

Jan N. Bremmer

Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World

Münchener Vorlesungen zu Antiken Welten



Herausgegeben vom
Münchener Zentrum für Antike Welten (MZAW)

Band 1

Jan N. Bremmer

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DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-029929-8
e-ISBN 978-3-11-029955-7
ISSN 2198-9664



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2014 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
The book is published with open access at www.degruyter.com.

Typesetting: jürgen ullrich typesatz, Nördlingen
Printing: CPI books GmbH, Leck
☉ Printed on acid-free paper
Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

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Preface

Whoever takes the trouble to google the term ‘mysterious’, will get approximately 42 million hits, and the term ‘mystery’ will give more than 114 million: there can be little doubt that people all over the world like mysteries.¹ However, in the course of its long existence, the word has undergone several changes in meaning: its present connotation of ‘secret’ is not found before the New Testament (Ch. VI.3). In the 1930s and 1940s, ‘mystery’ became associated with comics and *Trivialliteratur* in the USA about detectives battling monsters,² and it was this that eventually led to ‘mystery’ being used to denote a detective story.

Mystery originally appeared in Greek in the plural, *Mystêria*, as the name of the festival that we currently call the Eleusinian Mysteries (Ch. I), just as other names of Greek festivals are in the plural, such as Anthesteria, Thargelia and Dionysia. For obscure reasons, the Romans used the term *initia*, also plural, to translate *Mysteria*, and this usage became the basis of our term initiation,³ whereas Latin *mysterium*, eventually, became our ‘mystery’.⁴ Unfortunately, the etymology of *mystêrion* is not wholly clear. Generations of scholars have connected *mystêrion* with the Greek verb *myô*, which means ‘to close the lips or eyes’, and they have explained it as referring to Demeter’s commandment in her *Homeric Hymn* (478–479) to keep the rites secret. This assumption may be correct if *mystêrion* contains a secondary -s-, like many other Greek words. More recently, Hittite scholars have explained the Greek term from the Hittite verb *munnâe*, meaning ‘to conceal, to hide, to shut out of sight’, rather than ‘keep secret, be silent about’.⁵ If we take into account that some of the oldest Mysteries, those of Eleusis and of the Kabeiroi, probably devel-

1 Google, accessed 20 December 2013.

2 J. Symons, *Bloody Murder. From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History* (London, 1972) 134–142; H. Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective. Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford, 2011).

3 ThLL s.v. *initio*, *initium*; H. Wagenvoort, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden, 1956) 150–168 (‘Initia Cereris’, first published in 1948), to be added to P. Borgeaud, ‘Les mystères’, in L. Bricault and C. Bonnet (eds), *Panthée: Religious Transformations in the Graeco-Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2013) 131–144 at 138–140.

4 But note that ‘mystery’ in the expression ‘mystery play’ derives from Latin *ministerium* not *mysterium*.

5 N. Oettinger, *Die Stammbildung des hethitischen Verbums* (Nuremberg, 1979) 161–162; J. Puhvel, ‘Secrecy in Hittite: *munnâi*- vs. *sanna*-’, *Incontri linguistici* 27 (2004) 101–104 and *Hittite Etymological Dictionary, M* (Berlin and New York, 2004) 188–192; A. Kloekhorst, *Etymological Dictionary of the Hittite Inherited Lexicon* (Leiden, 2008) 587–588; R. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2010) 2.988. I am most grateful to Norbert Oettinger for advice regarding the etymology.

oped out of ancient rites of tribal initiation,⁶ their secrecy may well be the factor that distinguished them from other rites, for all over the world rites of initiation are highly secret. As we will also see shortly (Ch. I.4), the historical Greeks gave a different interpretation to the secrecy of the Mysteries, but the fact that the second stage of the Eleusinian initiation was called *Epopteia*, ‘Viewing’ (Ch. I.3), may mean that (some?) Greeks themselves interpreted the first stage, the *Myêsis*, as ‘Closing the eyes’. We simply do not know.

In ancient Greece, religion was very much controlled by the city, the *polis*, to such an extent that in the last few decades scholars preferred to speak of *polis* religion.⁷ Yet this focus on the city as the all-controlling authority in ancient Greek religion certainly goes too far; it has been pointed out very recently that there were areas, such as magic and eschatology, where the influence of the city must have been minimal.⁸ Another of these areas was the special type of cult that the Greeks called ‘Mysteries’.⁹ They thus gave the name that had originally denoted only the Eleusinian Mysteries also to other cults in other places, although terms, such as *teletê* and *orgia*, the ancestor of our ‘orgies’, were used as well.¹⁰

The modern study of and collection of evidence for the ancient Mysteries, in particular the Eleusinian Mysteries, started in the early seventeenth century with-

6 Eleusis: Bremmer, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1999²) 85 = *La religion grecque* (Paris, 2012) 128; R. Gordon, ‘Mysterienreligion’, in *RGG*⁴ 5 (2002) 1638–1640. Kabeiroi: this volume, Ch. II.2. The connection was exaggerated by earlier students of the Mysteries, such as K.H.E. de Jong, *Das antike Mysterienwesen in religionsgeschichtlicher, ethnologischer und psychologischer Beleuchtung* (Leiden, 1909, 1919²) and R. Pettazzoni, *I misteri* (Bologna, 1924, repr. Cosenza, 1997). For the former, see J.J. Poortman, ‘Karel Hendrik Eduard de Jong (Biebrich, 9 februari 1872 – Zeist, 27 december 1960)’, *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden* 1960–1961, 89–93. For the latter (1883–1959), see G. Casadio, ‘Introduzione: Raffaele Pettazzoni a cinquant’anni dalla morte’, *SMSR* 77 (2011) 27–37 and ‘Raffaele Pettazzoni ieri, oggi, domani: la formazione di uno storico delle religioni e il suo lascito intellettuale’, in G.P. Basello *et al.* (eds), *Il mistero che rivelato ci divide e sofferto ci unisce* (Milan, 2012) 221–240.

7 Although it has become popular through the influence of Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1945–2007) and Robert Parker, the term seems to have appeared first in R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1910¹) 3 (‘Polis-Religion’).

8 Bremmer, ‘*Manteis*, Magic, Mysteries and Mythography: Messy Margins of Polis Religion?’, *Kernos* 23 (2010) 13–35; E. Eidinow, ‘Networks and Narratives: A Model for Ancient Greek Religion’, *Kernos* 24 (2011) 9–38; J. Rüpke, ‘Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning “Cults” and “Polis Religion”’, *Mythos* ns 5 (2011) 191–204; J. Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 2012).

9 For collections of sources, see N. Turchi, *Fontes historiae mysteriorum aevi hellenistici* (Rome, 1923); P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002).

10 K. Dunbabin, ‘Domestic Dionysus? Telete in Mosaics from Zeugma and the Late Roman Near East’, *JRA* 21 (2008) 193–224; F. Schuddeboom, *Greek Religious Terminology – Telete & Orgia: A Revised and Supplemented English Edition of the Studies by Zijdeveld and Van der Burg* (Leiden, 2009).

in the framework of religious debates between Protestants and Roman-Catholics about the Last Supper. In a learned discussion, the Huguenot Isaac Casaubon (Ch. VI.2) showed that the terminology of the Mysteries had been incorporated into the language of the early Christian Church. Casaubon was a reliable philologist, but many other scholars went beyond the available evidence and tried to fill out the gap in our knowledge left by the secrecy of the Eleusinian Mysteries (Ch. I.4). In the Age of Enlightenment, which was also the age of secret societies such as the Freemasons and Rosicrucians (Ch. VI.2), the Mysteries became a popular subject and could be seen as the place where the enlightened elite was educated, where monotheism was taught or where the immortality of the soul was affirmed, to mention only some of the more imaginative treatises.¹¹

This growing interest in the Mysteries was also reflected at the verbal level by the emergence, from the 1780s, of the German term *Mysterienreligion*, initially also written as *Mysterien-Religion*. The plural *Mysterienreligionen* does not seem to occur before the 1880s, which was precisely the moment that scholars began to construct a picture of a group of Oriental cults which invaded the Roman Empire, and perhaps even became a rival to emerging Christianity.¹² In English, the term ‘mystery religion’ first appears occasionally in the later nineteenth century and is probably a calque on the German expression, as is suggested by its early occurrence in the English translation of Adolf von Harnack’s great *Dogmengeschichte* (1886–1890).¹³ The earlier discussions usually began from the idea that the Greek Mysteries derived from the Egyptian Mysteries (Ch. V.1), but this view was demolished by Christian August Lobeck (1781–1860) in his famous *Aglaophamus*, where he demonstrated that the Mysteries had not been imported from the Orient and that the Orphics (Ch. III) were in fact Greeks. Lobeck, though a skeptical minimalist, may thus be acknowledged as the first scholar to have studied the Mysteries in a modern manner.¹⁴

11 Cf. M. Mulsow, ‘Michael Hißmann und Christoph Meiners über die eleusinischen Mysterien’, in H.F. Klemme *et al.* (eds), *Michael Hißmann (1752–1784). Ein materialistischer Philosoph der deutschen Aufklärung* (Berlin, 2012) 147–156; A. Ben-Tov, ‘The Eleusinian Mysteries in the Age of Reason: Lack of Knowledge between Orthodoxy and Profanation’, in idem and M. Mulsow (eds), *Knowledge of Religion as Profanation* (Dordrecht, 2014).

12 *Mysterienreligion*: F. Plessing, *Memnonium oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Alterthums*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1787) 1.108, 144 (‘Mysterien-Religion’), 256 (‘MysterienReligion’); W. Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie*, 4 vols (Leipzig, 1792–1795) 1.72 (‘Mysterien-Religion’). *Mysterienreligionen*: E. Lübbert, *Pindar’s Leben und Dichtungen* (Bonn, 1882) 17 (‘Mysterien-Religionen’).

13 A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols (London, 1894–1899) 2.340 (1896).

14 C.A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus sive de theologiae mysticae graecorum causis, libri tres*, 2 vols (Königsberg, 1829). For Lobeck, see M. Lossau, ‘Christian August Lobeck (1781–1860)’, in

Through the centuries, Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians continued to bicker over the influence of the Mysteries on emerging Christianity, but around 1900 increasing secularisation resulted in several studies that tried to explain Christianity as emerging from what they called Mystery religions (Ch. VI.1).¹⁵ The most influential were the Protestant Richard Reitzenstein's *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (1910) and the lapsed Roman Catholic Alfred Loisy's *Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien* (1919).¹⁶ The work that really caught the imagination of the wider public was *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, the classic study of the Mysteries and their associated 'Oriental religions' by the great Belgian scholar, Franz Cumont (1868–1947).¹⁷ In his book, first published in 1906 and translated into many languages, Cumont put the Mysteries to the fore in his argument. Their rituals, he argued, allowed the pagan believers to display their faith and, in this respect, these pagan Mysteries prepared the way for Christianity and were even competitors of Christianity.¹⁸ Among the Mysteries, it was especially those of Mithras that fascinated Cumont and to which he dedicated various books and studies.¹⁹

D. Rauschnig and D. von Nerée (eds), *Die Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg und ihre Professoren* (Berlin, 1995) 283–293.

15 For a detailed study of the various authors, see A. Lannoy, *Het christelijke mysterie: de relatie tussen het vroege christendom en de heidense mysterieculen in het denken van Alfred Loisy en Franz Cumont, in de context van de modernistische crisis* (Diss. Ghent, 2012) 170–235; add the bibliography in V. Krech, *Wissenschaft und Religion. Studien zur Geschichte der Religionsforschung in Deutschland 1871 bis 1933* (Tübingen, 2002) 261–265.

16 R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (1910¹, 1927³) = *Hellenistic Mystery Religions*, tr. J.E. Stealy (Pittsburg, 1978); A. Loisy, *Les mystères païens et le mystère chrétien* (Paris, 1919). For Reitzenstein (1861–1931), see, most recently, with full bibliography, Bremmer, 'Richard Reitzenstein's *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*', in T. Nicklas and J. Spittler (eds), *Credible, Incredible. The Miraculous in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Tübingen, 2013) 1–19. Loisy (1857–1940): Lannoy, *Het christelijke mysterie*, 237–358; special issue of *Mythos* ns 7 (2013).

17 For Cumont, see, especially, C. Bonnet, *La correspondance scientifique de Franz Cumont* (Turnhout, 1997) 1–67 and *Le "grand atelier de la science": Franz Cumont et l'Altuntumswissenschaft: héritages et émancipations*, 2 vols (Brussels, 2005); Lannoy, *Het christelijke mysterie*, 365–477 as well as the literature mentioned in note 25. For the associations evoked by the Orient in scholarly circles around 1900, see A. Bendlin, "'Eine wenig Sinn für Religiosität verratende Betrachtungsweise": Emotion und Orient in der römischen Religionsgeschichtsschreibung der Moderne', *ARG* 8 (2006) 227–256.

18 F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, ed. C. Bonnet and F. Van Haepen (Turin, 2006 = Paris, 1929⁴) 305: 'Toutes les dévotions venues du Levant ont pris la forme de mystères'. See also the excellent introduction by the editors, XI–LXXIV at XXXIX–XLIV.

19 See the informative introduction by N. Belayche and A. Mastrocinque to F. Cumont, *Les mystères de Mithra* (Turin 2013 = Brussels 1913) XIII–XC.

Liberal Protestant theology lost its attraction in the 1920s (Ch. VI.1), and Roman Catholics were forbidden by the Pope from freely researching the emergence of early Christianity, so Cumont's views long dominated the field of 'Oriental religions' and the importance of the Mysteries.²⁰ His views also stimulated the study of these religions by my compatriot Maarten J. Vermaseren.²¹ It was only in the 1970s and 1980s that Richard Gordon, Ramsay MacMullen and Walter Burkert started to undermine Cumont's ideas. Against Cumont, Gordon showed that the Mithras cult was not a Persian creation and stressed its Roman character;²² MacMullen argued that the 'Oriental religions' were much less important than Cumont had claimed;²³ Burkert pointed out that the 'Oriental religions' were cults rather than religions, that they were anyway not that Oriental and, moreover, that they did not all promise otherworldly salvation.²⁴ The studies that appeared in commemoration of the centenary of Cumont's book confirmed and strengthened these conclusions in a somewhat ambivalent celebration of the anniversary.²⁵

There are few modern books to help those who want to acquire a full and up-to-date view of the ancient Mysteries. Undoubtedly, the most interesting contemporary study is Burkert's *Ancient Mystery Cults* (1987), in which he analyses the Mysteries in a synchronic, thematic manner. This approach throws light on all kinds of aspects of the Mysteries, but does not illuminate their historical development or the logic of their rituals and so, in the end, remains somewhat unsatisfactory. Burkert defined Mysteries as 'initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred', and he begins his book with a chapter on 'Personal Needs in This Life and After Death'.²⁶ However, nothing indicates that any such change of mind was involved in

20 For the *status quo* until the 1970s, see the detailed surveys by K. Prümmer, 'Mystères', in *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Suppl. 6* (Paris, 1960) 1–225 and 'Mystery Religions, Greco-Oriental', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia X* (New York, 1967) 153–164.

21 For the influence of Vermaseren (1918–1985), see C. Bonnet and L. Bricault, 'Introduction', in *eid.*, *Panthée*, 1–14; see also G. Sanders, 'In memoriam Maarten J. Vermaseren', *Jaarboek Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België* 47 (1985) 309–317.

22 See his collected earlier articles on Mithraism, starting in 1972, in R. Gordon, *Image and Value in the Greco-Roman World* (Aldershot, 1996).

23 R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven and London, 1981) 112–130.

24 Burkert, *AMC*, 1–11. For the eschatological aspects, see also G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Après *Lux perpetua* de Franz Cumont: quelle eschatologie dans les "cultes orientaux" à mystères?', in Bricault and Bonnet, *Panthée*, 145–167.

25 See especially C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Religions orientales – culti misterici* (Stuttgart, 2006); C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Religioni in contatto nel Mediterraneo antico = Mediterranea 4* (Pisa, 2008); C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain: cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)* (Brussels and Rome, 2009).

26 Burkert, *AMC*, 11 (definition), 12–29 ('Personal Needs').

the Eleusinian Mysteries (Ch. I) or in the second most famous Greek Mysteries, those of Samothrace; the latter long seem to have catered only to sailors and their wish for safety at sea (Ch. II.1). Burkert was evidently still under the influence of Cumont at this point. And anyway, what does ‘experience’ mean in this case? Did people have all and always the same experience? How do we know their experience?²⁷

In fact, ‘the variety of mystery cults makes them exceptionally difficult to summarise both briefly and accurately’.²⁸ Consequently, the most recent attempts to define the Greek Mysteries are much more cautious and abstain from a catch-all definition.²⁹ They usually agree that important characteristics shared by all these cults are secrecy and an emotionally impressive initiatory ritual.³⁰ To this I would add their voluntary character (*passim*),³¹ nocturnal performance (Ch. I n. 57), preliminary purification (*passim*), the obligation to pay for participation (*passim*), rewards promised for this life and that of the next (*passim*), and the fact that the older Mysteries were all situated at varying distances from the nearest city (*passim*). With the exception of the Mithras cult (Ch. V.2), they also seem to have been open to male and female, slave and free, young and old (*passim*). In that respect they differed from the normal *polis* festivals, which were usually accessible to men or women only or to the free with the exclusion of slaves; only rarely were they all-encompassing.

Beyond these general characteristics, we also need to differentiate between, on the one hand, Mystery cults that were attached to a special location, such as those of Aegina (Ch. IV.1.3), Eleusis (Ch. I), Lemnos (Ch. II.2), Samothrace (Ch. II.1) and the Peloponnesian Mysteries (Ch. IV.1.1, 2), and, on the other hand, wandering Mysteries which were not tied to a specific sanctuary but were instead

²⁷ For a plea to historicise the concept of ‘experience’, see J.W. Scott, ‘The Evidence of Experience’, *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991) 773–797; R.H. Scarf, ‘Experience’, in M. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago and London, 1998) 94–115.

²⁸ R. Gordon, ‘Mysteries’, in S. Hornblower et al. (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, fourth edition (Oxford, 2012) 990–991 at 990.

²⁹ F. Graf, ‘Mysterien’, in *Der Neue Pauly* 8 (2000) 615–626 at 615–616; Gordon, ‘Mysterienreligion’, 1639–1640 and ‘Mysteries’, 990; S.I. Johnston, ‘Mysteries’, in ead. (ed.), *Religions of the Ancient World* (Cambridge MA and London, 2004) 98–111 at 98–99 and, especially, T.J. Wellman, ‘Ancient *Mystēria* and Modern Mystery Cults’, *Religion and Theology* 12 (2005) 308–348. Note also the informative account of the most recent research on the Mysteries by G. Casadio and P.A. Johnston, ‘Introduction’, in eid. (eds), *Mystic Cults in Magna Graecia* (Austin, 2009) 1–29.

³⁰ For the secrecy, see W. Burkert, ‘Le secret public et les mystères dits privés’, *Ktema* 23 (1998) 375–381.

³¹ For mystery cults and their interrelation with concepts of individuality and individuation, see K. Waldner, ‘Dimensions of Individuality in Ancient Mystery Cults: Religious Practice and Philosophical Discourse’, in J. Rüpke (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2013) 215–242.

propagated and spread by religious entrepreneurs, such as those of the Korybantes (Ch. II.3) and the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III).³² In the Roman period, the older Mysteries were joined by newer ones, in particular those of Isis and Mithras, which seem to have entailed a much closer relationship of the participants with their gods and with fellow initiates (Ch. V).

The aim of these initiations was not everywhere the same. Some, such as Eleusis, seem to have promised well-being and material happiness in this life and the next (Ch. I.4), those of Samothrace promised safety at sea (Ch. II.1), the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries offered an elite position in the afterlife (Ch. III.3), while the Korybantic initiators promised people a cure from madness (Ch. II.3). In later antiquity, the Mithras cult developed a specific cosmology and soteriology, which was not a feature of the earlier Mysteries (Ch. V). This variety means that we should probably be content to stress the Wittgensteinian family resemblances of the various Mysteries rather than attempt to offer an all-encompassing definition.³³ The fact that the Greeks and Romans called all these rituals *Mystêria* suggests that they saw above all similarities, whereas we moderns might be inclined to stress the differences.

It is not the aim of this book to present an exhaustive study of the ancient cults usually identified as Mysteries. My aim is simpler: I try, in as much detail as possible, to describe the actual initiation rituals of the best known Mystery cults. This was not done by Burkert, and his approach makes it hard to get an idea of what actually went on during these rites. I do not, in general, discuss the larger cult of the divinities of specific Mysteries, as a detailed study of Demeter and Persephone, the Kabeiroi, Isis or Mithras could easily fill a book by itself – and has often done so. I have made an exception for Orphism, as the number of new discoveries in recent decades has made it necessary to sketch a more up-to-date picture of this movement before we can set the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries in their proper context (Ch. III).

I have not rehearsed old debates but try to start from the new insights of the past decades and to introduce the reader to the latest scholarly literature, although in that respect I have had to be selective. The Mysteries still attract an inordinate amount of attention, and it is hard to stay abreast of even the reliable scholarly studies.³⁴ It is my hope, however, that the book will be a dependable

32 The few examples of Mysteries of Cybele also belong to this type, cf. G. Sfamini Gasparro, *Soteriology and Mystic Aspects in the Cult of Cybele and Attis* (Leiden, 1985) 20–25.

33 C. Ginzburg, 'Family Resemblances and Family Trees: Two Cognitive Metaphors', *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004) 537–556.

34 Cf. Gordon, 'Mysteries', 990: 'Their (i.e. Mystery cults) prominence in modern scholarship is quite disproportionate to their ancient profile'.

basis for future research. My study comes hot on the heels of Hugh Bowden's *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*, which is aimed at a more general readership.³⁵ I am happy to refer the reader to this richly illustrated work for plans of sanctuaries and iconographical representations of the initiations. It was impossible to compete in that respect, but my reader is perhaps compensated by the much more detailed analysis of the ancient evidence and modern discussions that is presented here.

35 H. Bowden, *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World* (London, 2010).

Acknowledgments

The basis of this book are the four public lectures I had the honour to give as the inaugural Gastprofessor für Kulturgeschichte des Altertums at the Münchner Zentrum für Antike Welten, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich, in the academic year 2011–2012. They appear here as Chapters I, III, V and VI: I have retained their oral character but have added notes. I cannot say enough how much my wife Christine and I enjoyed Munich in general and the LMU in particular, a really great university. I am particularly grateful to Klaus Vollmer and Martin Hose who did so much to bring us to Munich; Martin also introduced me to the past and present world of German Classics and academia, always being able to come up with interesting anecdotes and shrewd insights. From the immediate colleagues I would also like to mention Susanne Goedde, Stefan Ritter, Rolf Schneider and Walther Sallaberger as well as Peter Marinkovic and Klaus Baltzer, who equally did so much to make me feel at home. From the graduates, Martin Schrage, Verena Schulz and Isabella Wiegand in particular enriched our social life, as did our old friends Hans and Geertje Teitler-Morsink and our newly made friend Siegfried Friedenberger and others from Nihao; on a more practical level, I was greatly helped by my student assistants Johannes Isepy and Henry Gordon. Most of all, though, I would like to thank my secretary Sandra Zerbin who made my life in the university so pleasant with unflinching good humour and discreet efficiency: I still miss our coffee breaks, Sandra.

I continued to work on my lectures as a Visiting Research Scholar at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World in New York during the academic year 2012–2013. Here I also wrote two new chapters (Chapters II and IV) in order to present a more rounded picture of the ancient Mysteries. I am most grateful to the director Roger Bagnall for the chance to spend a year in this inspiring environment, where I profited from stimulating seminars by Luigi d'Alfonso, Rod Campbell and, especially, Robert Hoyland as well as from many pleasant conversations with Li Zhang.

The book was completed in Erfurt, where I am a Fellow at the Max-Weber-Kolleg für kultur- und sozialwissenschaftliche Studien of the Universität Erfurt in 2013–2014. I am most grateful to Jörg Rüpke and Martin Mulsow for their invitation to this intellectually invigorating environment. There are few better places in Europe to study ancient and modern religion, and I have greatly profited from the methodological discussions of its seminars as well as from the weekly Kolloquium of Veit Rosenberger and Katharina Waldner.

I would also like to thank Brill (Leiden), the Franz Steiner Verlag (Stuttgart) and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge of the journal *Kernos* for their permission to

reprint the articles mentioned below. For this book I have corrected, standardised, updated, and, as far as possible, reduced overlaps in these chapters.

While working on this book I have incurred a number of debts, which I have mentioned at the end of each chapter. Naturally, I have also learned many things about the Mysteries from my colleagues and friends, in particular Christoph Auffarth, Walter Burkert, Ken Dowden, Richard Gordon, Fritz Graf, Albert Henrichs, Robert Parker and the late Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood. Bob Fowler kindly read the whole of my manuscript and saved me from a number of mistakes and obscurities, Mirjam Engert Kotwick generously helped to read the proofs, and Orla Mulholland skilfully corrected the English of my main manuscript. Last but not least, my wife Christine accompanied me on my journeys to Munich, New York and Erfurt, and happily endured the spell of the ancient Mysteries. I am grateful to them all.

- Chapter I ‘Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries: A ‘Thin’ Description’, in C.H. Bull *et al.* (eds), *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices. Festschrift for Einar Thomassen* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 375–397
- Appendix 1 ‘Demeter in Megara’, in A. Mastrocinque and C.G. Scibona (eds), *Demeter, Isis, Vesta, and Cybele. Studies in Greek and Roman Religion in Honour of Giulia Sfameni Gasparro* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2012) 23–36
- Appendix 2 ‘The Golden Bough: Orphic, Eleusinian and Hellenistic-Jewish Sources of Virgil’s Underworld in *Aeneid VI*’, *Kernos* 22 (2009) 183–208

Conventions and Abbreviations

For ancient authors the abbreviations in S. Hornblower *et al.* (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, fourth edition (Oxford, 2012) have usually been followed. Comic fragments are cited from *PCG*, fragments of Aeschylus and Sophocles from the editions of Radt, of Euripides from that of Kannicht. Other editions appear in the index, where they are identified by editor. All commentaries are identified by the commentator only. Quotations from the Bible usually follow the New Revised Standard Version.

A&A	<i>Antike und Abendland</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ARG	<i>Archiv für Religionsgeschichte</i>
ASAA	<i>Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
Burkert, AMC	W. Burkert, <i>Ancient Mystery Cults</i> (Cambridge Mass., 1987)
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
DDD	K. van der Toorn <i>et al.</i> (eds), <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (Leiden, 1999 ²)
EV	<i>Enciclopedia Virgiliana</i> , 5 vols (Rome, 1984–1991)
FGrH	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–1958)
Fowler	R.L. Fowler, <i>Early Greek Mythography</i> , 2 vols (Oxford 2000–2013)
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGASM	<i>Iscrizioni greche arcaiche di Sicilia e Magna Grecia</i>
IGBulg	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae</i>
IGLMP	<i>Iscrizioni greche lapidarie del Museo di Palermo</i>
IGUR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae urbis Romae</i>
IvP	<i>Inschriften von Pergamon</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JDAI	<i>Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JThS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> (Wiesbaden, 1975–1992)

LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> (Zurich, 1981–2009)
MÉFRA	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité</i>
MH	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
OCD ⁴	S. Hornblower et al. (eds), <i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> , fourth edition (Oxford, 2012)
OF	A. Bernabé, <i>Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta. Poetae Epici Graeci. Pars II. Fasc. 1–2</i> (Munich and Leipzig, 2004–2007)
PCG	R. Kassel and C. Austin, <i>Poetae comici graeci</i> (Berlin and New York, 1983-)
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart, 1950-)
RE	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart, 1884–1973)
REG	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i>
RGG ⁴	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , fourth edition (Tübingen, 1998–2007)
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'Histore des Religions</i>
RICIS	L. Bricault, <i>Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques</i> , 3 vols (Paris, 2005)
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris, 1942-)
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SH	H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons, <i>Supplementum Hellenisticum</i> (Berlin and New York, 1983)
SMSR	<i>Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni</i>
SVF	H. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> , 4 vols (Leipzig, 1903–1924)
TGrF	R. Kannicht, S. Radt and B. Snell, <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , 5 vols (Göttingen, 1971–2004)
ThesCRA	<i>Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum</i> , 8 vols (Los Angeles, 2005–2012)
ThLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopädie</i> (Berlin and New York, 1977–2004)
TWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> (Stuttgart, 1933–1979)
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZRGG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>

I Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries: A ‘Thin’ Description

The philosopher Democritus once said: ‘A life without festivals is like a road without inns’ (B 230), but there can be little doubt that of all the Greek festivals it is the Eleusinian Mysteries that most intrigue the modern public.¹ It is the aim of this chapter to take a fresh look at this festival at the height of the Athenian empire, the later fifth century BC. In contrast to older studies, the most recent detailed analyses, by Walter Burkert, Fritz Graf and Robert Parker, have given up on the attempt to offer a linear reconstruction of the initiation proper.² Yet there is something unsatisfactory in such an approach, as it prevents us from seeing the course of the ritual and appreciating its logic.³ Ideally, we should reconstruct a linear ‘thick description’ (to use the famous term of the late Clifford Geertz [1926–2006]) of the experience of the average initiate, *mystês*.⁴ We are prevented from doing this because some of the main sources of rather scanty literary information are Christian authors, who often wanted to defame the ritual, and, in some cases, lived six or seven hundred years after Athens’ heyday. Nonetheless, it also seems unnecessary to limit ourselves strictly to pre-Platonic evidence. Plato’s allusions to the Eleusinian Mysteries had a huge influence,⁵ but the Mysteries continued to exist for many

1 For an excellent collection of sources, see P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002) 1.5–219.

2 W. Burkert, *Homo necans* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983), 248–297; F. Graf, ‘Mysteria’, in *Der Neue Pauly* 8 (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2000) 611–615; R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 334–368; see also R. Turcan, ‘Initiation’, in *RAC* 18 (1998) 87–159 at 95–102. For the older, linear approach see A. Mommsen, *Heortologie* (Leipzig, 1864) 243–269 and *Feste der Stadt Athen im Altertum* (Leipzig, 1898) 204–245 (very little about the actual performance of the Mysteries); L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin, 1932) 71–91; G.E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, 1961) 237–285. For a different – and in my opinion unpersuasive – brief reconstruction, see K. Clinton, ‘The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis’, in N. Marinatos and R. Hägg (eds), *Greek Sanctuaries* (London, 1993) 110–124 at 118–119.

3 We can see the effect of this approach very clearly in the study of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* by I. Lada-Richards, *Initiating Dionysus: Ritual and Theatre in Aristophanes’ Frogs* (Oxford, 1999) 81–84, who completely confuses the two stages of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

4 For the term, note A. Hermay, ‘Dioskouroi’, in *LIMC* 3.1 (1986) 567–553 at 576 no. 111 (black-figure Attic pelike of about 510 BC); Sophocles fr. 804; Eur. *Suppl.* 173, 470; Ar. *Ra.* 159, 887; Thuc. 6.28.1 and 53.2; the title *Mystai* of one of Phrynichus’ comedies and *Mystis* of comedies by Philemon, Antiphanes and Philippides.

5 Burkert, *AMC*, 91–93; C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1987) 1–69; R. Kirchner, ‘Die Mysterien der Rhetorik. Zur Mysterienmetapher in rhetoriktheoretischen Texten’, *RhM* 148 (2005) 165–180; Th. Lechner, ‘Rhetorik und Ritual.

centuries, and there is no reason to assume that other ancient authors were merely repeating Plato rather than drawing on their own experiences or those of other authors.⁶ For these reasons, our account will be ‘thin’ rather than ‘thick’ and tentative rather than assured. In fact, almost all analyses of ancient festivals are no more than probable, ahistorical scripts or templates, because we cannot access the original performances, and must confine ourselves to static outlines of festivals, however unsatisfactory that may be. This is certainly true of the Eleusinian Mysteries: it is highly unlikely that this festival remained unchanged for a whole millennium. Yet our dearth of sources means that we cannot identify many changes in the ritual over the course of this period,⁷ although we know that at the end of the fifth century BC there was a considerable Orphic influence, and in Late Antiquity the Mysteries had become allegorised.⁸ Our analysis will follow a chronological order and look first at the necessary qualifications of the initiands and their preparations (§ 1), then at the first degree of initiation, the *myêsis* (§ 2), continuing to the highest degree of Eleusinian initiation, the *epopteia* (§ 3) and finishing with the aftermath of the initiation and some conclusions (§ 4).

1 Qualifications and preparations for initiation

Let us start with the identity of the average initiates. Uniquely for Greek festivals, the Mysteries were open to men and women,⁹ free and slaves,¹⁰ young and old,

Platonische Mysterienanalogien im Protreptikos des Clemens von Alexandrien’, in F.R. Prostmeier (ed.), *Frühchristentum und Kultur* (Freiburg, 2007) 183–222.

⁶ *Contra* B. Sattler, ‘The Eleusinian Mysteries in Pre-Platonic Thought: Metaphor, Practice, and Imagery for Plato’s *Symposium*’, in V. Adluri (ed.), *Greek Religion, Philosophy and Salvation* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 151–190.

⁷ I. Patera, ‘Changes and Arrangement in the Eleusinian Ritual’, in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Stuttgart, 2011) 119–138.

⁸ Orphic influence: F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 182–186; W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 34–37; A. Bernabé, ‘Orpheus and Eleusis’, *Thracia* 18 (2009) 89–98; Bremmer, ‘Divinities in the Orphic Gold Leaves: Euklēs, Eubouleus, Brimo, Kore, Kybele and Persephone’, *ZPE* 187 (2013) 35–48 at 39–41. Allegorisation: Eus. *Praep. Ev.* 3.12.

⁹ For the well known Ninnion Pinax, see most recently M. Tiverios, ‘Women of Athens in the Worship of Demeter: Iconographic Evidence from Archaic and Classical Times’, in N. Kaltsas and A. Shapiro (eds), *Worshipping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens* (New York, 2008) 125–135 at 130–131. K. Papangeli, *ibid.*, 150–151 wrongly implies that the name Ninnion suggests a courtesan, cf. O. Masson, *Onomastica Graeca Selecta 3* (Geneva, 2000) 238.

¹⁰ *IG* I³ 6 = *I. Eleusis* 19; *IG* II² 1672 = *I. Eleusis* 177; Theophilus, fr. 1 (a favour by a benevolent master); especially, K. Clinton, *Eleusis, the inscriptions on stone: documents of the Sanctuary of*

Greeks and non-Greeks.¹¹ Yet not everyone could afford the Mysteries. Prospective initiates first had to complete a whole series of ritual acts, as we know from the Church Father Clement of Alexandria (about AD 200), who relates the following ‘password’ of the initiates: ‘I fasted, I drank the *kykeon* (like Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*), I took from the hamper, after working I deposited in the basket and from the basket in the hamper’.¹² It is clear that the meaning of these allusive acts is intentionally left obscure, but they could not have been part of the actual Mysteries because there was no time in the programme for a couple of thousand initiates to perform such acts or to fast in a meaningful way. They will have been performed either at the Lesser Mysteries in the spring,¹³ seven months earlier,¹⁴ or, perhaps more likely, at some other time, because the receipts of the Lesser Mysteries in 407/6 were much lower than those of the Greater ones.¹⁵ Prospective initiates will have been introduced into the secret teachings of the Mysteries by so-called mystagogues, friends and acquaintances who were already initiated:¹⁶ Andocides mentions that he initiated guest friends, the orator Lysias promised to initiate Metaneira, the courtesan he was in love with, and Plutarch stresses that the murderer of Plato’s friend Dio had also been his mystagogue,¹⁷ which clearly made the murder even more heinous.¹⁸

the Two Goddesses and public documents of the deme, 3 vols (Athens, 2005–2008) 2.184–185 (slaves).

11 This liberal policy was probably imitated by some Attic demes with regard to their own Eleusinia, cf. S. Wijma, ‘The “Others” in a *lex sacra* from the Attic Deme Phrearrioi (*SEG* 35.113)’, *ZPE* 187 (2013) 199–205.

12 Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.21.2; Arnob. 5.26, cf. P. Roussel, ‘L’initiation préalable et le symbole éleusinien’, *BCH* 54 (1930) 52–74; Burkert, *Homo necans*, 269–274; Parker, *Polytheism*, 354.

13 This seems to be suggested by Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 5.11.

14 *IG* I³ 6 B 36–47 = *I. Eleusis* 19 B 36–47; Plut. *Demetr.* 26.2, cf. Parker, *Polytheism*, 344f.

15 R. Simms, ‘*Myesis*, *Telete*, and *Mysteria*’, *GRBS* 31 (1990) 183–195 at 183; Parker, *Polytheism*, 345–346; K. Clinton, ‘Preliminary Initiation in the Eleusinian *Mysteria*’, in A.P. Matthaiou and I. Polinskaya (eds), *Mikros hieromnēmōn: meletes eis mnēmēn Michael H. Jameson* (Athens, 2008) 25–34.

16 Note the close connection between mystagogues and teaching: Posidonius, fr. 368; Plut. *Mor.* 795e; Dio Chr. 12.27; I. Sluiter, ‘Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition’, in G.W. Most (ed.), *Commentaries – Kommentare* (Göttingen, 1999) 173–205 at 191–195. For assistance by mystagogues, see Menander, fr. 500; *LSCGS* 15; Plut. *Mor.* 765a; for the instruction, Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 5–14. Mystagogues are still underresearched, but see A.D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Z. Stewart, 2 vols (Oxford, 1972) 2.793 note 8; Simms, ‘*Myesis*’, 191–195, who notes the relatively late appearance of the term; P. Mueller-Jourdan, ‘*Mystagogie*’, in *RAC* 25 (2013) 404–422; *ThLL* s.v. *mystagogia*.

17 And. *Myst.* 29; [Dem.] *In Neaeram* 21; Plato, *Ep.* 7, 333e; Plut. *Dio* 54, 56.

18 For the close connection between friendship and mystagogy, see also *ThLL* s.v. *mystagogus*.

Initiation into the Mysteries, then, was not a simple act; potential initiates must have been in a position to spend time and money, as they also had to pay a fee to the officiants.¹⁹ All these conditions will have limited participation mainly to the less poor strata of the population. In addition, we should never forget that not every Athenian was initiated. The story that Aeschylus escaped condemnation for revealing the mysteries by arguing that he had not been initiated is probably a misunderstanding by Clement of Alexandria, our source,²⁰ but Socrates was not initiated; Andocides, charged with impiety in relation to the Mysteries, reports that the uninitiated had to withdraw from his trial,²¹ and the lexicographer Pollux, whose information seems to derive from the orator Hyperides, records that jurors in Mysteries trials were chosen from those who had been initiated in the *epopteia*.²² These cases are somewhat exceptional, but we must remain aware that we simply do not know how many Athenians participated in the Mysteries.

On the fifteenth of the month Boedromion (September) well over 3000 prospective initiates and mystagogues assembled in the agora of Athens to hear the proclamation of the festival, a gathering that excluded those who could not speak proper Greek or had blood on their hands;²³ in later antiquity, in line with the growing interiorisation of purity,²⁴ this ban came to be extended to those 'impure in soul'.²⁵ Participation *en masse* meant that the initiates had to bring their own sacrificial victims, just as they did at other large festivals, such as the Diasia for

19 *I. Eleusis* 19 C (=IG I³ 6 C), with Clinton *ad loc.*; *I. Eleusis* 233; Parker, *Polytheism*, 342 note 65; I. Pafford, 'IG I³ 6 and the *Aparche* of Grain?', *ZPE* 177 (2011) 75–78, who also compares Athen. 2.40d and Dem. 59.21 for the major expense of the Mysteries.

20 Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 2.14.60.2, cf. Radt on Aeschylus T 93d.

21 Luc. *Dem.* 11 (Socrates); And. *Myst.* 12. For his process, see R. Gagné, 'Mystery Inquisitors: Performance, Authority, and Sacrilege at Eleusis', *Class. Ant.* 48 (2009) 211–247.

22 Pollux 8.123–124, 141, cf. P. O'Connell, 'Hyperides and *Epopteia*: A New Fragment of the *Defense of Phryne*', *GRBS* 53 (2013) 90–116.

23 Ar. *Ra.* 369 with scholion *ad loc.*; Isocr. 4.157; Suet. *Nero* 34.4; Theon Smyrn., *De utilitate mathematicae* p. 14.23–24 Hiller; Celsus *apud* Or. *CCels.* 3.59; Pollux 8.90; Lib. *Decl.* 13.19, 52; *SHA Alex. Sev.* 18.2, *Marc. Aur.* 27.1; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 74–85.

24 J.N. Bremmer, 'How Old is the Ideal of Holiness (of Mind) in the Epidaurian Temple Inscription and the Hippocratic Oath?', *ZPE* 142 (2002) 106–108; A. Chaniotis, 'Greek Ritual Purity: from Automatismos to Moral Distinctions', in P. Rösch and U. Simon (eds), *How Purity is Made* (Wiesbaden, 2012) 123–139.

