggled hard and lost not hope as long as she could see the mountain chains and the veiled violet sea gyrate below during the infernal journey.

Hecate heard her cry, and great Apollo, but ne was busy in his cave receiving the allotted sacrifices. The chariot went down and with it went the sole witness of the scene, the swineherd Eubuleus and his beasts. Swallowed by a crevass Kore saw the light of day no more.

DEMETER heard her child's last desperate cry. She started from her lion-footed bed. She knew her daughter had met with a bad fate; she held her temples in distraction, she tore her head band and she wailed. She wrapped herself in seven darkening veil and descended to earth.

Carrying a lighted torch, she wandered for nine days in earthly gloom until she met Hecate who told her that she had heard the cry but did not know who had ravished Kore. Together the goddesses visited all-seeing Apollo, who alone knew that Zeus had promised Kore to Aidoneus, who was Demeter's own brother, for a wife.

When Demeter heard this she was angered with the gods. She left her home amongst them and took her cruel sorrow to the cities of men. And no one, for a period, recognized her for she hid her divine beauty well.

DURING HER wanderings Demeter came to fragrant Eleusis by the sea, ruled by Celeus from his walled city. On a hot day tasting of dust, cikadas marking endless time, she came within view of the acropolis on the ancient hill. Sadly she sat down to rest by a clear-flowing spring, for she was weary indeed.

The towns-people came that far to draw sweet tasting water.⁵ Demeter leaned in the cool shade of an olive tree, the trembling leaves marked her veil and gown with mottled pattern. She might be taken for a peasant or a palace nurse.

Presently came three young girls with copper pitchers;⁶ they were the king's daughters. Neither of them recognized the stranger. While they drew water they looked curiously at her and one of them spoke to her, surprised to find such an old woman outside the city walls and all alone on a hot day:

"Why are you not in the town, good lady, in a cool shady house where younger women can take care of you?"

While thus addressing her the princess wondered, for she could not make out Demeter's station. She seemed poor and humble enough yet there was something grand about her as of royal breeding. It was difficult to know how to address her.

Demeter told her story:

"Good day, dear children, may the gods grant you kind husbands and the blessing of children. I am a stranger in this country, maidens, and my name is Dos. I come from Crete. We have been carried off by pirates and with many others I was brought to these shores, as far as Thoricos.

We anchored there, for many more women were to be brought on board. That evening a feast was held on the shore, near our landing place. During the revelling I fled, hiding in the dark woods. I have been wandering since in search of a home. I do not know your country or your people. Dear children, have pity on me; help me find some work; a house in need of one who knows how to nurse a baby, make the master's couch, look after things and supervise the women".

Hearing this sad tale they felt pity for the aged stranger and one of them replied:

"Good lady, life is often harsh and painful; we must bear what the gods ordain".⁷

The three princesses conferred what to do, and decided to speak to their father. There were the large households of Triptolemus, Diodes, Polyxenus and Eumolpus, also their own, the royal household of Queen Metaneire to consider; one would have to see. They returned to the palace and told Celeus what they had seen and heard. The king listened attentively and at once despatched his daughters back to fetch the stranger, offering her a post as nurse to his small son, the late-born Demophon, with generous pay.

So now Demeter followed the three princesses heading for the palace, walking behind them who were fair as flowers, clad in her black veil. They entered the gate of the royal palace. It was there that Metaneire awaited them, seated on a hunch of the solid slope, holding the baby to her breast.

Now Demeter's manner proved in no wise that of a suppliant stranger. As she touched the threshold, surrounded by the curious women of the royal household, the portal and vast hall were flooded with divine clarity. The queen grew pale with fear and, filled with respect, offered her throne to the stranger. But Demeter declined and remained silent, with downcast eyes, until Iambe had placed in front of her an ordinary massive seat of stone, covered with a white fleece.⁸ On this Demeter seated herself and covered her head with her veil.

For a long time she remained in silent dolour, refusing food and drink, without taking notice of anyone, until the moment when Iambe, who was later to become her favourite, began to dance for her; she danced a pantomime of plants and animals and men coming together in the mating season and of the comeliness of sex.

As lambe swayed and lifted up her skirt, Demeter smiled, and then laughed out aloud. Now Metaneire offered her sweet wine but she declined, saying that it was forbidden her, but asked instead for a mixture to be prepared of flower and water, and a kind of mint. This the honourable Dos accepted in order to found the holy rites. While she drank of it, the women pressed around her and the queen addressed her thus

"Hail, woman, I believe indeed that you were not born of common parents, they surely were of noble birth, for your features betray a dignity and grace such as do those of our just kings. Alas, in spite of our griefs we must bear what the gods ordain; we are mere mortal men and their yoke weighs heavy on us. But now that you have come, all I own is at your disposal. Please consent to bring up this child of mine given me by the inmortals, this late-born son, unhoped for, object of all my prayers. If you raise him to reach the age of manhood I will reward you generously".

Crowned Demeter replied, "May the gods accord their gifts to you. I will gladly undertake to nurse your son. I do not think his nurses' imprudence will cause him to suffer a bad fate or corrodng ill. I know of an antidote to evil, stronger by far than pierced wood, and of a goodly remedy that drives away the evil fates".

With these words Demeter took the child to her immortal breast and held it close. His mother was glad to see this happen.

And Demeter nursed and raised the boy, fine son of prudent Celeus. He grew like a divine being, without taking the human breast and indeed without any sort of ordinary food. Demeter rubbed him with ambrosia and fed him with her divine breath. It was her design to make a god out of the mortal child.

It was a marvel to everyone how he grew, resembling a god; and Demeter would have freed him from old age and death but for the folly of Metaneire.

IT HAPPENED in this manner:
During the night Demeter stirred a fire in the hearth and placed the infant in it, skilfully increasing the heat and duration of this secret treatment. But Metaneire suspected something and hid one night to see what was happening.

When she saw her child laid in the glowing hearth, she shrieked aloud with horror:

"My son, the stranger hides you in a great fire and makes me cry and suffer bitterly!"

And the barbarous queen moaned, her knees gave way and she sat down, rocking to and fro, beating her thighs. Demeter turned and faced her with royal wrath. Angry, she took the child out of the fire and placed him away from her, on the stone floor. And she called out:

"I swear by the river Styx by which all the gods swear that I would have made your son into a god! Folly has made you commit the grossest error. I would have given him imperishable privilege. Now he cannot escape the fate of death. After the cycle of years is closed, the sons of Eleusis will fight each other forever, and the only immortality granted him will be that of fame!"

The palace became illuminated with Demeter's presence. Old age left her and she appeared in her true form, scented with summer and exuding light. She passed from room to room.

For a long time Metaneire remained speechless without even a thought for her cherished son. His sisters, attracted by his lamentable cries, appeared. One of them took him in her arms, another revived the fire, yet another raised his mother to her feet and led her away. Pressed round the child they bathed him who kicked and howled, used to different hands.

Demeter returned and spoke once more: "Let the people of Eleusis build me a temple at the foot of the Acropolis, above the clear-flowing spring, on the summit of the hill. There I will found my mysteries. There you shall pray to me and celebrate them reverently".

AT DAWN, after a night passed in sleepless vigil. Queen Metaneire and her attendants hastened to the king and recounted all that had come to pass. He in turn summoned his people, and a temple was planned and erected according to divine request. Demeter dwelt there, and continued to mourn for her lost child.

The years were barren. Oxen ploughed dry ground. Corn would not sprout and barley came up dry and pale like madmen's hair.

THIS ZEUS saw and he reflected on the matter. He sent down winged Iris and other gods to placate Demeter, but she refused his gifts and would not listen to their pleadings. Finally Zeus despatched Hermes to Erebus; Argeiphontes of the golden wand. Him he instructed to exhort Hades with gentle speech, and to bring back holy Persephoneia from dark mists into the light, to dwell amongst the gods. And Hermes delayed not;

rapidly he plunged from Olympus into deep Borboros.

Hermes found Pluto reclining by his listless wife. "Dark-haired Aidoneus, return Persephoneia or Demeter will destroy mankind; she will not leave her temple on the rocks. Have mercy on the race of men".

Hades looked at his queen, reflecting gravely upon the matter. Finally he acquiesced:

"Go Persephatta, go to your black-veiled mother. But remember that the husband you have in me is not unworthy amongst the immortals. When here with me you will ever reign over all beings that live and move;⁹ you will be privileged amongst the gods".