25 Or. *CCels.* 3.59; [Eus]. *Contra Hieroclem* 30.3 (anecdote about Apollonius of Tyana); Lib. *Decl.* 13.19, 52; Julian, *Or.* 7.25; M.W. Dickie, 'Priestly Proclamations and Sacred Laws', *CQ* 54 (2004) 579–591.

Zeus Meilichios and the Thesmophoria.²⁶ The initiates of the more remote regions must have brought their own piglets, to sacrifice later, and their squealing can hardly have enhanced the solemnity of the occasion (we may compare the inevitable ringing of cell phones at inappropriate moments today). The next day the formula ‘initiates to the sea’ sent them off to the coast in order to purify themselves and their animals.²⁷ This must have been an interesting occasion for voyeuristic males, as Athenaeus (13.590f) relates that the famous courtesan Phryne did not visit the public baths, and was only ever seen naked, even if perhaps from a distance, when she went into the ocean at the ‘Eleusinia’ (surely meaning the Mysteries) and the Poseidonia of Aegina. Some participants must have confused purification with having a nice swim, as in 339 BC a prospective initiate was eaten by a shark.²⁸ A sacrifice of the ‘mystic piglets’ probably concluded the day.²⁹

2 The myêsis

On the morning of the 19th Boedromion, after three days rest (a free period of time that had made it possible to intercalate the Epidauria festival for Asclepius),³⁰ the prospective initiates assembled again in the agora and formed the procession to the sanctuary of Demeter and her daughter Persephone in Eleusis.³¹ At the front went the Eleusinian dignitaries,³² dressed in their full

26 M. Jameson, ‘Notes on the Sacrificial Calendar from Erchia’, *BCH* 89 (1965) 154–172 at 159–166 (Diasia); R. Parker, ‘Festivals of the Attic Demes’, in T. Linders and G. Nordquist (eds), *Gifts to the Gods* (Uppsala, 1987) 137–147 at 145 (Thesmophoria).

27 Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 80, cf. Polyaeus 3.11.2; Hsch. α 2727; *IG* I³84.35–36; *IG* II² 847.20 = *I. Eleusis* 208 with Clinton *ad loc.* (bibliography).

28 Aesch. 3.130 and schol. *ad loc.*; Plut. *Phoc.* 28.3, cf. Graf, *Eleusis*, 43; Riedweg, *Mysterientermiologie*, 47 n. 85; Parker, *Polytheism*, 108–109, 347; K. Clinton, ‘Pigs in Greek Rituals’, in R. Hägg and B. Alroth (eds), *Greek Sacrificial Ritual: Olympian and Chthonian* (Stockholm, 2005) 167–179; note also, for the values associated with pigs, R. Schneider, ‘Der Satyrknabe im Schweinsfell’, in A. Mogwitz (ed.), *Die zweite Haut. Panther-, Wolfs- und Ferkelfell im Bild des Satyrm* (Munich, 2005) 37–46.

29 *Ar. Ra.* 336; Philostr. *VA.* 4.18, cf. Parker, *Polytheism*, 347 n. 87.

30 K. Clinton, ‘The Epidauria and the Arrival of Asclepius in Athens’, in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm, 1994) 17–34; Parker, *Polytheism*, 462.

31 For the debate on whether there were two processions, on Boedromion 19 and 20, see Parker, *Polytheism*, 348, whom I follow here.

32 *I. Eleusis* 250 with Clinton *ad loc.* For the Eleusinian priests and officials, see K. Clinton, *The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Philadelphia, 1974); C. Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘The Priest-

glory,³³ the priestesses carrying sacred objects on their heads in special baskets closed by red ribbons,³⁴ and, in later times, the ephebes, the Athenian male youth. They were followed by a huge cavalcade of Greeks, each holding a kind of pilgrim's staff consisting of a single branch of myrtle or several held together by rings³⁵ and accompanied by their donkeys with provisions and torches for the coming days.³⁶ The procession now left the city, and it would have been quite a few hours before they completed the roughly 15 mile journey, which was repeatedly interrupted by sacred dances, sacrifices, libations, ritual washings,³⁷ and the singing of hymns accompanied by pipes.³⁸ It was hot and dusty, but the crowds did not care and rhythmically chanted 'Iakch', o Iakche', invoking the god Iakchos at the head of the procession, who was closely related to and sometimes identified with Dionysos.³⁹ Later reports told how during the battle of Salamis (480 BC), 'a great light flamed out from Eleusis, and an echoing cry filled the Thriasian plain down to the sea, as of multitudes of men together conducting the mystic Iakchos in procession'.⁴⁰ At times, the scene must have resembled that of fervent Catholic or Shi'ite processions.

hoods of the Eleusinian Cult of Demeter and Kore', in *ThesCRA* 5 (Los Angeles, 2006) 60–65; K. Clinton, 'Epiphany in the Eleusinian Mysteries', *Illinois Class. Stud.* 29 (2004) 85–101 at 85–87.

33 For their costumes, see Lysias 6.51; Plut. *Alc.* 22, *Arist.* 5; Arrian, *Epict.* 3.21.16; Athen. 21e; J. Balty, 'Hiérophantes attiques d'époque impériale', in L. Hadermann-Misguich and G. Raepsaet (eds), *Rayonnement grec. Hommages à Ch. Delvoye* (Brussels, 1982) 263–272; W. Geominy, 'Eleusinische Priester', in H.-U. Cain *et al.* (eds), *Festschrift für Nikolaus Himmelmann* (Mainz, 1989) 253–264.

34 Plut. *Phoc.* 28; Ap. *Met.* 6.2; Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 245. For the sacred objects, which have not yet been satisfactorily identified, see C. Brechet, 'À la recherche des objets sacrés d'Eleusis: langage et mystères', in C. Delattre (ed.), *Objets sacrés, objets magiques* (Paris, 2007) 23–51.

35 Servius on *Aen.* 6.136; schol. *Ar. Eq.* 408; C. Bérard, 'La lumière et le faisceau: images du rituel éleusinien', *Recherches et documents du centre Thomas More* 48 (1985) 17–33; M.B. Moore, *Attic Red-figured and White-ground Pottery* (Princeton, 1997) 136–137; H. Schaubert, "'Bakchos". Der eleusinische Kultstab', in *ThesCRA* 5 (2006) 385–390; Parker, *Polytheism*, 349.

36 *Ar. Ra.* 159 with scholia *ad loc.*, cf. Diogenianus 6.98.

37 Hsch. p 202

38 *Ar. Ra.* 313 (pipes, cf. Graf, *Eleusis*, 57; C. Bérard, *Anodoi* [Rome, 1974] 92–93); Plut. *Alc.* 34.4; *IG II²* 1078.29–30 = *I. Eleusis* 638.29–30.

39 Hdt. 8.65.1; *Ar. Ra.* 316–317; Graf, *Eleusis*, 40–50; K. Clinton, *Myth and Cult* (Stockholm, 1992) 64–71; E. Simon, 'Iakchos', in *LIMC* V.1 (1990) 612–614; A. Ford, 'Dionysus' Many Names in Aristophanes' *Frogs*', in R. Schlesier (ed.), *A Different God: Dionysus and Ancient Polytheism* (Berlin and Boston, 2011) 343–355 (excellent literary analysis); A.I. Jiménez San Cristóbal, 'Iacchus in Plutarch', in L. Roig Lanzillotta and I. Muñoz Gallarte (eds), *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2012) 125–135 and 'The Sophoclean Dionysos', in A. Bernabé *et al.* (eds), *Redefining Dionysos* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 272–300 at 276–282.

40 Plut. *Them.* 15.1, tr. Perrin.

The participants were now in that transitory stage of betwixt and between, which, as the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) has taught us, is often characterised by reversals and confusions of the social order.⁴¹ During the journey the young mocked the old,⁴² at the bridge over the Athenian river Kephisos a prostitute hurled mockery at the passers by,⁴³ and the wealthier women who rode in buggies reviled one another.⁴⁴ Although some couples must have been initiated together,⁴⁵ in general the occasion presented an opportunity for the two sexes to take a close look at one another in a way that would have been unthinkable in normal circumstances. Aristophanes even has one of his male characters peep at a slave girl who had performed a Janet Jackson act with her top.⁴⁶ That will have been wishful thinking, but Phaedra, a kind of Athenian desperate housewife, first saw Hippolytus when he came to Athens for, to quote Euripides, ‘the viewing of and initiation into the most solemn mysteries’ (*Hippolytos* 25).

At the end of the day, the procession finally reached the sanctuary ‘together with Iakchos’,⁴⁷ and they entered it from the east through the relatively new Propylon that had been constructed around 430 BC.⁴⁸ The night fell early, and the flickering of the thousands of torches must have produced a near psychedelic effect among the weary travellers.⁴⁹ Recent neurological research has stressed that a good walk can produce euphoric effects.⁵⁰ I take it therefore that the ‘pilgrims’ were already in a state of excitement when they reached their goal, which can only have increased that mood. At the entry to the sanctuary was the Kallichoron Well, literally meaning ‘Beautiful dancing’, which was the location for dancing during the Mysteries cited by Euripides in his *Ion* (1074); apparently,

41 V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago, 1969).

42 *Ar. Ra.* 374–375, 389–393; *Ve.* 1362–365, cf. J.S. Rusten, ‘Wasps 1360–1369. Philokleon’s τῶθασμός’, *HSCP* 81 (1977) 157–161.

43 H. Fluck, *Skurrile Riten in griechischen Kulten* (Diss. Freiburg, 1931) 52–59; Rusten, ‘Wasps 1360–1369’; Burkert, *Homo necans*, 278 note 19;.

44 Buggies: *Ar. Plut.* 1014; *Dem.* 21.158; *Plut. Mor.* 842a. Reviling: schol. *Ar. Plut.* 1014; *Suda* τ 19.

45 H. Thompson and R. Wycherley, *The Agora of Athens: The History, Shape and Uses of an Ancient City Center* (Princeton, 1972) 153f.

46 *Ar. Ra.* 409–415, see also *Plut.* 1013f.

47 *Soph. Ant.* 1146–1152 with schol. *ad loc.*; *Ar. Ra.* 342–343; *LSS* 15.42; *IG II²* 847.21 = *I. Eleusis* 208.21.

48 M.M. Miles, ‘Entering Demeter’s Gateway: the Roman Propylon in the City Eleusinion’, in B.D. Wescoat and R.G. Ousterhout (eds), *Architecture of the Sacred* (Cambridge, 2012) 114–151 at 115–128 with illuminating observations on the procession, the Sacred Way and the Propylon.

49 The torches are mentioned already in *Soph. OC* 1049–1051.

50 See the interesting study of E.J. Albers-van Erkelens, *Heilige kracht wordt door beweging los gemaakt. Over pelgrimage, lopen en genezing* (Groningen, 2007).

the 'pilgrims' danced their way into the sanctuary.⁵¹ Demeter is portrayed several times as seated on the well,⁵² so the place clearly had a marked symbolic significance.

After their tiring but inspiring journey, the prospective initiates are unlikely to have performed other ritual obligations, and the evening and night must have been fairly quiet. The next day will have begun with sacrifices, as was normal. We hear of sacrifices by the *epimelêtai*, the *archôn basileus* and the epebes.⁵³ To demonstrate their physical prowess, the epebes, 'in the way of the Greeks' (Eur. *Helen* 1562), lifted up the sacrificial bull to have its throat cut. This custom is attested in many inscriptions but was doubted by Paul Stengel, the greatest expert on Greek sacrifice at the turn of the twentieth century. He had put the question to the Berlin abattoir, where the possibility was laughed away. Yet the sixth-century athlete Milo of Croton had gained great fame for lifting a four-year old bull on his shoulders and carrying it round the stadium at Olympia, and a more recently published sixth-century amphora shows us a group of adult males with a bull on their shoulders, clearly on their way to the sacrifice.⁵⁴ Modern viewers of bulls or oxen will probably share Stengel's doubts, but ancient Greek bovids were considerably smaller than those we see nowadays.⁵⁵ Despite this difference – and bovids on the mainland may have been somewhat bigger – the 'lifting up of the bulls' was undoubtedly a feat that was admired by the prospective initiates. Burkert places these sacrifices after the completion of the whole ritual of the Mysteries,⁵⁶ but this seems less likely, as people would hardly have been very interested in such ritual activities after the highlights of the actual initiation were over.

51 See also Paus. 1.38.6 and the allusion to the well in Ar. *Ra.* 450f.

52 I. Leventi, 'The Mondragone Relief Revisited: Eleusinian Cult Iconography in Campania', *Hesperia* 76 (2007) 107–141 at 121–124.

53 *IG II²* 847.13–16 = *I. Eleusis* 208.13–16, 1028.10–11, cf. P. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Éleusis* (Paris, 1914) 371–375; Parker, *Polytheism*, 351 n. 102. The nature of the Eleusinian sacrifices has not yet been fully clarified, cf. K. Clinton, 'Sacrifice at the Eleusinian Mysteries', in R. Hägg *et al.* (eds), *Early Greek Cult Practice* (Stockholm, 1988) 69–80; I. Patera, *Offrir en Grèce ancienne* (Stuttgart, 2012) 180–191.

54 Epebes: F. Graf, 'Apollon Delphinios', *MH* 36 (1979) 2–22 at 14–15 (fullest collection); P. Stengel, *Opferbräuche der Griechen* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1910) 115. Milo: Athen. 10.412ef. Amphora: C. Bérard *et al.*, *A City of Images: Iconography and Society in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, 1989) 58f.

55 J. Boessneck and A. von den Driesch, *Knochenabfall von Opfermahlen und Weihgaben aus dem Heraion von Samos* (Munich, 1988) 22 (sacrificed cows only between 95 cm and 1,15 m, one bull 126 cm, an ox 135 cm); M. Stanzel, *Die Tierreste aus dem Artemis-/Apollon-Heiligtum bei Kalapodi in Böötien/Griechenland* (Diss. Munich, 1991) 48 (bulls about 135 cm.).

56 Burkert, *Homo necans*, 292.

Some time after sunset, the prospective initiates would go to the *telestêrion*, where the actual initiation would take place over two consecutive nights.⁵⁷ This was a square or rectangular building of about 27 by 25 metres, seating around 3000 people,⁵⁸ and in its centre was a small chapel, the *anaktoron/anaktora*,⁵⁹ about 3 by 12 metres, which had remained in the same place despite successive reconstructions and innovations. This housed the sacred objects that were displayed at some point in the ritual. Given that there were 5 rows of 5 pillars each inside the *telestêrion*, it is understandable that, as Plutarch noted, there was shouting and uncomfortable jostling at the entrance to the building, presumably in order to get the best places.⁶⁰ Finally, the initiates, who would have washed themselves to be pure for the occasion,⁶¹ sat down on the 8 rows of stepped seats around the walls ‘in awe and silence’,⁶² the room smelling of extinguished torches,⁶³ darkness reigning supreme. The initiation could begin.

But what was the programme? In the second century AD a religious entrepreneur, Alexander of Abonuteichos (a kind of Greek Joseph Smith), founded Mysteries which were closely modelled on those of Eleusis. Their highlights were divided over two nights, with a kind of sacred wedding and the birth of a child on the second night.⁶⁴ The same division over two nights will have taken place in Eleusis, as there were two grades of initiation,⁶⁵ and two nights were available

57 For night as the usual time of Greek Mysteries, see Pease on Cicero, *ND* 1.119; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 47 n. 81; M. Becker, ‘Nacht’, in *RAC* 25 (2013) 565–594 at 574; for Eleusis, Graf, *Eleusis*, 27 n. 28. *Telestêrion*: Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 78–88, 111–113, 117–124, fig. 26.

58 For the various building phases and reconstructions, see especially F. Noack, *Eleusis: Die baugeschichtliche Entwicklung des Heiligtumes*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1927); C. Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘Reconstructing Change: Ideology and the Eleusinian Mysteries’, in M. Golden and P. Toohey (eds), *Inventing Ancient Culture* (London, 1997) 132–164; A. Jördens, ‘IG II² 1682 und die Baugeschichte des eleusinischen Telesterion im 4. Jh. v. Chr.’, *Klio* 81 (1999) 359–391, to be read with the comments by Clinton, *Eleusis, the inscriptions on stone*, 2.429f.

59 For the term, see C. Trümpy, ‘Die Thesmophoria, Brimo, Deo und das Anaktor: Beobachtungen zur Vorgeschichte des Demeterkults’, *Kernos* 17 (2004) 13–42 at 34–37.

60 Plut. *De prof. virt.* 10, 81de. The jostling is somewhat exaggerated in Plato, *Phaedrus* 248b1 and Plut. fr. 178; note also Plut. *Mor.* 943c, cf. Graf, *Eleusis*, 133f.

61 For the attention to washing at Eleusis, see R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 284 nn. 12f.

62 Plut. *Mor.* 81e. Silence: Plut. *Mor.* 10f; Hipp. *Ref.* 5.8.39–40.

63 Ar. *Ra.* 314 mentions ‘the most mystic whiff of torches’.

64 Luc. *Alex.* 38–39, cf. A. Chaniotis, ‘Old Wine in a New Skin: Tradition and Innovation in the Cult Foundation of Alexander of Abonouteichos’, in E. Dabrowa (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World* (Cracow, 2002) 67–85 at 77–79.

65 K. Dowden, ‘Grades in the Eleusinian Mysteries’, *RHR* 197 (1980) 409–427; K. Clinton, ‘Stages of Initiation in the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London, 2003) 50–78.

within the programme of the Mysteries.⁶⁶ It seems a reasonable guess that each night was different:⁶⁷ the freshly initiated would surely not have had to leave the scene after the climax of their initiation in order to clear the field for those aspiring to the highest grade.⁶⁸ We should therefore distribute the information that has come down to us over the two nights. This is not impossible, as both Plato in the *Phaedrus* and Christian authors assign certain events explicitly to the highest grade of the initiation, the *epopteia*, literally 'the viewing'. That leaves the events connected with the kidnapping of Persephone for the first night.

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the foundation myth of the Mysteries,⁶⁹ relates how Hades kidnapped Persephone and how her mother Demeter wandered the earth in search of her. When her daughter had been returned to her, Demeter promised fields yellow with corn and a better afterlife. It was this myth that was in some way acted out by the Eleusinian clergy and the prospective initiates on the first night. Only the three highest Eleusinian officials seem to have participated in this 'mystic drama';⁷⁰ their limited number enabled Alcibiades and his friends to parody the Mysteries in private houses.⁷¹ It was a kind of Passion Play, which contained dances,⁷² but no discursive accounts. Apparently, the initiates

66 Clinton, 'The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore', 118–119 reduces the events to one night, as he postulates two processions on two days to Eleusis, but this is improbable, cf. Parker, *Polytheism*, 348 n. 90.

67 This was already argued by Mommsen, *Heortologie*, 261.

68 Noack, *Eleusis*, 1.230. In this division over two nights, my analysis returns to the older studies of Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen*, 244–245; L. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1906) 173 and Foucart, *Mystères*, 357. The great value of Noack's reconstruction is that he continuously takes into account the practical possibilities of the *telestêrion*.

69 R. Parker, 'The Hymn to Demeter and the Homeric Hymns', *Greece and Rome* 38 (1991) 1–17.

70 Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.12; Graf, *Eleusis*, 129f. Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.12 still mentions only four officials, even though their significance had clearly been adapted to the allegorising spirit of his times.

71 As is well observed by Parker, *Polytheism*, 353. For the judicial proceedings against Alcibiades, see most recently F. Graf, 'Der Mysterienprozess', in L. Burckhardt and J. Ungern-Sternberg (eds), *Grosse Prozesse im antiken Athen* (Munich, 2000) 114–127, 270–273; A. Rubel, *Stadt in Angst. Religion und Politik in Athen während des peloponnesischen Krieges* (Darmstadt, 2000) 220–229; S. Todd, 'Revisiting the Herms and the Mysteries', in D. Cairns and R. Knox (eds), *Law, Rhetoric, and Comedy in Classical Athens* (Swansea 2004) 87–102 at 89–92; A. Rijksbaron, 'The Profanation of the Mysteries and the Mutilation of the Hermae: two variations on two themes', in J. Lallot et al. (eds), *The Historical Present in Thucydides: Semantics and Narrative Function* (Leiden, 2011) 177–194.

72 Cleanthes, *SVF* 1. no. 538; Epict. 3.21.16; Ael. Arist. 22.13; Luc. *Pisc.* 33, *Sal.* 14; Tatian, *Or.* 27; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.12.1; Sopater, *Rhet. Gr.* VII.115.11, 30; Burkert, *Homo necans*, 288.

were sent outdoors to look for Persephone with their torches,⁷³ like Demeter herself in her *Homeric Hymn* (47);⁷⁴ eventually the hierophant, the Eleusinian high-priest, sounded a gong to call up Persephone.⁷⁵ This was the sign for the initiates to assemble in order to witness her successful recovery, which guaranteed the fertility of the land. It must have been an extremely joyful moment and Lactantius, surely correctly, reports that after Persephone was found the ritual came to an end with ‘rejoicing and brandishing of torches’.⁷⁶ The search for a divinity was a well-known ritual in ancient Greece,⁷⁷ and, originally, the Mysteries did perhaps end with the return of Demeter’s daughter.⁷⁸

3 The *epopteia*

This leaves the initiation into the highest degree of the Mysteries, the *epopteia*, for the second night – once again, surely, after washing. Although we do not know the exact order of the programme, it must have included several things, and it seems reasonable to surmise that it gradually worked towards a climax. We will therefore start with the preliminary events. Tertullian mentions that a phallus was shown to the *epoptai*. The reliability of this information has been denied, but another Christian author also mentions ‘acts about which silence is observed, and which truly deserve silence’.⁷⁹ In fact, a phallus was part of several festivals and does not seem to be out of place in a ritual for Demeter.

A more intriguing feature is mentioned by the late antique Christian bishop Asterius of Amaseia in Pontus. He rhetorically asks:

73 It may well be that some women used the crossed torches that were typical of the cults of Demeter, Kore and Artemis, cf. B. Otto, ‘Athena und die Kreuzfackel. Zwei Bronzemünzen aus dem Demeter-Heiligtum von Herakleia in Lukanien’, in R. Einicke *et al.* (eds), *Zurück zum Gegenstand. Festschrift für Andreas E. Furtwängler*, 2 vols (Langenweissbach, 2009) 2.373–381; A. Klöckner, ‘Women’s Affairs? On a Group of Attic Votive Reliefs with Unusual Decoration’, in J. Dijkstra *et al.* (eds), *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer* (Leiden, 2010) 179–191.

74 See also Ap. *Met.* 6.2, cf. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 47.

75 Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 110b; Bérard, *Anodoi*, 84f.

76 Lact. *Div. inst. epit.* 18.7: *et ea (Proserpina) inventa ritus omnis gratulatione ac taedarum iactatione finitur*. The reconstruction of C. Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘Festival and Mysteries: Aspects of the Eleusinian Cult’, in Cosmopoulos, *Greek Mysteries*, 25–49 at 29–31 is not persuasive.

77 C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Hylas, the Nymphs, Dionysos and Others: Myth, Ritual, Ethnicity* (Stockholm, 2005).

78 For a possible role of the priestesses in this search, see Clinton, ‘Epiphany’, 88.

79 Tert. *Adv. Valent.* 1; Gregory Naz., *Or.* 39.4, tr. Parker; Theodoretus, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 7.11, cf. Parker, *Polytheism*, 355 nn. 123–124.

Are not the Mysteries at Eleusis the core of your worship [...]? Are the dark crypt (καταβάσιον) not there and the solemn meeting of the hierophant with the priestess, the two alone together? Are not the torches extinguished while the whole huge crowd believes its salvation (σωτηρία: note the Christian interpretation) to lie in the things done by the two in the dark?⁸⁰

The mention of a subterranean crypt should not be taken as a reference to a 'gate to the underworld', as suggested by Burkert, since the word καταβάσιον never has this meaning,⁸¹ and archaeology has demonstrated that there was no subterranean crypt in the *telestêrion*. However, that does not really solve the problem, as was thought by Mylonas, who felt he had to defend the dignity of the Mysteries.⁸² Now a *Hymn to Isis* by the mid-second century AD Cretan poet Mesomedes indicates the stages of the Mysteries of Isis according to rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries.⁸³ His list mentions the 'birth of a child' (13), the 'unspeakable fire' (14), the 'harvest of Kronos' (16) and, finally, the *anaktora* (18), a term that betrays the material's Eleusinian origin. And indeed, Mesomedes' list starts with a *chthonios hymenaios* (10), which is exactly and irrefutably a 'subterranean wedding'. The Mysteries of Isis were developed by the Eleusinian hierophant Timotheus, who had been summoned to Alexandria by Ptolemy Soter to propagate the cult of Sarapis (Plut. *Iside* 28). This takes the information about the Eleusinian mysteries back to about 300 BC, which is pretty early.

Burkert interprets *chthonios hymenaios* as a reference to Persephone, but her wedding was in no way a highlight of the Mysteries. Given that all the other references are to clearly identifiable stages of the epoptic ritual, it seems more likely that we have here a reference to the same act mentioned by Asterius. In fact, Gregory of Nazianzus notes: 'nor does Demeter wander and bring in Celeuses and Triptolemoi and snakes, and perform some acts and undergo others'; love between the Eleusinian king Celeus and Demeter is attested elsewhere.⁸⁴ In other words, various sources suggest that sex played a role at least on the mythical level, which could, but need not, have been reflected on the level of ritual. But how do we explain a 'subterranean wedding' when no such space is attested archeologically? Two answers seem possible. The *anaktoron* was sometimes called *megaron* or *magaron*, the term for subterranean cultic buildings of Demeter

⁸⁰ Asterius, *Homilies* 10.9.1 Datema, tr. Parker, *Polytheism*, 356, with an illuminating commentary.

⁸¹ *Contra* Burkert, *Homo necans*, 284 n. 47.

⁸² Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 314.

⁸³ Mesomedes, *Hymn*. 5, cf. Burkert, *Homo necans*, 291 n. 79 and *AMC*, 160 n. 116. For Mesomedes, see T. Whitmarsh, *Beyond the Second Sophistic* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2013) 154–175.

⁸⁴ Greg. Naz. *Or.* 39.4; schol. on Ael. Arist. p. 53.15–16.

and Persephone, but also of the pits in which sacrifice was deposited during the Thesmophoria.⁸⁵ Both Asterius and Mesomedes, directly or indirectly, could have misinterpreted their source's report of the sacred wedding in the *anaktoron* because they were not, or no longer, familiar with the Mysteries. A second possibility is that the hierophant himself, who was the only one who had access to the *anaktoron*,⁸⁶ made a suggestion of a subterranean descent. We simply do not know.

There will also have been dancing,⁸⁷ and probably other acts that escape us but which almost certainly included speaking or singing, as *euphōnia* was required of the hierophant, whose voice could even be depicted as that of his eponymous ancestor Eumolpos.⁸⁸ In fact, there is a close connection between *Mousai* and *mystēria* in a number of texts.⁸⁹ As the singing of hymns is securely attested in the Mysteries of the Lykomids,⁹⁰ we should expect them in Eleusis as well. A first-century BC inscription mentions *hymnagōgoi* in Eleusis,⁹¹ but unfortunately we cannot tell whether they instructed choirs or whether we should think of some kind of congregational singing in the *telestērion*.

Before the high point of the ritual occurred, the initiated were first subjected to a terrifying experience, perhaps by being confronted with a female monster with snaky hair. As Plutarch notes: 'subsequently, *before the climax* (my italics: *pro tou telous*) [come] all the terrors – shuddering (*phrikē*), shivering, sweating and amazement'.⁹² It is the same rhythm that we see in Plato's *Phaedrus* (251a), where those who have seen 'a godlike face' first experience shuddering (*phrikē*),

85 Hsch. α 4390. For the spelling *magaron*, see Menander, fr. 553; Aelius Dion. μ 2; Photius μ 5; Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States III*, 65–68; A. Henrichs, 'Megaron im Orakel des Apollon Kareios', *ZPE* 4 (1969) 31–37 at 35–36; L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7 vols (Amsterdam, 1969–1990) 2.1005–1007 and 5.289–290; Clinton, *Myth and Cult*, 126–132.

86 Aelian, fr. 10h, i¹.

87 Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 57–58, who compares Plato, *Phaedr.* 247a7; 250b6; 252c3; A. Hardie, 'Muses and Mysteries', in P. Murray and P. Wilson (eds), *Music and the Muses* (Oxford, 2004) 11–37 at 19.

88 Plut. *Phoc.* 28.2; Arrian, *Epict.* 3.21.16; Philostr. *VS* 601; *IG II².3639.4 = I. Eleusis* 515.4.

89 Hardie, 'Muses and Mysteries'.

90 Bremmer, 'Manteis, Magic, Mysteries and Mythography: Messy Margins of Polis Religion?', *Kernos* 23 (2010) 13–35 at 27.

91 *SEG* 30.93.18 = *I. Eleusis* 300.18.

92 Plut. fr. 178; similarly, Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 3.18; see also Aesch. fr. 387; Plut. *Ages.* 24.7; Ael. Arist. 22.2; Luc. *Cataphus* 22, cf. C. Brown, 'Empousa, Dionysus and the Mysteries: Aristophanes, *Frogs* 285ff.', *CQ* 41 (1991) 41–50 (female monster); schol. Ar. *Ve.* 1361; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 64–67; R. Seaford, 'Sophokles and the Mysteries', *Hermes* 122 (1994) 275–288 at 284f.

sweating and abnormal heat.⁹³ We may safely assume that the Eleusinian clergy knew how to build up tension in the performance, and several sources state that prospective initiates were frightened during initiations into all kinds of Mysteries.⁹⁴ It seems a fair assumption that Greek initiations learned from one another, and that such a practice will thus have occurred at Eleusis as well.

The high point of the initiation has been described by a Gnostic author, who rhetorically asked: 'what is the great, marvellous, most perfect epoptic Mystery there, an ear of wheat harvested in silence', the showing of which was probably accompanied by the display of a statue of Demeter.⁹⁵ But that was not all. The Gnostic author proceeds, 'just as the hierophant [...] at Eleusis, when performing the great, unspeakable Mysteries amid great fire, calls out at the top of his voice: "the reverend goddess has given birth to a sacred boy, Brimo to Brimos, that is the strong one has born a strong child".'⁹⁶ As we just noted (above), Mesomedes had also mentioned the birth of a child, the fire and the 'harvest of Kronos'. These acts surely constituted the climax of the epoptic ritual.⁹⁷

This conclusion is confirmed by other indications. Around AD 200 an epigram for a hierophant stresses the moment that the initiates saw him 'stepping forward from the *anaktoron* in the shining nights' of the Mysteries.⁹⁸ The fire returns in many allusions to the Mysteries,⁹⁹ and was clearly a well-staged moment in the ritual which made a big impression on the participants. One of the newly discovered epigrams of Posidippus mentions it, and Plutarch even uses this crucial moment in a discussion of the *Werdegang* of a philosopher: 'but he who succeeded in getting inside, and has seen a great light, because the *anaktora* was opened ...'.¹⁰⁰ The

93 For shuddering, see D. Cairns, 'A Short History of Shudders', in A. Chaniotis and P. Ducrey (eds), *Emotions in Greece and Rome: Texts, Images, Material Culture* (Stuttgart, 2013) 85–107 at 100–101 (Mysteries).

94 Idomeneus *FGrH* 338 F 2 (Sabazius); Or. *CCels.* 4.10 (Bacchic mysteries); Lada-Richards, *Initiating Dionysos*, 90–92; this volume Ch. IV.1.3, V.2.

95 Plato, *Phaedr.* 254b, cf. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 52, 61–2; Clinton, *Myth and Cult*, 89f. For such φάσματα in Mysteries, see Graf, *Eleusis*, 134 n. 34; Burkert, *Homo necans*, 288 and *AMC*, 164 n. 36.

96 Hipp. *Ref.* 5.8.39–41, cf. Burkert, *Homo necans*, 288–290; Parker, *Polytheism*, 357f.

97 Burkert, *Homo necans*, 276 n. 8: 'the high point of the celebration'.

98 *IG* II/III² 3811.1–2 = *I. Eleusis* 637.1–2, cf. Clinton, *The Sacred Officials*, 40–41 and 'Epiphany', 90; note also *IG* II/III² 3709.10 = *I. Eleusis* 659.10; Philostr. *VS* 587.

99 See the extensive discussion by Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 47–52; A. Motte, 'Nuit et lumière dans les mystères d'Éleusis', in J. Ries and C.M. Ternes (eds), *Symbolisme et expérience de la lumière dans les grandes religions* (Turnhout, 2002) 91–104; R. Seaford, 'Mystic Light in Aeschylus' *Bassarai*', *CQ* 55 (2005) 602–606.

100 Posidippus, *Ep.* 43.2; Plut. *Mor.* 81e, cf. Burkert, *Homo necans*, 276 n. 8; similarly, Max.Tyr. *Diss.* 39.3; Him. *Or.* 67.9.

announcement of the birth also seems to be traditional, as the beginning closely resembles a line from Euripides' *Suppliants*: 'You too, reverend goddess, once gave birth to a boy' (54). The main difference with the Gnostic report is the introduction of the names Brimo and Brimos. The *Suppliants* probably date from about 420 BC, and it fits with this date that the name Brimo is most likely an import from Orphic poetry, probably at the end of the fifth century BC.¹⁰¹ The most likely interpretation of these somewhat enigmatic words is that the boy is Ploutos, the personified Wealth, who is a recurrent figure in Eleusinian iconography and who is already mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* as 'the god who bestows affluence on men' (489).¹⁰² The ritual thus seems to have celebrated the arrival of both wheat and its personification. We may think the showing of an ear of wheat to be a rather poor climax, but we must not forget that the fifth century was the heyday of Athens' claims to have invented agriculture and of the notion of Triptolemos as the missionary of this new invention,¹⁰³ as well as of Prodicus' re-interpretation of Demeter as the deified wheat.¹⁰⁴

Finally, why did the hierophant call out 'at the top of his voice'? We touch here upon a difficult and debated topic of the Mysteries. One of the obvious answers is: because this was the climax of the ritual. And indeed, already at the end of the fifth century the loud voice is mentioned at the conclusion of a list of profanations of the Mysteries, just as Alexander of Abonuteichos used a loud voice at the climax of his ritual.¹⁰⁵ Yet there will have been another, more practical reason. Given the architecture of the *telestêrion* with its many pillars, it must have been impossible for everyone to see exactly what was on show during the climax of the ritual. This is admitted by our best recent students of the question, but they refuse to accept it because, as they argue,¹⁰⁶ the importance of 'seeing' and 'showing' is continuously stressed by our sources as a fundamental component of the highest degree of initiation.¹⁰⁷ Yet in the same passage of

101 For Brimo as an originally Orphic figure and the date of her introduction into Eleusis, see Bremmer, 'Divinities in the Orphic Gold Leaves', 40–41; differently, Johnston in F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2013²) 196–200.

102 Clinton, *Myth and Cult*, 91–95, followed by Parker, *Polytheism*, 358.

103 Graf, *Eleusis*, 22–39; Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 99.

104 A. Henrichs, 'Two Doxographical Notes: Democritus and Prodicus on Religion', *HSCP* 79 (1975) 93–123 and 'The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretologies', *HSCP* 88 (1984) 139–158.

105 Ps. Lysias 6.51: καὶ εἶπε τῇ φωνῇ τὰ ἀπόρρητα; Luc. *Alex.* 39; Philostr. *VS* 103.

106 Graf, *Eleusis*, 128–129 ('völlig ausgeschlossen'); Parker, *Polytheism*, 351–352 ('we know that the initiates did see the sacred objects, even if we do not understand how').

107 *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 480; Pindar, fr. 137.1; Soph. fr. 753.2; Eur. *Her.* 613, *Hipp.* 25; And. *Myst.* 31; Ael. *Arist. Or.* 22.2, 12; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 22–26, 37–38; Parker, *Polytheism*,

Plato's *Phaedrus* (248ab), which is so replete with the terminology of the Mysteries,¹⁰⁸ we also read that many horses could not behold the realities or could only just do so. The ancient Greeks were not yet like modern consumers who would certainly have demanded their money back if they had not seen everything. We may better compare church services in medieval cathedrals. Here, too, not everyone could see the performance of the Eucharist and, in fact, a bell had to be rung so that the faithful knew when to kneel at the climax of the mass. In many churches the clergy even made a squint – 'an aperture, usually oblique, affording a view of an altar' – in walls or screens to permit a view of the climax of the service at the high altar.¹⁰⁹

However this may be, we may assume that whatever awe there was would eventually have turned into relief and joy. With their personal well-being assured the initiates will have left the *telestêrion* tired but content.

4 The aftermath

The last day of the Mysteries was a day of festivities and sacrifices, and the happy initiates now could wear a myrtle wreath, like the officiating priests.¹¹⁰ The day was called Plemochoai, after a type of vessel that was used for the concluding libation, one vessel upturned to the west, the other to the east,¹¹¹ to the accom-

353 (importance of 'showing'); G. Petridou, "Blessed is He, Who Has Seen": The Power of Ritual Viewing and Ritual Framing in Eleusis', *Helios* 40 (2013) 309–341.

108 Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 65f.

109 E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, 2005²) 97 (bell, squint); J. Kroesen, 'Squints in Nederland: Definitie, typering en inventarisatie', *Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek* 22 (2006) 195–216; S. Roffey, 'Constructing a Vision of Salvation: Chantries and the Social Dimension of Religious Experience in the Medieval Parish Church', *Archaeological Journal* 163 (2006) 122–146. For interesting observations on the problem of blocked vision during ritual action, see also A. Terry, 'The Iconostasis, the Choir Screen, and San Marco: The Veiling of Ritual Action and the Participation of the Viewer in Byzantine and Renaissance Imagery', *Chicago Art Journal* 11 (2001) 15–32.

110 Initiates: Ar. *Ra.* 330 and schol. *ad loc.*; *Agora* 16.239 (late third century BC; see also A. Chaniotis and J. Mylonopoulos, 'Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion, 2002', *Kernos* 18 [2005] 425–474 at 473); Plut. fr. 178; Theo Smyrn. *De utilitate mathematicae* p. 15.1–4 Hiller; schol. Soph. *OC* 681; P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Myrtle and the Eleusinian Mysteries', *Wiener Studien* 85 (1972) 145–161; H.R. Goette, 'Römische Kinderbildnisse mit Jugendlocken', *Athen. Mitt.* 104 (1989) 203–218 at 207–209; L.A. Riccardi, 'The Bust-Crown, the Panhellenion, and Eleusis', *Hesperia* 76 (2007) 365–390 at 386–387; in general, M. Siede, 'Myrte', in *RAC* 25 (2013) 378–389. Priests: Istros *FGrH* 334 F 29.

111 For the vessels, see M.M. Miles, *The City Eleusinion* (Princeton, 1998) 95–103; I. Krauskopf, 'Plemochoe', in *ThesCRA* 5 (2006) 252–255; K. Clinton, 'Donors of Keranoi at the Eleusinian

paniment of a ‘mystic utterance’, perhaps the attested cry ‘Rain’, while looking up to heaven, and ‘Conceive’ while looking down to the earth.¹¹² During this day, and probably also before, the initiates visited the fair, which was a standard feature of ancient festivals, as it often still is today.¹¹³ In the mid-fourth century BC the Athenian state even issued a number of coins with symbols referring to the Mysteries, such as Triptolemos, the mystic piglet and the staff. These will have helped to pay the vendors of food and drink but also the sellers of presents, souvenirs and, probably, ladies of pleasure.¹¹⁴ We must never forget that longer rituals regularly had, so-to-speak, empty moments, which were not rule-bound, formal or differentiated from everyday activities.¹¹⁵

On leaving, the initiates perhaps uttered the words ‘*paks*’ or ‘*konks*’, as we are told that this was the exclamation upon a completed task.¹¹⁶ We have no idea what these words mean, but the end of the Mysteries had to be ritualised somehow. Once they had returned home, the initiates used the clothes they had worn during their initiation as lucky blankets for their children or consecrated them in a local sanctuary. For that reason many an initiate even wore old clothes.¹¹⁷ After all, religion and economic interest are not mutually exclusive, as the USA shows us all too clearly.

When we now review this description of the Eleusinian Mysteries, we may first note that the term ‘Mysteries’ is misleading to a certain extent. The rite was

Sanctuary of the Two Goddesses’, in C. Prêtre (ed.), *Le donateur, l’offrande et la déesse* (Liège, 2009) 239–246; C. Mitsopoulou, ‘De Nouveaux *Kernoï* pour *Kernos*... Réévaluation et mise à jour de la recherche sur les vases de culte éleusiniens’, *Kernos* 23 (2010) 145–178, with a unique representation of the ritual at 168–172.

112 Critias *TrGF* 43 F 2; Athen. 11.496ab; Proclus, *In Tim.* 3.176.28, reflected at Ael. Arist. 22.7. I here follow Burkert, *Homo necans*, 293; see also Parker, *Polytheism*, 350.