When Persephone saw him thus relent she was glad; she changed under his eyes, life came back into her gaze, joy flooded her limbs and she began to dance. But before she departed with Hermes, Pluto gave her the seed of a pomegranate to eat.¹⁰ This he did secretly, while glancing furtively about him, his object being to charm Persephone, and bring her back for part of the year, preventing her from staying forever with her mother in the upper region.

Then he himself attached the steeds to his golden chariot. Persephone mounted it and at her side, holding the reins and whip with powerful grip. Argeiphontes traversed the subterranean palace. The horses flew obedient to his touch. They drove through sounding caverns and emerged from a grotto by the shore filled with transparent water and with rings and sheaves of reflected light. Neither the sea nor rivers nor grassy vales arrested their immortal flight. Fast they ascended to the hills, cutting through dense white clouds.

HERMES STOPPED in front of the fragrant temple where Demeter dwelt. When she perceived her child, Demeter, like a maenad, leaped for joy. They ran towards each other, but even amidst the joy of mutual greetings Demeter thought of something and she enquired anxiously:

"My child, tell me the truth. Have you accepted food or drink before leaving Hades? If you have not, you could live henceforth with me and your immortal Father".

"Mother", replied Kore. "by using ruse and force my husband made me eat the ripe seed of a pomegranate. I am his willing wife and he has power over me".

And she related to her mother the story of her rape and of the life below, and how she had parted from her dark-haired husband.

"Since you have eaten of the cursed seed", said Demeter, "you must annually return to the Land of Shades, but for two parts of the year you shall be with me and the other immortals. When the earth turns green and fragrant with flowers, you shall ascend from the dark mists, a marvel to both gods and men".

Mother and daughter passed the rest of the day in each other's company, united in heart and mind, giving and receiving a thousand tokens of mutual love, and now at last their hearts ceased to ache.

Later Hecate joined them; she who precedes and follows Persephone in the mysteries, and she gave to the goddess many signs of her attachment. The storm god gave his assent to Persephone's annual return—He sent down Rhea to summon Demeter to heaven, and the shining goddess descended to the plain of Rharia to meet her daughter there.

Demeter obeyed the decrees of the highest god. Now in the barren plain she made the corn sprout, made leaves and blossoms grow, and soon fat furrows filled with green-ear'd corn.

She instructed the just kings, Triptolemus, Diodes, the Master of the Carriage, powerful Eumolpus and Celeus, chief of the people. She taught them the accomplishment of her sacred mysteries, and revealed to them the lovely rites, the royal rites impossible to divulge, to penetrate or to transgress. Blessed those amongst mortal men who have been initiated in these mysteries! Those who have not taken part in the holy rites do not have the same fate, not even in Hades.

As an expression and an outer symbol, and as the basis for her work she gave the Greeks knowledge of the culture of the soil.

Soon noble-ordered grain swelled the plain of Rharia like gentle breath, the ears of corn moved in measure like a choir of dancers, rare poppy flashed, like grace, in the wide field. The hills of Attica were terraced and planted with vine, and in the orchards ripened heavy fruit.

After having established these mysteries, the goddess joined the other gods in high Olympus. There the two deities remained with Zeus of the thunderbolt.

Blessed him whom they deign to love: to his mansion they send Pluto, giver of true wealth.

NOBLE DEO of fragrant Eleusis, and Paros girded by the waves, and rocky Antron, you who bestows the gifts of the seasons, and you, beautiful Persephone, grant me a life according to my heart's desire. Let me remember you with other songs.

THE LESSER MYSTERIES I

DISCOURSE *of a mystagogue on the eve of the Small Eleusinian Festival held. at Agra on the Ilisus, outside Athens. End of February. He is addressing older mustai and new neophytes at Athens.*

FRIENDS new and old, we have come together this day so as to clear our minds, and see the meaning of tomorrow's rites.

Those amongst you who have been initiated in previous years will know what is meant, but will do well to recollect themselves tonight, and to refresh their memories. Those who are here for the first time should try and reflect in their own minds:

What is it that you want?

How does your aim and the experiences that brought you here to our sacred telete relate to the rites of spring?

Did not, while you unquestioningly belonged to the circle of again-becoming, the coming of the deity mean plentiful crops, the fertile heifer in your stable, a god glowing in the grape, in the lust, too, that tightens limbs like sails, known with your husband, lover, wife or slave, and only that?

You may have known these things, and they are good; good as the cloudy blossoms, spawning fish, the nesting birds. And yet, the earth is full of ills, and ills the sea.¹ You have found life wanting, you have come.

Could not your feelings and your intimations, different from each to each, yet be likened to a breath of spring?

You have been dead; and now new life has begun to stir.

The god in you was absent. We herald his coming.

You were asleep like seed in wintry soil; obscure longing born of divine discontent has come to your dreams.

Like Kore you had fallen into generation.

Like Persephone of the lulled eyes you lived below, in bondage, amongst your herds and houses, children, goods.

Like Demeter great Love has mourned for you.

Now Light is kindled in the darkness.

The Wisdom of the gods, like Hermes of the golden wand, has come to rescue, and conducts you during our ascent.

Does the past life lie behind you like a barren dream?

Or have you always known, and loved, and waited in the dark?

Have you come here for grief and loss, satiety, a questing mind, for expiation of a burdening wrong? From the passion of hot youth or the disillusion of age, fear of death or any of the gnawing hungers? Has the god claimed you as his own; do you, like Ariadne, wait for the true Love? Or have you, like Semele, known the fertilizing flash of divine lightening, death rehearsed?² There are these and other motives for return.

You have begun to die, and we teach you to die and be reborn.

Tomorrow, by the banks of the Ilisus, take in the beauty of the world, the detail and the Whole; remember, try to apprehend how behind nature of the seven veils Mind remains stable, ancient and unchanged.

In generation, Chronos' realm, place is always and only place, and time is always and only time. This and individuation is the cause of ill.

The universe, the world in time and place are the imperfect image of the One.

The God whose garment is the sensible world is free of time and its conditions. Him we shall celebrate with our epoptic hymns.

Each blade of grass, each furry beast, the sprouting shoot upon the tree, to seeing eyes shines with the fulgent light of Dionysos.

Those manifold changes that he suffers into winds and water and earth and stars and the birth of plants and animals are called Disappearances and New Births and the song sung to him is full of sufferings and wanderings, but also of great joy in another Birth.³

Now I want you to understand that near the Metroon of Demeter, during the festival of spring, we abstrain from mourning;⁴ we do not mourn our losses nor bewail our infirmities. Come to the holy place without your woes and your desires. You then may feed on Greater Life; you may perceive the way we lead.

After the festival is over, on the last day of Anthesterion, we meet again at this same place.

I shall begin the initiation to our sacred telete.

THE LESSER MYSTERIES II

And then will all the Muses sing
Of Magnus Annus by the spring
As though God's death were but a play!

A GRA. A *kurotrophos* — one who teaches the young — is talking to a visiting priestess of the bearded Aphrodite of Perga. She is a short muscular woman with fleshy features and a neck that juts forward from rounded shoulders. She has an air of concentrated vitality and alertness. Doric Pamphilia, of which Perga is the capital, is her home. That part of southern Asia Minor is still cut off from the other Greek colonies, and Perga a stronghold of Asian religious tradition. The priestess is of Hittite race; she knows the dialect of Pamphilia and has learnt Greek; she has become discontented with the formalized traditions of a crumbling empire. She has sailed down the Cestus, and, passing through Cyprus, has come to Greece.

Kurotr: What you have told me, noble Mezulla, of your cities and sanctuaries south of the Taurus ridge is of great import. The founders of the Mysteries had much contact with Egypt and Phoenicia, especially in the past, but our knowledge of the Eastern empire, in spite of Phrygian conquests, has been restricted. It will be pleasing to the gods that you have mastered Greek, and that the winds and Fates have brought you here. Let me now, since this is your earnest desire, speak of the Mysteries of Agra.

They are most venerable, like your own, though not as ancient. Therefore the sap of life still courses in them lustily.

Orpheus founded them, the Thracian Bard, in order to effect purification from a bloody deed. Of our hero Hercules you know.²

Mezulla: By Tesup, the pyres with his effigies burn annually on our coast. The peoples of the south call him Baal, or Sandon, and it is said in our land that he gained initiation from our priests. Near the Pontic confines of our empire he won the double-headed axe from them.³

Kurotr: The emblem of the Heraclidae. And what it signifies we know.

Now, as you saw, the sanctuaries on the Ilissus; founded to purify Heracles, who was not Greek and could not be admitted to Eleusis, belong to Kore and the Mother, to Artemis Agrotera, the Huntress; chaste Artemis who hunts down the wild beast out in the hills and in the breast, who delivers from mad passions, who purifies and hits the mark, she who directs the choir of the Muses, the same that you and past generations of Melissai have served.⁴ At Agra she shares honours with another: Telepinu, if I remember rightly, you have called him.

Mezulla: The Divine Son of Tesup.

Kurotr: Zeus. We call him Dionysos; Zagreus is his Asian name with us, and it signifies great Hunter — of darkness and barbarous ignorance. The Divine Incarnation of immortal creed. Together the great gods ensure fertility.

Medulla: And so with us, in the heroic past.

Kurotr: Now in the month of Anthesterion we celebrate the annual preliminary initiation here. The visitors, our neophytes and the Athenian people, come down from Athens and pitch their tents in the sacred grounds. This to remind them of a barbarous state before the goddess gave us agriculture. We take the throng down to the river and there asperse them with the sacred water. Public lustrations are for all to see, and are a rite. The inner meaning is expounded to the neophytes, and are, for them, a preparation.⁵ They then receive instruction on the meaning of true poverty, and are sworn into lifelong silence. Our mystagogues perform the sacred dance with clashing bronze,⁶ like the great planetary gods revolving round the human soul from birth.

The immortals themselves initiate the mystae, in truth revolving round him day and night, as sun and stars. And God supreme, is he not the great coryphaeus of the universe?⁷

He is not telling anything. This is philosophy.

Orpheus brought us these from Thracian Samos, and there, if you were initiated, is a choregie and play.⁸

Mezulla: The dances have been known in our cult.

Kurotr: And to the Phrygians after you. Have they not come from Media and Baktria, and beyond? — so Dionysos said, the roaring god whose servitude is sweet.⁹

A pause. The two remain in deep thought.

Kurotr: With these and similar ceremonies we speak to the new neophytes, Athenians mostly,¹⁰ seldom strangers who have come to settle here, or who inhabit other parts of Greece. And speech we use but sparingly at our Mysteries of Spring. But it so happens that people who have never heard of truth and have reflected little, find their minds are opened; such is the action of the Divine on the sleeping soul.

A pause.

Sometimes, within the sacred precinct, the god comes in a dream. We use the juice of poppy and essence of mint.

Mezulla: Across our northern ranges, so I learnt, lie fields of a black poppy on a table land. The Idaean priests distil the juice from them.¹¹ The poppy is the sacred flower of the Mother.

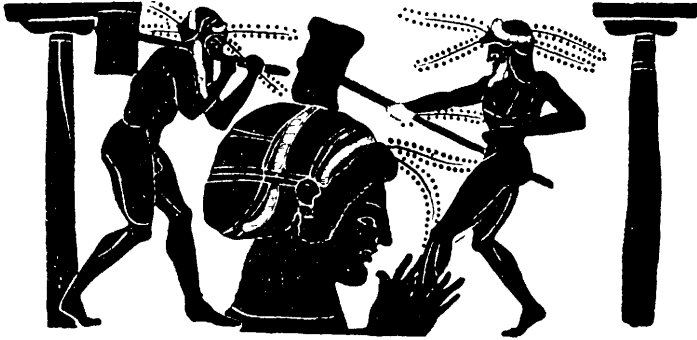
Kurotr: Only Demeter knows of its right use.

Mezulla: Most true, I have seen it abused in Eastern ports.

Kurotr: Well, you will understand that what we show with rite and song, is a first introduction into a cycle of ideas. We chose our people, and during the six months that divide from the Great Eleusinians, we give oral instruction to our neophytes — here for artists at the temple of the Ilissidian Muses — at Athens, and in Eleusis. We teach the knowledge of the self, gnome, the power of right decision, cosmology, arithmetic, astronomy, the sciences, medicine and the crafts and their right use in daily life; other things too according to the needs that rise from year to year. For nothing, in the mysteries, must fossilize; for they are ever young.

Mezulla (moved, for she has seen great connections)

Telepinu descends, and is reborn with every year. . .¹²



THE LESSER MYSTERIES I I I

SPRING is the time of birth and death,
For the dumb ache to move the buried root,
The snake spreads terror in the tender vein.¹
Ghosts crowd around, avid for the new womb-
Demons crowd inner space, feed on the coursing blood.
Beware of the polluted air, the clammy moon.

Spring is the time to exorcize the house
With branch of buckthorne,² blood and tar,
With clashing bronze; foot on the ancient fleece.³
We signal the catharsis of the inner man.
We show you the reversal of the signs,⁴
And how to tame and use the swift, bright power.

THE MAJOR MYSTERIES I

DIALOGUE *between a Kerykes and a Mystagogue.*¹ Eleusis. One day in early summer.

Kerykes: I have asked you, Poimander, to come and visit us so soon in the year in order to discuss the coming Dromena. Have you thought about it yet? Have you begun to work on it?

Poimander: I have thought much, Hermippus, but have written nothing. We spoke about it at Lysander's house. We agreed that the myth has a triple meaning: that the descent of Kore symbolizes the fall of the soul into generation and multiplicity, descent into a netherworld at physical death, and the way as taught in the Mysteries: the craft of dying practised in this life. We have not decided which, if any one, of these meanings we should stress in the coming Dromena.

Kerykes: Good. Whichever you choose — unless you wish simply to represent the Rape of Kore as laid down in the sacred hymns — abide by it and do not mix the lines of thought. One interpretation, if rightly put, implies the others. It will be pleasing to the goddess if you do something different from the Dromena four years ago, when we enacted Her myth, with dances.

A pause.

Do you think you could divide the chorus to show the parallel between bodily death and death in initiation?

Poimander (reflects). It could be done, but not by me. Two choruses are difficult to handle and have never been tried.

Kerykes: Do as you deem best.

Poimander: I have some notes on the theme of Royal Initiation. It is very high, very far from where I am; these are only thoughts on what we have heard.

Concentrates, quotes from memory:

On the Royal Initiation that is rarely spoken of.² The highest degree of initiation demands superior qualities of being, an

unceasing watchfulness, also a final stage of admission to the Royal Rites.

The initiate suffers great trials.

He renounces his self-will completely, he renounces even Beauty.

He sheds all that holds him back.

He passes the statues of the Soul and of Thought.

He casts off his garments.

He remains alone.

He advances, revolving round the Centre

His feet are immersed in water, his body and head are dry.

He enters the sanctuary; there, by divine Grace and Love he experiences Union. He becomes a God.

He leaves the sanctuary. On emerging he beholds the statues of the Beautiful and the God.

It is difficult to cleave to divine Union.

The many fail, though some have seen and known with Memory.

He who has been made whole, and known the flight of the alone to the Alone, can still fall back, then reascend.³

Things recorded of the Royal Initiate, of his Birth and Growth and the true doctrine, and greater magistrature; how, gods and divine men having chosen Him, He acceded to great commandment, and how He established Himself, and how a conjuration arose against Him and until what point it succeeded, though not finally; these things are worthy of being remembered and have been told.

They have been told of holy Osiris;⁴ we could tell a similar tale.

Kerykes (reflects). Very beautiful. But not this year. There are many new neophytes, from Boeotia too, and the islands. Give them something more immediate and practical, nearer their own stage of development. It will be best to compose a Dromena about the secret doctrine showing the stages of the journey of the soul, with our ceremonies and symbols which you know This, in a wider circle, includes the elements of Royal Initiation and refers to the myth of Demeter. Do you think you could do that?

Poimander: I can try.

Kerykes: Lysander can assist you. But remember that we want you to compose from your own understanding of our teaching, from your experience and divination.

Be very strict with self-purification. You know, but need to bear in mind that euphrosyne is a necessity for this creative work. To lead the good life, one of piety, gaiety and humility, to write from that inner gladness which is also good sense and from a healthy soul; that is right. Be careful, practice sophrosyne; that quality which supports moderation, balance.⁵ Do not leak. And never work from memory of mere words. Reach out for the incorporeal idea, and what it has wrought in your soul; then you shall have atopia, the freshness and originality that comes from living faith.⁶

A pause.