113 Plut. *Mor.* 635a, cf. L. de Ligt and P.W. de Neeve, ‘Ancient Periodic Markets: Festivals and Fairs’, *Athenaeum* 66 (1988) 391–416; M. Wörrle, *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien* (Munich, 1988) 209–215; C. Chandezon, ‘Foières et panégyries dans le monde grec classique et hellénistique’, *REG* 113 (2000) 70–100; R. Bassier, ‘Is the Pagan Fair Fairly Dangerous? Jewish-Pagan Relations in Antiquity’, in L. Vaage (ed.), *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (Waterloo, 2006) 73–84; Y. Cohn, ‘The Graeco-Roman Trade Fair and the Rabbis’, *J. Am. Or. Soc.* 131 (2011) 187–194.

114 For the coins, see J.H. Kroll, *The Greek Coins* (Princeton, 1993) 27–36, who, at 29, also notes an increase of visitors in the fourth century BC, cf. K. Clinton, ‘A Law in the City Eleusinian Concerning the Mysteries’, *Hesperia* 49 (1980) 258–288 at 273–275, 281; S. Psoma, ‘*Panegyris* Coinages’, *Am. J. Numismatics* II 20 (2008) 227–255 at 229.

115 Parker, *Polytheism*, 370.

116 Hsch. k 3134, incorrectly quoted by Mylonas, *Eleusis*, 279, cf. O. Weinreich, in A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1923³) 257; Parker, *Polytheism*, 455.

117 Ar. *Ra.* 404–406; Melanthios *FGrH* 326 F 4, cf. Graf, *Eleusis*, 45; Parker, *Polytheism*, 361.

secret, but there was nothing mysterious about it. Even if we were to find a full, ancient description of it, nothing leads us to expect that we would encounter anything outlandish. Why, then, were the Mysteries secret in historical times? The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* explains the secrecy from the fact that the rites, like the deities to whom they belong, are *semna*, 'awesome', and 'a great reverence for the gods restrains utterance' (478–9).¹¹⁸ In Augustan times, Strabo gave the following explanation: 'the secrecy with which the sacred rites are concealed induces reverence for the divine, since it imitates the nature of the divine, which is to avoid being perceived by our human senses' (10.3.9, tr. Jones, Loeb). These 'emic', or insider, explanations are fully satisfactory: it is the very holiness of the rites that forbids them to be performed or related outside their proper ritual context.¹¹⁹ It is also important to note that these 'emic' explanations do not suggest that there was a valuable propositional element in the Mysteries. Contrary to what many moderns seem to think, there was no esoteric wisdom to be found in the ancient Mysteries, no Da Vinci Code to be deciphered.

Second, what was the goal of the Mysteries? Was it eschatological, as one of the best students of Greek religion states in his most recent discussion?¹²⁰ Such a statement perhaps overstates one, admittedly important, aspect of the Mysteries and fails to take another claim sufficiently into account. As we have seen, the first day ended with the return of Persephone, the guarantee of fertility, and the second with the showing of an ear of wheat and the birth of (Agricultural) Wealth. Varro, the most learned Roman of the first century BC, noted that, 'there are many traditions in her (Persephone's) mysteries, all related to the discovery of grain'.¹²¹ As Burkert has observed, 'no matter how surprising it may seem to one Platonically influenced, there is no mention of immortality at Eleusis, nor of a soul and the transmigration of souls, nor yet of deification'.¹²² In other words, the actual performance of the Mysteries points only to agricultural fertility.

This interpretation of the Mysteries as a kind of fertility ritual seems to fit the iconographical representations. None of those with Eleusinian themes refers to

118 A. Henrichs, 'Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: Zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im attischen Drama', in H. Hofmann and A. Harder (eds), *Fragmenta Dramatica* (Göttingen, 1991) 161–201 at 169–179.

119 A. Motte, 'Silence et secret dans les mystères d'Éleusis', in J. Ries and H. Limet (eds), *Les rites d'initiation* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1986) 317–334; Bremmer, 'Religious Secrets and Secrecy in Classical Greece', in H.G. Kippenberg and G. Stroumsa (eds), *Secrecy and Concealment* (Leiden, 1995) 61–78 at 71–78; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 1–20; Horsfall on Verg. *Aen.* 3.112.

120 Parker, *Polytheism*, 354, 373; differently, Burkert, *Homo necans*, 294.

121 Varro fr. 271 (*apud* Aug. *De civitate Dei* 7.20). For other, similar texts see Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Festival and Mysteries', 35.

122 Burkert, *Homo necans*, 294.

blessings in the afterlife, but the message of fertility is very clearly expressed through the prominence of the gods Ploutos and Pluto, whose names reflect the aspiration for (agricultural) wealth.¹²³ The connection of Eleusis with agriculture is also manifest in the equally prominent position in Eleusis of Triptolemos, the inventor of agriculture, who only in the fourth century becomes a judge in the underworld, and by the presence on a fourth-century Apulian vase of personified Eleusis sitting next to Eniautos, ‘(The products of the) Year’, holding a horn of plenty that sprouts ears of wheat.¹²⁴

On the other hand, literary texts regularly speak of the eschatological hopes that await the initiates and the punishments awaiting non-initiates.¹²⁵ As the afterlife does not seem to have been mentioned during the actual performance, which consisted primarily in ‘showing’ not ‘teaching’, prospective initiates will have heard about it during their preliminary initiation. Such a ‘catechism’ kept the interpretation of the Mysteries up-to-date and could incorporate contemporary intellectual fashions, just as Christian theology and rabbinic scholarship have kept the texts of the Bible alive for the faithful by their interpretations.

Recent years have seen many discussions of the relation between myth and ritual, which have led to the realisation that myth often selects the more striking parts of a ritual and also dramatises and simplifies the issues at stake in it.¹²⁶ We have also recently learned that there is no one-to-one relationship between rituals and their representations.¹²⁷ We must therefore accept that to represent the

123 Parker, *Polytheism*, 336f.

124 Triptolemos: see most recently G. Schwarz, ‘Triptolemos’, in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 56–68; Bremmer, ‘Triptolemos’, in *Der Neue Pauly* 12/2 (2002) 528f. Apulian vase: Malibu 86.AE.680, not yet known to D. Parrish, ‘Annus’, in *LIMC* 1.1 (1981) 799f.

125 Blessings: *Hom.H.Dem.* 480–483; Pind. fr. 137; Soph. fr. 837; Isocr. 4.28; Plato, *Gorg.* 493b; Cic. *Leg.* 2.36; Crinagoras, *Anth. Pal.* 11.42; B. Gladigow, ‘Zum Makarismos des Weisen’, *Hermes* 95 (1967) 404–433; P. Lévêque, ‘*Olbios* et la félicité des initiés’, in L. Hadermann-Misguich and G. Raepsaet (eds), *Rayonnement grec: hommages à Ch. Delvoye* (Brussels, 1982) 113–126; M.A. Santamaría, ‘La parodia de los Misterios en el fr. 17 Kassel-Austin de Filetero’, in A. Lumbresas *et al.* (eds), *Perfiles de Grecia y Roma*, 3 vols (Madrid, 2011) 2.693–700; C. Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysteriekulte)’, in *RAC* 25 (2013) 422–471 at 459f. Punishments: D. Fabiano, ‘“Ho fuggito il male, ho trovato il meglio”: le punizioni dei non iniziati nell’aldilà greco’, *ARG* 12 (2010) 149–165.

126 For the most recent surveys, see Bremmer, ‘Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece: Observations on a Difficult Relationship’, in R. von Haehling (ed.), *Griechische Mythologie und Frühchristentum* (Darmstadt, 2005) 21–43 and ‘Walter Burkert on Ancient Myth and Ritual: Some Personal Observations’, in A. Bierl and W. Braungart (eds), *Gewalt und Opfer. Im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin, 2010) 71–86.

127 A. Klöckner, ‘Votive als Gegenstände des Rituals – Votive als Bilder von Ritualen: Das Beispiel der griechischen Weihreliefs’, in J. Mylonopoulos and H. Roeder (eds), *Archäologie und Ritual* (Vienna, 2006) 139–152.

Mysteries vase painters chose to emphasise fertility rather than the eschatological promise. There was probably a good reason for that choice, as the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (480–3) says only this about the afterlife: 'Blessed is he of men on earth who has seen them, whereas he that is uninitiated in the rites [...] has another lot wasting away in the musty dark'. That is all, and the other older texts with this promise (cited above) are equally vague. As belief in the afterlife was not widely held and always seems to have been limited to a minority,¹²⁸ vase painters had little to work with and hardly ever represented the afterlife.¹²⁹ People will have made their own choices about what to bring home from the festival. As no one seems to have put the fact of their Eleusinian initiation on his or her tombstone before the second century BC,¹³⁰ most Greeks may well have looked forward more to the promise of wealth in this life than to a good afterlife. The era of medieval Christianity was still far away.¹³¹

128 Bremmer, *Rise and Fall*, 7–8; Parker, *Polytheism*, 363–368.

129 A. Scholl, 'Hades und Elyision – Bilder des Jenseits in der Grabkunst des klassischen Athens', *JDAI* 122 (2007) 51–79.

130 See now *SEG* 55.723: a funerary epigram that mentions the initiation into both the Samothracian and Eleusinian Mysteries; this volume, Chapter II.1.

131 For information and comments I am most grateful to audiences in Malibu (Getty Villa: 2006), Durham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Malibu (Pepperdine University), St. Andrews, Winnipeg (2007), Montréal (McGill), Giessen (2008), Cologne (Internationales Kolleg Morphomata: 2010) and Munich (2011). Sarah Hitch kindly and skilfully corrected the English of the original version.

II Mysteries at the Interface of Greece and Anatolia: Samothracian Gods, Kabeiroi and Korybantēs

After Eleusis the most famous Mysteries in Greece were those of the island of Samothrace, though their clientele mostly came from the neighbouring areas.¹ We know even less of them than of Eleusis,² yet we can still make some progress over earlier discussions because new inscriptions have turned up, excavations have increasingly elucidated the buildings of the sanctuaries in which the initiations took place, and Indo-European linguists are gradually deciphering the languages that were spoken on the Thracian and Anatolian coasts. Comparison with the Eleusinian Mysteries reveals that the Samothracians had modelled their own Mystery rites to a significant extent on those of Eleusis. In fact, the term ‘Mysteries’ is Athenian, which makes it likely that the Samothracians took it over from Athens,³ perhaps following their membership in the Attic-Delian League.⁴ This insight makes it possible to structure our material by following the order of the rituals in Eleusis. On the other hand, the Greeks themselves, notably already Herodotus (2.51) and his contemporary Stesimbrotus of neighbouring Thasos (*FGrH* 107 F 20), associated the Samothracian Mysteries with those of the Kabeiroi, a set of divinities that were the focus of Mysteries on neighbouring islands and in Boeotian Thebes, so we also need to be aware of possible resemblances between the cult of Samothrace and those of the neighbouring islands. We will therefore first look at the Samothracian Mysteries (§ 1), then at those of the Kabeiroi (§ 2) and, finally, at a different type of Mysteries, those of the Korybantēs (§ 3), who were often identified with the Samothracian Gods and the Kabeiroi and who, like them, also derived from the Eastern Aegean and Anatolia. In conclusion we will briefly compare these different types of Mysteries (§ 4).

1 See the geographical survey in S.G. Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* (Leiden, 1984) 43–44, 49–51, updated by I. Rutherford, *State Pilgrims and Sacred Observers in Ancient Greece: a Study of Theōriā and Theōroi* (Cambridge, 2013) 56–57, 282–286.

2 For a good collection of sources with Italian translation, see P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002) 2.3–99.

3 As is plausibly argued by Fritz Graf in idem and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2013²) 238 note 20.

4 For Samothrace’s membership, see M.H. Hansen and T.H. Nielsen (eds), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford, 2004) 770.

1 The Mysteries of Samothrace

Unlike Eleusis, we have very little early information about the Samothracian Mysteries, and most of our evidence derives from the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁵ This lack of sources means that we must be cautious in reconstructing the ritual. At the same time, the traditional nature of Greek ritual and its logic can help us to propose a reconstruction in line with what we know about Greek religion in general. This has not been done in recent studies of the Samothracian Mysteries. So let us begin at the beginning, but keep in mind that we are mainly reconstructing the Hellenistic ritual, which is better known thanks to interest in the sanctuary from Macedonian and Ptolemaic kings, who even invited famous sculptors like Scopas to work on it.⁶

We have no explicit information about admission to the Mysteries, but it seems likely that the admission policy was as liberal in Samothrace as it was in Eleusis. From the inscriptions and buildings we can see that men as well as women, slaves and freedmen as well as high officials and royalty were admitted. In fact, Philip II of Macedonia and his later wife Olympias were said to have met

5 B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (Uppsala, 1950) 104–118; Cole, *Theoi Megaloi*, 26–37; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985) 281–285 and ‘Concordia Discors: The Literary and the Archaeological Evidence on the Sanctuary of Samothrace’, in N. Marinatos and R. Hägg (eds), *Greek Sanctuaries. New Approaches* (London and New York, 1993) 178–191, reprinted in Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 137–151; R. Turcan, ‘Initiation’, in *RAC* 18 (1998) 87–159 at 102–104; D. Musti, ‘Aspetti della religione dei Cabiri’, in S. Ribichini *et al.* (eds), *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca* (Rome, 2001) 141–154; M. Mari, ‘Gli studi sul santuario e i culti di Samotraccia: prospettive e problemi’, *ibid.*, 155–167; K. Clinton, ‘Stages of Initiation in the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London and New York, 2003) 50–78; W. Burkert, ‘Initiation’, in *ThesCRA* 2 (2004) 91–124 at 101–103; N.M. Dimitrova, *Theoi and Initiates in Samothrace: the epigraphical evidence* (Princeton, 2008) 244–249 (I quote all relevant inscriptions from her edition); V. Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten. Untersuchungen zu Mythen aus Lemnos* (Stuttgart, 2008) 344–351; H. Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton and London, 2010) 49–67; S. Blakely, ‘Kadmos, Jason, and the Great Gods of Samothrace: initiation as mediation in a Northern Aegean context’, *Electronic Antiquity* 11.1 (2010) = <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ElAnt/V11N1/pdf/blakely.pdf> and ‘Toward an archaeology of secrecy: power, paradox, and the Great Gods of Samothrace’, in *Beyond Belief: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual = Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropology Association* 21.1 (2011) 49–71; R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000–2013) 2.37–43, 56–58, 522f.

6 *SEG* 29.795; Cole, *Theoi Megaloi*, 20–25; B.D. Wescoat, ‘Athens and Macedonian Royalty on Samothrace: the Pentelic connection’, in O. Palagia and S. Tracy (eds), *The Macedonians in Athens 322–229 B.C.* (Oxford, 2003) 102–116; O. Palagia, ‘Hellenistic Art’, in R. Lane Fox (ed.), *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Macedon* (Leiden, 2011) 477–493 at 493; C. Marconi, ‘Skopas in Samothrace’, forthcoming.

during the initiation ceremony, and women initiates dedicated votive statuettes to commemorate their initiation.⁷ As the prestige of the Mysteries grew, more mythological heroes were said to have been initiated, and in due time all of the Argonauts, including Heracles, Jason, Kadmos, Orpheus and the Dioskouroi, became Samothracian initiates.⁸

Unlike Eleusis, there was no single occasion for initiation. Apparently, it was possible to become initiated all through the sailing season, from April to November. Admittedly, older literature claims the celebration of a large festival,⁹ but on rather shaky grounds. Nonetheless, it seems that some occasions were more important than others, as is implied by the report of a fair in connection with the Mysteries, which would be out of place for just one individual's initiation.¹⁰ This larger occasion was most likely in June. The number of initiations in September is nearly the same, as far as we can judge from the votives of the initiates, but an important point favours the earlier month. As several scholars have noted, we can calculate that the Argonauts in Apollonius' epic were also initiated in June, and Apollonius will surely have selected the most prestigious moment for the initiation of his prestigious heroes.¹¹ We cannot say if the Mysteries were celebrated in connection with other festivals or if they were the occasion of a special celebration. In the latter case, we may expect that the initiation was spread out over two days because there were two degrees of initiation (see below), but we are unable to say anything more precise at this point.

How did the initiation start? We do not hear of a procession, comparable to the Eleusinian one, from the city of Samothrace to the sanctuary of the Great Gods, but it can hardly be supposed that the start of the initiation was not dramatised in some way. The sanctuary was close to the city, and the prospective initiates entered the sanctuary from the east, as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. I.2)

7 Plut. *Alex.* 2.2 (Philip and Olympias), doubted by Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 17, but see W. Greenwalt, 'Philip II and Olympias on Samothrace: A Clue to Macedonian Politics during the 360s', in T. Howe and J. Reames (eds), *Macedonian Legacies* (Claremont, 2008) 79–106; Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 42; S. Dillon, 'Marble Votive Statuettes of Women from the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace', in O. Palagia and B.D. Wescoat (eds), *Samothracian Connections* (Oxford and Oakville, 2010) 165–172.

8 Ap. Rhod. 1.915–918 and scholia *ad loc.*; Diod. Sic. 5.48.5, 49.6; Val. Flacc. 2.437–438; *Orph. Arg.* 466–70.

9 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 108 (July?); Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 283 (no date given).

10 So, persuasively, Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 248–249, who compares Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 120; *I. Samothrace* 170; Plut. *Luc.* 13.2 (fair).

11 C.M. Schroeder, "'To Keep Silent is a Small Virtue": Hellenistic Poetry and the Samothracian Mysteries', in M.A. Harder *et al.* (eds), *Gods and Religion in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leuven, 2012) 307–334 at 322–324.

through the impressive, though narrow (2 m), Propylon, which was dedicated in the early third century BC and spanned the deep brook that formed the boundary of the sanctuary. Clinton has suggested that they were veiled or blindfolded, but there is no evidence for this.¹² Within the sanctuary the initiates immediately came to a circular space about 9 meters in diameter, paved with flagstones and surrounded by a grandstand of five steps, which is nowadays called the Theatral Circle.¹³ This installation, which is set in a natural hollow on the slope of a hill, was clearly very important in the ritual, as it is one of the oldest permanent structures of the sanctuary, although the Sacred Way, the road through the sanctuary, bypassed it in Hellenistic times. The area must have made a strong impression on viewers as it was framed by at least 22 statues of which the bases have been found, though not the statues themselves or the inscriptions that would have identified them.¹⁴ The open location of the Circle makes it unsuitable for a secret ritual, refuting the recent suggestion that a supposed part of the initiation ritual, the so-called *thronôsis*, took place here.¹⁵ In fact, the *thronôsis* is not attested at all for the Samothracian Mysteries but belongs properly to those of the Korybantes (§ 3).

Before they started their initiation, prospective initiates had to listen to a proclamation comparable to the one in Eleusis (Ch. I.1) regarding the absence of bloodshed and other crimes, as is shown by an anecdote recorded by Livy (45.5.4) about the Macedonian king Perseus in 168 BC. In Roman times, one of the priests, who seem to have been called Sai,¹⁶ asked the initiates what the worst deed was that they had ever committed. The ethical nature of the question fits the growing interiorisation of purity that we already noted in Eleusis (Ch. I.1). This seems a better explanation than Burkert's suggestion that the question was intended 'to elicit complicity, thereby securing unbreakable solidarity', as we have no inkling why or with whom the visiting initiates might be in solidarity.¹⁷

This is one of the very few occasions where we hear of an officiating priest; on Samothrace there was no family of priests comparable to those in Eleusis.

12 *Contra* Clinton, 'Stages of Initiation', 65f.

13 B.D. Wescoat, 'Coming and Going in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace', in Wescoat and R.G. Ousterhout (eds), *Architecture of the Sacred* (Cambridge, 2012) 66–113 at 68.

14 B. Wescoat, 'Recent Work on the Eastern Hill of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace', in C. Mattusch *et al.* (eds), *Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (Oxford, 2010) 79–83 and 'Coming and Going', 76f.

15 Thus, rightly, Wescoat, 'Coming and Going', 79, against Clinton, 'Stages of initiation', 62–65.

16 Kritolaos *FGrH* 823 F 1; Varro, fr. 206, cf. G. Wissowa, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur römischen Religions- und Stadtgeschichte* (Munich, 1904) 117; Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 2.324.

17 Plut. *Mor.* 217d, 229d, 236d, *contra* Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 283 and *Kleine Schriften III*, 144.

Diodorus Siculus (5.47.14–16), writing in the first century BC, noted that the language of the ‘natives’ was used in the cult even in his day, nearly five centuries after the Greeks had arrived on the island. From ceramic inscriptions from the sixth to the fourth centuries BC, recent research has demonstrated that a form of Thracian was indeed spoken on the island in addition to Greek.¹⁸ In other words, some (many?) families had continued to speak the old language of the Thracian inhabitants of the island, though perhaps mostly at home.¹⁹ Unfortunately, it is unclear where the initial part of the ritual took place, and several scholars have advanced the idea that it may have been in the Theatral Circle.²⁰ However, Clinton has persuasively argued that the proclamation had to take place outside the sanctuary:²¹ in the Theatral Circle the initiands would already have been well on their way, and it would have been an awkward place to be turned back. In addition to the proclamation, there will also have been the customary purifications, perhaps with water from the brook at the edge of the sanctuary,²² but our knowledge of the ‘waterworks’ of the sanctuary is tantalisingly fragmentary.²³

As sacrifices took place in Eleusis preceding the initiation, we might expect them in Samothrace too. Although there is a so-called Altar Court, adjacent to the Hieron, which had a monumental altar with ascending stairs,²⁴ the main site of sacrifice will have been the construction at the heart of the sanctuary that is nowadays called the Hall of Choral Dancers, formerly known as the Temenos.²⁵ It was a large enclosed building of Thasian marble, about 34 metres long and 20.7 metres wide, decorated with a frieze of two processions consist-

18 C. Brixhe, ‘Zone et Samothrace: Lueurs sur la langue thrace et nouveau chapitre de la grammaire comparée?’, *CRAI* 2006, 1–20.

19 For the use of different languages on one Greek island, see M. Egetmeyer, “‘Sprechen Sie Golgisch?’ Anmerkungen zu einer übersehenen Sprache”, in P. Carlier (ed.), *Études mycéniennes 2010* (Pisa and Rome, 2012) 427–434. We may also compare the ‘Etruscoid’ language on Lemnos, see most recently C. de Simone, ‘Le lingue etrusco-tirsenica (Lemno, Efestia [teatro]) e retica tra due documenti epigrafici chiave’, *ASAA* 88 (2010) 85–100; H. Eichner, ‘Neues zur Sprache der Stele von Lemnos (Erster Teil)’, *Journal of Language Relationship* 7 (2012) 9–3 and (‘Zweiter Teil’), *ibid.* 10 (2013) 1–42.

20 Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 26; Blakely, ‘Toward an archaeology of secrecy’, 57.

21 K. Clinton, quoted by Wescoat, ‘Coming and Going’, 100 n. 10.

22 Thus Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 110.

23 Bonna Wescoat *per email* 11–8–2013.

24 K. Lehmann and D. Spittle, *Samothrace: Excavations Conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University*, Vol. 4.2 *The Altar Court* (New York, 1964).

25 For the description and reconstruction, I follow C. Marconi, ‘Choroi, Theōriai and International Ambitions: The Hall of Choral Dancers and its Frieze’, in Palagia and Wescoat, *Samothracian Connections*, 106–135.

ing of about 900 (!) dancing maidens who met in the middle of the façade.²⁶ A porch gave access to two aisles separated by a wall, a construction that has parallels on Thasos and Kos.²⁷ Notable in this building is the absence of benches or bench supports and the narrowness of the cellae, which almost certainly bars us from seeing in it the Samothracian equivalent of the Eleusian Telesterion.²⁸

On the other hand, we do know that this Hall was used for animal sacrifices and libations. The early excavators found two *bothroi* in the middle of its west aisle, and the absence of ashes, bones and pottery suggests that it was used for receiving blood or libations. The prominence of a ram's head on Samothracian coins suggests the sacrifice of a ram, which was the preferred victim both for pre-civilised and underworld gods and in Mysteries, as earlier scholars have already noted, and excavations in the Rotunda of Arsinoe have brought to light ram's horns.²⁹ The discovery in the sanctuary of thousands of sherds of Samothracian conical bowls, which were eminently suited for libations but not for much else, suggests the importance of libations in the initiatory ritual. The prospective initiates presumably arrived with such a bowl or were handed one by the priests at the start of the ritual. The large number of these bowls found inside the sanctuary suggests that they were the preferred vessel for libations from the second half of the third century BC onwards.³⁰

After the preliminary rites, the initiates will have moved to the building in which the actual initiation took place. It is one of the vexing problems of the Samothracian Mysteries that we still cannot be certain which building this was, as we have more cult buildings than the cult actions seem to require, and we cannot exclude that the functions of the various buildings changed over time. Of all the available buildings – the Hall of Choral Dancers, the Hieron, the Anaktoron and the Rotunda of Arsinoe II – the Hieron is the best suited, as along its walls (the building

26 B. Kowalzig, 'Mapping out *Communitas*: Performances of Theōria in their Sacred and Political Context', in J. Elsner and I. Rutherford (eds), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford, 2007) 41–72 suggests that 'chorality' was a central part of the Mysteries, but the frieze alone hardly supports that statement.

27 M.-C. Hellmann, *L'architecture grecque*, 2 vols (Paris, 2002–2006) 2.222–225.

28 Thus, persuasively, Marconi, 'Choroi, Theōriai and International Ambitions', 123, against Clinton, 'Stages of Initiation', 61, and *per email* 21–8–2013.

29 J. McCredie *et al.*, *Samothrace, Vol. 7, The Rotunda of Arsinoe, Part I: Text* (Princeton, 1992) 239–241, cf. W. Burkert, *Homo necans* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983) 283, 311; F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 27 n. 28 and *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 282; add now *SEG* 40.146.247–248 (Athens, Persephone), 43.630 A 17 (Selinus, Z. Meilichios), 50.168 A II.44 (Eleusis, Kore).

30 Wescoat, 'Coming and Going', 94f.

is 40 metres long by 13 wide)³¹ we find two long rows of marble benches supported by sculpted lion's legs, just as there were benches in the Telesterion of the Kabeirion in Lemnos and places to sit in the Eleusinian Telesterion (Ch. I.2).³² The main cella ended in a curved apse at the end, which is a feature of geometric and archaic temple buildings, but is rarely found later. This particular architecture suggests that there was an archaic forerunner of the present building which, however, has not (yet?) been found. In the middle of the central space, somewhat closer to the entrance than to the apse, was an *eschara*, an offering pit, for sacrifices. If this was indeed the building used for the initiation, there must have been 'two masculine images of bronze before the doors', as we are told by Varro,³³ who visited Samothrace in 67 BC.³⁴ Given his profound interest in and the importance he attached to the Samothracian Mysteries,³⁵ we may safely assume that Varro was also initiated during his visit. The information about the images is confirmed by a Gnostic author, who is quoted by the heresiologist Hippolytus in his *Refutation of all Heresies*:

There stand two statues of naked men in the Anaktoron of the Samothracians, with both hands stretched up toward heaven and their *pudenda* turned up, just as the statue of Hermes at Kyllene. The aforesaid statues are images of the primal man and of the regenerated, spiritual man who is in every respect consubstantial with that man (5.8.9, tr. Burkert).

The language of the last sentence is Gnostic, but the source was clearly well informed about the Mysteries.

It was now night, and the prospective initiates would have entered the building with their torches or been provided with lamps,³⁶ but what did they do there? The secrecy of the Greeks in matters of Mysteries means that we have hardly any idea,³⁷

31 For the building, see most recently K. Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide to the Excavations and the Museum*, rev. J.R. McCredie (Thessalonike, 1998⁶) 78–86; O. Palagia *et al.*, 'New investigations on the pedimental sculptures of the "Hieron" of Samothrace: a preliminary report', in Y. Maniatis (ed.), *ASMOSIA VII, The Study of Marble and Other Stones in Antiquity = BCH Suppl.* 51 (2009) 113–112; A. Sowder, 'A New Ceiling for the Hieron in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace', in Palagia and Wescoat, *Samothracian Connections*, 138–151.

32 As is stressed by Marconi, '*Choroi, Theōriai* and International Ambitions', 123.

33 Varro, *LL* 5.58, identified as Castor and Pollux by Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 3.12, to be read with Horsfall *ad loc.*

34 Varro, *Rust.* 2 *praef.* 6.

35 See P. Van Nuffelen, 'Varro's *Divine Antiquities*: Roman Religion as an Image of Truth', *CPh* 105 (2010) 162–188 at 174–182 and his *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period* (Cambridge, 2011) 32–37.

36 Night and torches are mentioned by Nonnos, *D.* 3.43–51, 4.184–185, 13.402, 14.18, 29.213–214.

37 For the secrecy of the Samothracian rites, see Hdt. 2.51; Ap. Rhod. 1.920–921; Diod. Sic. 3.55.9, 5.48.4 and 49.5; Ov. *AA.* 2.601–604; Val. Flacc. 2.432–433, 439–440; Tert. *Apol.* 7.6; *Orph. Arg.* 467.

but it seems likely that, as in Eleusis, the initiates left the building for dances, which are explicitly mentioned.³⁸ These dances seem to have been quite ecstatic in character, as Diodorus Siculus (5.49.1) mentions cymbals and tambourines as a gift for Kadmos and Harmonia because of their wedding on Samothrace.³⁹ The regular identification of the Samothracian gods with the Korybantes (§ 3), which we already find in the fifth-century Athenian Pherecydes (F 48 Fowler), points in the same direction.⁴⁰

One may perhaps wonder if these dances were also connected with the search for Harmonia, another part of the Mysteries. The search must have been reasonably ancient, as it is already mentioned by the fourth-century historian Ephoros, who relates that ‘even now in Samothrace they search for her at the festivals (*heortais*)’, most likely the Mysteries.⁴¹ In the same fragment Ephoros tells us that Kadmos kidnapped Harmonia when sailing past Samothrace. It seems reasonable to suppose that the two events went together, and that the story of her kidnapping was the mythical explanation for the search. Most likely, the search is a calque on the search for Persephone in Eleusis. We do not know when Harmonia was first incorporated into the myths of Samothrace, but the mythographer Hellanicus (*FGrH* 4 F 23 = F 23 Fowler) already connected Harmonia, Kadmos and Samothrace, which points to somewhere in the later fifth century. Having returned from their dances and search, there may have been more happening, but it might equally be possible that, as in Eleusis, the first degree of initiation ended with the finding of Harmonia.

At the end of the initiation the initiates received a purple fillet. A scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius tells us:

They say Odysseus, being an initiate and using Leukothea’s veil in place of a fillet, was saved from the storm at sea by placing the veil below his abdomen. For the initiates bind fillets below their abdomens.⁴²

This notice is most interesting, as it confirms the primary goal of the Samothracian Mysteries: saving sailors from the perils of the sea, a goal that clearly

38 Kritolaos *FGrH* 823 F 1; Statius, *Ach.* 1.830.

39 L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7 vols (Amsterdam, 1969–1990) 6.598–599 notes that Diodorus was well acquainted with local poetry, and also restores an inscription mentioning a poem by Herodes of Priene about the wedding of Kadmos and Harmonia in a Samothracian context.

40 Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 304 with a full list of identifications of the Kabeiroi with the Korybantes.

41 Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 120 (supplemented now by schol. Hes. *Th.* 937 p. 117.7 Di Gregorio).

42 Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.917–918, tr. Burkert,

distinguished Samothrace from Eleusis. Over time, the story of Odysseus had evidently become associated with the Mysteries, and the purple fillet will have served as a kind of talisman. We already hear about the association of Samothrace with the sea in the fifth century, as the famous ‘atheist’ Diagoras, when confronted with the many votive tablets in Samothrace from grateful sailors, responded: ‘There would be many more of these if those who were not saved had made declarations’.⁴³ It is this connection with the sea that must have enabled the association of the Dioskouroi as saviours at sea with Samothrace.⁴⁴ The connection with the sea also inspired a Hellenistic grandee to construct a building in the sanctuary, in which he dedicated a real warship to the Samothracian Gods.⁴⁵

With their fillets around their hips the initiates will have left the sanctuary in a happy mood. Yet before they departed, they probably concluded their initiation with a good meal, as a number of dining rooms have been excavated on the same level as the initiation halls, and banqueting is also mentioned by Nonnos.⁴⁶ As there was no more need for further libations, they left their libation bowls behind when re-entering the Theatral Circle, as attested by the thousands of sherds of them found on the nearby Eastern Hill.⁴⁷ Some initiates may have discarded other items from the initiation too, as several lamps were also found on or near the floor of the Theatral Circle.⁴⁸

Yet the initiates did not depart without lasting souvenirs. In addition to the fillet, they also received a magnetic, iron ring, several of which have been found in the sanctuary. Pliny reports that iron rings coated with gold were called ‘Samothracian rings’, so people seem to have considered their rings valuable souvenirs, and well worth keeping. Some scholars have even connected the ring with the supposed power of a goddess, but there is no evidence for this suggestion.⁴⁹ The

43 Diog. Laert. 6.59, tr. Burkert; see also Cic. *ND* 3.89; note also for salvation at sea, Pease on Cic. *ND* 3.89; add Ar. *Pax* 277–278; Alexis fr.183; *PCG*, *Adesp.* 1063.15–16; Theophr. *Char.* 25.2 (probably); Athenakon *FGrH* 546 F 1; Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.917–918; Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7.716–720; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 143.

44 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 225–239; Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 3, 63, 66, 74, 102; perhaps *PCG*, *Adesp.* 1146.21–22. Saviours at sea: Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 213.

45 B, Wescoat, ‘Buildings for votive ships on Delos and Samothrace’, in M. Yeroulanou and M. Stamatopoulou (eds), *Architecture and Archaeology in the Cyclades* (Oxford, 2005) 153–172.

46 Nonnos, *D.* 3.169–171, cf. Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 36–37, who not implausibly suggests that there was fasting during the initiation which was broken after the conclusion of the Mysteries.

47 Wescoat, ‘Coming and Going’, 94f.

48 J. McCredie, ‘Samothrace: Preliminary Report on the Campaigns of 1965–1967’, *Hesperia* 37 (1968) 200–234 at 232–233, pl. 69e.

49 Lucr. 6.1044; Pliny, *NH* 33.23; Isid. *Or.* 19.32.5; *Et. Magnum*, s.v. *Magnêtis*; Zenobius 4.22; P.W. Lehmann and D. Spittle, *Samothrace V* (Princeton, 1982) 403–404; Wescoat, ‘Coming and

gift of the ring was not the final act of the initiation: many initiates set up a record of their initiation in the Stoa of the sanctuary, on the road from the sanctuary to the ancient city or in the city itself, as lasting monuments of their piety towards the gods and testimonies to their desire to be remembered by mortals.⁵⁰

Once their religious obligations had been fulfilled, it was time for leisure. In his *Life of Lucullus* (13.2), Plutarch reports that Voconius, one of Lucullus' naval commanders in the war against Mithradates, lingered on Samothrace, being initiated and celebrating a *panegyris*, and Louis Robert made the attractive suggestion that the pseudo-eponymous *agoranomos* of the Samothracian inscriptions was also responsible for the *panegyris* of the Mysteries.⁵¹ We already saw that the Eleusinian Mysteries were concluded with such a fair (Ch. I.4); the same was clearly the case on Samothrace.

Given the evident resemblance between the Samothracian and Eleusinian Mysteries, we may expect that the Samothracian *epopteia* was also modelled on the Eleusinian one. Although the Samothracian inscriptions give little information, what we know suggests that the *epopteia* followed some time after the first initiation.⁵² This time lapse probably explains why far fewer inscriptions mention *epoptai* (initiates of the highest degree) than *mystai*.⁵³ Once again we have no idea in which building this ritual took place, but in 1938 the excavators found a bilingual Latin/Greek inscription near the entrance to the so-called Anaktoron: a sign of the sanctuary's attraction to Roman visitors already in the last two centuries BC.⁵⁴ It states in Latin: 'those who have not accepted the rituals of the gods do not enter'. Earlier scholars thought that it had been discovered *in situ*, but renewed study of its discovery has shown that this is not the case. Its findspot therefore does not help us to locate the site of the *epopteia*. However, in 1951 excavators found a similar Greek, first-century BC, inscription in the vicinity of the Hieron stating: 'The uninitiated is forbidden to enter the temple (or cella)', which actually seems to have been part of the walls of that building.⁵⁵ Contrary to a suggestion by Kevin Clinton, these prohibitions, or so-called sacred

Going', 96 (pictures). Connection with goddess: Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 30; Blakely, 'Toward an archaeology of secrecy', 62.

50 For the locations, see Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 80–82.

51 Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 6.607–608, cf. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 26.

52 Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 246f.

53 As noted by Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 30.

54 For Romans on Samothrace, see Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 87–103.

55 *I. Samothrace* 168–169, cf. C. Marconi, 'Entering the Sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace', communication to the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) Annual Meeting, Seattle 2013.

laws,⁵⁶ would be out of place at the entrance to the sanctuary, as there is no sign that the sanctuary was used only for the Mysteries or that all visitors had already been initiated; its function as asylum, the presence of a theatre and the celebration of the local Dionysia in the sanctuary speak against such an assumption.⁵⁷ We may therefore assume that these inscriptions stood near a building where the initiation into the second degree, the *epopteia*, took place.

From the available buildings, the Anaktoron, already mentioned, seems a likely candidate, although we should note that its name is modern, not ancient. As we saw, Varro also mentioned an Anaktoron, but in his case he clearly meant the Samothracian Telesterion, the location of which, as we also saw, has not yet been established with any certainty. The Anaktoron is of Roman imperial date, but it was preceded by at least two buildings of similar design, more or less on the same spot, which reminds us that the Eleusinian Anaktoron had remained in the same place despite successive reconstructions and innovations (Ch. I.2). Given that benches lined the eastern and northern walls of its main chamber, the *epopteia* could well have taken place there. However, nothing is certain, and new finds or new insights may force us to rethink this idea in the future.⁵⁸

We know very little about the ritual of the *epopteia*, but we may safely assume the usual preliminary lustration rites and sacrifices. It is also clear that a sacred tale was told during the Samothracian Mysteries and, given its scabrous character, I am inclined to place it during the *epopteia*, as scandalous things were also shown and told during the Eleusinian *epopteia* (Ch. 1.3). Regarding this sacred tale we even have two notices, one positive and one negative. Let us start with the positive information. In connection with the derivation of the names of the Greek gods from the Egyptians, Herodotus mentions that the Greeks derived their ithyphallic statues of Hermes from the Pelasgians, from whom the Athenians took over the custom and who, in turn, were followed by the other Greeks. He continues:

56 For the sacred laws, see R. Parker, 'What Are Sacred Laws?', in E.M. Harris and L. Rubinstein (eds), *The Law and the Courts in Ancient Greece* (London, 2004) 57–70; S. Georgoudi, 'Comment régler les *theia pragmata*. Pour une étude de ce qu'on appelle "lois sacrées"', *Mètis* NS 8 (2010) 39–54; J.-M. Carbon and V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Beyond Greek "Sacred Laws"', *Kernos* 25 (2012) 163–182.

57 Asylum: Diod. Sic. 3.55.9; K.J. Rigsby, *Asylia: territorial inviolability in the Hellenistic world* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996) 397f. Theatre and Dionysia: I. Rutherford, 'Theoria and Theatre at Samothrace: The *Dardanos* by Dymas of Iasos', in P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals* (Oxford, 2007) 279–293; Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 72–74.

58 For the building, see Lehmann, *Samothrace: A Guide*, 56–61.

Anyone who has been initiated into the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, which the Samothracians celebrate (who got them from the Pelasgians), will know what I mean. (...) The Pelasgians had a sacred tale about this, as is made clear in the Samothracian Mysteries.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the learned, second-century BC historian Demetrios of Skepsis explicitly notes that no *mystikos logos* was told about the Kabeiroi on Samothrace. In other words, there was no mention of Kabeiroi in the sacred tale of the Samothracian initiation.⁶⁰ Can we say anything positive about the contents of this tale? Yes, we can. Burkert has noted that a First Mercurius (Hermes), son of Caelum (Ouranos) and Dies (Hemera) appears in the list of eponyms offered by the sceptic in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, 'whose nature was aroused in a rather obscene way, tradition says, because he was moved by the sight of Proserpina (Persephone)'.⁶¹ As Varro (*LL* 5.58) mentions that Caelum/Ouranos was one of the Great Gods of Samothrace, it seems that there was a story during the initiation about seeing Persephone and sexual arousal, as Burkert persuasively suggests. His suggestion seems to fit well with what Herodotus tells us. The full context of the passage quoted above is as follows:

Anyone who has been initiated into the Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, which the Samothracians celebrate (who got them from the Pelasgians), will know what I mean, since the Pelasgians, from whom the Samothracians took their rites, and who cohabited with the Athenians, previously lived in Samothrace. The Athenians, then, were the first Greeks to make ithyphallic Herms, and they learned the practice from the Pelasgians. The Pelasgians had a sacred tale (*hiros logos*) about this, as is made clear in the Samothracian Mysteries (2.51, tr. Fowler).