It is our aim to keep the holy truth alive by our active understanding. For this reason the Eumolpides have decreed of old that we should ever re-create the Dromena.

A pause.

Pray to the Muses to inspire you. See Parysatis about music and the postures. Begin soon, and when you are ready, come down together to discuss the parts and the beginning of rehearsals.

And now tell me about yourself . . .



THE MAJOR MYSTERIES II

THE MIDDLE of September. After a few days of festive preparation in Athens the procession of mustai start for Eleusis in the forenoon. The sacrificial pigs and travelling bags have been sent ahead. The statue of Iacchos is to follow. The pilgrims carry as yet no sacred objects, but bread and goat cheese for the day. They leave the city along the paved sacred road that crosses the Cephissus bridge, the plain and wooded outskirts of Athens and climbs the height to the Aigaia pass flanked on both sides by ancestral graves.

Early in the day the procession reaches the bridge that spans the Cephissus. It is here that, following an ancient custom, the participants make fun of each other's weaknesses and bad features, and this they do with gusto, giving full scope to their quick Attic wit. The theory has been put forward that Athenian comedy had its origin here.

The people approach the bridge with mirthful expectation, some apprehension too. As they draw near jibes and laughter begin to fly about and loosen the ranks.

The wife of a senior Kerykes, who has been in Athens to visit a friend and is returning this way, mounted on a mule, leaves the procession and stations herself near the bridge head. She is well known for her caustic gift of observation and quick tongue. A Thracian by birth, she has the high cheekbones and pale grey eyes of the North, a homely figure and a commanding presence. Her deep-set eyes wander with amusement over the known faces. They come to rest on the wife of an Athenian aristocrat, a wealthy member of the Areopagus, a tall slim woman with hooded eyes and a proud mouth. She walks near the head of the procession.

"Room, room for Galaxoroe!" the priestess cries, giving her mule a spur so that it starts. "Slaves, where is her barge, eh, clear the landing place".

Pushing and laughing the people round Galaxoroe clear the ground before her and bow down in the oriental manner. Two men rip off branches from a wayside bush and walk behind her, fanning like Egyptian slaves.

"Alcmene, Leda, fortunate Europa", the priestess mimics Europa caressing the neck of the divine bull. "Those were the days, what, Galaxoroe?" The great lady cannot help laughing though a trifle uneasily.

She has come to Eleusis for several years and already knows that her caste pride is her worst side. The oligarchs of Athens are still rich and powerful though a new merchant class is slowly coming up. She has been brought up on her father's estate and there has known her equals only, and the humble farmers that worked the fields for him. She has married a steady, unexciting noble. Citizens of every rank come to Eleusis, and she had not liked mixing with them when she first came. Occasionally she is still visited by dreams and aspirations of mythical grandeur and eminence that find no scope in small Athens, and certainly none in the strict discipline of Eleusis.

But now the priestess has spotted a fine girl with the tight glowing skin of youth and a big, graceful body. With her almond shaped dark eyes and secret smile she is the living image of the Maid. She does not look her best today, sweating and with untidy hair bound at the top of her head. Always looking for appraisal she knows what is coming to her and tries to behave unconcerned.

With an exaggerated gesture the priestess throws up her arms, places one elbow in a cupped hand and her chin in the other; a frequent attitude of the girl who tries to hide a slightly receding chin in this manner.

"Kallimache", she mimics her, "Help with the washing? But there is my dancing lesson to attend, and I want to go to the beach. Oriander says I have improved my carriage, every one looked at me as I crossed the agora yesterday, like a caryatid he says. I must have that Tyrian linen; father really might give it me, instead of buying another dreary piece of land".

The girl reddens under her tan, the neighbours giggle and a young man shouts:

"Better be noticed, beauteous Kallimache, than to be ignored. That never happens to you, eh?"

And he makes his way to her side with protective male arrogance. He has Ionian blood, and looks and is a promiscuous young man, attracted to the girl and to many others. The priestess knows his cockiness but for the moment leaves him alone, since an impulse mixed of sex and kindness brought him to the girl's side; she rides to the end of the line where shouts and laughter soon betray her presence.

Then she returns: "O Hernander, stiff in the buttocks, turkey-cock!"

And she blows herself up and hollers like a turkey. The youth flashes angry dark eyes at her but she laughs good-naturedly and taps a passing youth on the shoulder:

"Come on you, carry on now, go on, do it".

But he is too shy. Instead a short stocky man with blunt features leaves the ranks. He whisks out a tear jar and steals up behind a young woman who tends to make up situations. Just now she fancies herself in love with the husband of a friend. The man, who looks like, and is called Silenus in jest, silently thrusts the jar under her nose and saunters off. She looks startled. But already he has spotted another victim. He snatches off his pointed travel hat with a wide brim that shades the eyes and is turned up at the back and, bowing abjectly, like a beggar, he runs alongside a citizen who is known to be tight-fisted.

"A coin for Hermes, one coin only", he chants in a whining voice. And in his ordinary manner:

"Can you bear it, does it pain you badly?"

The others, entering the game, clutch at their satchel with a pained expression; and Silenus: "Come, act it". The citizen: "But I always...". A Chorus: "Give plenty at the temple and for the poor". The citizen decides then and there to increase his donation to Eleusis. What he does not know is that it will not be accepted, since it will be done to be seen of men. He has a lot to learn, but he will.

Silenus has spotted a small corpulent woman with a pitiful expression. "No, I am not enjoying myself, how could I enjoy myself like other people. I feel miserable, things are different for me". After some more of this, instead of laughing, the woman's face puckers and she begins to cry. She is hard of hearing and in poor health. The teachers try to wean her from self-pity. Instantly the others surround her and Silenus hugs her: he has given her more than she can take. Another older woman gets off her mule, and they seat her on it. Silenus pats it on the buttocks: "There, there". The kindness and attention has restored her and she is glad to ride. Trot, trot, the animal takes her along the paved road.

Silenus looks along the ranks once more.

"Ah, there he is, and she right beside him".

He reaches into his pocket and makes for a couple. He sidles up to the man.

"How about a visit to the slave market, Colonus. Too busy, eh, with the ware houses and affairs of State". And in a stage whisper, with hunched shoulders he mimics a Phoenician merchant: "Leetle Nubian girls, only twelve years old". He brandishes some tablets with satirical drawings but quickly hides them. The girls round the two look away, people laugh and the man, who tends to pomposity, looks interested. Now Silenus brings out a phallic amulet and dangles it before his eyes, then gallops off, laughing like a goat.

This scene was aimed at the wife of Colonus, who has eyed it with dark suspicious eyes. Her nose is too long and she is gaunt, with fine eyes. She has followed her husband, seeking initiation more out of a somewhat mean sexual jealousy than other reasons. This the teachers know, but they also know that underneath her sharp nosed irritation is genuine affection for her husband and a sensitive emotional nature.

An elderly neighbour who knows her jealousy better than she does herself, chaffs her:

"Look out, august Hera of the snowy arms, do not let them get away with it".

She is about to reply sharply when she thinks the better of it; one must not show anger at Cesiphos. "Just wait, I will give her a piece of my mind back in Athens".

But now the bridge has been left behind. Hilarity subsides, Silenus is seen talking earnestly to a man at the end of the line who has not been ragged.

The procession crosses the plain which is partly wooded and partly cultivated, and from the farms situated in the fields come husbandmen, their women and their children with offerings of grapes and figs, and with gourds of water mixed with wine or honey. At midday the procession halts where the road begins to rise, to rest and feed under some ancient pines that exude freshness even in the midday heat. Fern and heather grow beside the mastic bushes.

The animals are left to graze and drink from a way-side trough. After a rest and sleep of some of the older people, the pilgrims set out again, for the pass is still well ahead of them.

The hillside resounds with solemn hymns and prayers. Silenus plays a flute, and distant shepherds answer his in a dialogue of question and answer, and these are old Arcadian melodies. Some girls have made garlands of flowers, vine leaves and grapes plucked from the wayside.

Now Silenus discards his hat and staff, his cloak and peplum. Almost naked, hairy and shining like red glazed clay, he really looks like a satyr emerged from the woods. A cymbal starts the rhythm for a slow dance. Silenus passes his flute to a youth who takes up the tune and he begins to dance ahead of the procession. He seems a sylvan disciple of Bacchus, carrying out some simple steps with intricate variations, expressing reverence, a search, and joy. The people watch him. quietly.

Later, the olive trees cast marked shadows east, the bees are fewer, freshness meets them from the heights. And as the shadows overtake them, the pilgrims reach the pass, and on the other side lies Eleusis across the bay of Salamis.

As they descend a slow winding road a mild still night begins to fall. When they finally reach the shore at the foot of the hill, the procession stops for a last rest; many people discard their clothes and are wading into the shallow water. At some distance from the shore where it is still shallow enough to stand, deep enough to swim:

Kallimache: It is good that it should be dark. So many men.

Older woman: Better for me than for you, my dear.

Third woman: Never too tired or too dirty to be thinking of Them, eh?

Fourth woman: We should remember the meaning of this rite.

Older woman: Come, come Melissa, we do remember, no need to be preaching. Besides the day of purification is tomorrow.²

A silent girl swims out with fast strokes. Lies on her back and looks at the immense and starry sky oned with the dark diaphanous sea which is deep green, almost black; on the curving beach she has seen how it unrolls a fine border of foam, as from a woman's garment. The girl feels the water on her naked skin. She is a conscious part of the Whole, and it is infinite, and beyond speech or thought. This is ecstasy. Wrapped in the living cloak of the Divinity she prays:

"Heavenly Aphrodite, great Urania, whose spangled cloak unfurls a gleaming hem with gentle rhythm, unfold me . . .".

THE MAJOR MYSTERIES III

FOR FOUR days the mustai have stayed at Eleusis, have bathed and fasted, offered their sacrificial pigs and played strenuous competitive games. Now they are gathered after nightfall to await the coming of Iacchos.¹ He is on his way from the Iaccheion of Athens, carried by a group of epheboi.

Melissa: Should we not light our torches?

Kerykes: Not yet. The dusk of Salamis awaits another light. Let us go down the sacred way and meet the god.

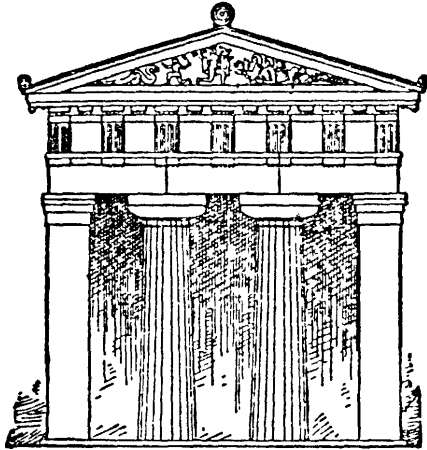
The mustai fall into rows of two and two and, always watching the pass, slowly descend to the shore. The mediterranean sky deepens and now, over the mountain ridge appears a pinpoint of light. The epheboi with the statue have come within sight of Eleusis. Their distant chant is faintly heard. The light is that of a single torch carried ahead of the god. Absorbed, the mustai watch the light advance.

Melissa: The first-born Star of Night:

In a flash she sees many things together.

Kerykes: Star from the East. Hail Iacchos! Hail the Light! Now let us sing.

And the hills resound with hymns that celebrate the giving and receiving. One by one the torches of the mustai are lit; reflected in still waters, they move to meet the god.



THE DROMENA I

THE TELESTERION is built of brick and wood in an early Doric style. It is oblong with four columns at the front and a few steps descending there and at the back, and is surrounded by a wide enclosure and a wall of rough hewn stone. Laurel, bay and stone oak grow there, and the wild flowers of the season. It faces south-west; at the back of this temple is a space reserved for the Dromena. Except for a short run along the steps that descend from the back wall which is paved, it is covered with short thick grass where flowers grow: crocus and anemone in early spring, poppy and camomile and the mint used in the mysteries later in the year. It ends in a semi-circle of terraced seats cut into a hillside; during the festival these are covered with wooden planks. It is partitioned off from the rest of the grounds by wooden walls, and is reached by two slightly sloping corridors built into the sides of the Telesterion, and from a small aperture leading down from the altar. It has no other access. The grounds are closely guarded by fierce dogs. It is severely prohibited to enter unbidden.

THE DROMENA II

PRE-DAWN at the Telesterion of Eleusis. It is quite dark with an autumnal tang in the air and distant stars. The chosen mustai, a hundred people or more, file in through one of the side entrances and take their seats. They are wearing their usual clothes and over them the skins of animals, mostly of fawn or goat to protect them from the cold.¹ Each carries a small cushion to sit on.

The people are in a state of deep religious emotion and mental alertness induced by the impressions and experiences of the past few days; by a catharsis of mind, feeling and the bodily system, and by a drug used at Eleusis. A housewife, shivering a little, in a low voice to her neighbour:

Did they give you the mixture to drink?

A Physician: Yes, as soon as we awoke, it was stronger than on previous days.

Housew: It does not taste good but it feels good after the long fast.

A Physician: It contains everything the body needs — and more: water, flower, honey and the juice of the sacred mint.

(Gravely) Demeter herself invented it.

Housew: Is it true that fasting without games is bad for you?

A Physician: That is so.

A poet: We should not talk. Soon it will begin.

A girl: What will it be? A spectacle?

A Poet: So I believe.

A few people only talk in whispers.

Girl: How well one sleeps in Eleusis.

A Poet: By Zeus, yes. I had a dream...

Girl (eagerly): Me too; a winged horse sprang from a rocky shore as of living pentelic marble in the rising sun...

Others: Silence now, silence.

There is a movement in front of the temple wall. All sit in silence. Reverent concentration gathers force. The eye gets used to the dark and distinguishes moving shapes entering and taking their stand: the chorus

of the Kerykes; the hymnodes. An ephebe pyrophoros enters carrying a lighted torch with which he kindles torches held aloft by two epheboi dressed in black and white peplums respectively, facing each other across the scene of action. The light reveals the following scene:

In the centre of the paved space which fronts the steps and temple wall, on what seems a couch or bier covered with furs and linen clothes lies a woman in an attitude of sleep or death. She wears festive clothes and elaborate gold jewels; her hair is curled and banded; at her head are placed a bowl and a jug of clay.

The action of the Dromena is played in a highly stylized manner. The protagonists move as figures on a frieze or in a sacred dance. The chorus alternatively speaks or chants for them, as the text requires.

Chorus: Mountainous homeland, veined great-breasted sea; the coast, a shining sodden floor where Thetis' stallions race with unbound manes.

Islands that draw our pentecosters of the curved prow.² The hamlet in the wood, white smoke rising in a straight line from homely hearth.

The cool, serrated panoply of shade, ripe gourd out in the field.
And bees intent on the erect corolla.

The winds of Greece on the warm stone fashioned by Ge, or made noble by man.

Stem rocky home of kings, ringed round with lake and marsh,
Or girded city, work of Erechtheus:
Agora, temple, alcove, laughter, tears.

Exchange of gold and ware, caress and thrust of sword, and death.

A carcass in the asphodels, a festive bier.

Beyond, barbarous shores, Herculean Gates and pathless waterways.

And to the West, the Island of the Blessed.

Fish, insect, fowl and beast.

The race of men.

This Cosmos: earth and moon, sun, planets, fixed stars, galaxies.

(A pause and change of key)

It is a dream, dreamt in a dark cave.

While the chorus continues the woman, with her eyes still closed, stirs lightly, rouses herself on one elbow and lifts her closed face as if listening to voices coming from far away, above herself.

Chorus: This world of multiplicity, these myriad forms.
Like a deep-scented flower of death burst into many blooms.
It roused desire, Psyche, lured you from heavenly life.
From being one, your self is broken in the prism of time.
For twenty centuries of stony sleep you dreamt a dream.³
Often you stirred, and listlessly sank back, fed by unholy
pomegranate and dark caress.
But now your hour has come.
Rise up, entrust yourself.
To divine guidance of the holy creed,
And follow Hermes of the golden wand.
Arise, of the water of forgetfulness. Drink.
Of the water of remembrance. Drink!

The woman slowly opens her eyes and sits up. She picks up the jug and empties it to the left. She picks up the bowl and, turning her head to the right, she drinks of it. She looks around her as if trying to make out where she is. She tries to rise to her feet but fails, and sinks halfway back.