Apparently, the sacred tale related the aetiology of the ithyphallic Herms of the Anaktoron,⁶² and the somewhat peculiar nature of the subject may be responsible for assigning it a Pelasgian, non-Greek origin.⁶³ As Burkert observes, the erection is also referred to in Callimachus' ninth *Iambus*, where a visitor to a palaestra asks the statue of the ithyphallic god Hermes about his status. The god answers that 'he is, from farther back, a Tyrsenian (Etruscan), and in accordance with a mystic tale he has got his erection' (fr. 199 Pfeiffer = *Dieg.* VIII.37–39, tr. Burkert). Burkert

⁵⁹ Hdt. 2.51, tr. Fowler, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 74–78; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 140f.

⁶⁰ Demetrios *apud* Strabo 10.3.20 = Demetrios, fr. 61 = Demetrios *FGrH* 2013 F 61.

⁶¹ Cic. *ND* 3.56, see also Arnob. 4.14; Schol. Dan. on Servius on *Aen.* 1.297, cf. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 141f.

⁶² This is also noted by C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1987) 11.

⁶³ For the Pelasgians and their place in Greek mythology, see Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.84–96.

argues that Callimachus took the detail from Herodotus, but that seems unduly sceptical. Callimachus was very learned and also knew the name of the Samothracian god Kasmilos (see below).⁶⁴ There is no reason, then, not to accept his text as an important confirmation that a myth about the erection of Hermes was part of the Samothracian *epopteia*. Another scandalous story must have been the rape by Iasion of Demeter on Samothrace, rationalised by Hellanicus as an insult against her statue and by Conon against her *phasma*,⁶⁵ though the latter story was probably not very old and suggests, once again, Athenian influence.

The recent publication of an inscription has now also informed us about the *gran finale* of the *epopteia*. We are told of a certain Isidorus, an Athenian of probably the second or first century BC, that:

as an initiate (*mystês*), great-hearted, he saw the doubly sacred light of Kabeiros (= the light of the two Kabeiroi) in Samothrace and the pure rites of Deo (= Demeter) in Eleusis.⁶⁶

In other words, the climax of the rites in Samothrace was the showing of a great light, just as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. I.3). After the initiation, the *epoptai* proudly called themselves ‘*mystai* and pious *epoptai*’ as the inscriptions show. The piety is probably a claim made by the Samothracian priesthood, as Diodorus (5.49.6) tells us that those ‘who have taken part in the Mysteries become both more pious and more just – and both in every respect – than they were before’. Once again, a banquet will have concluded the initiation.

It is highly interesting that Isidorus calls the gods of Samothrace ‘Kabeiroi’, just like Herodotus and Stesimbrotus (above). Evidently, non-Samothracians identified the gods with the Kabeiroi. But is that right and what does it mean? Until now I have postponed discussion of the nature of the Samothracian gods, as their identification is riddled with problems, but we cannot pass over this question. We can hardly solve it, but it is perhaps possible to shed a little more light on the problem. We should start with the observation that the Samothracian themselves called the gods of their Mysteries ‘the Gods’ or ‘Great Gods’.⁶⁷ Divine anonymity is noteworthy but

⁶⁴ A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus’ Book of Iambi* (Oxford, 1999) 204–207; E. Livrea, ‘Il Giambò IX di Callimaco’, *ZPE* 179 (2011) 84–88.

⁶⁵ For Iasion, Burkert compares *Od.* 5.125; Hes. *Theog.* 969–971, fr. 177; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 23 = F 23 Fowler; Scymnus 684–685; Diod. Sic. 6.47–49; Dion. Hal. *AR.* 1.61.4. Add Strabo 7, fr. 20b, derived, according to Radt *ad loc.*, from Demetrios of Skepsis (fr. 62 Gaede = Demetrios *FGrH* 2013 F 62); Conon *FGrH* 26 F 1.21; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.522f.

⁶⁶ *I. Samothrace* 29.13–16, cf. Dimitrova, *Theoroi and Initiates*, 83–90; R. Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca and London, 2011) 254.

⁶⁷ Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 2.

not unique in Greek religion. Anonymous gods are often foreign, chthonic or otherwise different from the Olympian gods.⁶⁸ In our case, the anonymity is probably to be explained by the special character of the Mysteries and its rituals.⁶⁹ The epithet 'great' is very common for gods, marking them out as highly important.⁷⁰ Yet it is striking that both names, 'Gods' and 'Great Gods', are attested only quite late and do not seem to occur before the first century BC in the surviving literature, occurring especially in Roman reports.⁷¹ It was the Roman attention to Samothrace in connection with the Aeneas legend that had raised interest in the names of the Samothracian gods.⁷² On the other hand, inscriptions outside Samothrace regularly mention the 'Samothracian gods' or 'the gods on Samothrace'.⁷³ There were priests, temples and, even, associations of worshippers, the so-called Samothrakiastai, of the Samothracian gods, in cities on the Black Sea, on islands in the southern Aegean and in coastal cities of Asia Minor.⁷⁴ They illustrate the attraction of the Mysteries, but they do not help us with the nature or names of the gods.

Although, then, the Samothracians themselves and many of their worshippers elsewhere referred to their gods only as 'the Gods' or 'the Great Gods', others were less satisfied with this anonymity. We have seen that already in the fifth century BC Herodotus and Stesimbrotus identified them with the Kabeiroi, and it is striking how often the Greeks and Romans tried to replace their anonymity with a specific name, as we also hear of Aōoi theoi, Daktyloi, Korybantēs, Kouretēs, Penates, Propoloi and Telchines.⁷⁵ I will reserve discussion of the name and nature of the Kabeiroi for the next section (§ 2), but here it is sufficient to note that they were often thought to be two in number.⁷⁶ This must have helped to identify

68 H.S. Versnel, 'Self-sacrifice, Compensation and the Anonymous Gods', in *Entretiens Hardt 27* (Vandoeuvres and Geneva, 1981) 135–195 at 171–179; A. Henrichs, 'Anonymity and Polarity: Unknown Gods and Nameless Altars at the Areopagos', *Illinois Class. Stud.* 19 (1994) 27–58; P.W. van der Horst, *Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity: essays on their interaction* (Leuven, 1998) 187–220; E.J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2007) 2.952–960 (1937–1938¹); D. Ackermann, 'L'Hagnè Theos du dème d'Aixônè en Attique: réflexions sur l'anonymat divin dans la religion grecque antique', *ARG* 12 (2010) 83–118.

69 P. Scarpi, 'Des Grands Dieux aux dieux sans nom: autour de l'altérité des Dieux de Samothrace', in N. Belayche *et al.* (eds.), *Nommer les Dieux. Théonyme, épithètes, épicleses dans l'antiquité* (Turnhout, 2005) 213–218.

70 H.S. Versnel, *Ter Unus* (Leiden, 1990) 194–196 and *passim*.

71 See the lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 303, 305.

72 A. Fo, 'Samotraccia', in *EV III*, 672.

73 See the discussion in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 212–238; add A. Avram, 'Autour de quelques décrets d'Istros', *Pontica* 33–34 (2000–2001) 337–348; *SEG* 42, 661, 999; 38.847; 40.657; 46.1567; 50.1211.

74 Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 57–86; add *SEG* 45.897–898 (temple); 39.737A (association).

75 See the lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 304–305; add Horsfall on Verg. *Aen.* 3.12 (Penates).

76 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 274.

them with the Dioskouroi, but also with the two ithyphallic Samothracian statues mentioned above and thus with the ‘Great Gods’. There probably were other points of contact between the cult of the Kabeiroi and that of the Samothracian gods, but our evidence does not get us beyond general notions, such as ecstatic dancing.

The only ‘native’ names that we hear of are mentioned by Mnaseas of Patara, a little known scholar of around 200 BC, who relates that the gods were called: Axieros, Axiokersa and Axiokersos, whom he identifies with Demeter, Persephone and Hades; a fourth god, Kasmilos, served as an attendant and was identified with Hermes.⁷⁷ His information has recently been confirmed in an amazing manner. A fifth-, early sixth-century AD curse tablet from Antioch starts with: ‘*Axieris Kadmile, Axierissa Kadmilos*’.⁷⁸ The author of this curse tablet was clearly at home in the world of the Mysteries, as he also mentions the Korybantes (§ 3) and figures from the Eleusinian Mysteries like Brimo and Baubo. Knowledge of Mysteries was much sought after in Late Antiquity for magical practices,⁷⁹ but it is surprising to find these rare names on such a late curse tablet. Yet there can be no doubt that the author was well informed. One may wonder if there was not a handbook about Mysteries circulating in Late Antiquity.

According to the early mythographer Akousilaos, Kamillos (his spelling for Kasmilos) was a son of Kabeiro and Hephaestus, which seems to suggest that Kasmilos originally belonged to the sphere of the Kabeiroi,⁸⁰ but had been transferred in the course of time to that of the Samothracian gods, perhaps as a consequence of the identification of the latter with the former. On neighbouring Imbros the Kabeiroi were also worshipped together with Kasmeilos who was also identified as Hermes (see also § 2),⁸¹ although in local inscriptions the Kabeiroi are always called ‘Great Gods’! There seems to have been an active cross-fertilisation between the two neighbouring islands in the area of religion. Kasm(e)ilos is also the spelling in Hipponax (fr. 155b West² = 164 Degani²) and in Callimachus,

⁷⁷ Mnaseas *FGrH* 154 F 27 (*apud* Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.916–918b) = Mnaseas, fr. 17; Dionysodoros *FGrH* 68 F 1 (Hermes); H.S. Versnel, ‘Mercurius amongst the *magni dei*’, *Mnemosyne* IV 27 (1974) 144–151; P. Cappelletto, *I frammenti di Mnasea* (Milano, 2003) 191–197.

⁷⁸ A. Hollmann, ‘A Curse Tablet from the Circus at Antioch’, *ZPE* 145 (2003) 67–82 (= *SEG* 53.1786).

⁷⁹ H.-D. Betz, ‘Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri’, in C. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York, 1991) 244–259 at 249–250 = *Hellenismus und Urchristentum* (Tübingen, 1990) 209–229.

⁸⁰ Akousilaos *FGrH* 2 F 20 = F 20 Fowler. For the spelling Kadmilos, see Hipponax, fr. dub. 197 Degani² = *Adesp. Iamb.* 58 West²; Lycophron 162. The spelling Kasmilos is considered an Atticism by S. Hawkins, *Studies in the Language of Hipponax* (Bremen, 2013) 66.

⁸¹ *IG* XII 8.74; Steph. Byz. τ 57, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 37–43.

but we also find Kadmilos and, as attested by Akousilaos, Kamillos.⁸² The name has a foreign sound, and an Anatolian background seems likely, especially given the occurrence of the name in Hipponax, who was born in Ephesus.⁸³ This leaves us with 3 gods, one female (Axiokersa) and two males (Axieros, Axiokersos), to judge by their names, which until now have defied a convincing explanation. The frequent reference to a pair of two males would make no sense if there had been two females, as Burkert asserted,⁸⁴ but the identification of the three with Demeter, Persephone and Hades cannot have been very early and once again points to Eleusinian influence.

A triad of one female and two males also seems to lie in the background of the foundation myth of the Samothracian Mysteries. According to Hesiod (fr. 177), Elektra gave birth to Dardanos and Eetion,⁸⁵ and the already mentioned Mnaseas (fr. 41) related that Dardanos arrived on Samothrace with his sister Harmonia and brother Iasion. Later mythology reported that Iasion had founded the Mysteries of Samothrace (Diod. Sic. 5.49.2), married Cybele and fathered Korybas: once again one female and two males, but also an attempt to account for the orgiastic nature of the cult and its resemblance to the cult of the Korybantēs (§ 3). Evidently, the composition of the triad had to stay the same, but the names could vary infinitely, the more so as there was no canonical iconography of the deities that would have helped to channel the tradition in a certain direction.⁸⁶

With the triads we have come to the end of the Samothracian Mysteries. We will meet more triads in connection with the Kabeiroi, and we now turn to these no less enigmatic gods.

82 Hipponax, fr. dub. 197 Degani² = *Adesp. Iamb.* 58 West² (Kadmilos); Call. fr. 723 with Pfeiffer *ad loc.*; Lycophron 162 (Kadmilos); Varro, *LL* 7.34; Iuba *FGrH* 275 F 88 (Kadmilos); Dion. Hal. *AR* 2.22.2 (Kadmilos, a probable emendation).

83 Cf. R. Beekes, 'The Origin of the Kabeiroi', *Mnemosyne* IV 57 (2004) 465–477 at 467 and his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2010) 1.613–614; see also Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.41 n, 147, but the proposed connection with the Hattic god Hasammil seems a long shot.

84 Thus, rightly, Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 2–3, against Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 458 n. 40 and *Kleine Schriften III*, 147f.

85 Cf. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 138–139, refuting the objections of Cole, *Megaloi Theoi*, 3; see also Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.522.

86 For the absence of a specific iconography, see D. Vollkommer-Glöker, 'Megaloi Theoi', in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 820–828.

2 The Kabeiroi

There can be little doubt that the Kabeiroi constitute one of the most problematic groups of divinities: they are very difficult to interpret because of the great number of often confusing testimonies.⁸⁷ For our purpose we have to be selective, and we will concentrate on the main sites that are known to have had Mysteries associated with them. Demetrios of Skepsis (*apud* Strabo 10.3.21) noted that the Kabeiroi were worshipped most on Imbros, Lemnos and some cities of the Troad. In other words, for the Greeks these islands were the real centres of the cult of the Kabeiroi. It therefore seems reasonable to begin with them, the more so as they also demonstrate the problems posed by these gods.

We will start with Imbros,⁸⁸ where the extra-urban sanctuary of the Kabeiroi has only recently been identified.⁸⁹ Regarding its gods we are immediately confronted with the same problem as we encountered on Samothrace. Demetrios reports that their names were *mystika* ('secret') and he denies that the name of the Kabeiroi occurred in the Samothracian Mysteries, as we just saw (§ 1). Literary testimonies connect the Kabeiroi with Imbros,⁹⁰ although, as on Samothrace, in the local inscriptions they are called Great Gods.⁹¹ Especially interesting is a lemma in Stephanus of Byzantium that says: 'Imbros ... is sacred to the Kabeiroi and Hermes, whom the Carians call Imbrasos' (τ 57). To make it more complicated, we also have a local, late inscription that mentions a Lord Kasmeilos in the company of five Titans (*IG XII 8.74*). The Imbrians seem to have worshipped the same group of divinities as the Samothracians (§ 1), for they also worshipped a goddess in connection with the male gods (*IG XII 8.51*).⁹² Yet there was a differ-

87 See still O. Kern, 'Kabeiros und Kabiren', in *RE* 10 (1917) 1399–1450, with his *Nachtrag* in *RE* 16.2 (1935) 1275–1279; there is an excellent collection and discussion of testimonies by Hemberg, *Kabiren*. More recently: F. Graf, 'Kabeiroi,' in *Der Neue Pauly* 6 (1999) 23–27 (fine overview); S. Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge, 2006) 32–54; Bowden, *Mystery Cults*, 49–67; R.L. Fowler, 'Herodotos and the Early Mythographers: the case of the Kabeiroi', in R.S. Smith and S. Trzaskoma (eds), *Writing Myth* (Leuven, 2013) 1–19.

88 For the Imbrian Mysteries, see Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 37–43; Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 351–353.

89 B. Ruhl, 'Gli Ateniesi sull'isola di Imbro', *ASAA* 88 (2010) 455–468 at 463f.

90 In addition to the passages mentioned in the text, see schol. Hes. *Th.* 338; Eusth. *DP* 524 and on *Il.* XIV.281.

91 *IG XII 8.51–52*, 68–74, 87–89a–b.

92 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 38–39. K. Clinton and N. Dimitrova, 'A New Edition of *IG XII 8, 51*', in A. Themis and N. Papazarkadas (eds), *Attika epigraphika: meletes pros timen tou Christian Habicht* (Athens, 2009) 201–207 (= *SEG* 59.947) have now established that the Imbrian inscription includes a goddess among the Great Gods.

ence. On Imbros, the fourth Samothracian god also had an epichoric name, Imbrasos, which clearly points to influence from Caria and Lycia where places and names with the element *Imbr-* are well attested and probably go back to a Cuneiform Luwian word meaning ‘open country’;⁹³ on the other hand, on Imbrian coins it is always Hermes who is shown.⁹⁴ The presence of epichoric name shows that names were not the most important characteristic of this group of divinities, but that, rather, the names were adapted to local circumstances and traditions.

Unfortunately, very little is known about the Mysteries. We hear of initiates (*IG XII 8.70*, 87–89), of Pythagoras having been initiated into the Imbrian Mysteries (Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 28.151), and of the secrecy of the names of the Kabeiroi (Demetrios, above). That is the sum total. Hemberg deduces from the location of the sanctuary near a brook that purifications must have played a role.⁹⁵ That is undoubtedly true, but does not get us very far.

We hear more about the cult of the Kabeiroi and their sanctuary on Lemnos.⁹⁶ Unlike Samothrace and Imbros, local inscriptions do attest their name on the island, but it is typical of the onomastic situation that we also find a dedication to the Great Gods and even to the Lords Gods.⁹⁷ As on the other islands, we also find a goddess here, Lemnos, a homonym of the island, who may well lie behind Artemis, who was the most prominent goddess of the island in the fifth century, and Cybele, who seems to have become prominent on the island in late Hellenistic times.⁹⁸ According to the heresiologist Hippolytus, already mentioned above

93 L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen* (Heidelberg, 1984) 199; D. Schürr, ‘Imbr- in lykischer und karischer Schrift’, *Die Sprache* 35 (1991–1993) 163–175 and ‘Karische und lykische Sibilanten’, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 106 (2001) 94–121 at 104–105; I.J. Adiego, *The Carian Language* (Leiden, 2007) 335. Imbros in Lycia: C. Marek, *Die Inschriften von Kaunos* (Munich, 2006) 83 n. 63. Imbriades and other, related Carian names: *SEG* 59.1200.

94 G. Gorini, ‘Le monete di Imbros dal santuario dei Cabiri a Lemno’, in U. Peter (ed.), *Stephanos nomismatikos* (Berlin, 1998) 295–300.

95 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 42.

96 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 160–170; L. Beschi, ‘Cabirio di Lemno: Testimonianze letterarie ed epigrafiche’, *ASAA* 74–75 (1997) 7–192; Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 331–344; R. Leone, ‘Tra Lemno e Samotraccia: il santuario degli dei Cabiri di Chloi’, *ASAA* 88 (2010) 273–80.

97 Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 162. For *Anakes* in connection with the Kabeiroi, see also Paus. 10.38.7. According to Graf, ‘Kabeiroi’, 124 and A.-F. Jaccottet, ‘Les Cabires. Entre assimilation et mise en scène de l’altérité’, in C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Les représentations des dieux des autres* (Palermo, 2011) 1–16 at 2–3, the name Kabeiroi never appears on Lemnian inscriptions, but see S. Accame, ‘Iscrizioni del Cabirio di Lemno’, *ASAA NS* 3–4 (1941–1943 [1948]) 75–105 at 79 no.3, 84 no.4, 105 nos 23–24; *SEG* 45.1194; 50.831, 836–837.

98 Lemnos is also mentioned as ‘Great Goddess’ by Steph. Byz. s.v. *Lēmnos* and is perhaps still meant in Ar. fr. 384. Artemis and Lemnos: R. Parker, ‘Athenian Religion Abroad’, in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (eds), *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian democratic accounts presented to*

(§ 1), she gave birth to Kabeiros, ‘a fair child celebrated in unspeakable orgiastic rites’, but early mythographers give different genealogies. Akousilaos mentions a Kamillos, son of Hephaestus and Kabeiro, who was the father of three Kabeiroi and probably (though unfortunately the text is corrupted here) three Kabeiric nymphs, whereas Pherecydes cites three male and female Kabeiroi as offspring of Hephaestus and Kabeiro. On the other hand, the late antique but well informed Nonnos knows of only two Lemnian Kabeiroi.⁹⁹ As Hemberg rightly concludes, the different constellations all suggest the combination of a goddess and male Kabeiroi, who on Lemnos sometimes seem to have been an older and a younger god (Hephaestus and Kamillos). Given that on Imbros Hermes played a role next in rank to the Kabeiroi, it may be noteworthy that Hermes was prominent on Lemnos too.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps here too he was seen as an embodiment of Kamillos. The Kabeiric nymphs have not turned up in the inscriptions, but some representations of nymphs in the sanctuary may perhaps be associated with them.¹⁰¹ The mention of these female Kabeiroi or Kabeiric nymphs could well be a reflection of the attested presence of women in the cult.¹⁰²

Finally, the prominent position of Hephaestus on Lemnos meant that the god had to be incorporated into the cult of the Kabeiroi, in which he was so important that the Kabeiroi were also called Hephaesti, according to Photius (κ 3). This learned Byzantine bishop informs us that they were called Titans as well, which reminds us of the inscription from Imbros that has just been quoted. The reason for this equation is unclear, but Hephaestus could clearly upset the original constellation, as there was no authoritative genealogical myth in this respect.¹⁰³

David Lewis (Oxford, 1994) 339–346 at 345. Cybele: K. Welch, ‘A Statue Head of the “Great Mother” Discovered in Samothrace’, *Hesperia* 65 (1996) 467–473. In general, see also L. Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, in G. Capecchi *et al.* (eds), *In memoria di Enrico Paribeni*, 2 vols (Rome, 1998) 1.45–58 at 56.

99 Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.7.3 (Lemnos); Akousilaos *FGrH* 2 F 20 = F 20 Fowler (Kamillos); Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler (the children Kabeiroi); Nonnos, *D.* 14.19–22, 17.195 (2 Kabeiroi). Note that Akousilaos’ information can also be found in Steph. Byz. s.v. *Nymphai Kabeirides*, which as Radt *ad* Strabo 10.3.21 (our source for Akousilaos) notes, points to a common source, probably, I suggest, Demetrios of Skepsis, who was interested in the Kabeiroi, as we have seen.

100 Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, 53f.

101 Beschi, ‘Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno’, 56f. Perhaps the mention of Lemnian nymphs in Schol. Pind. *O.* 13.74g should be connected with this, cf. Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 279.

102 Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.41.

103 For Hephaestus, see now Bremmer, ‘Hephaistos Sweats or How to Construct an Ambivalent God’, in J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine (eds), *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 2010) 193–208.

As regards the actual initiation, we are again not blessed with many testimonies, but the inscriptions suggest that we need not take into account Eleusinian influence and can therefore suppose a single initiatory stage. The Italian excavations on the island have shown that the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi already contained a Telesterion in the seventh century, about 14 by 6 metres, with stone benches lining the walls, which was replaced by 200 BC with a much larger building, again with seating spaces.¹⁰⁴ The Roman dramatist Accius (*Philocteta*, fr. 2) and Cicero (*ND* 1.119: perhaps from the same tragedy)¹⁰⁵ tell us that there was a wood nearby, as was entirely normal for Greek sanctuaries.¹⁰⁶ Otherwise we know very little. We may safely assume purifications, perhaps with water from the sea, which was close to the sanctuary. There will also have been sacrifices,¹⁰⁷ and we know that the initiation, as could be expected, took place at night.¹⁰⁸ There will have been ecstatic dances, as Hippolytus' 'orgiastic rites' suggests: the comparison, if not identification, of the Kabeiroi with the Kouretes and Korybantes (§ 3) argues for the ecstatic character of the dances, which is further confirmed by the discovery of *auloi* in the sanctuary.¹⁰⁹ A striking aspect must have been the large consumption of wine, as Aeschylus not only put the Argonauts drunken on the stage, but also has the Kabeiroi themselves drinking.¹¹⁰ Lemnian wine was well known for its quality,¹¹¹ and the discovery of many kantharoi, dating from the archaic period and with strong Anatolian connections, proves the importance of drinking in the sanctuary. They are also found on Samothrace, which indicates that drink was important also in the Samothracian

104 L. Beschi, 'Il primitivo Telesterio del Cabirio di Lemno (campagne di scavo 1990–1991)', *ASAA* 81 (2003) 963–1022; L. Beschi *et al.*, 'Il Telesterio ellenistico del Cabirio di Lemno', *ASAA* 82 (2004) 225–341 (seating: 240).

105 As is suggested by Masciadri, *Eine Insel im Meer der Geschichten*, 334. In general, see on Accius' tragedy, V. Tandoi, *Scritti di filologia e di storia della cultura classica*, 2 vols (Pisa, 1992) 1.234–270.

106 J. Scheid (ed.), *Les bois sacrées* (Naples, 1993); V.J. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon* (Leiden, 1996) 141–142; P. Bonnechere, 'The place of the Sacred Grove in the Mantic Rituals of Greece: the Example of the Oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia (Boeotia)', in M. Conan (ed.), *Sacred Gardens and Landscapes: ritual and agency* (Washington DC, 2007) 17–41. For groves and oracles, see also C. Schuler and K. Zimmermann, 'Neue Inschriften aus Patara I: Zur Elite der Stadt im Hellenismus und früher Kaiserzeit', *Chiron* 42 (2012) 567–626 at 600–602.

107 Cf. Accame, 'Iscrizioni del Cabirio di Lemno', nos. 6.4–5, 11.2.

108 Cic. *ND* 1.119: *nocturno aditu occulta coluntur*; Nonnos, *D.* 4.183–185; perhaps, *Orph. Arg.* 28–30.

109 L. Beschi, 'Frammenti di auloi dal Cabirio di Lemno', in S. Böhm and K.-V. von Eickstedt (eds), *Ithake. Festschrift für Jörg Schäfer* (Würzburg, 2001) 175–180.

110 Athen. 10.428f = Aesch. *TrGF* 3 T 117a7 (Argonauts); Aesch. fr. 97 (Kabeiroi).

111 *Il.* VII.467; Ar. *Pax* 1161–1165; Androtion *FGrH* 324 F 80.

Mysteries.¹¹² Such drinking seems to fit best into the final stage of the initiation. Was the ritual on Lemnos perhaps concluded with a symposium or banquet as we supposed for Samothrace? However that may be, the discovery of many iron rings in the sanctuary suggests that Lemnian initiates, like the Samothracian ones, went home with a concrete souvenir of their initiation.¹¹³

Other aspects of the Kabeiroi appear in Asia Minor, where we are especially informed about their cults in Pergamon and Miletus. In Pergamon, the cult had the reputation of being very ancient,¹¹⁴ which need not be true and may indicate somewhat strange rituals.¹¹⁵ We know that Mysteries of the Kabeiroi were performed on the Acropolis of Pergamon, probably during the festival of the Kabiria.¹¹⁶ As we have already seen, there were apparently two Kabeiroi, the elder of whom was actually named Kabeiros.¹¹⁷ From an honorary decree for a gymnasiarch of about 130 BC,¹¹⁸ just after the death of the last Attalid king, we learn that the Kabirion was closely associated with the gymnasium and that the festival of the Kabiria enjoyed sumptuous banquets thanks to the gymnasiarch's generosity. Even more detailed is an honorary decree for another well-known inhabitant of Pergamon, Diodoros Paspáros, who lived during the Mithradatic wars. From this inscription we learn of an 'initiation (*myêsis*) of the ephebes' that took place 'according to ancestral traditions'.¹¹⁹

Moreover, the decree mentions that Diodoros restored an old ritual, Kriobolia, literally 'the slaying of a ram', 'for the entertainment of the boys' in which the young, *neoi*, had to chase and catch a ram. Having caught the animal, its meat was the price for a festival, the Nikephoria. One cannot escape the impression that once again we have here the ram as a special animal for Mysteries, as we already saw above (§ 1), the more so as the ram figures on coins that were probably

112 L. Beschi, 'Gli scavi del cabirio di Chloi', in *Un ponte fra l'Italia e la Grecia: Atti del simposio in onore di Antonino di Vita* (Padua, 2000) 75–84 at 78–80; Leone, 'Tra Lemno e Samotraccia', 276; P. Ilieva, 'The Sessile Kantharos of the Archaic Northeast Aegean Ceramic Assemblage: the Anatolian Connection', *Studia Troica* 19 (2011) 179–203.

113 L. Beschi, 'Immagini dei Cabiri di Lemno', 52.

114 Paus. 1.4.6; Ael. Arist. fr. vol. 2.469 § 5.

115 For Pergamon, see E. Ohlemutz, *Kulte und Heiligtümer der Götter in Pergamon* (Würzburg, 1940) 192–202; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 172–182.

116 Mysteries: Ael. Aristides, *loc. cit.* (note 114); *OGIS* 2.764. Festival: *IvP* 252.26.

117 Kabeiros: *IvP* 251.1, 34, cf. Ohlemutz, *Kulte*, 197; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 176 n. 3.

118 H. Hepding, 'Die Inschriften', *Athen. Mitt.* 32 (2007) 241–414 at no. 10 (273–278, supplanting *IvP* 252), cf. M. Wörrle, 'Zu Rang und Bedeutung von Gymnasion im hellenistischen Pergamon', *Chiron* 37 (2002) 501–516.

119 *OGIS* 2.764; for the date, see C.P. Jones, 'Diodoros Paspáros Revisited', *Chiron* 30 (2000) 1–14, whereas Ohlemutz, *Kulte*, 198 and Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 179 dated him to about 125 BC.

connected with the cult of the Kabeiroi.¹²⁰ Finally, given that we already noted the combination of Kabeiroi and a female deity on Imbros and Lemnos,¹²¹ it is important to observe that the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi was close to that of Meter Basileia, an association that we also find in Anthedon, Chios and Thebes (below).¹²²

Although, then, we cannot reconstruct the Pergamene Mysteries in detail, we can still see some important features that we have already met or will meet again. The ritual contained an excellent sacrificial meal, which will probably have concluded the Mysteries. Important for us is also the close connection with the world of the ephebes. This strongly suggests an initiatory background of the Mysteries, which we will also find in Miletus, our next cult.

In Miletus, the sanctuary of the Kabeiroi was situated in neighbouring Assesos, somewhat outside the main city, as was the case with those on Samothrace, Imbros, Lemnos and in Thebes (below).¹²³ Here we hear only of a myth, of which the fullest version is told by the Augustan historian Nicolaus of Damascus (*FGrH* 90 F 52). According to him, the sons of the murdered king Laodamas had taken refuge in Assesos. When they were besieged, help appeared in the shape of two young men from Phrygia, a country whose language was related to that of the Greeks but still suggested something foreign.¹²⁴ The two youths, Tottes and Onnes, brought a chest with the *hiera*, ‘holy objects’, of the Kabeiroi, which were probably shown during the Mysteries. After a sacrifice, the sons of Laodamas and their army confronted the opponents with the chest at the head of the phalanx, secured victory and reasserted their right to the throne.¹²⁵ Most older studies of the Kabeiroi have overlooked the fact that the story is already told by Callimachus (fr. 113e Harder = 115 Pfeiffer), which takes it back to the earlier Hellenistic period.¹²⁶ From his account, which survives only in fragments, we can see some of the main lines as filled out by Nicolaus, but we also hear of the education of Tottes and Onnes ‘at the furnaces of Hephaestus’. This connection suggests influence from Lemnos and an association with smithing.

120 This is also the conclusion of Ohlemutz, *Kulte*, 199 and Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 179f.

121 See the list in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 288–290.

122 Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 117f.

123 For Miletus and Assesos, see Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 137–140.

124 Ch. de Lamberterie, ‘Grec, phrygien, arménien: des anciens aux modernes’, *J. des Savants* 2013, 3–69.

125 One is reminded of the story of the usage of the ark in battle by the Israelites against the Philistines in *1 Samuel* 4.1–11.

126 See the extensive commentary in A. Harder, *Callimachus: Aetia*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2012) 2.875–891.

The name Tottes can hardly be separated from the place name Tottoa in Phrygia, which probably goes back to Luwian Tuttuwa, and the name Onnes is almost certainly also of Anatolian origin.¹²⁷ As regards their character, we note that they are youths and two in number, just like the Dioskouroi and Kabeiroi elsewhere. Moreover, the fact that they are described as non-Greek suggests a non-Greek appearance, perhaps with ithyphallic statues in the background. Now the great goddess of Assesos was Athena, who was also the most important divinity of Milesian Pidasa;¹²⁸ in fact, she was widely worshipped in Caria and adjacent Ionia.¹²⁹ The more recent discovery of Archaic votives for her in Assesos, which used to be a Carian town, implies that an epichoric divinity probably lies behind Athena, but all attempts at identification have been unsuccessful.¹³⁰ We may perhaps see here too the combination of a goddess with two youths, as on Samothrace and elsewhere. In the Milesian variant of the cult there was evidently a connection between youths, war and the Kabeiroi, which suggests that a ritual connected with puberty-initiation lies in the background of the myth.

Our last location is Thebes, where excavations have given us plenty to think about but little that is easy to interpret.¹³¹ The little we know about the cult dates mainly from the archaic and classical period, but the situation is complicated by the fact that Pausanias, who visited the sanctuary in the later second century AD, refuses to tell us anything about the Kabeiroi or the ritual connected with them (9.25.5), as he is wont to do with Mysteries.¹³² On top of this refusal we are confronted by the problem of how to interpret the many (fragments of) vases with comically distorted figures found in the Kabirion, which seem to date from about the mid-fifth century to the destruction of the city by the Macedonians in 335 BC.¹³³

127 Tottes: Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, 628 §1356. Onnes: L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personennamen* (Prague, 1964) 374 §1089–2: ‘Mitglied einer selbständigen, wenn auch nicht entwickelten Lallnamensippe’.

128 H. von Aulock, ‘Eine neue kleinasiatische Münzstätte: Pedasa (Pidasa) in Karien’, *Jahrb. Num. Geldgesch.* 25 (1975) 123–128.

129 A. Laumonier, *Les cultes indigènes en Carie* (Paris, 1958) 544, index s.v. Athèna.

130 W. Held, ‘Funde aus Milet XIV. Ein Reiterrelief aus Milet und die Kabiren von Assesos’, *Arch. Anz.* 2002, 41–46; P. Herrmann et al., *Inschriften von Milet, Teil 3. Inschriften n. 1020–1580* (Berlin and New York, 2006) 171–174 (votives and definitive identification of Assesos).

131 P. Wolters and G. Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*, 6 vols (Berlin, 1940–1982) 1.81–128; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 184–205. For the Boeotian spelling Kabiroi rather than Kabeiroi, see S. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta 3* (Göttingen, 1985) 214. For the onomastic evidence for their regional worship, see F. Marchand, ‘Rencontres onomastiques au carrefour de l’Eubée et de la Béotie’, in N. Badoud (ed.), *Philologos Dionysios* (Geneva, 2011) 343–376 at 351f.

132 V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Liège, 2008) 291–346.

133 A.G. Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting and the origins of visual humour* (Cambridge, 2009) 253f.

Can we take these as direct illustrations of the ritual performed or should we resign from attempting a ritual interpretation at all?¹³⁴ Perhaps there is a middle road. It is clear that some of the vases refer to the ritual by their representation of a specific sash (see below). I take it therefore that we can also deduce some other features of the ritual from the vases, as has been done by Albert Schachter in his excellent analysis of the sanctuary and its rites, and in my analysis I mainly follow his reconstruction.¹³⁵

The Theban Kabirion was situated about six kilometres west of Thebes, in the folds of low hills. Originally, there was no Telesterion, and initiation must have taken place in the open or in a temporary construction. The entry to the Mysteries was apparently open to slaves and free, men and women, of whom the latter perhaps dedicated necklaces, given the enormous quantity of beads that have been found, more than in any other Greek sanctuary. Women's names have also been found on the sherds of the many kantharoi found in the sanctuary.¹³⁶ Entry was not free, and there seem to have been entry tokens.¹³⁷ The presence of expensive bulls (see below) and heavy drinking (below) in fact suggests that the Mysteries in the sanctuary were very much an upper-class affair.

As in Eleusis, the initiation seems to have begun with a procession, which will have been followed by purifications and preliminary sacrifices. The construction of bathing installations already in late classical times attests to the importance of purifications,¹³⁸ the water of which will have been supplied from the brook that bordered on the sanctuary.¹³⁹ Although we cannot place the sacrifices at precise moments of the initiation, their importance appears from the vase paintings showing sacrificial processions and the many dedications of

134 M. Daumas, *Cabiriaca: Recherches sur l'iconographie du culte des Cabires* (Paris, 1998) 30–41, with a ritual interpretation, which is opposed by Jaccottet, 'Les Cabires'.

135 A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia 2* (London, 1986) 66–110, summarises and updates the results of the German excavations of the sanctuary, further updated and corrected in his 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult: the Theban Kabiroi', in Cosmopoulos, *Greek Mysteries*, 112–142, not refuted by M. Daumas, 'De Thèbes à Lemnos et Samothrace. Remarques nouvelles sur le culte des Cabires', *Topoi* 12–13 (2005) 851–881. For the reconstruction, see Schachter, *Cults*, 101–102, who is much more prudent than Daumas (previous note) and who provides all references when none is given in my text.

136 As noted by Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 128.

137 Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 118.

138 Bathing: G. Bruns, 'Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben', *Arch. Anz.* 1967, 228–273 at 245–250.

139 See the photo in Schachter, 'Evolutions of a Mystery Cult', 115; Bruns, 'Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben', 245f.

bulls – 534 out of the 562 lead and bronze statuettes that have been found.¹⁴⁰ The two priests seem to have been appointed for life, and this may imply Eleusinian influence.¹⁴¹ The actual initiation will have taken place at night, as torches on the vases suggest,¹⁴² and as was usual in Mysteries (Ch. 1.2). The rest is silence. We do not have a single thread of evidence about the actual ritual during the night but, as with the Lemnian Kabirion, we have an enormous amount of sherds of black glaze ware, which is indicating the amount of drinking that must have gone on and which probably concluded the ritual, as we suggested above for Samothrace and Lemnos. There can be little doubt that all that drinking is reflected in the many kantharoi with the famous scenes parodying everyday activities, such as hunting, athletics, slavery and weddings, but also local and pan-Hellenic mythological scenes, such as Kadmos, Odysseus and Circe or the Judgement of Paris.¹⁴³ After the performance of the ritual, the initiates seem to have left with a souvenir. In Samothrace, they received a purple fillet (§ 1), and on vases from the Kabirion, we sometimes see the banqueters, but also the god Kabiros himself, with a sash tied in a special knot.¹⁴⁴ Was this sash perhaps the Theban equivalent of the Samothracian fillet?

We hear nothing about the specific nature of the Theban Mysteries, but we have one important indication. From early in the fifth century to the end of the Classical period, there is an enormous quantity – more than 700 – of terracotta figurines of boys and youths, as well as some *kalos* graffiti that suggest pederastic activities.¹⁴⁵ This prominence of male youths surely points to the importance of a stage of male initiation, the more so as the dedication of numerous toys, such as peg tops and a yo-yo, suggests a dramatisation of the end of childhood.¹⁴⁶ This insight may help us to shed light on a much discussed vase from the Kabirion. On

140 Wolters and Bruns, *Das Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben*, 36–43; Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 197–199; B. Schmaltz, *Metallfiguren aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben: Die Statuetten aus Bronze und Blei* (Berlin, 1980); R. Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions* (Oxford, 2001) 325–327.

141 Schachter, *Cults*, 83, who compares IG VII.2420, 3646, 3684, 3686.

142 Schachter, *Cults*, 101, 107 note 2.

143 For the vases, see more recently G. Gadaleta, ‘La zattera di Odisseo e il culto cabirico a Tebe’, *Ostraka* 18 (2009) 357–375; Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting*, 248–279; D. Walsh, *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting* (Cambridge, 2009) 58–64, 251–253.

144 Schachter, *Cults*, 93 n. 1, 101; Mitchell, *Greek vase-painting*, 255–259.

145 B. Schmaltz, *Terrakotten aus dem Kabirenheiligtum bei Theben* (Berlin, 1974). *Kalos* graffiti: IG VII.3596–97, 4122. For the *kalos* inscriptions, see F. Lissarrague, ‘Publicity and performance. *Kalos* inscriptions in Attic vase-painting’, in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge, 1999) 359–373; I. Scheibler, ‘Lieblingsinschriften’, in *Der Neue Pauly* 7 (1999) 181–183; N.W. Slater, ‘The Vase as Ventriloquist: *Kalos*-inscriptions and the Culture of Fame’, in E.A. Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and its Influence in the Greek and Roman World* (Leiden, 1999) 143–161.