Chorus: As yet you dream that you have wakened.
Demons and vengeful shades lurk in the gloom.
The low dream holds you in its grip.⁴
Resist it.

The two epheboi lower their torches one after the other. It grows dark. Enter three daemonic masked apparitions with dim glowing torches. They dance round Psyche while the chorus speaks.

Chorus: Face the dread apparitions born of your own mind;
Empusa of the triple face; dog, ass, and woman,⁵
Your own multiplicity. Know her for what she is.
A creature of the low imagination.
Distrust, believe her not, be mindful.

And invoke great Hermes. Distrust the mortal mind,
It fills a false Elysium and Borboros with fancy shapes.

During the last lines the ritual dance led by the female mask, which expresses exaggerated vanity and is decked out with vulgar ostentation, is joined by more figures of demons and of genii who are slight caricatures of real ones.

Chorus: Pray to the gods, awake, lend them no force.

Psyche stirs with an effort to awaken from the nightmare. She lifts an arm, passes it over her eyes; it sinks back. The demons fade.

Enters Triptolemus with a lighted torch. He is played by the Hierophant of Eleusis and wears the purple Asiatic cloak with narrow sleeves. Silently he stands over the sleeper, and his being expresses calm, infinite compassion, stern, conscious love. This is the Good Shepherd. He touches her on the forehead but she cannot see him, except in her dream.

He lowers his torch. Simultaneously the erynies appear in the background; a close knit group with masks and live snakes coiled round their heads and necks. They advance as one, taking short leaps and shaking their torches at the sleeping figure.

She turns away as if in anguish and hides her head in her arm. While the Chorus speaks she turns as if giving them half a backward glance, but quickly hides her head again.

Chorus: Do not look back or the erynies will get you
And cast you back into the pit, and this is second death.
There is no going back, only a going forward or a going under.
The sacred precinct shields you from their wrath,
Enter, remain therein; it is in you.
Cast down the burden of past folly and enchantment,
The dreaded sisters thrive on false remorse and the wrong
memory.

Give up your suffering, lend it no force.
Remember who you were from the beginning,
A child of starry heaven, pure, unspoilt,⁶
Freed from obsession with past wrong and old desire
You shall face Triptolemus, Judge of Dead and Living.

Psyche moves and slowly rises to her feet. She opens her eyes. While the erylies stay in the background she moves slowly about as if looking for an exit. When she cannot discover one her movements register disquietude and anguish.

Chorus: Winged Hermes travels light, and so must you.
 Divest yourself of wishing, willing and imagining,
 Know that nothing is yours, nothing is needed
 On this journey save the eidolon.

Psyche takes off her necklace, armbands and tunic. She remains in a short white peplum, symbol of the eidolon or vehicle, the body; or what is essential in contrast to what is inessential and acquired. The erylies fade. It is dark.

A pause. When it grows light Psyche is not there. Enters Demeter, holding aloft her torch, clad in her seven dark veils. The part is played by the Hierophantess of Eleusis who moves with impressive dignity. She seeks her daughter.

Chorus (this is a dirge):

Kore, my child! I have scanned earth and sky
Asia and Europe, the blind, cruel sea,
The hidden mountain caves ever shrouded in mist
The crowded cities of the East. In vain!
Forgetting and forgotten, my Beloved, by gods and men
You are yet present in a Mother's heart and
I shall wait, and never rest from toil until
My deathless eyes behold you once again.
But who can show a way?

Demeter sits down and veils herself. Enter Hecate from the other entrance. Growling and alert, three powerful dogs strain a chain she firmly holds. They are the fierce trained animals that guard the temple precinct which it is forbidden to enter without permission. In the Dromena they symbolize the three-headed dog of Hecate, which stands for right attention in the Eleusinian teaching. Hecate is the goddess who guards this teaching and keeps it alive in the home, in everyday life. She guards t/ic mysteries, she guards the family.

Hecate: Revered Deo, you have called and here I am.
 Come with the speed of wind from my cavernous home⁷
 For it is I who heard Persephone
 And I can show a way; for did you not
 Entrust me with the sacred fire of the earth, the hearth?
 I watch in the deep gloom, my triple-headed guardian
 Well knows the way of Love, the secret path.
 Prescribing and recording I precede and follow.

Demeter has risen and has greeted. Hecate with a gesture of joy and hope. The goddesses meet in the centre and embrace. Then Demeter comes forward and raises her arms as if addressing heaven:

Chorus: Cronide, brother, you who are the Power
 Hear me who am Love. By your dark thunderclouds
 I swear: I shall not rest from toil nor wear
 Immortal youth, nor dwell in my true home until
 I find and bring to you our child, the human soul.

She turns and faces Hecate. With a gesture she beckons to her to lead the way. Hecate bows to her, the goddesses leave.

Follows a interval of perfect starlit silence. The mustai become aware how still it has become; even the distant sea is sleeping, and this hour animal life is hushed. But now, from the hillside some distance away, comes the sound of flutes, a slow dirge which gathers some momentum, then breaks off and starts again on a livelier note. This is no coincidence but part of the Dromena. Some hieraules, consecrated musicians, have been waiting in the hills for a light signal from the Telesterion, and, are now playing parts of an ancient Phrygian shepherd's song recorded by Orpheus and his followers. They symbolize the 'Satyrs' or thyrsos-bearers, the voice of the mysteries reaching the soul engrossed and lost in sense-based life, and we imagine them moving with lighted torches through the dense woods, espied from afar.

Perhaps wakened by the sound, the cocks of Eleusis begin to crow on nearby and distant farms⁸

It grows imperceptibly lighter. Dew has begun to fall.

Psyche has come in and, as if seeing the thyrsos bearers in the distance, above the heads of the spectators, has slowly raised her arms in a gesture of hope and humble greeting.

Chorus: Psyche, Beloved of the gods, rejoice!
The flutes of Pan, the cocks of Eleusis mark the end of night.

Enter in a single file, Triptolemus the Torch-Bearer, and three epopts carrying a seat, a white folded fleece, and a torch. They place the seat next to what seemed a couch, and, is now being uncovered. It is the sacred cist of Demeter made of wood and carved in relief.

The following action closely corresponds to the one in the myth of Demeter.

One epopt places the fleece on the seat. Another leads Psyche to it and beckons to her to sit down which she does, with her back to the audience. The third places the lighted torch in her hand. The first opens the cist and extracts the objects of the cult one by one. The figurantes stay in a row, as on a vase-painting or frieze and pass the objects from hand to hand.

Triptolemus stands in front of Psyche. First, a veil is taken from the cist and placed over Psyche's head.

Chorus: Initiation is death.
Initiation is a marriage.
Be seated on the fleece of the slain god.
Receive the veil of ignorance;
Mystae, veiled one I declare you.
To know that you know nought is the new knowledge,
Dwell in it fast and sealed, speak not.
Humbly, remain unseen of men.
Before you would go up, you must go down.
Put out your torch, unlearn your human thoughts.

Psyche lowers her torch.

Unlearn your love and face your solitude,
Let Pluto's darkness come upon you fully.
Relight your torch, kindled of divine truth,
Follow the Guide whom you love.

Triptolemus kindles her torch on his own. The cyceon is taken from the cist and handed to Triptolemus. Psyche removes her veil from her face and receives the drink.

Chorus: I offer you the body of the god mixed
With the holy plant that bestows unity.
Now, distant, hardly known, hardly believed
The voice of Eleusis sounds for you.

A branch of laurel, or of pine topped with a cone is taken from the cist and held aloft. Psyche, still with her back to the audience, looks at it over her shoulder.

Chorus: Behold the golden bough; a branch
Of the vast, ever growing universe.
Green thyrsos, ever green! locked up
In it the great Fertility. Wand,
Too, of the awakened will, new Life.
It shall be yours.

The thyrsos is handed to Psyche.

Now face the Judge, the Master of the Carriage.

Psyche turns and faces Triptolemus for the first time.

Face him with a heart light as summer winds
For now ascent begins, if you are ready.

At this moment the flutes accompanied by cymbals are heard again much nearer, perhaps within the enclosure of the Telesterion, and their tune is urgent and joyful. A sigh, a shiver of deep feeling and enthusiasm runs through the rows of mustai. When the tune has been played the instruments fade with the exception of a single flute. Crescendo it accompanies the following words.

Chorus: Broken the troubled silence of a sleeping world
Forget dark Erebus, blind Night, shed the low dream,
And meet the dawn, the hope, new Birth of man.