146 See the list of the finds in Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, 326f.

a Kabirion kantharos fragment, we see at the right the god Kabiros reclining, with wreaths and ivy in his hair and his name inscribed, with a youth called Pais who clearly is his wine-pourer. Neither of them is caricatured, unlike the other three figures towards the left: a boy named Pratolaos and an embracing couple named as Mitos and Krateia. In 1890, Otto Kern (1863–1942) interpreted the vase as a scene of Orphic anthropogony, and he is still followed by Burkert.¹⁴⁷ Kern could arrive at this explanation by interpreting the name Pratolaos as ‘the first man’, but its proper meaning is: ‘the first in the army’ or ‘the first amongst his people’, and Kern’s other arguments were even less plausible. The names Mitos and Krateia are perfectly explicable from Boeotian onomastics, and the most plausible explanation is that they are the representation of a family of worshippers, albeit somewhat caricatured.¹⁴⁸

Yet this persuasive interpretation pays no attention to Pais and his action on the vase. From this vase and other inscriptions we know that Pais was worshipped together with Kabiros.¹⁴⁹ In other words, we have here the pair of two Kabeiroi that we also encountered elsewhere. Yet it seems important to note that the younger member of the Theban pair is represented as a wine-pourer, as we know from elsewhere in Greece that pouring wine was one of the roles of young males during their initiation or the period preceding full adulthood, the most prominent example being Ganymede as wine-pourer of Zeus.¹⁵⁰ In other words, it seems that in Thebes the initiation of the youths was reflected in the representation of Pais, whose name ‘boy, servant’ perfectly fitted this function.

Kabiros and Pais were not the only divinities worshipped in the Kabirion. Pausanias (9.25.5) tells us that in addition rites were also performed for Mother. Thus we are once again confronted with the constellation of two males and a female. Pausanias (9.25.6) further tells us that not far from the Kabirion there was a grove of Kore and Demeter Kabiria. The latter gave ‘something’, presumably the sacred objects of the Mysteries, to Prometheus and his son Aetnaeus, two original inhabitants of the place who were called Kabeiroi. The myth clearly reflects Eleusinian influence as now it is Demeter who gives and the Kabeiroi who receive. The two original inhabitants reflect both the older Kabiros and his son and also,

147 O. Kern, ‘Die boiotischen Kabiren’, *Hermes* 25 (1890) 1–16 at 7; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 282; Graf, ‘Kabeiroi’, 126; Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 42.

148 Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, 325–326 (onomastic analysis); Schachter, ‘Evolutions of a Mystery Cult’, 131 (family of worshippers).

149 Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions*, no. BOI 16 (*IG VII.3599*), BOI 26 (*IG VII.3626*), BOI 28 (*IG VII.3970*); *IG VII passim*.

150 Bremmer, ‘Adolescents, Symposium and Pederasty’, in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptotica* (Oxford, 1990) 135–148.

via the name Aetnaeus, ‘The Man from Etna’, the ‘smith’ connection of the Kabeiroi of Lemnos and Miletus. The connection of the Kabeiroi with smiths can also be found in Macedonian iconography at the turn of the era where they are always given hammers.¹⁵¹ We see here the continued influence of the Lemnian cult of the Kabeiroi together with Hephaestus.

Finally, the cult of the Kabeiroi was typical of western Asia Minor and adjacent islands with extensions to Northern Greece, especially Thessalonica, and Thebes.¹⁵² There is no connection with Phoenicia or the Levant. This makes very improbable Scaliger’s (1540–1609) Semitic etymology, originally proposed in 1565, which connected Kabeiroi with Semitic *kabir*, ‘mighty’.¹⁵³ The Anatolian centre of the cult rather suggests an Anatolian origin for the name. This seems fairly certain in the case of Kasmilos, and Beekes has also made a good case for the Kabeiroi, even though our available evidence does not yet allow us to understand their name properly.¹⁵⁴

The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi, then, originated at the interface of Greece and Anatolia. Anatolia was probably also the cradle of the divine triad consisting of a goddess and two male companions. In the area of northern Lycia, southern Pisidia and the Kibyris, the Dioskouroi are often represented accompanied by an unnamed goddess who has been identified in all kinds of ways, though not yet with any certainty. A recent inscription calls the anonymous goddess Helen, but that is of course a sign of the increasing Hellenisation of an epichoric cult that has so far defied all attempts to trace its Anatolian ancestors. Could it be that the triad of divinities is an avatar of the divine triads that we find in the Hittite period?¹⁵⁵

Undoubtedly the Kabeiroi are old, which explains the local character of their cults and the influence of prominent local gods, such as Hephaestus on Lemnos. Where we have a good view of the evidence, we can see that they consisted of two

151 Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 33–36; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.42f.

152 See the various maps in Hemberg, *Kabiren*.

153 As Schachter, *Cults*, 96 n. 4 and ‘Evolutions of a Mystery Cult’, gives 1619 as date for this etymology, when Scaliger had been dead for a decade, and Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy*, 58 puts Scaliger in the fifteenth century, the original reference may not be superfluous: J.J. Scaliger, *Coniectanea in M. Terentium Varronem de lingua Latina* (Paris, 1565) 146: ‘Nam Phoenicia & Syriaca lingua Cabir potem, & potentem significat’.

154 Beekes, ‘The Origin of the Kabeiroi’, whose collection of evidence seems to me to be of uneven value; see also his *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1.612.

155 Helen: B. İpikçioğlu and C. Schuler. ‘Ein Tempel für die Dioskuren und Helena’, *Anzeiger der philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 146.2 (2011) 39–59. Hittite: P. Taracha, *Religions of Second Millennium Anatolia* (Wiesbaden, 2009) 45f. Note also the map of the triad in F. Chapouthier, *Les Dioscures au service d’une déesse* (Paris, 1935) 100 with its strong concentration in south-western Anatolia and northern Greece.

gods, Kabeiros and a younger one, but these two were often identified with other minor gods, such as the Kouretes or the Korybantes (§ 3). Their function in Pergamon, Miletus and Thebes points to a background in puberty rites, which in Lemnos, under the influence of the Hephaestus cult, was perhaps transformed into a cult by a guild of smiths, although our evidence for a connection with iron working is not very early.¹⁵⁶ The Mysteries must have been characterised by orgiastic dances and heavy drinking. All in all, they seem to have been a jollier affair than the more serious Eleusinian Mysteries.

3 The Korybantes

Both the Samothracian gods and the Kabeiroi were sometimes identified with the Korybantes, but we will see that, although sharing some similarities, their rituals also displayed considerable differences from those we have already discussed.¹⁵⁷ Our early evidence comes mainly from Plato,¹⁵⁸ but recent finds of contemporary inscriptions of Erythrae with sales of the Korybantic priesthoods have considerably enriched our knowledge.¹⁵⁹ Whereas earlier studies concentrated on the literary evidence, contemporary discussions have focused on the epigraphical material. It therefore seems important to present a synthesis of both types of sources. Naturally such a new picture can only be an ideal cult type, as we have no idea of local differences. Moreover, the Erythraean inscriptions mention both a public and a private cult whereas the Platonic descriptions clearly concern only a

156 Fowler, 'Herodotos and the Early Mythographers', 15.

157 For the older literature, see O. Immisch, 'Kureten und Korybanten', in W.H. Roscher (ed.), *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie II.1* (Leipzig, 1890–1897) 1587–1628; J. Poerner, *De Curetibus et Corybantibus* (Halle, 1913); F. Schwenn, 'Korybanten', in *RE* 11 (1922) 1441–1446, but Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 319–334, updated in 'The Korybantes of Erythrai', in G. Reger et al. (eds), *Studies in Greek Epigraphy and History in Honor of Stephen V. Tracy* (Bordeaux, 2010) 301–309, is now the starting point for any modern discussion.

158 E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951) 77–79; I.M. Linforth, *Studies in Herodotus and Plato*, ed. L. Tarán (New York and London, 1987) 159–200 ('The Corybantic Rites in Plato', 1946¹).

159 *I.Erythrai* 201,206+SEG 47.1628 (cf. SEG 52.1147); E. Voutiras, 'Un culte domestique des Corybantes', *Kernos* 9 (1996) 243–256 (= SEG 46.810); N. Himmelmann, 'Die Priesterschaft der Korybantes in Erythrai (neues Fragment von I.K. 2, 206)', *Epigraphica Anatolica* 29 (1997) 117–122 = *Tieropfer in der griechischen Kunst* (Opladen, 1997) 75–82 (cf. SEG 47.1628); P. Herrmann, 'Eine "pierre errante" in Samos: Kultgesetz der Korybanten', *Chiron* 32 (2002) 157–172 (= SEG 52.1146 = IG XII 1.6.1197), who persuasively assigns this inscription to Erythrae.

private cult. Yet the differences seem to be less important than the similarities. In the following we will try to integrate the literary and epigraphical evidence.

Before we start the analysis of the ritual, though, we will first look at the name of the divinities and their nature. Later literary evidence usually speaks of Korybantes, but the oldest inscriptions always speak of Kyrbantes, as do some of the oldest literary references: this must have been the original spelling.¹⁶⁰ The centres of their cult were the islands of Rhodes and Kos, where we also find the spelling Kyrbanthes,¹⁶¹ and their Anatolian *hinterland*. From here the cult spread to Ionia, Crete and Athens, where they seem to have arrived in the later fifth century BC.¹⁶² The original location is confirmed by the prominence of toponyms with the element Kyrb- in the south-western corner of Anatolia.¹⁶³ Despite recent advances in Anatolian linguistics we are not yet able to explain the name properly.¹⁶⁴

The Korybantes were minor divinities at the fringe of the Olympic pantheon, whose profile remains extremely unclear in our evidence. Pherecydes (F 48 Fowler) mentions that they were nine in number and were the children of Apollo and Rhetia, but he does not add anything else. Their shadowy profile also appears from the fact that already in the fifth century, starting with Euripides in his *Bacchae* (125), poets began to identify them with the Kouretes, with whom they clearly shared ecstatic dancing and the use of weapons in their dances (Ar. *Lys.* 558). The latter detail points to a genderisation of the ritual: it is hardly likely that women would handle arms; moreover, given their sedentary life one would expect them to tire more quickly in the ritual than well-trained youths like the Platonic Clinias (below). The loss of the divinities' identity is clearly manifested in literature, where Korybantes and Kouretes could be mentioned interchangeably; similarly, their iconography, when it becomes visible in the fourth century, does not allow us to distinguish properly between the two groups.¹⁶⁵ Admittedly, the late antique Nonnos knows the exact names of the – in his case – seven Korybantes, but the names are manifestly his own inventions.¹⁶⁶

160 Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 48 = F 48 Fowler; Soph. fr. 862. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 332 n. 124 suggests that the later form (Koryb-) is due to influence from the Kouretes.

161 Rhodes: *Parola del Passato* 4 (1949) 73. Kos: *IG XII* 4.1.299, cf. S. Paul, *Cultes et sanctuaires de l'île de Cos* (Liège, 2013) 160f.

162 Crete: Strabo 10.3.19; Steph. Byz. τ 35. Athens: see below.

163 Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, 314; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 331–332; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.52.

164 Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 1.755.

165 R. Lindner, 'Kouretes, Korybantes', in *LIMC VIII.1* (1997) 736–741 (iconography); Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.51 (literature).

166 Nonnos, *D.* 13.143–145, cf. Robert, *Opera minora selecta*, 7.202–206.

In the end, the Korybantes remain impossible to pin down properly, but it is clear that they were associated with madness. The chorus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* speculates on Phaedra's wasting away by asking: 'Are you wandering seized, princess, by Pan or Hecate or the holy Korybantes or the Mountain Mother?' (141–44). In Aristophanes' *Wasps* Bdelycleon first tried to purify his father from his madness by performing the Korybantic rites (119–20) before taking refuge in other rituals, and it is with madness that Plato also associates them, as we will see now when turning to their ritual.

Who was allowed to participate in the Korybantic Mysteries? It will not be surprising that once again we hear of both men and women. Plato (below) mentions only men, and aristocratic ones at that, but inscriptions from Thessalonica and Erythrae, dating to the fourth and second century BC respectively, mention women; in fact, in fourth-century Erythrae the majority of the participants seem to have been women. This gender difference is reflected in the presence of priests and priestesses; the Erythraean inscription stipulates that the priests had to wash the men and priestesses the women.¹⁶⁷ As we have seen with other Mysteries, the initiation was not for free, and for the public initiation in Erythrae strangers had to pay even more than locals,¹⁶⁸ a unique condition that seems to have been determined by the public character of the Mysteries.

From Plato (*Euthd.* 277d) we learn that the Mysteries consisted of two parts, as he clearly distinguishes the preliminary rites from the actual initiation. We do not know how the beginning of the ritual was dramatised, but undoubtedly, once the candidate was received, the first act will have been the ablutions, which is explicitly mentioned for the Erythraean ritual.¹⁶⁹ Next will have been the sacrifice, which is also mentioned in the Erythraean inscriptions.¹⁷⁰ Yet the public character of these sacrifices may suggest that the actual performance of the Mysteries took place at a somewhat later stage. It is striking that in Erythrae the Korybantes received offerings for heroes (*enagismous*).¹⁷¹ Were they too low in rank to receive the proper sacrifices for gods? We do not know which animals were sacrificed, but

167 Men: Plato, *Euthd.* 277de, to be added to R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 120 note 18; *I. Erythrae* 206; *IG XII* 1.6.1197. Women: Plato, *Leg.* 7.790d; *SEG* 46.810 (Thessalonica), 47.1628; *IG XII* 6.1197 (Erythrae), cf. Graf, 'The Korybantes of Erythrae', 304 (majority). Priests: *Tit. Cam.* 226 no. 90.134 (Kameiros); *SEG* 47.1628 (Erythrae); *IG XII* 4.1.299 (Kos). Priestesses: Posidippus fr. 28.21; B. Haussoullier, 'Inscriptions d'Halicarnasse (1)', *BCH* 4 (1880) 395–408 at 399 no. 8 (Halicarnassus); *SEG* 47.1628 and *IG XII* 1.6.1197 (Erythrae).

168 Cf. B. Dignas, 'Priestly Authority in the Cult of the Corybantes at Erythrae', *Epigr. Anat.* 34 (2002) 29–40.

169 *I. Erythrae* 206.8, 10; *SEG* 47.1628.20, 22

170 *I. Erythrae* 206; *SEG* 47.1628 .

171 *IG XII* 1.6.1197.

it may well be that once again a ram was the preferred animal, as was the case in the other Mysteries we have discussed (§ 1 and 2).

In the epigraphical sources the sacrifice is closely connected to a rite not mentioned by Plato: the performance of the krater ritual (*kratêrismos*). The *bricolage* of initiatory rituals cited by Demosthenes in his attempt to slander Aeschines includes the list ‘performing on the initiates the fawn skin ritual (*nebrizôn*), the krater ritual (*kratêrizôn*) and cleansing (*apomattôn*) with the loam and the bran’.¹⁷² This ‘description’ strongly suggests that the so-called krater ritual was also performed in Athens and was part of the preliminary rites of the Korybantic Mysteries, which apparently consisted of washing, sacrificing and drinking. Yet the sparse elucidations of late lexicographers do not help us to understand this part of the ritual better. According to Fritz Graf, the mention of the krater ‘points to wine drinking, presumably a lot of it’, but is this likely?¹⁷³ Binge drinking was not characteristic of women in the ancient world, and wine was often even forbidden to them.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the position of the krater ritual within Demosthenes’ list of rites suggests a preliminary rite rather than a concluding meal, just as is the case in Erythrae where the krater ritual is closely related to ablutions.¹⁷⁵ The ancient commentators and lexicographers were, perhaps, not that far off the mark with the latter half of their explanation: ‘mixing wine in a krater or offering libations of wine from a krater during the Mysteries’.¹⁷⁶

The high point of the preliminary rite is described in detail by Plato in his *Euthydemus*. When Clinias becomes bewildered by the questions of the sophists, Socrates comforts him by telling him that they are only teasing him:

They are doing the same thing that is done by the ministrants in the rite of the Korybantes, when they perform the *thronôsis* (literally ‘enthronement’) of the person for whom they are going to administer the rite. In that preliminary ceremony there is dancing and playing around ... intending afterward to proceed to the rite proper (277de, tr. Linforth).

172 Dem. 18.259 = OT 577 I Bernabé, cf. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 321–323, who takes Demosthenes’ description of the ritual too literally and neglects its slanderous character; G. Martin, *Divine Talk* (Oxford, 2009) 104–115; A. Henrichs, ‘Mystika, Orphika, Dionysiaka’, in A. Bierl and W. Braungart (eds), *Gewalt und Opfer: im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 87–114 at 102–106; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.374.

173 Graf, ‘The Korybantes of Erythrai’, 306.

174 Cf. Bremmer, ‘The Old Women of Ancient Greece’, in J. Blok and P. Mason (eds), *Sexual Asymmetry, Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam, 1987) 191–215.

175 The local myth related by Phylarchos *FGrH* 81 F 69, which Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 324 adduces, does not point to drinking but to a libation.

176 Photius κ 1063, with the parallels adduced by Theodoridis *ad loc.*

It is clear from this description that the ‘enthronement’ is still part of the preliminary rite. We hear a little more from Dio Chrysostom (12.33), who mentions that ‘in the so-called *thronismos* the initiators, having seated the initiands, dance in circles around them’, but that is more or less it.¹⁷⁷ Dancing is mentioned already by Sophocles (fr. 862), and its frenetic character must have been such a striking part of the ritual that the corresponding verb *korybantiaō* already means ‘to be mad’ in Aristophanes.¹⁷⁸ As was the case in the maenadic ritual, the tambourine and pipes, played in a certain tune,¹⁷⁹ helped to promote a kind of trance among the initiators, which was supported by whirling dances, so well known from the Turkish dervishes today.¹⁸⁰ Plato repeatedly refers to the ritual and mentions that the participants in the ritual dance in ecstasy (*Ion* 533e).¹⁸¹ This part of the initiation must have been pretty arousing, as Plato’s Alcibiades says that when he listens to Socrates the emotional effects surpass those experienced in the Korybantic rites and make his heart pound and fill his eyes with tears (*Symp.* 215cd). From Plato’s description it seems that the aim of this part of the ritual was to bewilder the initiand. Can we perhaps compare it with the frightening experiences before the final revelation that are attested for other Mysteries (Ch. I.3)? However this may be, it seems to have been the end of the preliminary part of the ritual.

What followed remains unknown. It is almost certain that the highlight of the Korybantic Mysteries took place at night, but that is really the only thing we can say.¹⁸² Likewise almost certain is that the initiation was concluded with a nice meal. This seems obvious from the names of the two Erythraean Korybantic priesthoods, the Kyrbantēs Euphronisioi, ‘of merriment’ and Thaleioi, ‘of good cheer’, but both Greek terms also have connotations of festive meals and drinking.¹⁸³

177 For a full collection of texts, see R.G. Edmonds III, ‘To sit in solemn Silence? *Thronosis* in Ritual, Myth, and Iconography’, *AJPh* 127 (2006) 347–366.

178 *Ar. Ve.* 8, *Eccl.* 1069; *Men. Sic.* 273.

179 *Ar. Ve.* 119–120 (tambourine); *Eur. Bacch.* 124–125 (tambourine); Plato, *Crito* 54d (flute), *Ion* 536c (tune), *Men. Theoph.* 28 (pipes); Posidippus fr. 28.22 (pipes); Long. *Subl.* 39.2 (pipes); *Plut. Mor.* 759b (tune); *Max. Tyr.* 38.2 (pipes); Origen, *CCels.* 3.16 (pipes and tambourine); *Iambl. Myst.* 3.9 (pipes, cymbals, tambourines and tune).

180 I agree with Dodds, *The Greeks*, 96–97 that Pliny, *NH* 11.147 refers to trance rather than ordinary sleep. For maenadism and dervishes, see Bremmer, ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered’, *ZPE* 55 (1984) 267–286 at 271; Y. Ustinova, ‘Corybantism: The Nature and Role of an Ecstatic Cult in the Greek Polis’, *Horos* 10–12 (1992–1998) 503–552 (not without errors).

181 See also Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 3–4.

182 *Orph. Hymns* 39.3.

183 *I. Erythrae* 204, as persuasively explained by Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 325–328. The distinction probably arose in their area of origin, as we still read Θαλειοίς in the fragmentarily preserved Koan inscription *IG XII* 4.1.299 (line 12), but we do not hear of it outside Ionia.

When they had concluded their ritual, the participants could call themselves *kekorybantismenoi*.¹⁸⁴ They had performed the Korybantic ritual but stayed connected to the cult in some manner, perhaps to help with the initiation of others.

Why did people want to perform the Korybantic ritual? Nowhere in our evidence is there any hint of a connection with the afterlife, let alone with safety at sea. It is only Plato who, in terms less clear than we would like them to be, suggests that the Korybantes would cure ‘phobias or anxiety-feelings arising from some morbid mental condition’.¹⁸⁵ It is in this connection, probably, that we should look again at the over-representation of women in the Erythraean ritual (above), which matches the mention of women by Plato and the votive to the Korybantes by a woman in Thessalonica. We may here also compare a recently published second-century BC inscription from Priene concerning the sale of the priesthood of the Phrygian Mother.¹⁸⁶ In this ecstatic cult it was women who were initiated, although the cult was closely regulated by the city. The important place of women did not escape the insightful French classicist Henri Jeanmaire (1884–1960), who already at the end of the 1940s compared the possession of women in the African cults of *zar* and *bori* with possession in the maenadic and Korybantic rituals.¹⁸⁷ However, the women in the African cults often came from the lower strata of society and were possessed by minor divinities, whereas those of Erythrae and Priene belonged to the better parts of society, as will have been the case with the Athenian and Thessalonican women we mentioned. It may well be that the Korybantic ritual enabled these women to escape the boredom of everyday life. Just as the maenadic ritual will have been an exciting event,¹⁸⁸ so the Korybantic ritual must have enabled middle- and upper-class women to escape the loom and the wool basket, if only for a single day.¹⁸⁹

184 IG XII 1.6.1197.

185 Ar. *Vesp.* 119; Plato, *Leg* 7.790d, cf. the clear discussion in Dodds, *The Greeks*, 78–79 (quotation).

186 H.-U. Wiemer and D. Kah, ‘Die Phrygische Mutter im hellenistischen Priene: eine neue *diagraphé* und verwandte Texte’, *Epigr. Anat.* 44 (2011) 1–54.

187 H. Jeanmaire, ‘Le traitement de la mania dans les “mystères” de Dionysos et des Corybantes’, *Journal de Psychologie* 46 (1949) 64–82 and *Dionysos* (Paris, 1951) 119–138, to be added to the bibliography in R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 247 n. 62.

188 See my ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered’ and ‘A Macedonian Maenad in Posidippus (AB 44)’, *ZPE* 155 (2006) 37–40.

189 Parker, *Miasma*, 244–248.

4 Conclusion

When we now look back at the Mysteries of the Samothracian Gods, Kabeiroi and Korybantes, we can see that these divinities, who derive from the interface between Greece and Anatolia, display some striking similarities but also major differences. The protagonists of all three Mysteries retain something mysterious. Even though we sometimes hear their names, these are often attested only at a late period and sometimes, perhaps, are no more than late inventions. In all three rituals, ecstatic dancing, wining and dining seem to have been much more important than in the Eleusinian or Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III). These similarities seem to have influenced the Greeks much more than the differences, and, from the fifth century onwards, this led to an increasing identification of these gods, first in literature but eventually also in inscriptions, as is witnessed by the fact that in a second-century AD Pergamene inscription it is the Kabeiroi, not the Kouretes, who are present at the birth of Zeus.¹⁹⁰ Yet when we look at their functions, the differences seem profound. The Mysteries of Samothrace were meant for sailors, the Kabeiroi had clear associations with coming-of-age rituals, even though in literature they could also become saviours at sea (*Anth. Pal.* 6.245), and the Korybantes were worshipped for their healing powers, at least among Athenian women. At the same time, we see the rise of a certain privatisation of Mysteries. Whereas in Samothrace, on Lemnos and in Pergamon the Mysteries are part of *polis* religion, in the case of the Erythraean Korybantes we can see the development of a private cult, which had clearly also arrived in Thessalonica and Athens. The most influential private Mysteries in the classical period, however, were the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, and we now turn to them, no matter how enigmatic they will prove to be.

190 R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem Griechischen Osten I* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998) 06 / 02/ 01. For further bibliography, see the various lists in Hemberg, *Kabiren*, 303–305; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.34–36.

III Orpheus, Orphism and Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries

While the Eleusinian Mysteries and those of Samothrace were tied to specific sanctuaries, there was also a much more mysterious type of Mysteries, not unlike those of the Korybantes, that was associated with Orpheus, one of the most popular figures of Greek mythology.¹ Who does not know his failed attempt to recover Eurydice, whom some modern female poets consider even more important than Orpheus himself?² The early Greeks thought of Orpheus primarily as a musician and a poet, but that was not the only side of him that attracted people in antiquity. There was a religious movement associated with him, which we nowadays call Orphism. In the last four decades there have been astonishing new discoveries relating to this movement. We have had the publication of a commentary on what may be the oldest Orphic theogony (the famous Derveni Papyrus),³ the discovery of Orphic bone tablets in Olbia,⁴ the appearance on the market of new Apulian vases with representations of Orpheus and the afterlife,⁵ and a steady stream of Orphic ‘Gold Leaves’ (small inscribed gold lamellae found in

1 For an excellent bibliographical survey of recent work on Orpheus and Orphism, see M.A. Santamaría, ‘Orfeo y el orfismo. Actualización bibliográfica (2004–2012)’, *Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 17 (2012) 211–252. For the texts, see P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002) 1.349–437 and, especially, A. Bernabé, *Poetae epici Graeci II: Orphicorum et Orphicis similibus testimonia et fragmenta, fasc. 1, 2* (Munich and Leipzig, 2004–2005), with rich commentaries.

2 C. Segal, *Orpheus: the myth of the poet* (Baltimore and London, 1988) 118–154, 171–198.

3 The official *editio princeps* by T. Kouremenos *et al.*, *The Derveni Papyrus* (Florence, 2006) has to be read with the review by R. Janko, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2006.10.19, 1–7 and his ‘Reconstructing (again) the Opening of the Derveni Papyrus’, *ZPE* 166 (2008) 37–51. Because of its critical apparatus, R. Janko, ‘The Derveni Papyrus: An interim text’, *ZPE* 141 (2002) 1–62 remains valuable. For the reconstruction of the beginning of the Derveni Papyrus, see now V. Piano, ‘Ricostruendo il rotolo di Derveni. Per una revisione papirologica di P. Derveni I–III’ and F. Ferrari, ‘Frustoli erranti. Per una ricostruzione di P. Derveni coll. I–III’, in *Papiri filosofici. Miscellanea di Studi. VI* (Florence, 2011) 5–38, 39–54, respectively. For a reconstruction of the Orphic *Theogony* in the poem, see M.A. Santamaría, ‘Critical Notes to the Orphic Poem of the Derveni Papyrus’, *ZPE* 182 (2012) 55–76 at 74f.

4 For the most recent editions, see *OF* 463–465; A.S. Rusjaeva, *Graffiti Ol’vii Pontijskoj* (Simferopol, 2010) 33–35; nos 29–31; F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2013²) 214–216.

5 C. Pouzadoux, ‘Hades’, in *LIMC*, Suppl. 1 (2009) 234–236, add. 10*; M.-X. Garezou, ‘Orpheus’, *ibid.*, 399–405, no. 77.

graves) from all over the Greek world.⁶ These striking new discoveries enable us to study Orphism in a more detailed way than was possible in studies produced before the 1970s,⁷ which are now all, to a greater or lesser extent, out of date. The new finds have also enriched our understanding of a particular type of Mysteries, which are increasingly being called the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries. This chapter will explore the origin, development and social location of these Mysteries (§ 3), but will first take a brief look at Orpheus himself (§ 1) and at the Orphic movement (§ 2). I will conclude with some considerations about the historical development of Orphism and its Mysteries (§ 4).

1 Orpheus

So let us start with Orpheus himself: I shall emphasise four of his aspects.⁸ First, in the mythological tradition he was a Thracian, even though in the historical period his place of origin, Leibethra on the foothills of Mt Olympus, was part of Macedonia. In ancient Greece, Thrace was the country of the Other. The wine god Dionysos was reputed to come from Thrace, as did the god of war, Ares, even though we know from Mycenaean texts that both these gods were already fully part of the Greek pantheon in the later second millennium BC.⁹ So ‘otherness’ is an important aspect of Orpheus’ mythological persona.

6 For the most recent editions, see *OF* 474–496, updated in A. Bernabé and A.I. Jiménez San Cristóbal, *Instructions for the Netherworld* (Leiden, 2008) 241–271; Y. Tzifopoulos, *Paradise Earned: The Bacchic-Orphic Gold Lamellae of Crete* (Washington DC and Cambridge MA, 2010) 255–284; R.G. Edmonds III (ed.), *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets and Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 2011) 15–50; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 1–49, with a useful concordance (48–49).

7 See especially R. Parker, ‘Early Orphism’, in A. Powell (ed.), *The Greek World* (London and New York, 1995) 483–510; W. Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis* (Cambridge MA, 2004) 74–98 and *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006); A. Bernabé and F. Casadesús (eds), *Orfeo y la tradición órfica: un reencuentro*, 2 vols (Madrid, 2008); F. Graf, ‘Text and Ritual: The Corpus Eschatologicum of the Orphics’, in Edmonds, *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets*, 53–67.

8 For Orpheus, see F. Graf, ‘Orpheus: A Poet Among Men’, in J.N. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1988²) 80–106, somewhat abbreviated, and with less focus on possible shamanistic connections, in Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 167–176; Bremmer, ‘Orpheus: From Guru to Gay’, in Ph. Borgeaud (ed.), *Orphisme et Orphée* (Geneva, 1991) 13–30; M.-X. Garezou, ‘Orpheus’, in *LIMC* 7.1 (1994) 81–105 and ‘Orpheus’ (2009: with further bibliography); C. Calame, ‘The Authority of Orpheus, Poet and Bard: Between Oral Tradition and Written Practice’, in Ph. Mitsis and C. Tsagalis (eds), *Allusion, Authority, and Truth: Critical Perspectives on Greek Poetic and Rhetorical Praxis* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 13–35 at 13–17.

9 Bremmer, ‘The Greek Gods in the Twentieth Century’, in J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine (eds), *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 2010) 1–18 at 3.

Secondly, Orpheus is the musician and singer *par excellence*. It is with his music that he persuaded Hades to release Eurydice, and it is with his music that he charmed animals, trees and stones, though that theme became popular only in Late Antiquity. It was for his musicianship that he was selected as the *keleustês*, the man who beat the rhythm to the oarsmen of the Argo, the famous ship of Jason and his Argonauts, as Euripides tells us: ‘by the mast amidships the Thracian lyre cried out a mournful Asian plaint singing commands to the rowers for their long-sweeping strokes’. Already in the mid-sixth century a metope from the Sicyonian treasury at Delphi shows him on the Argo.¹⁰ Music, song and poetry all went together for the Greeks, and they belonged to a sphere of life that was separate from the hustle and bustle of everyday existence. Poets and singers were thus people outside the normal social order. They had a special connection with the Muses – Orpheus was even the son of the Muse Calliope, which must have contributed to his authority (*OF* 902–11) – and were often represented as blind, like Homer himself, which again singled them out from most people.¹¹

Thirdly, the Argonautic expedition, in which Orpheus participated, has clear initiatory characteristics, abundantly demonstrated by Jason’s single sandal, the group of 50, the young age of the crew, the presence of maternal uncles, the test and the return to become king.¹² Although he is still bearded on the Delphi metope, at an early stage Orpheus appears as a beardless adolescent on Attic and Apulian vases.¹³ The Augustan mythographer Conon (*FGrH* 26 F1.45) adds a most interesting detail regarding Orpheus in this respect: as king of Macedonia and Thrace, Orpheus assembled his warriors around him and performed secret rites (*orgiazein*) in a large building that was specially suited to initiations (*teletai*), but into which they could not bring weapons; this seclusion aroused the wrath of the Thracian women, who therefore stormed the building and tore Orpheus to pieces.¹⁴ Fritz Graf, perhaps our best expert on Orpheus and the Orphic movement, has persuasively connected this tradition with the Spartan and Cretan societies where the male citizens customarily dined together and initiated their youth. For our purpose we simply note that a

10 Argo and *keleustês*: Eur. fr. 752g.8–12, tr. Cropp; Apoll. Rhod. 1.536–541; Stat. *Theb.* 5.342–345; R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000–2013) 2.211–213. Delphi: A. Kossatz-Deissmann, ‘Philammon’, in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 982 no. 1.

11 R. Buxton, ‘Blindness and limits: Sophokles and the logic of myth’, *JHS* 100 (1980) 22–37, reprinted in his *Myths and Tragedies in their Ancient Greek Contexts* (Oxford, 2013) 173–200.

12 Graf, ‘Orpheus’, 97–98; Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 310; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.206f.

13 Garezou, ‘Orpheus’ (1994) 99; R. Olmos, ‘Las imágenes de un Orfeo fugitivo y ubicuo’, in Bernabé and Casadesús, *Orfeo y la tradición órfica*, 1.137–177.

14 Conon *FGrH* 26 F1.45; see also Bernabé on *OF* 1003.

tradition existed that connected Orpheus with secret societies. In Greek literature Orpheus is the inventor *par excellence* of the Mysteries.¹⁵

Fourth and finally, Orpheus' song – Pindar (*P.* 4.176) calls him 'father of songs' – must have been rated very highly in the classical era. The fifth-century mythographers Hellanicus, Pherecydes and Damastes all state that both Homer and Hesiod were descended from Orpheus¹⁶ and when the learned Sophist Hippias of Elis listed the most famous Greek poets he gave them in the order Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer, as did Aristophanes, Plato and others after him.¹⁷ Although Herodotus does not mention Orpheus by name, he clearly felt obliged to state that Homer and Hesiod lived before 'the so-called earlier poets' (2.53: Orpheus and Musaeus).¹⁸ In other words, in the fifth century BC the prestige of Orpheus as poet was paramount, even though no archaic epics were credited to him. It was this vacuum, as we will see shortly, which would invite people to ascribe to him poems of a sometimes rather peculiar nature.

2 Orphism

From Orpheus I now turn to Orphism. In the summer of 1931 the aged Wilamowitz (1848–1931) worked feverishly on his last book, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, knowing that he would have little time left to complete this work that was clearly close to his heart.¹⁹ On Orpheus and Orphism he was pretty sceptical. He even called *Orphismus* 'das neue Wort',²⁰ although in fact the German term *Orphik* was already current around 1830²¹ and *Orphismus* was probably coined at the end of

15 *OF* 510–523; F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 26–28.

16 *OF* 871 = Hellanicus F 5a,b Fowler = Pherecydes F 167 Fowler = Damastes F 11b Fowler; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.608f.

17 Hippias 86 B 6 DK = *OF* 1146; Ar. *Ra.* 1032–1034; Plato, *Resp.* 364e; Chrysipp. *SVF* II 316.12; Cic. *ND* 1.41 with Pease *ad loc.*

18 W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge MA, 1972) 129f.

19 For Wilamowitz as historian of Greek religion, see A. Henrichs, "'Der Glaube der Hellenen": Religionsgeschichte als Glaubensbekenntnis und Kulturkritik', in W.M. Calder III *et al.* (eds), *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren* (Darmstadt, 1985) 262–305; R.L. Fowler, 'Blood for the Ghosts: Wilamowitz in Oxford', *Syllecta Classica* 20 (2009) 171–213; Bremmer, 'The Greek Gods in the Twentieth Century', 7–10.

20 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1959³) 2.200.

21 See, for example, C. Heinecke, *Homer und Lykurg, oder das Alter der Iliade und die politische Tendenz ihrer Poesie* (Leipzig, 1833) 44: 'Geist athenischer Orphik'; U.W. Dieterich, *Ausführliche Schwedische Grammatik* (Stockholm and Leipzig, 1849) 48: 'bacchantischen Orphik'.

the 1850s by the German Orientalist and statesman Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen (1791–1860).²² Bunsen was not only the patron of Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), one of the founders of *Religionswissenschaft*,²³ but also the man who influenced Florence Nightingale to dedicate her life to nursing;²⁴ he had been the Prussian ambassador in London, where he will have picked up the English term ‘Orphism’, coined around 1800.²⁵ *Orphismus*, then, was hardly a new word at the time of Wilamowitz’s death.

There had never been unanimity among scholars about the nature of Orphism and its adherents, and Burkert has spoken well of a ‘battlefield between rationalists and mystics since the beginning of the nineteenth century’.²⁶ The discovery of the Derveni Papyrus and the important allusions to Orphism in Athenian literature show that Athens has a special place in the history of Orphism. So let us turn to this intellectual centre of the Greek world in the fifth century BC. Which Orphic poems were available in Athens at that time and what can we tell about the people connected to these poems?²⁷

In recent decades it has become increasingly clear that a number of Orphic poems were circulating in Athens in the later fifth century. **One of the oldest ones available may well have been an Orphic *katabasis*, ‘descent into the underworld’, of which Eduard Norden already reconstructed elements on the basis of *Aeneid* VI.**

²² See, for example, Bunsen, *Aegyptens Stelle in der Weltgeschichte, Buch 5, Abth. 1/3* (Gotha, 1857) 372: ‘priesterlichen thrazischen Orphismus in der Mysterien’ and *Gott in der Geschichte 2* (Leipzig, 1858) 288. For Bunsen, see most recently H.-R. Ruppel (ed.), *Universeller Geist und guter Europäer: Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen 1791–1860* (Korbach, 1991); F. Foerster, *Christian Carl Josias Bunsen: Diplomat, Mäzen und Vordenker in Wissenschaft, Kirche und Politik* (Bad Arolsen, 2001).

²³ L.P. van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities* (Leiden, 2002) 35–38 and *passim*.

²⁴ M. Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale* (London, 2008) 84f.

²⁵ The earliest reference I found is G.S. Faber, *Horae Mosaicae: or, A Dissertation on the Credibility and Theology of the Pentateuch* (London, 1818²) 203: ‘Into this ancient philosophy, which constituted the basis of Gnosticism and Manicheism, Virgil and Porphyry have largely entered: it may be pronounced the very essence of Pythagorism and Orphism and Platonism’. For similar words and their transfers into different languages, see the interesting reflections of M. Roché, ‘Logique lexicale et morphologie: la dérivation en -isme’, in F. Montermini *et al.* (eds), *Selected Proceedings of the 5th Décembrettes: Morphology in Toulouse* (Somerville MA, 2007) 45–58. Orphic, on the other hand, in the spelling Orphick, is already attested in the mid-seventeenth century, cf. T. Stanley, *The History of Philosophy* (London, 1656) II.vii.4 (*OED*).

²⁶ Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*, 74.

²⁷ On the Orphic works available, I here correct and update my discussion in Bremmer, ‘*Manteis*, Magic, Mysteries and Mythography: Messy Margins of Polis Religion?’, *Kernos* 23 (2010) 13–35 at 25–28.

The Bologna papyrus (*OF* 717), first published in 1947, with its picture of the underworld, has only strengthened his position.²⁸ In Greek and Latin poetry, Orpheus' descent into the underworld is always connected to his love for Eurydice,²⁹ but the latter's name does not appear in our sources before Hermesianax in the early third century BC; in fact, the name Eurydice became popular only after the rise to prominence of Macedonian queens and princesses of that name.³⁰ As references to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice begin with Euripides' *Alcestis* (357–62 = *OF* 980) of 438 BC, a red-figure loutrophoros of 440–430 BC³¹ and the decorated reliefs of, probably, the altar of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora, dating from about 410 BC,³² so the poem about Orpheus' *katabasis* must have certainly arrived in Athens around the middle of the fifth century BC, and its use by Aristophanes in the *Frogs* shows that it was well known in Athens later that century. Perhaps it had arrived even earlier: Martin West, another great expert on Orphism, may be right to think that Orpheus' *katabasis* was already mentioned in Aeschylus' Lycurgan trilogy.³³ This earlier date would match the eschatological theme found in Pindar (see below), but our sources for this question are so late that it is prudent to be cautious.

Where did the poem originate? Epigenes, a writer of probably the late fifth- or early fourth-century, tells us that the Orphic *Descent to Hades* was actually written by Cercops the Pythagorean, which points to southern Italy, as does the mention of an Orpheus of Croton and a *Descent to Hades* ascribed to Orpheus from Sicilian Camarina.³⁴ Both these authors called Orpheus will have been fictitious persons, as Martin West already noted regarding the latter,³⁵ but Epigenes' report is still remarkable. The poems surely acquired these author-names

28 E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis VI* (Leipzig, 1903¹, 1927³) 5 n. 2; F. Graf, 'Orfeo, Eleusis y Atenas', in Bernabé and Casadesús, *Orfeo y la tradición órfica*, 1.671–696 at 687–694; this volume, Appendix 2.3.

29 Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, 2.194; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 174–176.

30 Bremmer, 'Orpheus: From Guru to Gay', in P. Borgeaud (ed.), *Orphisme et Orphée* (Geneva, 1991) 13–30 at 13–17 (also on the name Eurydice); see now also D. Fontannaz, 'L'entre-deux-mondes. Orphée et Eurydice sur une hydrie proto-italiote du sanctuaire de la source à Saturo', *Antike Kunst* 51 (2008) 41–72.

31 E. Simon, 'Die Hochzeit des Orpheus und der Eurydike', in J. Gebauer et al. (eds), *Bildergeschichte. Festschrift für Klaus Stähler* (Möhnesee, 2004) 451–456.