The flute stops. The sea, stirred by the morning winds that blow towards the shore, sounds in the distance, like the sea heard in a shell. It is dawn. A formation of early birds, storks or wild geese on their way south pass overhead and their cry cleaves the air. Slowly the dawn colours.

Chorus: Ascend, and heed the Master of your Chariot,⁹
Divine Guide, lest you fall down, and fall again,
Hurled back into the slimy mud of Tartaros.
Control the body, rein the dual passions,
Stay watchful in the centre, harmonized
By greater Mind of godlike Knowledge.
Press forward, join our throng, do not delay
Pass on the light you have received in sacred orgy
Enter and see the Light, be freed from evil.
Before the light of day our torches pale.

Triptolemus extinguishes his torch and with him the others. The single flute begins again, and to its rhythm, as in a bridal procession, he leads Psyche off the scene, the epopts follow. A clear golden September day announces itself, a faint mist rises from the grass.

Chorus: They have departed, they are lost from sight.
Ascend, ascend, unfettered, free of bondage!
Forward each steed is straining to the light.¹⁰
Winged the chariot and the charioteer
Winged the loving soul, and crowned like a bride-¹¹

Just then the first rays of a rising sun fall into the Telesterion. They fall on the Hierophantess who emerges from behind the altar. She is dressed in Demeter's red-golden cloak. With both hands she raises a sheaf of freshly cut corn heavy with ripeness, and she lifts it towards the sun.

The single voice of the Hierophant of Eleusis rings out like a clarion, decisive and with solemn emphasis.

Hierophant: Unless a grain fall into the ground and die
It cannot grow into an ear of corn.
Before you could be born, you had to die
Before you died, you had to be awakened.
This is the mystery of Eleusis.

The Hierophantess lowers her arms and bows over the corn. She seems Demeter who has found what has long been lost.

Hierophant: It has been done
It will be done
It is done.

Chorus, on a low deep note, spontaneously joined by the audience:

It is done.¹²

Hierophant: A destiny has found a perfect end.¹³

All intone a hymn. While it is sung two epheboi bring in the plemochai, ritual vessels filled with water mixed with wine; holding them aloft, they empty them to the east and west as an emblem of the blessing of Eleusinian teaching flowing into Greece. When the hymn is ended the chorus speaks:

EPILOGUE

GUARD golden mysteries of holy fear
To nourish mortal souls
Whose voice the seal of silent awe controls
Imprinted by the priest of Eleusis.¹⁴



THE HALOA

D ECEMBER at Eleusis. A Festival in honour of the great Principle of Fertility. Poseidon¹ Pluto, Zeus, and Dionysos, Mainly celebrated by women, who have come to Eleusis with gifts of corn and sea food. This is the season when they perform on the dancing grounds near Demeter's well. A priestess of Eleusis speaks to them.

THE YEAR draws to its close.

Let us look back my friends, as a ploughman looks back along the narrow-ing furrow. What have we sown, what reaped in the past year? What taken in, applied and understood?

Do you now know, in parts, what we began to teach before the Festival of Spring?

Have you begun to die? Have you begun to die to your titanic nature? Have you begun to see your inner gloom, and violence and evil, fear? Your vanity and greed and sorry pride?

Have you begun to grasp that to be mystae does not mean to be a being apart, and better than barbarian or slave, or ordinary citizen of Pallas' home, but merely one who sees, and who begins to know himself in humble silence?

Recall to mind the teaching of the year and see if you have changed.

The seed you planted last year in your field, has it begun to sprout?²

And there are those that ever learn yet never know. They are like one who ever ploughs yet never sows.³

At all times it is true that many are the bearers of the narthex, few the disciples of Iacchos.⁴

Many have here received instruction, but only those who strive can grow through their decline.

To be an epopt or a true bacchante is to know union with Iacchos. If you have Iacchos in the heart, he will be in your mind and limb.

You have brought corn and wine; offer yourselves in a like manner, hold not back. As you offer your womb to the male seed and bear your sons in pain, open your selves to the great fertilizing Powers. To be born woman is to know that we must labour to be beautiful.⁵

Make your new life, and feed it tenderly. Receive the Light and it shall fill your being.

Then, in great Harvesting you shall not be cast out, you will not be found wanting.

The life that you have fed, the Kouros, Son, shall be a part of a great cosmic dance.



THE ELEUSINIAN YEAR

I

THE DAYS grow longer. Pluto yields his riches,
Kore returns, the blossom-bringer, Power in the Tree¹
She comes to Demeter at Agrai on the Ilisus.
Low golden willows dust the whirling brook.
Pan in his cave, withdrawn, is All in all.
Artemis leads the choir of the Muses
And we have come together for a hymn of praise;
The young and old, the happy and bereaved,
Joy, joy, o joy and adoration!
Released from self we revel in great Being
O life in death, Dionysos, golden breath.
The goddess leads, like maenads let us leap with gladness,
Of horned Iacchos, Kore, and the Mother let us chant together.

II

The deer lies panting in the mountain cave.
Lulled by the sapless plaint of Tithoneus¹
A pregnant hamadryad by the brook combs straight green hair,
The fibre thickens in the leaf and skin,
The fruit swells in the womb and on the bough,
Falling, it marks the hour in the silent orchard.
Gone the fine frenzy of the early hope:
We live with our love, and bear and work,
Like Delian bees we seek, now find, now lose²
Dusk brings relief. Above the darkening hall
The Hunter and his Dog stalk the black Night.
We watch his fulgent rise, we hail the harvest-bringer.³

III

Reflected in the molten silver of swift flowing rivers
The island poplars darken once again.¹
The Pleiades are sinking; bare the plain, the threshing floor
The hallowed dancing ground.²
Fruit scents nocturnal orchards, gift of great Eumolpus.³
The deepening blood of Zagreus streaks cold hills
Beneath the golden leaf and tendril swells the purple grape.
We honour our Dead.⁴
We break the boat shaped bread in memory of a journey
And a flowering mast.⁵
A grain fell in the furrow, died, and was reborn
As an ear of corn.
The ripened corn was threshed for the holy loaf.
The bread is shared and
Shall become the joyful ecstasy of union with God.

IV

Winter has come, the Forces are withdrawn.
Low drift the clouds across a vast, blind sea.
The Tritons hiss and bellow in the caves
We scan the sea and sky. We hunt in the lone marsh,
The hills scented with thyme and rain, the
Rotting acorn, pine, the furtive boar.
We sit around the hearth, we spin and weave the cloth,
We offer our tripod to Hecate;
Daily we learn to bear our imperfections.
O fruitful dark, o stillness, silent wait, unfolding,
O life in death, the rightness of all things.



NOTES

The Eleusinian Myth of Demeter and the Rape of Kore.

- 1 No doubt an oral tradition existed previous to the hymn, and also earlier writings that have been lost. The Homeric hymn was preserved for a long time on mount Athos. An Orphic hymn tells of Demeter's arrival at Eleusis as the guest of Dysaules, the ill-housed, and his wife Baubo, the Anatolian goddess. Demeter taught their son Eubuleus, the swine herd, and Triptolemus. Other traditions speak of MUSAION and EUMOLPUS, son and grandson, or else disciples of Orpheus. Eumolpus founded the priestly dynasty of ELEUSIS. On accession the Hierophant laid down name and assumed the name of MUSAION or EUMOLPUS alternatively. Orphic hymns are short and compressed, Homeric hymns are long and descriptive.

The Homeric hymn falls into four sections: the Rape of Kore; the tale of failure over Demophoon; the Institution of the Mysteries; the ascent of Persephone, and the Myth of the Chariot elaborated by Plato in the Phaidros.

The Eleusinian theory of the soul can be considered the inspiration of Greek transcendental philosophy.

- 2 Legendary Nysa, birthplace of Dionysos, here thought to be in Caria.
- 3 On a blue and white frieze of Knossos the young god is depicted picking saffron. The Titans have lured him out of bounds.