32 On the relief, see most recently Olmos, 'Las imágenes de un Orfeo', 171–173.

33 M.L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Stuttgart, 1990) 26–50.

34 Epigenes: Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.21.131.3 = *OF* 707. Orpheus of Croton: *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς = Asclepiades *FGrH* 697 F 9 = *OF* 1104. Orpheus of Camarina: *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς = *OF* 708, 870, 1103. On Epigenes, see Bernabé on *OF* 1128.

35 M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983) 10 n. 17.

from the fact that they told Orpheus' descent in the first person singular, just as Orpheus himself does at the beginning of the Orphic *Argonautica*: 'I told you what I saw and perceived when I went down the dark road of Taenarum into Hades, trusting in our lyre,³⁶ out of love for my wife' (40–42). Norden had already noted the close correspondence with the line that opens the *katabasis* of Orpheus in Virgil's *Georgics*, *Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis, / ... ingressus* (4.467–9), and persuasively concluded that both lines go back to a *Descent to Hades* ascribed to Orpheus.³⁷ Pythagoras was also reputed to have made a journey to the underworld and Plato, in the *Gorgias* (493ac), ascribes an eschatological myth to 'some clever mythologist, presumably from Italy or Sicily'.³⁸ It thus seems reasonable to guess that the Orphic *katabasis* with the story of Eurydice originated in that area. Orphic eschatological material is used by Pindar in his *Second Olympic Ode* for Theron of Acragas, written in 476 BC, so the Orphic poem will probably have been composed somewhat earlier. Unfortunately no direct quotation survives from it, but it will have given a depiction of the underworld that concentrated on rewards and penalties of nameless people in the afterlife, in contrast to the older *katabaseis*, which focused on the heroic and famous dead.³⁹ We cannot be sure if the poem mentioned reincarnation, but the presence of that theme in Pindar's *Second Olympian Ode* and in Empedocles makes this plausible.⁴⁰

A second old Orphic work available in Athens was a *Theogony*. As with the Orphic *katabasis*, there was probably more than one work circulating under this name,⁴¹ as Orphic literature was very prolific. The oldest example to give us some idea of the Orphic theogony(ies?) is the Derveni Papyrus, which contains a number of quotations from Orpheus' poem together with an allegorising commentary. The surviving quotations are incomplete, not only due to the burning

36 Norden (*ad loc.*) compares *Aen.* 6.120: *Threicia fretus cithara*, unnecessarily doubted by Horsfall *ad loc.*; see also Norden, *Kleine Schriften*, 506f.

37 See also Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 5, *Kleine Schriften*, 508f. For Orpheus' account in the first person singular, Wilamowitz, *Glaube*, 2.194–195 also compares *Plut. Mor.* 566c (= *OF* 412). H. Diels, *Parmenides* (Berlin, 1897) 14 had already observed the importance of the *Icherzählung* in connection with descents to the underworld; similarly, K. Meuli, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2 vols (Basle, 1975) 2.858 notes the narration in the first person singular of the mythical journey of Aristeas in the *Arimaspeia* (see also *ibid.* p. 869).

38 For Pythagoras, see Hieronymus fr. 42; Heracl. Pont. fr. 89, cf. Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 154–159, 199; Graf, *Eleusis*, 122 n. 138; C. Riedweg, *Pythagoras* (Munich, 2002) 78f.

39 This volume, Appendix 2.3; add Aristophon fr. 12, where famous names are lacking too.

40 Graf, *Eleusis*, 94; Parker, 'Early Orphism', 500; Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2002) 13–14; in general, A. Bernabé, 'La transmigración entre los órficos', in A. Bernabé *et al.* (eds), *Reencarnación* (Madrid, 2011) 179–210.

41 Graf, *Eleusis*, 13 n. 42.

of the papyrus, but also because the author of the commentary may have left out whole passages in his discussion of the poem; any reconstruction of the original content of the *Theogony* therefore needs to proceed carefully.⁴² Although its date and place of composition are unknown, the *Theogony* is close to Parmenides, which once again seems to point to southern Italy in the early fifth century.⁴³

The Orphic *Theogony* was clearly written in opposition to Hesiod's *Theogony* and stressed the pre-eminent position of Zeus in a kind of *magnificat* which glorified him as 'Zeus is the head, Zeus is the middle and from Zeus everything is fashioned' (XVII.12);⁴⁴ Zeus even 'devised' Oceanus (XXIII.4; XXV.14?) in a kind of, so to speak, intelligent design. The papyrus breaks off at the moment when Zeus was raping his mother Rhea-Demeter. In later Orphism this rape is followed by Zeus' incestuous union in snake form with their daughter Persephone, which produced Dionysos. After the Titans had slaughtered and eaten him, Zeus killed them with his thunderbolt, but from their soot emerged mankind, which was therefore partially divine in origin.⁴⁵

The latter part, from the rapes onwards, is attested only in later Orphic literature, but details of this story, although not to the anthropogony, are found already in Callimachus and Euphorion, which takes it back to the early Hellenistic period.⁴⁶ Here we may add another, neglected allusion that implies an early date for the story. In Athens Persephone's name was written as P(h)ersephassa in tragedy and as Pherephatta and its variations in inscriptions, comedy and other non-tragic literature.⁴⁷ Tatian and Clement of Alexandria use these old

⁴² Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*, 89–90; see also Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 95–111 ('Die alorphische Theogonie nach dem Papyrus von Derveni').

⁴³ West, *Orphic Poems*, 109–110 rightly refuses to decide who is earlier: Parmenides or 'Orpheus'? This is more persuasive than Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 110–111, who opts for the priority of 'Orpheus'.

⁴⁴ G. Ricciardelli, 'Zeus, primo e ultimo', *Paideia* 64 (2009) 423–435.

⁴⁵ See most recently A. Bernabé, 'El mito órfico de Dioniso y los Titanes', in Bernabé and Casadesús, *Orfeo y la tradición órfica*, 1.591–607.

⁴⁶ Call. fr. 43.117 = *OF* 34, fr. 643 = *OF* 36; Euphorion fr. 14 = *OF* 36, cf. A. Henrichs, 'Dionysos Dismembered and Restored to Life: The Earliest Evidence (*OF* 59 I–II)', in M. Herrero de Jáuregui et al. (eds), *Tracing Orpheus: Studies of Orphic Fragments in Honour of Alberto Bernabé* (Berlin and Boston, 2011) 61–68. For other early allusions, see Graf, *Eleusis*, 74–75; Parker, 'Early Orphism', 495–498.

⁴⁷ Persephassa: Aesch. *Cho.* 490; Eur. *Or.* 964 (corrupt), *Phoen.* 684; Archemachus *FGrH* 424 F 6; A. Hollmann, 'A Curse Tablet from the Circus at Antioch', *ZPE* 145 (2003) 67–82 = *SEG* 53.1786, 27. Pherephassa: Aesch. fr.(dub.) 451s.70; Soph. *Ant.* 894; Eur. *Hel.* 175, which Timaeus Soph. φ 1006b.37–38 (= Thomas Magister, *Ecl.* φ 378) identified as the more poetical form in his Platonic lexicon. Pherephatta: Ar. *Thesm.* 287, *Ra.* 671; the place called Pherephattion (Dem. 54.8; Hsch.

Attic forms Phersephassa and Pherephatta, respectively, in a list of divine metamorphoses when they mention Zeus's rape of Persephone in snake form,⁴⁸ the rape which was part of the Orphic myth about man's descent from the Titans (above). Both have clearly used the same source, which, as we know that Clement derived the passage from an Attic antiquarian,⁴⁹ takes us back to Hellenistic times. This evidence for the story's early date strengthens the position of those scholars who think that this part of the Orphic myth was part of the early Orphic *Theogony*.⁵⁰

But how do we know if this poem was read in Athens, and in what context was it performed? To start with the latter problem, there is an interesting, if neglected, aspect of the first verse of the Orphic *Theogony*, 'I will sing to those who understand, close the doors ye profane' (*OF* 1a: see also § 3), namely that it was soon considered to be out of date or difficult to understand.⁵¹ The reference to 'doors' must originally have presupposed a performance inside a building, in contrast to the outdoor performance of epic poetry during festivals or dramatic poetry in theatres. When it was removed from the context of the original performance, the reference to doors no longer made sense and was reinterpreted or simply left out. That is why both the Derveni Papyrus and Plato allegorise the line 'close the doors' by interpreting it as putting doors on the ears of the audience. Their explanation remained popular in later times and can be found in many Greek authors.⁵² In Roman allusions the doors were dropped wholesale: Horace simply states in his *First Roman Ode* (C. 3.1.1) of circa 23 BC, *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*,⁵³ and Vergil

s.v.); L. Thraette, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions*, 2 vols (Berlin and New York, 1980–1996) 1.450–451, 2.750.

48 Tat. *Or.* 10.1 = *OF* 89, cf. M. Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 170–171; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.16.1 = *OF* 589.

49 C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandria* (Berlin and New York, 1987) 119; M. Herrero de Jáuregui, 'Las fuentes de Clem. Alex. *Protr.* II 12–22: un tratado sobre los misterios y una teogonía órfica', *Emerita* 75 (2007) 19–50.

50 See, most recently, Bernabé, 'El mito órfico de Dioniso y los Titanes' and Henrichs, 'Dionysos Dismembered and Restored to Life'; R. Gagné, *Ancestral Fault in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2013) 456.

51 Here, as in the rest of this chapter, I occasionally draw freely on my 'The Place of Performance of Orphic Poetry (*OF* 1)', in Herrero, *Tracing Orpheus*, 1–6.

52 Derveni Papyrus VII.7–11; Plato, *Symp.* 218b; Dion. Hal. *De compos. verb.* 6.25.5, Philo *Cher.* 42; Ael. Arist. *Or.* 3.50 (with the scholion *ad loc.*); Galen, *De usu partium* 12.6; Eus. *De laude Const. Proem.* 4; Greg. Naz., *Carmen de se ipso*, PG 37.1367; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 17–18; Bernabé on *OF* 1.

53 R. Nisbet and N. Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace, Odes, Book III* (Oxford, 2004) 6–7 is not wholly helpful on this aspect of the line.

(*Aen.* 6.258) has the Sibyl call out *procul, o procul este, profani*.⁵⁴ No doors here either!

We do not know if the *Theogony* was performed in Athens but we can be fairly sure that it was read there. In a recent discussion of the rise of Attic rather than Ionic as the medium of prose writing, Andreas Willi has noted: ‘Some writers who had been brought up with Ionic prose were not yet sufficiently used to the novel way of writing in Attic to do so consistently. This, not the geographical origin of the author, best explains the curious Attic-Ionic dialect mixture we find in the Orphic Derveni commentary’.⁵⁵ In other words, the author of the Derveni Papyrus will have read the Orphic *Theogony* in Athens, where he will also have written his commentary in, very probably, the late fifth century.

A much less well-known text is the Orphic *Physica* (*OF* 800–02) or *Peri Physeôs* (*OF* 803). As Renaud Gagné has persuasively argued,⁵⁶ this hexametric poem, in which the Tritopatores play a prominent role, combined theogonic and anthropogonic narratives with a theory of the soul and Presocratic physical doctrine. In other words, it seems to have been an alternative version of the ancient Orphic *Theogony*, but with more attention to the immortality of the soul and, perhaps, reincarnation. It seems to have lacked any reference to the Titans and was thus perhaps less scandalous and more acceptable to mainstream Athenian thought. A reference to *Physika* by Epigenes, the prominence of *Aer* in the poem and the presence in it of the One/Many problem all point to the later fifth century,⁵⁷ but Gagné thinks it impossible to locate the poem geographically. However, the mention of the Tritopatores and their connection with the winds strongly suggests Athens, because the centre of their cult was Attica and its environs⁵⁸ and it was perhaps only in Athens that they were connected with procreation. It is also only in Athens that we hear from local historians about their

54 For further bibliography, see this volume, Appendix 2.1.

55 A. Willi, ‘Attic as the Language of the Classics’, in C. Caragounis (ed.), *Greek: A Language in Evolution* (Hildesheim, 2010) 101–118 at 114. For the Ionic-Attic nature of the text, see Kouremenos, *The Derveni Papyrus*, 11–14 and, especially, L. Lulli, ‘La lingua del papiro di Derveni. Interrogativi ancora irrisolti’, in *Papiri filosofici. Miscellanea di Studi. VI* (Florence, 2011) 91–104.

56 R. Gagné, ‘Winds and Ancestors: The *Physika* of Orpheus’, *HSCP* 103 (2007) 1–24.

57 Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.21.131.5 = *OF* 406, 800, 1018 IV, 1100 I (Epigenes); *OF* 421 (*Aer*); Gagné, ‘Winds and Ancestors’, 7–9 (date).

58 M. Jameson *et al.*, *A lex sacra from Selinous* (Durham NC, 1993) 107–114; add *SEG* 57.64 B 12; see also S. Georgoudi, ‘“Ancêtres” de Sélinonte et d’ailleurs: le cas des Tritopatores’, in G. Hoffmann (ed.), *Les pierres de l’offrande* (Zurich, 2001) 152–163; R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society in Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 31–32; J. Stroszeck, ‘Das Heiligtum der Tritopatores im Kerameikos von Athen’, in H. Frielinghaus and ead. (eds), *Neue Forschungen in griechischen Städten und Heiligtümern* (Münster 2010) 55–83.

connection with the winds. If the book was not written in Athens, it was certainly read there.

Our penultimate texts are the Orphic *Hymns*, which are mentioned in the Derveni Papyrus, where in column XXII we are told: ‘And it is also said in the *Hymns*: Demeter, Rhea, Ge, Meter, Hestia, Deioi’⁵⁹ (11–12). Quotation in the Derveni Papyrus dates the *Hymns* at least as early as the later fifth century.⁶⁰ Dirk Obbink has noted that the line was written in Attic;⁶¹ the many divine identifications are a feature that also links it to Attic poetry of the latter half of the fifth century.⁶²

Our last text is an Orphic hymn on Demeter’s entry into Eleusis, which has been reconstructed in outline by Fritz Graf. This hymn celebrated the cultural achievements of Athens within the framework of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, but made some important alterations: it stressed Athens’ role as the *Urheimat* of agriculture and made references to the Thesmophoria, the most important female festival of Demeter and the source from which originally non-Eleusinian figures, such as Eubouleus and Baubo, were adopted in Eleusis in the late fifth century.⁶³ The influence of the Sophist Prodicus indicates a date for the hymn around the third quarter of the fifth century and its Eleusinian focus suggests Athens as the place of composition, or even Eleusis itself.⁶⁴

When we review this material we can see that Orphic texts began to be read in Athens after the mid-fifth century. The oldest texts, the *Descent to Hades* and the *Theogony*, were Italian imports, but the later ones seem to have been Attic

59 For the spelling Deioi, see Bremmer, ‘Rescuing Deio in Sophocles and Euripides’, *ZPE* 158 (2007) 27.

60 D. Obbink, ‘A Quotation of the Derveni Papyrus in Philodemus’ *On Piety*’, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 24 (1994) 110–135 has argued that Philochorus, who quotes other Orphic poetry (*FGrH* 328 F 77 = *OF* 810), must therefore have known the Derveni text, because he also quotes this verse as being by Orpheus and as having stood ‘in the *Hymns*’ (*FGrH* 328 F 185). However, the two authors could be citing the text independently under the same title; if the text from which the quotation was taken was a collection of hymns, it may indeed have been generally known as the *Hymns*. See also the doubts of G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus* (Cambridge, 2004) 98–99 n. 20, 190 and the objections of A. Henrichs, ‘Mystika, Orphika, Dionysiaka. Esoterische Gruppenbildungen, Glaubensinhalte und Verhaltensweisen in der griechischen Religion’, in A. Bierl and W. Braungart (eds), *Gewalt und Opfer. Im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 87–114 at 98–99; O. Salati, ‘Mitografi e storici in Filodemo (*De pietate, pars altera*)’, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 42 (2012) 209–258 at 247 n. 145.

61 Similarly Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 116f.

62 W. Allan, ‘Religious Syncretism: the New Gods of Greek Tragedy’, *HSCP* 102 (2004) 113–155.

63 Bremmer, ‘Divinities in the Orphic Gold Leaves: Euklēs, Eubouleus, Brimo, Kybele, Kore and Persephone’, *ZPE* 187 (2013) 35–48 at 37–40.

64 Graf, *Eleusis*, 151–186, summarised and updated by Graf, ‘Orfeo, Eleusis y Atenas’, 683–687.

compositions. This demonstrates the great impact Orphism had on Athens for a time, something that is also manifest in the Orphic influence on the Eleusinian Mysteries and the many allusions to Orphism in Plato.⁶⁵

Aspects of this evidence – literacy, the association with Eleusis, a connection with the Athenian clans of the Lykomids and the Euneids (§ 3) – demonstrate that the attraction to Orphism was primarily among the higher, if not highest, social classes of Athens. Did members of these classes also lead an Orphic life? It is perhaps not surprising that indications of an Orphic lifestyle begin to appear only shortly later than, or more or less contemporaneously with, the appearance of Orphic writings in Athens. The oldest reference to an Orphic lifestyle is found in Euripides' *Cretans*, produced sometime after the mid- fifth century, perhaps about 438 BC,⁶⁶ i.e. around the same time that Orpheus is mentioned in the *Alcestis*. In this fragmentary play there is a passage that, unmistakably, must have evoked Orphic ideas for the Athenian spectators:

We lead a pure life since I became an initiate (*mystês*) of Idaean Zeus and a herdsman (*boutês*) of night-wandering Zagreus, having performed feasts of raw meat; and raising torches high to the Mountain Mother with the Kouretes I was consecrated and named a *bakchos*. Wearing all white clothing I avoid the birth of mortals, and the resting places of the dead I do not approach. I have guarded myself against the eating of food with souls (fr. 472.9–19 = OF 567).

The passage has often been discussed,⁶⁷ but it seems clear that Euripides is here combining several ecstatic cults that can be connected with initiation. First the speaker has become an initiate of Idaean Zeus, though we never hear of these Mysteries of Zeus anywhere else.⁶⁸ He then became a *boutês* (presumably the same as a *boukolos*) and finally a *bakchos*.⁶⁹ Later sources show that the *boukolos* was a kind of mid-range Bacchic initiate (Ch. IV.2)⁷⁰ and the well known, probably Orphic, dictum 'many are *narthêkophoroi*, but the *bakchoi* are few', which

⁶⁵ Eleusis: Graf, *Eleusis*, 182–186; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 34–37; A. Bernabé, 'Orpheus and Eleusis', *Thracia* 18 (2009) 89–98; Bremmer, 'Divinities in the Orphic Gold Leaves', 39–41. Plato: A. Bernabé, *Platón y el orfismo* (Madrid, 2011).

⁶⁶ C. Collard et al., *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays*, 2 vols (Warminster, 1995–2004) 1.58; Kannicht in *TGrF* 5.1, 504.

⁶⁷ See especially G. Casadio, 'I *Cretesi* di Euripide e l'ascesi orfica', *Didattica del Classico* 2 (1990) 278–310; A. Bernabé, 'Un fragment de Los Cretenses de Eurípides', in J.A. López Férrez (ed.), *La tragedia griega en sus textos* (Madrid, 2004) 257–286.

⁶⁸ For a possible exception, see Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2.391.

⁶⁹ For the *boukolos*, see Eur. *Antiope* fr. 203 with Kannicht *ad loc.*; Cratinus, *Boukoloi* fr. 17–22.

⁷⁰ *Orphic Hymns* 1.10, 31.7; A.-F. Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme*, 2 vols (Zurich, 2003) 2.182–190.

was already known to Plato (*Phd.* 69c = *OF* 576), suggests that the *bakchoi* were the highest stage in the Bacchic Mysteries.⁷¹ We find the combination ‘*mystai* and *bakchoi*’ also in the Gold Leaf from Hipponion (*OF* 474.16), dating to about 400 BC, where it presumably means all the initiates, whatever their stage of initiation; the combination may well have been inspired by the two Eleusinian degrees of *mystai* and *epoptai* (Ch. I.2 and 3). Subsequent Leaves have only the terms *mystês* or *mystai*, present in both late fourth-century BC Leaves from Pherae and also in a series of later, small Gold Leaves, often accompanied by no more than the name of the deceased.⁷² The rank of *bakchos* seems to have been dropped in individual Bacchic initiations in the course of the fourth century BC.

The passage informs us of a number of characteristics of the cults. Of great importance is purity, which is stressed twice with the Greek terms *hagnos* (9) and *hosios* (15). This vocabulary points to rituals of purification before the initiation but also to purity of life thereafter. This purity is expressed through vegetarianism, wearing white clothing and avoiding contact with births and deaths (both well-known natural pollutions in ancient Greece).⁷³ Vegetarianism is expressed by the Greek term *empsychos*, ‘with a soul in it’, which seems to indicate reincarnation. As regards the white clothing, the excavator of the main tomb of Timpone Grande in Thurii, the source of two Orphic Gold Leaves, found *un bianchissimo lenzuolo* over the cremated remains of the deceased woman, but the ‘snow-white sheet’ immediately ‘disintegrated when touched by the excavators’.⁷⁴ Already Herodotus (2.81.2) mentions that participants in Orphic and Bacchic customs wished to be buried in linen. It is probably safe to presume that the white shroud was what the deceased had worn during her rituals.⁷⁵ We know that the Pythagoreans also wore white clothes and Pythagoras himself, according to Aelian (*VH* 12.32), dressed in white clothes, trousers and a golden wreath.⁷⁶ It seems likely that the Orphics followed the Pythagoreans in this respect, as in several others.⁷⁷

71 For the precise form of the dictum and its history, see W. Bühler, *Zenobii Athoi proverbia V* (Göttingen, 1999) 371–372, to be added to the commentary of Bernabé on *OF* 576. For the narthex, see H. Guiraud, ‘Les fleurs du narthex’, *Pallas* 85 (2011) 59–65.

72 Pherae: *OF* 493 (first published in 1994); *OF* 493a (first published in 2007), which speaks of ‘*mystôn thiasous*’, a typical Bacchic expression. Small Gold Leaves: *OF* 496 Fb-e.

73 R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 32–73.

74 G. Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford, 1971) 290.

75 Note the prohibition on wearing black clothes in the ‘Orphic’ *I. Smyrna* 728.10 (= *OF* 528).

76 Cf. E. Tigheelaar, ‘The White Dress of the Essenes and the Pythagoreans’, in F. García Martínez and G. Luttikhuisen (eds), *Jerusalem, Alexandria Rome. Studies ... A. Hilhorst* (Leiden, 2003) 301–321.

77 See now the balanced survey by A. Bernabé, ‘Orphics and Pythagoreans: the Greek perspective’, in G. Cornelli *et al.* (eds), *On Pythagoreanism* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 117–152.

In the Euripidean fragment the lifestyle is connected with Dionysiac rituals, but Orpheus is nowhere mentioned. Yet the combination of vegetarianism (despite the mention of eating raw meat), purity of lifestyle and white linen all point to Orphism. The first two characteristics are also explicitly mentioned in a passage of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where Theseus accuses his son of being a hypocritical Orphic, as he pretends purity but lusts after his stepmother:

Continue then your confident boasting, make a display with your soul-free food, and with Orpheus as your master engage in Bacchic revelling as you honour the smoke of many books (952–54 = OF 627).

Once again we hear of vegetarianism⁷⁸ but now Orpheus and Bacchic revelling are explicitly combined, together with books which Euripides himself may well have had in his own library,⁷⁹ for he became increasingly interested in Orphism in the course of his career.⁸⁰ In the oral society that Athens largely still was in the later fifth century, books in religious activities could raise suspicion. Demosthenes, slandering Aeschines, twice mentions that he had read books for his mother during initiations.⁸¹ Greek religion was by nature oral and the invasion of books, which were also used by the Sophists, in the mid-fifth century must have initially raised many an eyebrow and was of course satirised in comedy.⁸²

A neglected aspect of the *Hippolytus* passage is Hippolytus' age. He is obviously a very young man, not yet married. A little later in the play he states: 'I am clumsy at giving an explanation to a crowd, but more intelligent for a small group of my age-mates' (986–87). We may wonder if in Athens Orphism was at

⁷⁸ L. Zieske, 'Hippolytos – ein orphischer Vegetarier? Zu Eurip., Hipp. 952–954', *Wiener Studien* 125 (2012) 23–29.

⁷⁹ For Euripides' library, see M. Ercoles and L. Fiorentini, 'Giocasta tra Stesicoro (*PMGF* 222(B)) ed Euripide (*Fenicie*)', *ZPE* 179 (2011) 21–34 at 23f.

⁸⁰ R. Scodel, 'Euripides, the Derveni Papyrus, and the Smoke of Many Writings', in A. Lardinois *et al.* (eds), *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion* (Leiden, 2011) 79–98.

⁸¹ Dem. 18.259 = OF 577 I, 19.199 = OF 577 II. For the Mysteries of Aeschines' mother, see H. Wankel, *Demosthenes, Rede für Ktesiphon über den Kranz*, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1976) 2.1132–1148; Bernabé on OF 577; Henrichs, 'Mystika, Orphika, Dionysiaka', 102–106; M.A. Santamaría, 'Los misterios de Esquines y su madre según Demóstenes (Sobre la corona 259–260)', in F. Cortés Gabaudan and J. Méndez Dosuna (eds), *DIC MIHI, MVSA, VIRUM. Homenaje al profesor Antonio López Eire* (Salamanca, 2010) 613–620; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2. 374.

⁸² Ar. *Ran.* 943, fr. 506, cf. J. Mansfeld, *Studies in the Historiography of Greek Philosophy* (Assen, 1990) 305 n. 345; Plato *Ap.* 26d; M.A. Santamaría, 'Dos tipos de profesionales del libro en la Atenas clásica: sofistas y órficos', in P. Fernández Álvarez *et al.* (eds), *Est hic varia lectio. La lectura en el mundo antiguo* (Salamanca, 2008) 57–75.

first especially successful with the elite young; we may recall the success of the Sophists with the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens.

How do we explain the more or less contemporaneous appearance of Orphic books and an Orphic lifestyle? The easiest answer is that both writings and lifestyle were probably imported into Athens by wandering Orphic initiators, the so-called Orpheotelests. The presence in Athens of these initiators in the late fifth century is already attested by the Derveni Papyrus, which tells us:

But all those (who hope to acquire knowledge) from someone who makes a craft of holy rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied – wondered at, because, thinking that they will know before they perform the rites, they go away after having performed them before they have known, without even asking further questions, as if they knew something of what they saw or heard or were taught; and pitied because it is not enough for them to have spent their money in advance, but they also go off deprived of understanding as well (XX).

Like the Sophists, the Orphic initiators evidently asked money for their services, and this is confirmed by Plato in an important passage from the *Republic*:

... and begging priests and seers go to rich men's doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors, and that if a man wishes to harm an enemy, at little cost he will be enabled to injure just and unjust alike, since they are masters of spells and incantations that constrain the gods to serve their end... And they produce a hubbub of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, the offspring of the Moon and the Muses, as they affirm, and these books they use in their rites (364b-e = *OF* 573 I, translation adapted from P. Shorey).

Interestingly, in the *Meno* (81a = *OF* 424, 666) Plato also mentions 'priestesses', presumably Orphic ones. Given that upper-class Greek women were not free to wander the streets, other women could probably better cater to their religious interest. The fact that the majority of the Gold Leaves have been found in graves of women demonstrates that women were interested in these new ideas.⁸³ We may compare early Christianity, where women also dominated: a Syrian Church Order stipulates that a bishop sometimes did better to choose a deaconess as his assistant, because she had better access to houses in which both Christians and

⁸³ This can now be seen best from the tables in Edmonds, *The "Orphic" Gold Tablets*, 41–48; see also the tables in R. Parker and M. Stamatopoulou, 'A New Funerary Gold Leaf from Pherai', *Arch. Ephem.* 2004 [2007], 1–32 at 28–31.

non-Christians lived.⁸⁴ In his *Characters* (16 = OF 654), Theophrastus mentions such an Orphic initiator, an Orpheotelest, who had set up shop in Athens and was consulted regarding purity, but the fact that he is associated with the ‘Superstitious Man’ shows that his reputation was not high in the eyes of Theophrastus.

From our discussion it will have become clear that Orphic ideas and practices rejected central values of Greek society of their day. Their asceticism and vegetarianism isolated their followers from occasions associated with sacrifice, the central act of Greek religion, and their eschatological ideas featuring reincarnation and their sense of election as being gods, as we will see shortly, set them far apart from traditional Greek eschatological ideas. This Orphic complex was peddled by initiators as, say, modern Scientology does, through initiations aimed at rich people. During these initiations they offered knowledge, presumably above all eschatological, but also sold spells and incantations. However, we will not focus on Orphic magic here, but turn to the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries.

3 The Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries

The earliest mention of Bacchic Mysteries, still without any Orphic influence, occurs in a fragment of Heraclitus of Ephesus, who is commonly dated to about 500 BC, in which he threatens specific groups of people, the ‘nightwanderers, *magoi*, *bakchoi*, *lênai* (maenads), *mystai*’ (B 14), with a fiery punishment after death.⁸⁵ The mention of *bakchoi* and *lênai*, in other words male and female followers of Dionysos, as well as of *mystai* clearly suggests Mysteries; indeed, in the same fragment we find the word *mystêria* for the very first time in surviving Greek literature. The occurrence in Ephesus of *bakchoi*, that is, ecstatic worshippers of Dionysos Bakchos, is not really surprising, as the centre of the cult of Dionysos Bakchos/Bakcheus/Bakch(e)ios was in the Dodecanese and its neigh-

⁸⁴ *Constitutiones Apostolicae* 3.16.1, cf. Bremmer, ‘Why Did Early Christianity Attract Upper-Class Women?’, in A.A.R. Bastiaensen *et al.* (eds), *Fructus centesimus. Mélanges G.J.M. Bartelink* (Steenbrugge and Dordrecht, 1989) 37–47.

⁸⁵ The authenticity of the fragment has been disputed, cf. G.E.R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge, 1979) 12 n, 18; A. Henrichs, ‘Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: Zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im attischen Drama’, in H. Hofmann and A. Harder (eds), *Fragmenta dramatica* (Göttingen, 1991) 161–201 at 190f. Its authenticity is accepted, most recently, by Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus*, 81; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 58; L. Gemelli Marciano, ‘A chi profetizza Eraclito di Efeso? Eraclito “specialista del sacro” fra Oriente e Occidente’, in C. Riedweg (ed.), *Grecia Maggiore: intrecci culturali con l’Asia nel periodo arcaico* (Basle, 2009) 99–122 at 104–109; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 145.

bouring cities on the coast of Asia Minor.⁸⁶ As Ephesus did not have public Mysteries comparable to those of Eleusis or Samothrace, Heraclitus must have been targeting private Mysteries. This means that around 500 BC there were already private Mysteries of followers of Dionysos Bakchos. Wherever we have more detailed information, this epithet is linked to ecstatic rituals.⁸⁷ Heraclitus would probably not have worried about these categories had they belonged to the lowest classes of the city.

More or less at the same time, a well-to-do woman in the Milesian colony of Olbia was buried with a bronze mirror with the inscription: ‘Demonassa daughter of Lenaeus, *euai!* And Lenaeus son of Damoclus, *euai!*’.⁸⁸ The shout *euai* was typical of the maenads and recurs in the form *euhoi* in Sophocles (*Tr.* 219; note also *Ant.* 1134–35) and Aristophanes (*Th.* 995). The cry, then, was well established before Euripides used it in his *Cyclops* (25) and *Bacchae* (141). This is also demonstrated by Dionysos’ epithet *Euios*, already attested from the mid-fifth century.⁸⁹ Interestingly, the maenadic cry is here also associated with a male, who even has a Dionysiac name: apparently, in Olbia as in Ephesus, there were male and female Bacchic groups. The shout *euai* points to ecstatic rites with dancing and chanting.⁹⁰

In 1978 a small set of bone plaques from Olbia were published, dating to the fifth century and containing the sequence of words ‘life-death-life’, followed by ‘truth’ underneath; at the bottom of the plaque it read, ‘Dio(nysos) Orphiko(i)’.⁹¹ A second plaque reads, ‘Dio(nysos), truth, body soul’.⁹² These plaques evidently refer to a group of followers of Orpheus, that is, of Orphic ideas and, possibly, an Orphic lifestyle, though the expression ‘Orphikoi’ is unique in this meaning, as all

86 F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 285–291; add *I. Ephesus* 1267.

87 Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 286; A. Jiménez San Cristóbal, ‘The Meaning of *bakchos* and *bakcheuein* in Orphism’, in G. Casadio and P. Johnston (eds), *Mystic Cults in Magna Graecia* (Austin, 2009) 46–60; M.A. Santamaría, ‘The Term *bakchos* and Dionysos *Bakchios*’, in A. Bernabé et al. (eds), *Redefining Dionysos* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 38–57.

88 L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales d’Olbia du Pont* (Geneva, 1996) 143 no. 92, tr. Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 216.

89 Ecphantides fr. 4; Soph. *OT* 211; Ar. *Thesm.* 990, 995; Eur. *Ba.* 1167; R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten II* (Munich, 2001) no. 10/03/02 (Amastris: AD 155); Horsfall on Verg. *Aen.* 7.389.

90 For Dionysiac ecstasy, see most recently A. Henrichs, ‘Der rasende Gott: Zur Psychologie des Dionysos und des Dionysischen in Mythos und Literatur’, *A&A* 40 (1994) 31–58; F. Graf, ‘The Blessings of Madness’, *ARG* 12 (2010) 167–180; S. Gödde, ‘Seligkeit und Gewalt. Die dionysische Ekstase in der griechischen Antike’, in T. Koebner (ed.), *Ekstase* (Munich, 2012) 10–34.

91 *OF* 463 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 214. For an excellent defense of the reading ‘Orphiko(i)’, see B. Bravo, ‘Testi iniziatici da Olbia Pontica (VI e V sec. a.C.) e osservazioni su Orfismo e religione civica’, *Palamedes* 2 (2007) 55–92 at 75f.

92 *OF* 465 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 216.

later attestations of the term mean ‘producers of Orphic literature’.⁹³ The sequence ‘life-death-life’ and the opposition ‘body soul’ suggest that these plaques are concerned with reincarnation, in which the soul played an important role. In Greece reincarnation was ‘invented’ by Pythagoras, and it seems reasonable to accept that the Orphics had taken it over from him,⁹⁴ though not everyone agrees with this.⁹⁵ Yet there is also a tie between these Orphics and Dionysos. The plaques do not specify which Dionysos this was, but around 460 BC the Scythian king Scyles, whose mother was Greek, wanted to become initiated (*telesthênai*) into the cult of Dionysos Bakcheios in Olbia. Herodotus leaves no doubt about its ecstatic character, stressing it repeatedly (4.79.3–4). The king even joined a Bacchic *thiasos* before he was deposed and, eventually, beheaded.⁹⁶ Given the later connections between Orphism and Dionysos Bakchios, which we will mention shortly, it seems plausible that the Dionysos of the bone plaques also had an ecstatic character. Finally, bone plaques in themselves are not very valuable, but the use of writing surely points to a higher social status, just as the *thiasos* joined by King Scyles will not have consisted of the riffraff of Olbia.

Around the same time but at the other end of the Mediterranean, an inhabitant of Campanian Cumae was buried in a tomb of large dimensions, the roof slab of which bore the inscription: ‘It is illicit to lie buried in this place unless one has become a *bakchos*’ (*bebakcheumenon*).⁹⁷ The inscription seems to presuppose a group of followers of Dionysos Bakchos/Bakcheus/Bakche(i)os who, again, be-

93 Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 139; Philodem. *Piet.* 4967 = Henrichs, ‘Dionysos Dismembered’, 63 = *OF* 59 I; Apollod. 3.10.3; Schol. Pind. P. 3.96 = *OF* 365; Schol. Eur. *Alc.* 1. A. Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (New York, 2004) 99–103 persuasively shows that all these references eventually derive from Apollodorus of Athens, one more testimony to the circulation of Orphic books in Athens.

94 See Bremmer, *Rise and Fall*, 11–15, updated in my ‘The Rise of the Unitary Soul and its Opposition to the Body. From Homer to Socrates’, in L. Jansen and C. Jedan (eds), *Philosophische Anthropologie in der Antike* (Frankfurt, 2010) 11–29.

95 See most recently L. Zhmud, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans* (Oxford, 2012) 221–238; F. Casadesús, ‘On the origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean notion of the immortality of the soul’, in Cornelli, *On Pythagoreanism*, 153–176.

96 Hdt. 4.78–80, cf. Henrichs, ‘Der rasende Gott’, 47–51. For his date, see S. Hornblower, ‘Personal Names and the Study of the Ancient Greek Historians’, in idem and E. Matthews (eds), *Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, 2000) 129–148 at 132f.

97 F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cites grecques. Supplément* (Paris, 1962) no. 120, cf. R. Turcan, ‘Bacchoi ou bacchants? De la dissidence des vivants à la ségrégation des morts’, in O. de Cazanove (ed.), *L’association dionysiaque dans les sociétés anciennes* (Rome, 1986) 227–246, to be read with the criticism of J.-M. Paillier, *Bacchus: figures et pouvoirs* (Paris, 1995) 111–126; G. Casadio, ‘Dionysos in Campania: Cumae’, in Casadio and Johnston, *Mystic Cults*, 33–45 (with rich bibliography).

longed to the higher strata of Cumaean society. Whether the inscription also presupposes a meeting with other *bakchoi* in the afterlife remains impossible to say, but does not seem unlikely.

No more than two decades later Herodotus, speaking about the linen garments of the Egyptians, noted: ‘This agrees with the customs known as Orphic and Bacchic, which are in reality Egyptian and Pythagorean, for anyone initiated into these rites (*orgia*) is similarly forbidden to be buried in wool. A *hieros logos* is told about these things’ (2.81 = *OF* 650).⁹⁸ Unfortunately, as is his custom, Herodotus does not tell us the content of this *hieros logos*,⁹⁹ but his comments clearly show that he, like Ion of Chios,¹⁰⁰ ascribed the Orphic ideas to Pythagoras, which shows how close their ideas were in the eyes of fifth-century intellectuals.

From the evidence collected so far, we can conclude that around the mid-fifth century BC Dionysiac ecstatic rituals had converged with Orphic ideas and practices in some Greek cities. This development is also very much apparent in the Gold Leaves that we have already mentioned repeatedly. These Leaves have been known for well over a century, but the steady publication of new ones in the last four decades has greatly increased our understanding of them. The oldest examples were found in southern Italy, and the ‘Doricisms’ in their language support this geographical origin.¹⁰¹ It is now clear that these Leaves served as a kind of passport and guide to the underworld. The passport function is directly mentioned by the first Leaf from Thessalian Pherae to be published, from the fourth century: ‘Passwords (*symbola*): man-and-child-thyrso. Man-and-child-thyrso. Brimo. Brimo’.¹⁰² In

98 The text is debated, but I accept the longer version while admitting that it is not totally free of suspicion. For the full bibliography, see Bernabé on *OF* 650; add Bravo, ‘Testi iniziatici da Olbia Pontica’, 87–92 (prefers short text); O. Primavesi, ‘Heilige Texte im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen? Herodot als Zeuge für einen Orphischen *Hieros logos*’, in A. Kablitz and C. Markschieß (eds), *Heilige Texte* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 43–70.

99 Cf. S. Gödde, ‘οὐ μοι ὄσιόν ἐστι λέγειν. Zur Poetik der Leerstelle in Herodots Ägypten-Logos’, in A. Bierl et al. (eds), *Literatur und Religion 2* (Berlin and New York, 2007) 41–90; T. Harrison, *Divinity and History: the Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2002²) 184–186. For the expression itself, see A. Henrichs, ‘*Hieroi Logoi* and *Hierai Bibloi*: The (Un)written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece’, *HSCP* 101 (2003) 207–266; Bremmer, ‘From Holy Books to Holy Bible: an Itinerary from Ancient Greece to Modern Islam via Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity’, in M. Popović (ed.), *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden, 2010) 327–360 at 331–333.

100 Ion of Chios, B 2 DK = *FGrH* 392 F 25a, cf. Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 128–129; C. Riedweg, ‘“Pythagoras hinterliess keine einzige Schrift” – ein Irrtum? Anmerkungen zu einer alten Streitfrage’, *MH* 54 (1997) 65–92 at 88–89.

101 For the ‘Doricisms’, see D. Obbink, ‘Poetry and Performance in the Orphic Gold Leaves’, in Edmonds, *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets*, 291–309 at 295 note 17.

102 *OF* 493 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 38f. For the term *symbolon*, see also this volume, Ch. VI.3.

contrast, the fourth-century Gold Leaf from Petelia in southern Italy starts with, ‘You will find in the house of Hades a spring on the left, and standing by it a white cypress. Do not even approach this spring!’,¹⁰³ and several others contain even more elaborate instructions. Some hexametrical Gold Leaves also contain snippets of prose, such as ‘Bull you jumped into the milk. Quickly, you jumped into the milk. Ram you fell into the milk’.¹⁰⁴ **These have led Fritz Graf to the persuasive conclusion that the Gold Leaves were meant for oral performance. Originally, they must have been recited during the bearers’ initiation, to prepare them for what they should say when they died and arrived in the underworld.**¹⁰⁵

In the Leaf from Hipponion, mentioned above, we read: ‘And you, too, having drunk, will go along the sacred road on which other glorious *mystai* and *bakchoi* travel’.¹⁰⁶ In 1985 Fritz Graf noted that neither the Cumaean inscription nor the Hipponion Leaf ‘setzen natürlich Dionysos Bakcheus voraus’,¹⁰⁷ but only 2 years later two new, late fourth-century Leaves from Thessalian Pelinna were published, which read, ‘Now you have died and now you have come into being, O thrice happy one, on this day. Tell Persephone that Bakchios himself released you’, and a late fourth-century Leaf from Macedonian Amphipolis published in 2003 reads, ‘Pure and sacred to Dionysos Bakchios am I, Archeboule (daughter of) Antidoros’.¹⁰⁸ **As we might have suspected, it is precisely the ecstatic Dionysos who is the focus of these rituals.**

We have hardly any information about the rituals underlying these Gold Leaves. A chance remark tells us that Bacchic initiates were crowned with the twigs of a white poplar as it is a chthonic tree. Heracles had also crowned himself with white poplar after his victory over Cerberus, so the symbolism seems clear: **the initiates had nothing to fear at their entry to the underworld.**¹⁰⁹ Philodemus associates an Orpheotelest with a tambourine, which shows that ecstatic dancing was part of their activities¹¹⁰ and is also a valuable confirmation that Orphic

103 OF 476 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 6f.

104 OF 485–486 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 36f. **For an interesting, but ultimately unpersuasive discussion, see C. Faraone, ‘Rushing into milk. New perspectives on the gold tablets’, in Edmonds, *The “Orphic” Gold Tablets*, 310–330.**

105 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 137–140, 164

106 OF 474 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 4f.

107 Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 286 note 29.

108 Phrae: OF 485–486 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 36f. Amphipolis: OF 496n = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 40f.

109 Call. fr. 804 with Pfeiffer *ad loc.*; Harpocration λ 13; Photius λ 216, μ 100 with Theodoridis *ad loc.*

110 Philodemus, *On poems* 1.181 = OF 655, cf. Bernabé on OF 573.

initiators were associated with Dionysos Bakchios, as the tambourine was a standard instrument in Dionysiac rituals.¹¹¹

Finally, the texts seem to suggest communal activities. With the Hipponion Gold Leaf we cannot be certain whether the *mystai* and *bakchoi* mentioned were members of a *thiasos*. However, three fourth-century Gold Leaves from a single burial mound in Thurii start with, ‘I come pure from the pure, Queen of the Chthonian ones’, as does a second- or third-century AD Leaf from Rome (although it begins ‘*She* comes pure from the pure’).¹¹² In other words, the initiate clearly presented herself as a member of a group of pure initiates.¹¹³ And the initiates imagine themselves still as a group also in the afterlife, as the most recently published Gold Leaf from Thessalian Pherae (around 300 BC) states: ‘Send me to the *thiasoi* of the *mystai*: I have the ritual objects (*orgia*) of [Bakchios] and the rites (*telê*) of Demeter Chthonia and of the Mountain Mother’.¹¹⁴ The new Leaf reveals that the Bacchic initiation also involved ritual objects. Later testimonies from Dionysiac Mysteries mention, for example, the *cista mystica* with a snake and the winnowing fan with a phallus in it (Ch. IV.2) but it seems risky to retroject these back to the earlier period without further evidence. We also do not know enough about the cult of Demeter Chthonia to infer why she is mentioned, although Demeter became closely associated with Dionysos in the late fifth century. On the other hand, the Mountain Mother, whom we have just met in the fragment from Euripides’ *Cretans*, was already combined with Dionysos by Pindar (*Dith.* II.6–9) and was, like him, a patron of ecstatic dancing.¹¹⁵

Were there distinctively Orphic ideas in these elusive Bacchic Mysteries? The Olbian bone plaques pointed to reincarnation and a special position for the soul in the afterlife, as we noted above. The same idea recurs in the Gold Leaves. In one of the Thurii Gold Leaves discussed above, the initiate tells Persephone: ‘I have flown out of the painful cycle (*kyklos*) of deep sorrow and I have approached the longed-for crown with swift feet. I plunged beneath the lap of the Lady, the chthonian Queen’.¹¹⁶ The ‘cycle’, which also appears in Vergil’s *Aeneid* Book VI

111 Bömer on Ov. *F.* 5.441.

112 OF 488–491 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 12–15 (Thurii), 18–19 (Rome).

113 For the expression, see G.J. de Vries on Plato *Phaedr.* 246; Bernabé on OF 488.1.

114 OF 493a (in the Addenda of Bernabé) = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 38–39, although I follow the interpretation and translation of Henrichs, ‘Mystika, Orphika, Dionysiaka’, 96–98.

115 But see Parker and Stamatopoulou, ‘A New Funerary Gold Leaf’, 14–15; S.I. Johnston, ‘Demeter in Hermione: Sacrifice and the Polyvalence of Ritual’, *Arethusa* 45 (2012) 211–241 and *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 200–204; Bremmer, ‘Divinities in the Orphic Gold Leaves’, 36f.

116 OF 488 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 12f.

(748: *rotam*),¹¹⁷ seems to contain the successive stages through which the soul has to pass during its Orphic reincarnation.¹¹⁸ Why was the soul obliged to pass through this cycle? Here the Leaves also give new answers. The Pelinna Gold Leaf states that the initiate has to tell Persephone that ‘Bakchios himself has released you’, and this forgiving action of Dionysos is probably illustrated on a fourth-century Apulian volute crater by the Darius Painter: Dionysos clasps hands with Hades, who is sitting opposite a standing Persephone, while the image of the deceased at the other side of the vase strongly suggests an intervention by Dionysos on his behalf.¹¹⁹ The reason for Bakchios’ forgiveness probably appears in the Gold Leaf from Pherae that we have just discussed, which states after the mention of the passwords: ‘Enter the holy meadow. For the *mystês* has paid the penalty (*apoinos*)’.¹²⁰ Evidently guilt had to be atoned – and was atoned, presumably by initiation – before the deceased could enter the abode of the blessed. The same guilt is cited in one of the fourth-century Thuri Leaves, in which the initiate declares, ‘I have paid the penalty (*poinan*) for unrighteous deeds’.¹²¹

It is almost certain that this guilt is the fact that the Titans had murdered Dionysos: because mankind emerged from the soot of the burned Titans, it shared responsibility for the murder. However, in what is probably the earliest allusion to this murder, in Pindar, there is not yet any mention of Dionysos Bakchios. All that is said is that the best roles in future incarnations will be for those ‘from whom Persephone accepts compensation for ancient grief’ (fr. 133), words that seem to refer to the murder of Dionysos.¹²² It is, I suggest, a reasonable supposition that Dionysos Bakchios’ forgiving role was inserted into the story when his rituals acquired their Orphic colouring.

The last point I wish to make regarding Orphic ideas in the Bacchic Mysteries is to highlight an important difference from the older, Eleusinian Mysteries. In the earlier quotation from the Derveni commentator on the Orpheotelests (§ 2), he says that the initiates will go away, ‘as if they knew something of what they saw

117 See also this volume, Appendix 2.6.

118 OF 338, 467, 488.5, with Bernabé *ad loc.*; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, *Instructions for the Netherworld*, 117–121.

119 S.I. Johnston and T. McNiven, ‘Dionysos and the Underworld in Toledo’, *MH* 53 (1996) 25–36; M. Schmidt, ‘Aufbruch oder Verharren in der Unterwelt? Nochmals zu den apulischen Vasenbildern mit Darstellungen des Hades’, *Antike Kunst* 43 (2000) 86–101; M. Harari, ‘Dionysos’, in *LIMC*, Suppl. 1 (2009) 171–177 at 174, add. 17.

120 OF 493 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 38f.

121 OF 490 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 14–15; M.A. Santamaria, ‘*Poinàs tîein*. Culpa y expiación en el orfismo’, in A. Alvar Ezquerro and J. F. González Castro (eds), *Actas del XI Congreso Español de Estudios Clásicos*, 3 vols (Madrid, 2005) 1.397–405.

122 H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy* (Oxford, 1990) 80–105.

or heard or were taught'. The references to the myth of the Titans' murder of Dionysos in the Gold Leaves suggest that this myth was also told during the initiations, probably in one of the versions of the oldest Orphic *Theogony*. The reference to hearing and being taught highlights an important difference between the Eleusinian and Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries. In the former, the importance of 'seeing' and 'showing' is continuously stressed by our sources as a fundamental part of the highest degree (Ch. I.3), but in the latter the focus is on 'hearing'. That is surely why hearing, not seeing, suddenly becomes so important in connection with the Mysteries. We can see this already in a line that soon became an alternative opening of the Orphic *Theogony*, 'I will speak to those for whom it is right (viz. to hear)', whereas the oldest version still had, 'I will sing to those who understand'.¹²³ This didactic aspect of the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries soon caught on.¹²⁴ In the *Clouds* (135) Aristophanes calls Strepsiades knocking on Socrates' door an 'ignoramus', *amathês*, which the *Suda* later explains as 'uninitiated', *amuêtos*.¹²⁵ In the fifth century, the more sophisticated initiates were evidently no longer satisfied by the display of an ear of corn as in Eleusis (Ch. I.3).

Until now we have spoken of Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, which were connected with Dionysos Bakchios.¹²⁶ Were there also Mysteries with Orphic influence but without Bacchic rituals? In Attic Phlya, Themistocles had rebuilt a shrine of mystery rites (*telestêrion*) for the Lykomids, his clan, after it was burnt by the Persians¹²⁷ and in the later second century AD the traveller Pausanias reported that the Lykomids chanted songs of Orpheus and a hymn to Demeter at the rituals in their 'clubhouse' (*kleision*). A *klision* was a great hall (Ael. Dion. κ 30) and Plutarch's Eleusinian term *telestêrion* (Ch. I.2) suggests the performance of Mysteries, which were limited to the initiated, in a secluded space. The Lykomids had introduced Orphic poetry into their rituals, as Pausanias noted.¹²⁸ The resemblance of this 'clubhouse' to other Greek 'men's houses' and the 'wolf' (*lykos*) in the clan's name suggest a background in tribal initiation.¹²⁹ It seems that some

123 For the priority of the latter version, see Bremmer, 'The Place of Performance of Orphic Poetry (OF 1)'; Santamaría, 'Critical Notes to the Orphic Poem of the Derveni Papyrus', 55–57.

124 Cf. Emp. B3.3–5; Eur. *Bacch.* 474; Plato, *Symp.* 218b; Cat. 64.260.

125 R. Seaford, 'Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysiac Mysteries', *CQ* 31 (1981) 252–275 at 253f.

126 Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 37–46 (first published in 1977) could not yet know this when he published his first ground-breaking article on the Bacchic mysteries.

127 Simonides fr. 627; Plut. *Vit. Them.* 1; Bernabé *ante OF* 531.

128 According to Paus. 9.30.12, the Lykomids sang Orphic hymns during their *drômena*, cf. Bernabé *ante OF* 531; V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Liège, 2008) 139f.

129 Lykomids: Paus. 1.22.7, 31; 4.1.5–9; 9.27.2; 9.30.12 = *OF* 531. Wolves and initiation: Bremmer and N. Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* (London, 1987) 43 (Bremmer) and Bremmer, 'Myth

Attic initiatory cults were reconstructed and reinterpreted as Mysteries after the disintegration of male puberty rites in the course of the archaic period.

Another connection between Orpheus and a respectable Athenian family becomes visible in Euripides' *Hypsipyle* (ca. 411–8 BC), where Euneus, the ancestor of the clan of the Euneids, is instructed on the lyre by Orpheus (fr. 759a.1619–22 = *OF* 972). The play even seems to contain traces of an Orphic theology (fr. 758a.1103–8 with Kannicht *ad loc.* = *OF* 65),¹³⁰ which we can recognise from the mention of darkness in its fragmentary remains: *ph]aos askopon* (1103)¹³¹ and perhaps *Aith]er* (1104–05) with Night and Eros (1106).¹³² None of these is exclusively Orphic, but their combination must have evoked the picture of a kind of Orphic *Theogony*. Such references to Orphic ideas are very rare in tragedy and it therefore seems likely that Euripides knew of some special tie between the Euneids and Orphism. Like the Lykomids, the *genos* may well have had a clubhouse where Mysteries and Orphic hymns were performed.¹³³

Similarly there can be little doubt that there were Dionysiac Mysteries without any hint of Orphism. In Euripides' *Bacchae* there are many allusions to Mystery language¹³⁴ yet there is nothing Orphic amongst them, and many later Dionysiac Mysteries clearly have nothing to do with Orphic ideas; indeed, recent research stresses the great variety of Bacchic Mysteries.¹³⁵ This variety is also reflected in geography, as no Bacchic Mystery is attested for Athens, nor has any Gold Leaf been found in Attica. The prominence of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which also

and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice: Lykaon, Polyxena and the Case of the Rhodian Criminal', in idem (ed.), *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (Leuven, 2007) 55–79 at 69–78; Kleision as 'men's house': L. Gernet and A. Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion*, (Paris, 1970 [first published in 1932]) 72.

130 Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 112–119, overlooked by Kouremenos, *The Derveni Papyrus*, 254f.

131 I follow the excellent discussion of Martin Cropp in C. Collard *et al.*, *Euripides, Selected Fragmentary Plays II* (Oxford, 2004) 251. For darkness in ancient cosmogonies, see Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 5, where this passage has to be added.

132 See Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 4–6 (Night), 8, 16 (Eros) and 13 (Aither), respectively. For Night, see also W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften VIII* (Göttingen, 2008) 20–26 ('Addendum 2007'); O. Primavesi, 'Le chemin vers la révélation: lumière et nuit dans le Proème de Parménide', *Philosophie Antique* 13 (2013) 37–81 (another indication of the closeness of Parmenides and Orphism).

133 For the Euneids, see R. Parker, *Athenian Religion* (Oxford, 1996) 297–298; S.C. Humphreys, *The Strangeness of Gods* (Oxford, 2004) 248–249, 262–265; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 112–119.

134 A.-J. Festugière, *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris, 1972) 66–80; H.S. Versnel, *Terminus* (Leiden, 1990) 168f.

135 A.-F. Jaccottet, 'Un dieu, plusieurs mystères? Les différents visages des mystères dionysiaques', in C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Religions orientales – culti misterici. Neue Perspektiven – nouvelles perspectives – prospettive nuove* (Stuttgart, 2006) 219–230.

promised a better afterlife, must have hindered any local competition from the (Orphic-)Bacchic Mysteries.¹³⁶

4 Conclusions

It is now more than fifty years since the Derveni Papyrus was discovered, and more than forty years since the first new Gold Leaf of the later twentieth century was published. What can we say about the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries at this moment? When we try to reconstruct the historical development, we seem to see a convergence of East and West, each making a different contribution. Around 500 BC we first hear of Mysteries in Ephesus in which *bakchoi* play a role, which fits the geographical origin of Dionysos Bakchos/Bakcheus/Bakch(e)ios, as we have seen. It looks as if some people had claimed that the same euphoria that was produced in Bacchic rites in this life was also available to them in the hereafter. Heraclitus' threat to the initiates of fire after death may be a reaction to the claims of these initiates regarding a blissful afterlife. Around the mid-fifth century, this ecstatic Dionysos has ecstatic Mysteries in Olbia and at the same time he has already been accepted in southern Italy, as witnessed by the Cumaean grave with its term *bebakcheumenon*.

Around 500 BC, give or take a decade or so, there also arose in southern Italy a movement of people who were dissatisfied with traditional religion. Assuming the name of Orpheus, the most famous poet of the day, they started to produce poems that were close to Pythagoreanism in content but also went into areas to which Pythagoras had contributed little, such as eschatology.¹³⁷ Unlike Pythagoras, they gave a much more detailed picture of the afterlife, which they disseminated through poems about Orpheus' descent into Hades to bring back his wife Eurydice. Their eschatological and anthropological ideas must have gradually become better known through books and/or wandering initiators (the Orpheotelests), and their detailed knowledge of the afterlife will have promoted the convergence of Orphic ideas with the ecstatic rites of Dionysos Bakchios.

Shortly after the mid-fifth century, these ideas also reached Athens, as we saw from Euripides. He is the first to mention an Orphic lifestyle, which consisted of a focus on purity and vegetarianism. This lifestyle isolated people from normal social relations and practices. It is therefore not surprising that we find this

136 Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*, 79, contra Parker, *Polytheism and Society in Athens*, 368 ('The absence of Gold Leaves from Attic tombs is an anomaly and a puzzle') and *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca and London, 2011) 257 ('strangely not Attica').

137 For Orphism's date of origin, see Bremmer, *Rise and Fall*, 24.

lifestyle associated with wandering initiators, young people such as Hippolytus and, perhaps, the women of the Orphic Gold Leaves. One need not be a fully convinced follower of rational choice theory to see that such a life had its social costs, such as isolation from public life, which could hardly have been borne by poorer people. Since women, especially, played no significant role in public life, these costs must have been minimal for them. In the modern world, too, New Age cults and ideas have attracted a more than average number of followers from the young and women.

Nonetheless, there must have been an additional factor that made Orphism attractive. We have seen that the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries were especially at home among the upper classes. In the fifth century, the traditional position of aristocracy in society had increasingly come under pressure, on the one hand through the rise of tyrants, especially in southern Italy, and on the other through the rise of democracy elsewhere. It now became more and more difficult to gain fame – the Homeric *kleos aphthiton* – in this life, and aristocrats will have looked to the next life for compensation. We may compare Max Weber's thesis that the rise of religions of salvation, such as Christianity, was the consequence of a depoliticisation of the *Bildungsschichten*.¹³⁸ These political developments must have made the idea of reincarnation particularly appealing. Reincarnation is expressed in the Gold Leaves in differing but hardly modest ways: the Leaf from Petelia that we have already discussed tells the deceased that he 'will reign with the other heroes', and two fourth-century Leaves from Thurii even assure the deceased that they have or will become 'a god instead of a mortal'.¹³⁹ The wandering initiators of the fourth century evidently sold their clients the best possible positions in the life hereafter, no doubt for a good sum of money in this one.

The world of early Orphism has been much elucidated in recent decades thanks to the new discoveries, yet the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries remain rather inscrutable. Not every ancient Mystery is wholly mysterious, but the light in their darkness remains a dim and flickering flame.¹⁴⁰

138 M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 1972⁵) 306–307, cf. H. Kippenberg, *Die vorderasiatischen Erlösungsreligionen in ihrem Zusammenhang mit der antiken Stadtherrschaft* (Stuttgart, 1991).

139 *OF* 487, 488 = Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 8–9, 12f.

140 For comments I am most grateful to Susanne Götde, Mirjam Engert Kotwick and Valeria Piano as well as to audiences in Munich, Würzburg (2012), Montréal, Columbus (Ohio) and New York (2013).

IV Greek Mysteries in Roman Times

Now that we have looked at the Mysteries in the Classical and Hellenistic period, we will turn to later times but will at first remain in the Greek world, albeit during the period of Roman rule. In the later second century AD the traveller Pausanias described a great number of cults which he called *teletai*. He never defined this properly,¹ but from his comments and reports it is clear that he was describing Mysteries and that there were many of them on the Greek mainland – he mentions eleven in Arcadia alone. Unfortunately, in most cases he makes only a few remarks and he consistently refuses to tell us anything about the content of these Mysteries.² His reticence means that on the basis of his reports alone we could do little more than list the various instances. As this would not be very helpful, in the first part of this chapter we will instead take a brief look at three of the Mysteries for which we have at least some additional information: those of Lycosura (§ 1.1), Andania (§ 1.2) and Aegina (§ 1.3). All these Mysteries originated before the Romans arrived, but they managed to maintain their existence well into Roman times and, in the case of Aegina, even until the end of antiquity. Inscriptions have given us some extra information about the rituals connected to these Mysteries, though they do not lift the veil on their revelations.

The second part of the chapter will look at the Dionysiac Mysteries (§ 2). These Mysteries pose many problems, but they were popular in Roman times, so we cannot pass over them. As with all things concerning Dionysos,³ we will see that it is hard to reach a consensus on the meaning of his Mysteries or how to interpret them. But first let us turn to Arcadian Lycosura.

¹ For his vocabulary regarding the Mysteries, see V. Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source. Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Liège, 2008) 292–298.

² Cf. F. Foccardi, ‘Silenzio religioso e reticenze in Pausania’, in M. Ciani (ed.), *Le regioni del silenzio* (Padua, 1983) 79–120.

³ For this much discussed god, see most recently R. Schlesier (ed.), *A Different God? Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism* (Berlin and New York, 2011); A. Bernabé *et al.* (eds), *Redefining Dionysos* (Berlin and Boston, 2013).

1 Local Greek Mysteries

1.1 Lycosura

In the course of his journey through Arcadia, Pausanias arrived in Lycosura, a city inside the territory of Megalopolis,⁴ where he visited the sanctuary of Despoina, ‘Mistress’.⁵ As he tells us:

... beside the temple of the Mistress on the right is what is called the Hall (*Megaron*), where the Arcadians celebrate Mysteries, and sacrifice to the Mistress many victims in generous fashion. Every man of them sacrifices what he possesses. But he does not cut the throats of the victims, as is done in other sacrifices; each man chops off a limb of the sacrifice, just that which happens to come to hand. This Mistress the Arcadians worship more than any other god, declaring that she is a daughter of Poseidon and Demeter. Mistress is her surname among the many, just as they surname Demeter’s daughter by Zeus the Maiden. But whereas the real name of the Maiden is Persephone, as Homer and Pamphos before him say in their poems, the real name of the Mistress I am afraid to write to the uninitiated (8.37.8–9, tr. Jones, Loeb).

Fortunately, inscriptions have brought to light two so-called sacred laws from Lycosura, dating from the third and second centuries BC. Although they do not explicitly state that they concern the Mysteries, a comparison with the sacred law of Andania (§ 1.2) makes this highly plausible. We thus have some information about these Mysteries across a timespan of more than 400 years.

In Arcadia Mysteries were usually celebrated once a year, and this will also have been the case in Lycosura. As regards the ‘clergy’ there, we know only that a priest and a priestess officiated, nothing else.⁶ We can be somewhat more specific about the clientele of these Mysteries. According to Pausanias, the Mysteries at Lycosura were a Panarcadian cult, which means that initiates will have come from the whole of Arcadia. They also had to pay an entry fee (*IG V 2.516, 18*), so prospective initiates will not have been members of the poorest layers of Arcadian society. As was the case in other Mysteries, both men and women were allowed to

⁴ M.H. Hansen and T. N. Nielsen (eds), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford, 2004) 517 no. 280.

⁵ M.P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig, 1906) 345–349; M. Jost, ‘La vie religieuse à Lykosoura’, *Ktema* 33 (2008) 93–110, updating her *Sanctuaires et cultes d’Arcadie* (Paris, 1985) 172–178, 326–337 and ‘Mystery Cults in Arcadia’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London and New York, 2003) 143–168. For my analysis of Lycosura I am indebted to Jost; see also A. Lo Monaco, *Il crepuscolo degli dei d’Achaia* (Rome, 2009) 45–55 (well illustrated).

⁶ Once a year: Jost, ‘Mystery Cults in Arcadia’, 146. Priest: *SEG* 36.376, 6 (see n. 7), cf. E. Durie, ‘Les fonctions sacerdotales au sanctuaire de Despoina à Lykosoura-Arcadie’, *Horos* 2 (1984) 137–147.

participate. We know this because our oldest sacred law forbids women who are pregnant or breast-feeding from entering the sanctuary,⁷ and the later one, which is only preserved in fragments, fixed the time that had to pass after childbirth before a woman could enter the sanctuary.⁸

Yet the goddess was not concerned only with gender: the older law also stipulates that women should display an extreme degree of modesty. Wearing gold, purple, flowery or black clothing was forbidden and even sandals or a ring were prohibited; moreover, no fashionable hairstyle was allowed. Although the law does not say so, wearing purple and flowery robes was typical of courtesans, whose presence would not be welcome;⁹ black clothing would introduce a note of sadness that was inappropriate for the joyful ritual of Despoina. It is typical of the male-dominated culture of ancient Greece that these regulations focus on women and not on men. Evidently the behaviour of the latter was of less concern to the males who issued these laws.¹⁰

Before the initiation there will have been preliminary sacrifices and the customary purifications, perhaps with water from the fountain at the south of the site.¹¹ After that the initiands and the priests entered the sanctuary or the area of the Hall, probably in procession. Madeleine Jost has attractively suggested that some 140 terracotta figurines of humans with heads of animals – rams or bulls – with baskets on their heads, which were found in the Hall, were votives from participants who had acted as *kanêphoroi*, ‘basket-bearers’, during this procession.¹² The procession must have ended at the large steps that led up to the Hall, where the initiation took place. Before entering the Hall, which was a unique construction from the early second century BC,¹³ the initiands came to a rectangular enclosure with an altar, the presence of which was demonstrated by the large quantities of ash and carbonised bones uncovered by the excavators.¹⁴ The older, larger law breaks off just when it starts to mention sacrifices for Despoina, but we can still see that it prescribed ‘female, white’ animals. This stipulation is

7 IG V 2.514, cf. E. Voutiras, ‘Opfer für Despoina: Zur Kultsatzung des Heiligtums von Lykosura IG V 2, 514’, *Chiron* 29 (1999) 233–249 (= *SEG* 49.446).

8 *SEG* 36.376, re-edited by E. Lupu, *Greek Sacred Law: a collection of new documents* (Leiden, 2009²) 215–218.

9 See the evidence in R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford 1983) 83 n. 36.

10 For an excellent collection of parallels for all these prohibitions from other sacred laws, see Jost, ‘La vie religieuse’, 94–99.

11 Jost, ‘La vie religieuse’, 103.

12 Jost, ‘Mystery Cults in Arcadia’, 157–163 and ‘La vie religieuse’, 105–07.

13 For a reconstruction of the appearance of the hall, see M.-C. Hellmann, ‘Le Mégaron de Lykosoura’, *Ktema* 33 (2008) 181–190.

14 K. Kourouniotes, ‘*To en Lukosoura Megaron tês Despoinês*’, *ArchEph* 1912, 142–161.

very interesting in the apparent absence of rams, which were the customary sacrificial victims in Mysteries (Ch. II.1 and 2). This detail is in conflict with Pausanias' report that everyone could sacrifice what they wanted and just chop off a limb, but suggests a holocaust of small animals, which were less costly and easier to carry in the procession.¹⁵ Pausanias (8.38.12) noted that there were only a few inhabitants in Lycosura, so the ritual had probably changed in the centuries since the 'publication' of the sacred laws, adapting into a less grandiose celebration in Roman times.¹⁶

We can reconstruct a few more details about what happened during the actual initiation thanks to Pausanias' description of a statue of Despoina by Damophon, the most famous sculptor of the southern Peloponnese around 200 BC:¹⁷

Demeter carries a torch in her right hand; her other hand she has laid upon the Mistress. The Mistress has on her knees a staff and the so-called *kisté*, 'box', which she holds in her right hand. On both sides of the throne are images. By the side of Demeter stands Artemis wrapped in the skin of a deer, and carrying a quiver on her shoulders, while in one hand she holds a torch, in the other two serpents; by her side a bitch, of a breed suitable for hunting, is lying down. By the image of the Mistress stands Anytus, represented as a man in armour. Those about the sanctuary say that the Mistress was brought up by Anytus, who was one of the Titans, as they are called (8.37.4–5, tr. Jones, Loeb).

The statue, which seems to have filled the whole of the *cella*, must have been imposing, given its height of about 4 metres. It represented Despoina and Demeter sitting in the middle on thrones, flanked by the standing Anytus and Artemis.¹⁸ The presence of Anytus would be explained by his fostering of Despoina, but we may also recall the presence of Titans in the Mysteries of Imbros and Lemnos (Ch. II.2). Was the presence of Titans needed to guarantee the antiquity of

15 Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source*, 222.

16 For the sacrifices, see Jost, 'La vie religieuse', 100–101; I. Patera, *Offrir en Grèce ancienne* (Stuttgart, 2012) 156–162.

17 For the date of Damophon, see most recently C. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1998²) 38–57; 8; C. Grandjean and H. Nicolet-Pierre, 'Le décret de Lykosoura en l'honneur de Damophon et la circulation monétaire dans le Péloponnèse aux III^e–II^e siècles avant notre ère', *Ktema* 33 (2008) 129–134; P. Schultz, 'Damophon', in R. Bagnall *et al.* (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, 13 vols (Oxford, 2013) 4.1922–1924, with also a representation of what the statue might have looked like.

18 For the impact of the statue, see S. Montel, 'Scénographies sculptées et présence divine', in P. Borgeaud and D. Fabiano (eds), *Perception et construction du divin dans l'Antiquité* (Geneva, 2013) 121–145 at 130–33. For its surviving fragments, see E. Lévy and J. Marcadé, 'Au musée de Lycosoura', *BCH* 96 (1972) 967–1004; J. Marcadé, 'À propos du groupe culturel de Lykosoura', *Ktema* 33 (2008) 111–116 (well illustrated).

the Mysteries? However this may be, it seems important that both Demeter and Artemis carry a torch. Torches belong to their traditional iconographical repertoire, but their presence here probably also suggests the nocturnal setting of the initiation.

Despoina's box held objects that were shown during the initiation, perhaps a snake or a phallus. There was probably also a sacred tale, for Pausanias reports: 'The story of the Kouretes, who are represented under the images, and that of the Korybantes (a different race from the Kouretes), carved in relief upon the base, I know, but pass them by' (8.37.6, tr. Jones, Loeb). These words suggest that the Korybantes and Kouretes were part of the sacred tale that Pausanias refuses to tell, just as he was not willing to tell the real name of Despoina, also probably part of the sacred tale. The presence of both Kouretes and Korybantes cannot be earlier than the fifth century BC, when these two groups came to be increasingly associated in literature (Ch. II.3); their differentiation, after centuries of amalgamation, looks very like someone's pedantic innovation. Even age-old Mysteries in conservative Arcadia did not stand outside the flow of history.

The most fascinating part of the ritual must have been a performance by masked priests. Its occurrence seems a reasonable inference from the figurines mentioned above and the depiction of humans disguised as animals on the lower, decorative parts of the sculpted garment of Despoina.¹⁹ The latter figures are represented as moving in dance and we can also identify some musicians playing instruments. The dancing figures, some of whom carry torches, exhibit a whirling movement with the head tossed back, which was the traditional sign of ecstasy in ancient Greece and Rome.²⁰ Ecstatic dancing thus seems to have been an important part of these Mysteries, an inference also supported by the depiction of the Korybantes (Ch. II.3) and Kouretes on the statue and the presence of an altar of the Great Mother in front of the temple of Despoina.

We are not well informed about the Mysteries of Lycosura, but we can still see that they were rather different from those of Eleusis. Demeter may have been closely connected to Despoina, but nothing suggests that the Arcadians copied the Eleusinian model in any detail and nowhere do we hear of two degrees of initiation. The Mysteries may have adapted to the spirit of the times by their stress on ecstatic dances, but the presence of animal masks also suggests the survival of an older layer in the Mysteries. In the end, we can see these Mysteries only through a glass darkly.

¹⁹ See now Y. Morizot, 'La draperie de Despoina', *Ktema* 33 (2008) 201–209, who persuasively argues against earlier interpretations of the garment as a veil.

²⁰ Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 296.

1.2 Andania

Before Pausanias reached Lycosura, he had already visited another sanctuary with Mysteries, those of Andania,²¹ a town in Messenia in the southwest Peloponnese, the exact site of which has not yet been identified with certainty.²² Once again Pausanias is our only literary source, but here we have a much more detailed inscription about the Mysteries than was the case at Lycosura, which allows us to reconstruct at least some parts of the ritual. This inscription of 194 lines, the so-called Sacred Law of Andania, has been frequently discussed, recently down-dated to AD 24 and even re-edited twice.²³ We also have a first-century BC oracle about the Mysteries, issued by the regional Apollo Pythaios.²⁴ Already in 1932 Wilamowitz wrote that, ‘Über Andania und seine Mysterien ist sehr viel geschrieben’,²⁵ but modern studies have not attempted a linear description of the Mysteries. The last scholar to do so, at least to some extent, was the great Martin P. Nilsson (1874–1969) in a now neglected discussion of 1906.²⁶

Pausanias’ account is not very promising (4.33.4–5). On arrival at the site, he notes that the extra-mural sanctuary lies at the edge of a plain in a grove full of

21 For the Mysteries, see especially M. Guarducci, ‘I culti di Andania’, *SMRS* 10 (1934) 174–204; M.L. Zunino, *Hiera Messeniaka: la storia religiosa della Messenia dall’età micenea all’età ellenistica* (Udine, 1997) 301–334; L. Piolot, ‘Pausanias et les Mystères d’Andanie. Histoire d’une aporie’, in J. Renard (ed.), *Le Péloponnèse. Archéologie et Histoire* (Rennes, 1999) 195–228; F. Graf, ‘Lesser Mysteries – not less Mysterious’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London and New York, 2003) 241–262 at 242–245; P. Themelis, ‘*Ta Karneia kai hê Andania*’, in E. Semantone-Bournia et al. (eds), *Amymona Erga* (Athens, 2007) 509–528; Pirenne-Delforge, *Retour à la source*, 304–12; Lo Monaco, *Il crepuscolo degli dei d’Achaia*, 55–62; H.-U. Wiemer, ‘Neue Feste – neue Geschichtsbilder? Zur Erinnerungsfunktion städtischer Feste im Hellenismus’, in H. Beck and H.-U. Wiemer (eds), *Feiern und Erinnern* (Berlin, 2009) 83–108 at 97–100; L. Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law of Andania: a new text with commentary* (Berlin and New York, 2011), whose detailed commentary is the basis of my discussion. I refer to her edition when quoting the line numbers in the main text. For the sources, see also P. Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 2 vols (Milan, 2002) 2.103–153.

22 See the discussion by Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 33–39.

23 Date: see now, after P. Themelis, N. Luraghi, *The Ancient Messenians* (Cambridge, 2008) 298–300; V. Pirenne-Delforge, ‘Mnasistratos, the “Hierophant” at Andania (*IG* 5.1.1390 and *Syll.*³ 735)’, in J. Dijkstra et al. (eds), *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity. Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer* (Leiden, 2010) 219–235 at 224–225, not refuted by Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 3–11. Editions: N. Deshours, *Les mystères d’Andania: Étude d’épigraphie et d’histoire religieuse* (Paris, 2006); Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*.

24 M. Piérart, ‘L’oracle d’Apollo à Argos’, *Kernos* 3 (1990) 319–333; Pirenne-Delforge, ‘Mnasistratos, the “Hierophant” at Andania’.

25 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendoff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1931–1932) 2.536.

26 Nilsson, *Griechische Feste*, 337–342.

cypresses. In inscriptions this is called the Karneiasion,²⁷ but Pausanias calls it the Karnasion. He notes that these Mysteries are second only to the Eleusinian ones in awesomeness, and he had even dreamt about them: he relates that a dream allowed him to mention the story of ‘the bronze urn, the discovery of the Argive general’ (see below). At the beginning of his book about Messene he also tells us something of the *Urgeschichte* of the Mysteries (4.1.5–9). At the dawn of humanity, they had been given to Messene, the eponymous queen of Messenia, by a certain Kaukon, who had brought them from Eleusis.²⁸ Subsequently they were ‘brought to greater honour’ by Lykos, an Athenian exile and ancestor of the Lykomids; he is also said to have brought the rites of the Great Goddesses from Athens to Andania (4.2.6). Finally, improvements were made by Methapos, who had established the rites of the Theban Kabeiros (Ch. II.2) and was also associated with the Mysteries of the Athenian Lykomids (Ch. III.3), Mysteries that were claimed to be older even than those of Eleusis. The association, through Methapos, with the Theban rites should almost certainly be linked to the Theban re-establishment of the Messenian state;²⁹ Methapos is portrayed as a travelling initiator, the type of man one could imagine as an Orpheotelest (Ch. III.2). This rather confusing history seems to combine various traditions and, perhaps, adaptations of the Mysteries, but it was certainly intended to establish a link with other prominent Mysteries.³⁰

In the somewhat imaginary history of the Andanian Mysteries a new chapter was written after the Theban defeat of the Spartans. When Epaminondas was wondering where to found the new capital of Messene, an old man appeared to him in a dream, closely resembling a hierophant of Demeter, another indication of the links constructed with Eleusis; the old man was later said to be the Kaukon mentioned above in relation to Queen Messene. Kaukon promised Epaminondas eternal fame but told Epiteles, the Argive general of the Messenians, also in a dream, that he should dig on Mount Ithome, the sacred mountain of the Messenians, at a place ‘wherever he found yew and myrtle growing’. Epiteles did as he was told and found a bronze urn (*hydria*), which he brought to Epaminondas. The latter opened the urn and – lo and behold! – it contained a very thin tin foil, rolled like a scroll, with the rites of the Andanian Mysteries as deposited by Aristo-

²⁷ Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, lines 54–55, 56, 60, 63; *SEG* 58.370, 40.

²⁸ N. Deshours, ‘La légende et le culte de Messénie ou comment forger l’identité d’une cité’, *REG* 106 (1993) 39–60.

²⁹ Graf, ‘Lesser Mysteries’, 245.

³⁰ For Eleusinian influence on Mysteries elsewhere, see H. Bowden, ‘Cults of Demeter Eleusinia and the Transmission of Religious Ideas’, *Mediterranean Hist. Rev.* 22 (2007) 71–83.

menes, the great hero of the Messenian resistance against Sparta in archaic times (Paus. 4.26.6–8).³¹

Evidently, with the new foundation of Messene the Messenians also invented age-old traditions to legitimate their new Mysteries, for the main protagonists of these tales and dreams all appear in Pausanias' account of the sacrifices for the inauguration of the new city (4.27.6).³² It is plausible that the sacred law is a yet further reconstruction of the Mysteries by Mnasistratos, a member of a wealthy and influential Messenian family who is mentioned prominently in the Sacred Law. It is clear that he had an interest in the Mysteries, of which he was the hierophant and, perhaps, he wanted to safeguard the priestly position for his family.³³ Whatever the case, his wealth allowed him to specify new rules for the Mysteries, although these were closely associated with the *synhedrion*, the 'council' of Messene (1, 49, 57, 89, etc.). What did they look like?

The Mysteries took place once a year during a festival. The annual character was to be expected but is confirmed by the law, which stipulates hiring musicians every year (73–74) and mentions instructions to open the treasuries annually at the Mysteries (93). The exact date is not known, but the celebration took place in the Eleventh Month (10), which in Andania was late August/September.³⁴ Although we will not discuss the officials and their duties in detail but note them only when they have a role in the actual initiation, we should observe that there was clearly quite a large personnel concerned with these Mysteries. Elsewhere, as in Eleusis, we hear only occasionally of the officials who worked behind the scenes, but this sacred law describes in detail the elections and appointments of numerous officials, in itself an indication of a later date. The celebration of the Mysteries clearly required a considerable investment of time and money by Messenian notables.

Like other Mysteries, those of Andania allowed participation by men and women, slaves (18, 28) and free. Yet the Mysteries were clearly not meant for the

31 Cf. A. Busine, 'The Discovery of Inscriptions and the Legitimation of New Cults', in B. Dignas and R. Smith (eds), *Historical and Religious Memory in the Ancient World* (Oxford, 2012) 241–256; D. Bonanno, 'Memory Lost, Memory Regained. Considerations on the Recovery of Sacred Texts in Messenia and in Biblical Israel: A Comparison', in N. Cusumano *et al.* (eds), *Memory and Religious Experience in the Greco-Roman World* (Stuttgart, 2013) 63–80. For such legitimating and authenticating strategies, see also this volume, Ch. V n. 11.

32 For possible sources of these traditions, see Luraghi, *The Ancient Messenians*, 94.

33 The fact that the sacred law does not give him the title of hierophant is not a decisive argument against his being so, as the law did not have to mention facts known to everybody, *contra* Pirenne-Delforge, 'Mnasistratos, the "Hierophant" at Andania', 233; see also Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 15.

34 Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 4.

poorest of the poor, as the initiands had to pay an entrance fee, though the law does not stipulate the amount (50). Regarding appearance, everyone was to be barefoot and in white clothes (15–16). Rules like this can be found elsewhere, but they do not seem to have been universal. White clothes fitted the joyful atmosphere of the festival and were a sign of purity,³⁵ but shoes rarely seem to have been prohibited, except by the Pythagoreans, who also favoured white clothes.³⁶ In addition to these general rules, there were more specific ones, as not all groups of participants were treated in the same way.