- 4 Narcissus Orientalis of Asia Minor. It grows on the shores of the Bosphorus, in Ionia, Anatolia and Syria. A tall stem breaks into multiple blossoms. Though they are small the scent is very strong.
- 5 Callirhoe, the traditional well of Eleusis with a dancing ground for women nearby.
- 6 Pausanias gives them names reminiscent of Thracian tribes.
- 7 This saying occurs many times in Greek literature.
- 8 The following ritual action was included in the Dromena. The sacred drink was called the Cyceon. The plant a kind of fern or mint.
- 9 Not over ghosts but over the living on earth.
- 10 The pomegranate, a symbol of forgetfulness. It grew on the spot where Orestes had slain his brother and on the tomb of suicides.

The Lesser Mysteries I

- 1 A line from a Boeotian poet.
- 2 Divine lightning kills and thus bestows eternal life.
- 3 Plutarch. On the Ei of Delphes.
- 4 Abstention from mourning was part of the Pythagorean purification. Diogenes Laertius VIII 317.

The Lesser Mysteries II

- 1 W. B. Yeats. Two Songs from a Play.
- 2 The Murder of the Centaur Nessus by Hercules. Diodorus of Sicily IV 14.
- 3 From the Amazon queen Hippolyta.

Some scholars believe that the Amazons were Hittite consecrated warriors.

- 4 These various functions and attributes of Artemis are given by several ancient authors. Artemis is another aspect of the Mother deity. She is an Asiatic. Artimus Ibismus in Lydia. A cone-shaped idol with a female bearded head in Perga, that seems a triangle or mountain to the eye, the same as the bi-sexual Aphrodite of Cyprus and the great Mother of vanished Pessinunt. The one-shaped goddess is also Aegean.
- 5 The difference between exoteric and esoteric teaching is noted by Clement of Alexandria, among others.
- 6 The "Thronismos", part of the purification ceremony. The mystagogues dance round the candidate seated in a chair, beating bronze instruments.
- 7 Dion Chrysostomos XII 387 (202).
- 8 Plato. Euthydemus 277 c.
- 9 Euripides. Bacchae.
- 10 Every inhabitant of united Attica was called an Athenian. Barbarians were admitted if they spoke Greek and settled in the country. But all through antiquity thoughtful individuals travelled in order to study the various schools.
- 11 This is conjectural. Some schools used drugs. But the fields of the black poppy are first heard of in the Osmanli period. Karahissar, the "Fort of the Black Poppy", now stands in ruins above the modern town.
The corybantes of the Phrygian Cybele were known for their orgiastic dances.
- 12 Mezulla refers to the myth of Telepinu recorded in cuneiform writing on clay tablets, published in translation by Gotze and other Hittite scholars. It is a fertility myth similar to those of Sumer, Egypt, and to that of Kore. Telepin descends and drought ensues. The great goddess sends the bees to find him.

The Lesser Mysteries III

- 1 Here emblem of the fertility demon; of the energy, sexual power.
- 2 R. Cathartica. Purging Buckthome. Used with tar to remove unclean spirits during the Anthesteria.
- 3 The fleece of a Ram, Zeus Codion. The golden fleece. We meet with it in the Dromena; in the spring festival the initiate places his left foot on it to symbolize participation in the everlasting sacrifice of the dying god. Bronze purifies, the noise keeps evil influences at bay.
- 4 Of birth and death.

The Major Mysteries I

- 1 Kerykes: descendant of Keryx, son of Hermes, initiate who lives at Eleusis.
- a Les Mysteres d'Eleusis. V Magnien. Payot Paris. P 353.
- 3 Plotinus.
- 4 Synesius. De providentia II 4.
- 5 Definitions given by ancient authors.
- 6 Plato. Phaidros 229 b.

The Major Mysteries II

- 1 I saw such dancing in the streets of Izmir during Kurban Bayram, a harvest festival held in September.
- 2 "Halade mustai" ("Into the sea, ye initiates!") was the call to the ritual bath.

The Major Mysteries III

- 1 Iacchos is Phanes, and Phanes is Dionysos. The symbol here of divine consciousness.

The Dromena I

- 1 Of the original Telesterion no trace has been found.

The Dromena II

- 1 The obvious garment to wear during nocturnal orgies and during the ceremonial dances in honour of the dying god that were sometimes held on the snowy summit of a mountain. Participants of religious ceremonies are seen wearing them on early seals of Asia Minor. The mustai are the descendants of a long line of "satyrs".
- 2 The usual type of early Greek warship was the pentecoster, or 'fifty-oar', a long narrow galley with 23 benches with two oarsmen at each. It came into use about the 8th century, and in Homeric poems appears as something wonderful.
- 3 Paraphrase from W. B. Yeats. The Second Coming.
- 4 On the low and the high dream: T. S. Eliot. Essay on Dante. Also: Proclus MS. Commentary of the first Alcibiades of Plato: ". . . in the most holy of the mysteries (i.e. the Mysteries) prior to the manifest presence of the god certain terrene daemons present themselves to the view, disturbing those that are initiates, divulging them from the undefiled good, and exciting them to matter. . .". I believe he speaks of imagination in the spiritual life.
- 5 Suidas. Aristophanes. Frogs.
- 6 Suidas. Lexicon: Pneumaticon Soma: "luminous vehicle which is of the nature of the stars, is eternal and is nevertheless imprisoned in the body".
- 7 The cave of Hecate was shown at Eleusis. Legend places Hecate at crossroads, i.e., the soul meets her at moments of decision, of birth and death, and there she is either terrible or benevolent. The initiate learns Gnome, the power of right decision. At times Hecate is close to Artemis: both are representations of esoteric work.
- 8 Fowl was not eaten at Eleusis, but was an article of export from the bay of Salamis.

- 9 "Plato was not the first to take the chariot and the horses but before him those poets who were divinely inspired, Homer, Orpheus, Parmenides". Hermias. On the Phaidros of Plato.
- 10 Paraphrase of a line from Sophocles.
- 11 Eros has wings.
- 13 The meaning of drama evolved from seasonal rites is correctly translated as "The thing done". (Christ on the cross had said: "It is finished"). Again, Aristotle given as the etymology of the word "drama" a Dorian term "dran", to act, with a significance of religious character which its synonym "prattein" does not have. Encyclopedia Britannica.
- 13 Sophocles. Oedipus at Colonos.
- 14 Sophocles. Oedipus at Colonos.

The Halao

- 1 Poseidon was not originally a sea-god only, he merges with Zeus Chthonion, and Erechtheus, and is another form of the great fertility demon of antiquity. The snake is his sacred animal.
- 2 Paraphrase from the "Waste Land".
- 3 Inscription in a British School in Argentina.
- 4 Plato. Phedon.
- 5 W. B. Yeats. Adam's Curse.

The Eleusinian Year — I

- 1 Epithets of Dionysos, Bacchae, Euripides.

II

- 1 Tithoneus, the cikada. The mortal husband of Aurora. She asked Zeus to grant him immortality, but the request was wrongly formulated. Tithoneus received eternal life in time, and he grew old but cannot die.
- 2 The bee-women or prophetesses of Thriess who taught the art of mantic to Apollo. They were represented with their heads covered with golden

pollen. In the ancient and mediaeval Near Orient the bee symbolized the Lover of God. See Hittite and Sufi literature. Greek hierophantesses and the priestesses of the Ephesian Artemis were called Melissai.

- 3 Orion and Arctophonos or Sirius. These are the dog days. Canicula in Rome.

III

- 1 These lines were inspired by a hauntingly beautiful passage in Cyril Conolly's "The Unquiet Grave".

2 In Crete and prehistoric Greece the fates of Dionysos were sung and dances after the harvest on "therae", consecrated threshing floors.

3 Eumolpus is recorded to have introduced horticulture to Attica.

4 The dead ancestors. The dead teachers is the inner meaning; whose "communication is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living".

5 Homeric hymn of Dionysos. Ravished by Thyrronian pirates he changed them into dolphins and himself into a lion. The mast began to flower and bear grapes.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Frontispiece. Triptolemus between Demeter, Persephone and the priestess of Eleusis.

Title-page, The child in the cauldron.

18 Pandora vising from the Earth.

21 A school of harmony.

28 A Doric telesterion.

39 Pluto, Poseidon and Zeus.

40 Demeter, Hermes, Persephone and Dionysios.

47 Nature under the Sun.

(Those on the frontispiece, title-page and pages 18, 38, 40, 47 after C. Kerényi, 'The Gods of the Greeks', that on page 5 by G. H.; that on, page 21 after Edmand Pettier, 'Douris and the Painters of Greek Vases'; and that an page 28 from Hermann Leicht, 'A History of the World's Art').