The laws prescribing clothing for women are strikingly detailed, whereas for men they are completely silent. For a start, women were not allowed to wear transparent clothes or stripes on their garments (16), both being suggestive of courtesans – we noted the same concern in Lycosura (above, § 1.1). Instead, women had to wear a simple chiton and himation of linen, which was considered to be more pure than wool by the Pythagoreans.³⁷ The whole outfit was not to be worth more than 100 drachmas (17) and, as if this were not enough, women were also forbidden to wear gold, make-up, a hairband or a fashionable hairstyle (22–23). Girls, whose presence is striking here, albeit not unparalleled,³⁸ had to wear fairly simple clothes with Eastern connotations (17–18) for reasons that are obscure, and female slaves could not wear clothes more expensive than 50 drachmas (18–19): all participants were equal but some were clearly more equal than others. The overall effect must have been of women looking fairly plain and in no way sexual objects that would disturb the pure atmosphere of the Mysteries.³⁹

After these general rules for the participants, let us turn to the actual Mysteries. The initiation took place during a festival that started with a procession (20–22, 28–34), as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. I.2). As in Eleusis (Ch. I.1), the procession was preceded by a purificatory ritual, which took place in the theatre (65–68), presumably that of Messene.⁴⁰ The law stipulates buying two lambs, a

35 Joyful: C.P. Jones, 'Processional Colors', in B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon (eds), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Washington, D.C., 1999) 247–257. Purity: Eur. fr. 248.

36 Shoes: Ov. *F.* 1.629, with Frazer *ad loc.*; F. Boehm, *De symbolis Pythagoreis* (Diss. Berlin, 1905) 9 no. 3. White clothes: Alex. Polyhist. *FGrH* 273 F 93; Diod. Sic. 10.9.6; Ael. *VH* 12.32; Iambl. *VP* 153; Boehm, *De symbolis Pythagoreis*, 9 no. 2; this volume, Ch. III.2.

37 Hdt. 2.81.2; Philostr. *VA* 8.7.6 (probably).

38 Note the 'sacred girls' in a contemporary procession in Gytheon (*SEG* 11.923), cf. Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 123f.

39 For the passage regarding the clothes in the sacred law, see also L. Piolot, 'À l'ombre des maris', in L. Bodiou *et al.* (eds), *Chemin faisant. Mythes, cultes et société en Grèce ancienne* (Rennes, 2009) 87–113 at 92–99.

40 For the theatre in Messene, see Paus. 4.32.6; S. Müth, *Eigene Wege: Topographie und Stadtplan von Messene in spätklassisch-hellenistischer Zeit* (Rahden, 2007) 79–89.

ram and three piglets as well as 100 lambs for the initiands (67–68). It was normal to use the cheapest of offerings for these sacrifices, so in this respect lambs and piglets are not surprising.⁴¹ On the other hand, the use of a ram as a purificatory victim is very unusual and one wonders if this is not a further development of the sacrifice of a ram during Mysteries (Ch. II.1 and 2). The number of lambs presupposes a modest number of initiands, as could indeed have been expected from the relatively small size of Messene.

Although the sacred law does not tell us where the procession began, purification in the theatre of Messene would suggest that the initiatory procession, too, began in Messene. This is the more likely as Andania itself was only about a kilometre and a half from the sanctuary, which would have meant a very short route for the procession, while Messene was about 16 kilometres away, which made for a decent distance.⁴² The procession will thus have taken at least five to six hours, as we may assume that, as in Eleusis (Ch. I.2), the participants stopped for dances, singing, libations and sacrifices. The procession will have started at the Messenian sanctuary of Apollo Karneios and ended in the Andanian one. This is supported by the law's stipulation that 'sacred women' should take the same oath as the men, to uphold the Mysteries properly, on the day before the Mysteries in the sanctuary of Apollo Karneios (7–8), presumably just before the start of the procession. The law is very specific about the order of the procession, which was thus probably one of the new aspects of the Mysteries, as there would have been no need to list all the details if the order had been traditional.

At the head of the procession went Mnasistratos himself (28), the hierophant,⁴³ just as in Eleusis the highest priests led the procession (Ch. I.2), and after him came the priest 'of the gods for whom the Mysteries are celebrated' (28–29, cf. 2–3). But who were those gods?⁴⁴ The grammatical gender of these gods is masculine, which suggests that they may have been masculine too; this is supported by the information in the law that it was the 'Great Gods' who had a temple in the sanctuary (91). However, Pausanias (4.33.5) differs: he states that he was not allowed to reveal the rites of the 'Great Goddesses', 'for it is their Mysteries which they perform in the Karnasion'. The apologetic tone of his words suggests that there was some debate over the identity of the Great Gods, as does Pausanias' earlier report that Methapos dedicated a statue (of himself?) in the

⁴¹ Parker, *Miasma*, 372.

⁴² Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 49f.

⁴³ Note the mention of 'hierophants of the Great Gods' in Paus. 4.16.2; the story told by Pausanias is certainly legendary, but it proves the existence of this priestly office and of an influence from Eleusis.

⁴⁴ For the history of this long debate, see Piolot, 'Pausanias et les Mystères d'Andanie', 202–205.

clubhouse of the Lykomids with an inscription claiming that he had purified the roads of Demeter and Kore ‘where they say that (Queen) Messene established the games for the Great Goddesses’. It seems that Pausanias had put his own interpretation on the local tradition, as he was sometimes wont to do.⁴⁵ In itself, debate over the identity of the local divinities would not be wholly surprising. As we saw in Samothrace (Ch. II.1), the names of the Megaloi Theoi were secret, if not simply unknown. We should therefore not identify them with the Dioskouroi, as Burkert and Gawlinski do,⁴⁶ but acknowledge the open nature of these gods.⁴⁷ Evidently here, as in Samothrace (Ch. II.1), there were no iconographical representations of these deities to preclude Pausanias’ interpretation.⁴⁸

The priest of the Great Gods was accompanied by a priestess, presumably also of the Great Gods, although such a pairing is extremely rare.⁴⁹ Next in line came the *agônothetês*, the *hierothytai* and the pipers. Gawlinski argues that the games presided over by the *agônothetês* were not part of the festival, but she overlooks the fact that the inscription, just cited, that Methapos set up in the clubhouse of the Lykomids claimed that, ‘Messene instituted games for the Great Goddesses’.⁵⁰ Games went together with sacrifices, which makes it understandable that the *hierothytai*, ‘sacrificers’, the men who presided over the sacrifices,⁵¹ also occupied an important place in the procession; in fact, in Messenian inscriptions they often appear, in various numbers, together with the *agônothetês*.⁵² The pipers, finally, indicated the walking rhythm of the procession, as can be seen on many Greek vases, but they would also be present at the sacrifices.⁵³

After these dignitaries came several vehicles, probably ox-wagons, each with a *cista mystica* and led by ‘sacred maidens’ (29–30). The *cista*, a kind of wooden basket closed with a lid, became a standard item of initiations in the late Hellenistic period, with the exception of the Mithraic Mysteries. Although, origin-

45 This is well noted by Piolot, *ibid.*, 211f.

46 Contra W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985) 279; Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 21.

47 Thus, rightly, Piolot, ‘Pausanias et les Mystères d’Andanie’, 220f.

48 D. Vollkommer-Glöker, ‘Megaloi Theoi’, in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 820–828.

49 R. Parker, ‘New Problems in Athenian Religion: The ‘Sacred Law’ of Aixone’, in Dijkstra, *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity*, 193–208 at 203.

50 Paus. 4.1.6, contra Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 138f.

51 J. Winand, *Les Hiérothytes: recherche institutionnelle* (Brussels, 1990).

52 *IG* V 1, 1467–1469, cf. P. Themelis, *Ancient Messene* (Athens, 2003) 100.

53 For pipers, see P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer* (Munich, 1920³) 100 n. 6; add Diog. Laert. 2.130; G.C. Nordquist, ‘Instrumental Music in Representations of Greek Cult’, in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Iconography of Greek Cult in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (Athens and Leuven, 1992) 143–168; F.T. van Straten, *Hierà kalá* (Leiden, 1995) *passim*; J. Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia* (Münster, 2002) 481f.

ally, Eleusis had only one basket, in later times Mysteries could have several baskets, and the inscriptions of the Dionysiac Mysteries show us several *kistophoroi* or *cistiferi* (below: § 2). Our inscription of course does not tell us their contents, which were revealed during the Mysteries, but states only that they contained the *hiera mystika* (30). The ‘sacred maidens’ who accompanied the wagons undoubtedly came from the highest Messenian circles, and the fact that they were chosen by lot (29–30) indicates that their number was limited. The qualification ‘sacred’ almost certainly derives from Spartan usage, where sacred girls and women also officiated in cults.⁵⁴ However, in the great Dionysiac inscription of Torre Nova of about AD 160–165 we also find ‘sacred *boukoloi*’ and ‘sacred *bakchoi*’ in different positions in the association’s hierarchy.⁵⁵ The qualification ‘sacred’ need not mean more than a close association with the Mysteries,⁵⁶ but in Andania it clearly denoted participants in the Mysteries of a higher status than the initiands and normal initiates.

The wagons were followed by a group of officials closely connected to Demeter. The first mentioned is the *thoinarmostria*, ‘banquet-organiser’, and her assistants: like the sacred maidens, an indigenous position that we find only in Sparta and Messene. It was a highly prestigious office, and she may well have presided over the Spartan equivalent of women’s rites like the Thesmophoria.⁵⁷ With them were the priestesses of Demeter at the Hippodrome and in Aegila; neither of these places has been localised yet. The position of the officials and priestesses of Demeter in the procession is striking, and it seems plausible that we have here a variant of the close proximity of a goddess with the Great Gods, as we also noted in the cases of Samothrace and the Kabeiroi (Ch. II.1 and 2).⁵⁸

Next came the officials who had to supervise the whole event, followed by the sacred women, one by one (31), and the sacred men. The order of the latter was arranged by the Ten Men (32), a higher supervisory board elected in the spring, well before the celebration of the Mysteries (116–20), whose members had to be older than forty (122–24) and were recognisable by a purple cord (179). Both sacred men and women were noticeable by their white felt caps, *piloi* (13), a type

54 P. Brulé and L. Piolot, ‘Women’s Way of Death: fatal childbirth or *hierai*? Commemorative Stones at Sparta and Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 27.3’, in T.J. Figueira (ed.), *Spartan Society* (Swansea, 2004) 151–178.

55 IGUR 160.IA.32 (*boukoloi*), IIA.23 (*bakchoi*) = A.-F. Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 2 vols (Zurich, 2003) no. 188.

56 Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 269.

57 R. Parker, ‘Demeter, Dionysus and the Spartan Pantheon’, in R. Hägg *et al.* (eds), *Early Greek Cult Practice* (Stockholm, 1988) 99–103.

58 B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (Uppsala, 1950) 288.

of headgear well attested for the Dioskouroi and Hephaestus as well as for the boys in the Theban sanctuary of the Kabeiroi (Ch. II.2). Its exact significance is uncertain, but the cap may have suggested that the wearer belonged to the sphere of these gods or of initiation.⁵⁹ The sacred men seem to have preceded the sacrificial victims, which are mentioned next and which they had selected and approved as fit for the sacrifice (64–72). The victims, which were mostly meant for the sacred meal (95; see below), are also listed in a specific order, with a pregnant sow to Demeter mentioned first (33). We may compare the cult of Pelarge who, according to myth, had re-established the Theban Kabiric Mysteries after their removal by the Seven against Thebes and who also was entitled to a ‘pregnant victim’ (Paus. 9.25.8). Sacrifices of pregnant victims were not uncommon in ancient Greece and usually indicated an ‘abnormal’ ritual, such as was the case with the Mysteries.⁶⁰

After Demeter, rather surprisingly, came Hermes with a ram (33–34). Pausanias (4.33.4) mentions a statue of him in the Karnasian grove and the purification of the ‘houses of Hermes’ by Methapos (4.1.8). The combination of statue and chapel (?) suggests he may have had a position in the local cult similar to the close association of Hermes (a.k.a. Kasmilos) with the Great Gods and Kabeiroi (Ch. II.2). Madeleine Jost has also pointed to the discovery of several terracotta votives with the staff of Hermes in the Megaron of Lycosura and noted the wooden statue of Hermes in the temple of the Great Goddesses at Megalopolis (Paus. 8.31.6).⁶¹ In Pausanias’ description of Corinth he sees a bronze statue of Hermes with a ram next to him and says: ‘the tale told at the Mysteries of the Mother about Hermes I know but do not tell’ (2.3.4). Evidently Hermes had some position in Mysteries, though it is not clear what this actually implied. The ram was an animal well connected with Hermes,⁶² but here its sacrifice also fits the Mysteries, where rams were customary victims (Ch. II.1 and 2). The Great Gods received only a young pig (34), later specified as a two-year-old pig (69), which shows their low status in the divine pecking order.⁶³ Apollo, the main god of the sanctuary, received a boar, and Hagna, a fountain goddess identified with Persephone by Pausanias (4.33.4), received a sheep, a normal sacrificial victim.

⁵⁹ Graf, ‘Lesser Mysteries’, 245.

⁶⁰ Bremmer, ‘The Sacrifice of Pregnant Animals’, in R. Hägg and B. Alroth (eds), *Greek Sacrificial Ritual: Olympian and Chthonian* (Stockholm, 2005) 155–165.

⁶¹ Jost, *Sanctuaires et cultes d’Arcadie*, 451.

⁶² G. Siebert, ‘Hermes’, in *LIMC* V.1 (1990) 285–378 at 311–314.

⁶³ Cf. K. Clinton, ‘Pigs in Greek Rituals’, in Hägg and Alroth, *Greek Sacrificial Ritual*, 167–179; this volume, Ch. I n. 28.

Finally, it is interesting to observe that the list of the participants ends with the animals. There is no mention at all of the initiands. Evidently, their place at the tail of the procession was so obvious that it did not need to be mentioned. Yet we know that they were present too, as the inscription distinguishes the *prôtomystai*, ‘those who were going to be initiated for the first time’ (14, 50, 68), from *hoi teloumenoi*, ‘those to be initiated’ (14). The prospective initiates were also recognisable by their headgear as they had to wear a *stlengis*, a kind of tiara, which seems to have been typical of the area, as it is mentioned by the Spartan historian Sosibius (*FGrH* 595 F 4, with Jacoby *ad loc.*) in his book *On the sacrifices in Laconia*. The law also mentions mystagogues (Ch. I.1), which implies that the initiands were accompanied by experienced initiates who would inform them about the do’s and don’ts of the ritual (149–50).

After the composition of the procession, the inscription continues with other rules, but we are left in the dark about the route of the procession and the procedure upon arrival. We can reconstruct at least a part of the subsequent events from indications in the text. The law stipulates that the sacred men should place lustral basins in the sanctuary, presumably at the entrance to the sanctuary, as was usual (37).⁶⁴ To ensure total purity, the sacred men even had to write down what the participants of the procession were to avoid and which areas they were allowed to enter (37). The presence of the basins means that after arrival the participants must have had to purify themselves, the water probably coming from the sacred spring near the statue of Hagna in the sanctuary (Paus. 4.33.4); the water seems to have been channelled into various ditches (84, 104). Supervision of the proper use of this precious resource was especially necessary during a festival, and various sacred laws from elsewhere refer to fountains in sanctuaries.⁶⁵ The sacred men, who had a separate area that the uninitiated were not allowed to enter (36), had to see to it that people did not erect excessively large tents (*skênai*) with excessively luxurious silverware in them (34–37). The modesty demanded of the women was thus also required of the men, albeit to a much lesser extent. These tents will have been for dining and sleeping, which suggests that the celebration of the Mysteries lasted some days.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Parker, *Miasma*, 19.

⁶⁵ S.G. Cole, ‘The Use of Water in Greek Sanctuaries’, in R. Hägg *et al.* (eds), *Early Greek Cult Practice* (Stockholm, 1988) 161–165.

⁶⁶ For such tents, see U. Kron, ‘Kultmahle im Heraion von Samos archaischer Zeit’, in Hägg, *Early Greek Cult Practice*, 135–148 at 142–144; note also W. Burkert, ‘Ancient Views on Festivals. A Case of Near Eastern Mediterranean Koine’, in J.R. Brandt and J.W. Iddeng (eds), *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice* (Oxford, 2012) 39–51 at 43.

After purification, the participants will have performed a number of sacrifices. Pausanias (4.3.10) mentions a preliminary sacrifice to the obscure hero Eurytos, who was buried in the sanctuary (4.33.5), before the Mysteries of the Great Goddesses. Its preliminary character suggests that it took place before the sacrifice of the animals from the procession. This latter sacrifice was a solemn occasion, as both pipers and lyre-players were present at it (74). They accompanied the choral dances that were part of the sacrifices and the Mysteries (73). The law does not tell us who performed the dances, but it was perhaps the sacred maidens, as these were especially popular in choral dances.⁶⁷ The law stipulates that the gods had to receive their customary part of the sacrifices and the rest was to form a sacred meal for the sacred men, women and maidens as well as the priest and priestess of Apollo Karneios, all in the company of Mnasistratos with his wife and children and those serving as artistes and their assistants (96–98).

This meal may well have been the last official part of the first day. The other participants in the procession will have had their meals too, but the law is not interested in them at this point. The next day there will, perhaps, have been more sacrifices and towards the end of the day the actual Mysteries will have started. We might suppose that they would have been a solemn affair, but that was not Mnasistratos' idea. In a revealing section of the law it is stipulated that a special group of 20 sacred men, the *rhabdophoroi*, 'stick bearers', had to flog anyone who disturbed the religious silence or displayed any other disorderly conduct (39–43, 165–67).⁶⁸ Perhaps those who had already been initiated before were later less impressed and chatted to their neighbours or made funny faces at inappropriate moments. This rule shows that we should not overestimate the piety of the participants or the solemn character of these Mysteries.

We cannot be very precise about the rest of the programme. The presence of the already mentioned *prôtomystai* among the *teloumenoi*, 'those to be initiated', suggests that there was a second group among the initiands who had already been initiated before. Andania thus seems to have followed Eleusis in having two degrees of initiation. Such a programme would suit the Eleusinian influence that is so visible in Pausanias' text, but also the fact that Mnasistratos bore the Eleusinian title hierophant (*Syll.*³ 735.21–22). Our scarce information about the programme does not allow us to divide it over two days with any certainty, but somewhat speculatively we could imagine the following scenario, based on the Eleusinian programme.

⁶⁷ See the authoritative study of C. Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece* (Lanham, 2001²).

⁶⁸ K. Harter-Uibopuu, 'Strafklauseln und gerichtliche Kontrolle in der Mysterieninschrift von Andania (IG V 1,1390)', *Dike* 5(2002) 135–159.

The law tells us that the artistes – pipers and lyre players – were hired for dances during the Mysteries. We have met dances already in other Mysteries and some of them will have been fairly ecstatic, but the lyre also suggests some of a quieter tone. Such dances may have been part of both degrees. If Andania modelled itself on Eleusis, as seems probable, the first degree will have included a kind of ‘mystic drama’, similar to that in Eleusis in which Demeter and Persephone played a role (Ch. I.2). This is made almost certain by the stipulation in the law that ‘whichever women are to dress themselves in representation of the goddesses must wear the clothes which the sacred men order’ (24–25). It is neither impossible nor improbable that over time the Andanian Mysteries underwent an increasing ‘Eleusinisation’ of their ritual programme.⁶⁹ However this may be, at the conclusion of the Mysteries the initiates were able to take off their ‘tiara’ and, at a signal from the sacred men, replace it with a crown of laurels. The latter was especially sacred to Apollo,⁷⁰ so it seems that the site of the celebration of the Mysteries, viz. the sanctuary of Apollo Karneios, was decisive in the choice of plant for the initiatory wreath. That is all we can say about the programme. Those who had been initiated for the first time will have lingered on and visited the fair that was part of the celebration (103), as we have already seen more than once (Ch. I.4, II.1).

Those who had been initiated before and went up for the highest grade may also have had a programme comparable to that of Eleusis, but we know nothing about it. The only detail about which we can speculate is the presence of books, a mark of the later date of these Mysteries. The law stipulates that ‘the sacred men must hand over to those appointed as successors the container and books which Mnasistratos gave and also the rest of whatever has been furnished for the sake of the Mysteries’ (11–13). Given that Pausanias tells us that the books were copied by the priestly family from the inscribed sheets of tin discovered by Epiteles (above), which had been presented to the sacred men by Mnasistratos, one may wonder if the latter had not himself fabricated these books. The mention of these books in connection with ‘the rest’ of the items furnished suggests that something was read from them during the performance of the Mysteries.⁷¹ That is all we can say.

With this somewhat abrupt end we conclude our look at Peloponnesian Mysteries, but we will continue with an example of local Mysteries that functioned until the end of antiquity, just like Eleusis: the Mysteries of Hecate on Aegina.

⁶⁹ See also L. Gawlinski, ‘Andania: The Messenian Eleusis’, in I. Leventi and C. Mistopoulou (eds), *Sanctuaries and Cults of Demeter in the Ancient Greek World* (Volos, 2010) 91–109.

⁷⁰ M. Blech, *Studien zum Kranz bei den Griechen* (Berlin, 1982) 216–246.

⁷¹ Thus, persuasively, Gawlinski, *The Sacred Law*, 105.

1.3 Hecate on Aegina

In contrast to the Peloponnesian Mysteries discussed above, we can be sure that the Mysteries of Hecate at Aegina were already known in fifth-century Athens.⁷² There is an allusion to them in Aristophanes' *Wasps* of 420 BC (see below), which fits well with Pausanias' report (2.30.2) that Hecate's sanctuary on Aegina had a temple that housed a wooden statue of her made by the mid fifth-century BC sculptor Myron. This gives us a *terminus ante quem* for her Mysteries, although her sanctuary, which was situated somewhere outside Aegina town, has not yet been identified.⁷³ The cult's focus becomes clear from two fifth-century passages that we have already encountered in our discussion of the Korybantes (Ch. II.3). The chorus in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (428 BC) speculates about Phaedra's wasting away by asking: 'Are you wandering seized, princess, by Pan or Hecate or the holy Korybantes or the Mountain Mother?' (141–44). In other words, Hecate was associated with possession, and this is confirmed by a brief allusion in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (422 BC), where Bdelycleon says that he first tried to purge his father of madness by performing the Korybantic rites (119–20), but when that failed he crossed the sea to Aegina, presumably to heal him through Hecate's Mysteries.⁷⁴ From these brief passages it seems clear that these Mysteries had a certain family relationship with the Korybantic Mysteries but, whereas the latter are no longer attested epigraphically by the Roman period, the Mysteries of Hecate continued to flourish and perhaps even increased in importance. Pausanias says that she was the most important divinity of the island, but this can hardly have been the case in the fifth century BC, a time when Hecate was a divinity at the fringe of the Olympic pantheon. Her marginal position will also explain why the Athenian dithyrambic poet Cinesias (ca. 400 BC) was said to have mocked her Mysteries, presumably those on Aegina.⁷⁵ The Aeginetans may have taken offence at this slight, as they later maintained that Orpheus had established Hecate's Mysteries – surely an assertion designed to compete with the late fifth-century Athenian claim that Orpheus was the founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries.⁷⁶

⁷² Hecate is overlooked in the list of Aeginetan cults in Hansen and Nielsen, *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, 621.

⁷³ For her cult and sanctuary, see also I. Polinskaya, *A Local History of Greek Polytheism: Gods, People and the Land of Aigina, 800–400 BCE* (Leiden, 2013) 290–296.

⁷⁴ Madness is also mentioned in Eudoxus *FGrH* 79 F 5 dub. (= fr. 338 Lasserre = Agatharchides *FGrH* 284 F 3), but the testimony is hardly reliable, cf. Jacoby *ad loc.*

⁷⁵ *Suda* κ 822.

⁷⁶ Paus. 2.30.2. For Orpheus, see *OF* 33–40, cf. F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens* (Berlin, 1974) 26–34; A. Bernabé, 'Orpheus and Eleusis', *Thracia* 18 (2009) 89–98.

What do we know of the ritual? Later passages give some insights, but we cannot reconstruct a full ritual scenario. The Mysteries (Pausanias: *teletê*) were celebrated annually. Undoubtedly, there will have been the usual preliminary purifications and sacrifices. A chance expression in a Latin inscription informs us that the Mysteries were celebrated at night (*CIL* VI.30966), as we would have expected. One of the orations of Dio Chrysostom, from the early second century AD, gives us a more precious insight: ‘before the purifications they interpret and point to many and various sorts of *phasmata*, “apparitions”,⁷⁷ which they say the angry goddess has sent’ (4.90). The display of such *phasmata* was typical of the preliminary phase of initiations and could be combined with frightening experiences.⁷⁸ The latter probably featured here too and the interpretation of the divine anger will have been related to the mental problems of the initiand. After this preliminary phase, the actual purification of the patient and appeasement of Hecate must have taken place. Origen (*CCels.* 6.22) notes that the Mysteries of Mithras are not more famous than those of Eleusis, and ‘*ta paradidomena*, “that which is handed down”, to those who are initiated into the Mysteries of Hecate on Aegina’. The expression is noteworthy because the verb *paradidômi* in the context of Mysteries suggests that a ‘sacred tale’ was told,⁷⁹ presumably during this part of the ritual. It thus seems that Hecate’s Mysteries, like those of the Korybantes, were an attempt to cure mental problems through a kind of psychodrama.

We have several fragments of a mime with the title *The women who claim that they are driving out the goddess* by the fifth-century comic author Sophron from Syracuse, which mentions a ‘chasing away’ of Hecate. It features a meal, which seems to have served to propitiate the goddess and which will subsequently have been carried outside, and with it the goddess.⁸⁰ Was such a meal part of Hecate’s Mysteries? Or should we think rather of ecstatic dances as with the Korybantes? Or both? Unfortunately we have no other data to help us lift the veil of darkness over this spooky goddess’s Mysteries.

⁷⁷ Graf, ‘Lesser Mysteries’, 253 translates *phasmata* as ‘ghosts’, but that unnecessarily narrows its meaning, as *phasmata* could also be ‘objects’, cf. Riedweg (next note). In the quotation, the ‘interpreting’ precedes the ‘pointing’, as the most important of the two acts.

⁷⁸ Or. *CCels.* 4.10 ascribes such ‘apparitions and signs’ to the preliminary phase of Dionysiac initiations (below, § 2). For such apparitions, see Graf, *Eleusis*, 134 n. 34 and C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1987) 55, 68, where in both cases our passage has to be added, which had already been noted by M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion II* (Munich, 1961²) 366; this volume, Ch. I.3.

⁷⁹ The expression has to be added to the material collected by Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 6–12; see also Burkert, *AMC*, 69 with n. 14.

⁸⁰ Sophron fr. 3-*9, cf. S. Eitrem, ‘Sophron und Theokrit’, *Symb. Osl.* 12 (1933) 10–29; K. Latte, *Kleine Schriften* (Munich, 1968) 492–498; Parker, *Miasma*, 223–224 (meal).

Dio's mention of Hecate's Mysteries suggests that they were still fully operative at the beginning of the second century AD, and this impression is strengthened by references later in the century in, probably, Artemidorus (2.37), Pausanias (see above) and Lucian (*Nav.* 15). In the third century Origen (above) knows them, and in the fourth century we still hear of the Mysteries in Libanius (*Or.* 14.5), who mentions a chief of a *thiasos*.⁸¹ This typically Dionysiac term (§ 2) suggests a certain blurring of the borders between the different Mysteries, as can indeed be noted in a series of most interesting Latin inscriptions from the last quarter of the fourth century.

These are nine inscriptions and epitaphs of a small group of pagan members of the social elite in Rome, which all mention initiation into the Mysteries of Hecate, using formulae such as *hierophantes Liberi Patris et Hecatarum*, *hierofanta (deae) Hecatae* or *sacerdos deae Hecatae*.⁸² It is clear from these inscriptions that initiation into Hecate's Mysteries was *de rigueur* for these people, as was initiation into the Mysteries of Dionysos and those of Mithras; rather surprisingly, those of Isis and Eleusis are almost never mentioned. Moreover, these aristocrats settled for nothing less than the top positions in the Mysteries. This alone should warn us against seeing these initiations as signs of profound pagan religiosity.⁸³ The exception to the rule is perhaps Fabia Aconia Paulina, the widow of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. She praised her husband, who is one of the protagonists of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, as 'a pious initiate who kept in his innermost mind everything that has been found in the sacred rites and who, with manifold learning, adores the divine power'; Paulina evidently felt very close to her husband, who introduced her 'to all Mysteries'.⁸⁴ Just as the Eleusinian Mysteries had accepted the allegorisation of its message (Ch. I, Introduction), so something of the same process seems to have taken place in Aegina, where the Mysteries of Hecate had also taken over the Eleusinian title of 'hierophant'. The Mysteries no longer focused on healing from madness, it seems, but now provided theological and philosophical knowledge. An Aeginetan or Athenian from the fifth-century BC would not have recognised this Hecate.

81 For the close contacts between Hecate and Dionysos in later antiquity, see Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 2. 296f.

82 *CIL* VI.261 (= Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, no. 183: all references to inscriptions derive from volume 2), 504 (= 193 Jaccottet), 507 (= 191 Jacc.), 509, 510 (= 192 Jacc.), 511, 1675 (= 194 Jacc.), 31940; *ILS* 1259–1260, 1264, 4148; *AE* 1953.238.

83 See the incisive analysis of A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011) 142–159.

84 *ILS* 1259 = *RICIS* 501/0210. For Paulina, see Cameron, *Last Pagans*, 301–305.

2 The Dionysiac Mysteries

The most complicated Mysteries, however, are those of Dionysos. The simple reason is that we have many texts and several inscriptions that refer to them, but there is no single authoritative format for them all. Each city could have its own ritual, though there was a certain family resemblance between them. As Franz Poland (1857–1945) saw already in the early twentieth century, the heartland of the Dionysiac associations was western Asia Minor, its adjacent islands and the coasts of the Black Sea; that is where most Dionysiac Mysteries are attested, not the Greek mainland.⁸⁵ Although the place of origin thus seems fairly clear, it is much harder to establish when precisely the Dionysiac Mysteries originated, and it would go beyond the aims of this book to try to do so here. Let me just state that in the course of the last centuries BC and the first century AD we witness a convergence between the female maenadic rituals and the mixed or male (Orphic-)Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III).⁸⁶ We hear no more of itinerant initiators after the famous edict of Ptolemy IV Philopator of about 210 BC and the notorious Bacchanalia scandal of 186 BC,⁸⁷ but Hellenistic kings took an increasing interest in Dionysiac rituals⁸⁸ and the Dionysiac associations became more and more important.⁸⁹ The traditional term for a member of a Dionysiac group, *thiasôtês*, started to be replaced by *mystês* at the beginning of the imperial period, to the extent that one could be a *mystês* in a Dionysiac association without, seemingly, participating in Mysteries.⁹⁰ The result

85 F. Poland, *Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens* (Leipzig, 1909) 36–41; Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion II*, 358 (Greek mainland); Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.128–129 and the map at the front of Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, vol. 2.

86 For maenadism, see A. Henrichs, ‘Die Mänaden von Milet’, *ZPE* 4 (1969) 223–241 and ‘Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina’, *HSCP* 82 (1978) 121–160; Bremmer, ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered’, *ZPE* 55 (1984) 267–286 and ‘A Macedonian Maenad in Posidippus (AB 44)’, *ZPE* 155 (2006) 37–40; S. Moraw, *Die Mänade in der attischen Vasenmalerei des 6. und 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Mainz, 1998); M.-C. Villanueva, *Ménades. Recherches sur la genèse iconographique du thiasé féminin de Dionysos des origines à la fin de la période archaïque* (Paris, 2009).

87 Edict: translation and bibliography in F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife* (Abingdon and New York, 2013²) 218f. Bacchanalia: bibliography and non-Livian sources in J. Briscoe, *A Commentary on Livy Books 38–40* (Oxford, 2008) 230–231; add H. Cancik-Lindemaier, *Von Atheismus bis Zensur* (Würzburg, 2006) 33–49; P. Pavón, ‘*Y ellas fueron el origen de este mal ...* (Liv. 39.15.9). *Mulieres contra mores* en las Bacanales de Livio’, *Habis* 39 (2008) 79–95; D. Šterbenc Erker, *Religiöse Rollen römischer Frauen in “griechischen” Ritualen* (Stuttgart, 2013) 208–244.

88 For a few preliminary remarks, see Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III*, 121.

89 For their function, see A.-F. Jaccottet, ‘Integrierte Andersartigkeit: die Rolle der dionysischen Vereine’, in Schlesier, *A Different God?*, 413–431.

90 See the judicious remarks of Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion II*, 371; Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.129; N. Belayche, ‘L’évolution des forms rituelles: hymnes et *mystéria*’, in

of these developments was a conglomerate of Mysteries that all drew on the Dionysiac tradition, be it female, male or just mythical, with considerable local differences.

These developments raise serious methodological problems. Greek and Roman literature of the Hellenistic and imperial period regularly mentions Dionysiac Mysteries, but it is often unclear whether they refer to maenadic rituals, older Bacchic Mysteries or contemporary Dionysiac Mysteries. One reason for this is, of course, that all these rituals shared similar elements, such as a nocturnal setting, sacrifices, ecstatic dances and revelations. Moreover, the iconographical evidence is highly selective and usually concentrates on only a few elements, such as the phallus or the winnowing fan. Finally, inscriptions are not anthropological reports and rarely present us with details of the Mysteries. The regular mention of a hierophant in Dionysiac inscriptions guarantees that there were Dionysiac Mysteries, but that does not mean that we have ‘many inscriptions’ mentioning Mysteries, as Burkert states.⁹¹ On the contrary: despite the attention they have received, not many Dionysiac Mysteries are epigraphically attested.⁹² There must have been more than just these ones, but it is easy to overstate their importance.

There is no easy way out of these problems. As the inscriptions present us with insufficient material to work with, we have to resort to literary passages and iconographical passages too. By a remarkable coincidence the years 2002 and 2003 saw the independent publication of two exhaustive collections of sources concerning the Dionysiac cult, by Paolo Scarpi and Robert Turcan (the fruit of more than forty years work), and also of the inscriptions regarding Dionysiac associations, collected by Jaccottet.⁹³ These three studies form the basis for my own work. Jaccottet is much more sceptical, and often rightly so, than Turcan who, on the other hand, helpfully arranges his material in the possible order of the initiation; unhelpfully he combines details from maenadic rituals as well as from Bacchic and Dionysiac Mysteries, as does Scarpi. In fact, neither of them

L. Bricault and C. Bonnet (eds), *Panthée: Religious Transformations in the Graeco-Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2013) 17–40 at 35–39.

⁹¹ Burkert, *AMC*, 34.

⁹² Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.130 (surveying the meagre evidence for Mysteries in the inscriptions).

⁹³ Scarpi, *Le religioni dei misteri*, 1.213–345; R. Turcan, *Liturgies de l'initiation bacchique à l'époque romaine (Liber): documentation littéraire, inscrite et figurée* (Paris, 2003); Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, the most important insights of which she summarises in ‘Les mystères dionysiaques à l'époque romaine’, *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études. Section des sciences religieuses* 114 (2005–2006) 235–239 and ‘Un dieu, plusieurs mystères? Les différents visages des mystères dionysiaques’, in C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Religions orientales – culti misterici* (Stuttgart, 2006) 219–230.

seems to have given much thought to the problem of the chronological development of the Dionysiac Mysteries. None of them has presented a synthesis regarding the Mysteries, as will be attempted here. The result can be no more than a possible script that was adapted to local circumstances by individual Mysteries but, in my opinion, it will give an idea of how a Dionysiac initiation could have taken place in the imperial period.

Let us start with the usual questions of who, when and where. Who was initiated into the Dionysiac Mysteries? In the Roman period we hardly hear anything more of female maenadic groups. The exception is perhaps a *thiasus Maenad(um)* in a Latin inscription from Philippi dating to the beginning of our era, but the fact that the inscription is dedicated to Liber, Libera and Hercules suggests a development away from traditional maenadism.⁹⁴ Its demise, for reasons that are not at all clear, means that most Mysteries will have had mixed initiands, though some inscriptions seem to indicate exclusively male Dionysiac groups, such as the Athenian IoBacchants.⁹⁵ Within Dionysiac associations, women held the more strictly religious functions, while men occupied the more administrative positions.⁹⁶ Although we have no explicit information about the roles of men and women in the actual initiation, this division of labour certainly suggests an important role for women as priestesses in the Mysteries, of whom we meet several in the inscriptions.⁹⁷

Traditionally, maenadic rites were biennial, as can be seen already from Euripides' *Bacchae* (133–34). This rhythm was taken over by purely male groups, continued well into the imperial era, when it is often mentioned in literary texts,⁹⁸ and remained the traditional periodicity. The reason for this rhythm is not clear but, given that maenadism seems to have developed out of ancient female rites of initiation,⁹⁹ the time-interval may have been needed for new groups of maidens to reach puberty. In which part of the year did these Mysteries take place? In Callatis on the Black Sea, the biennial Mysteries were held in the winter month

⁹⁴ Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, no. 25.

⁹⁵ See the discussion by Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.65–100. IoBacchants: Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, no. 4; E. Ebel, *Die Attraktivität früher christlicher Gemeinden* (Tübingen, 2004) 76–142 (detailed discussion of the inscription).

⁹⁶ See the analysis of Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.65–100.

⁹⁷ Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, nos 22 (Thessalonica), 45 (Bizye), 147 (Magnesia), 149–150 (Miletus), 174 (Puteoli), 181, 188 (Rome).

⁹⁸ Verg. *Aen.* 4.302, with Pease *ad loc.*; Ov. *F.* 1.394; Sen. *HO* 597; Stat. *Ach.* 1.595; Artemidorus 4.39; Cens. *DND* 18.2; Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.136–138 and nos 54, 58 (Callatis), 98, 99 (Pergamum), 150 (Miletus), 156 (Rhodes), 163 (Delos), 169 (Thera); Turcan, *Liturgies*, 4.

⁹⁹ Bremmer, 'Greek Maenadism Reconsidered', 282–284.

Dionysios.¹⁰⁰ This would correspond once again with the time of the maenadic rites, but Callatis is the only city for which we have such an indication.

We are better informed about the traditional site of initiation. In some places there seems to have been a grove, as we saw with other Mysteries (Ch. II.1).¹⁰¹ However, a grotto, be it natural or artificial, was the site *par excellence* for the cult of Dionysos and could also serve as the place of initiation into his Mysteries. The great inscription of Torre Nova of about AD 160–165 even records ‘guardians of the grotto’. Again, this is a traditional item of the Dionysiac tradition, but in the course of time the grottoes became more civilised, pleasant and varied. They could be subterranean crypts or open-air sites constructed like a grotto. We must surely not suppose that the well-to-do Romans who have given us the impressive inscription of Torre Nova, with its list of hundreds of cult members, would have met in a damp, uncomfortable, natural venue. Meeting in a real cave was more an ideal than a reality.¹⁰²

As was the case with the other Mysteries, the actual initiation had to remain a secret.¹⁰³ The Dionysiac Mysteries did not have the same fame and status as those of Eleusis and Samothrace, and this lack of public impact, combined with the secrecy, means that we are poorly informed about what went on, although the many modern studies might lead us to believe the opposite. We have little idea about how grades worked in the Mysteries. The famous Torre Nova inscription shows that with such a crowd of worshippers there were several grades, but this can hardly have been the case in small towns. Nor do we know if there was a new initiation for every grade or if it was just a matter of time and waiting for promotion. Our evidence no longer differentiates between *mystai* and *bakchoi*, as was the case in the Orphic Gold Leaves (Ch. III.3). My reconstruction hence offers only one scenario which, in addition, is rather speculative, more than I had expected when I started to work on these Mysteries. Yet comparison with the scenarios of other Mysteries suggests several ritual components that may have been played out, perhaps in the following order.

100 Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, nos 54, 58, cf. A. Avram, ‘Les calendriers de Mégare et de ses colonies pontiques’, in O. Lordkipanidzé and P. Lévêque (eds), *Religions du Pont-Euxin* (Besançon and Paris, 1999) 25–31.

101 *Stat. Ach.* 1.593–594.

102 Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, nos 31 (Thasos), 58 (Callatis), 188 (Torre Nova); *Plut. Mor.* 565e; *Athen.* 4.148bc (also tambourines and fawnskins); P. Boyancé, ‘L’antre dans les mystères de Dionysos’, *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 33 (1960–1961) 107–127; J.-M. Paillet, *Bacchus: figures et pouvoirs* (Paris, 1995) 59–77; Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.150–162; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 138.

103 *SEG* 28.141 (= 152 Jaccottet: Halicarnassus); *Arnob.* 5.19.

We have no idea how the beginning of the initiation was dramatised. There is no indication that there was a proclamation regarding the purity of the participants, as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. 1.1) and Samothrace (Ch. II.1), but we may assume that the initiation was preceded by a bath, given the omnipresence of baths in Mysteries and the mention of a ‘holy bath’ in an inscription from a Dionysiac sanctuary in Halicarnassus.¹⁰⁴ Strangely, none of our texts mentions sacrifices, but some of the iconographical representations show the sacrifice of a piglet or a cockerel. Such cheap preliminary, purificatory sacrifices were not uncommon in Greek Mysteries (Ch. I.1; IV.1 and 2), and their occurrence in the Dionysiac Mysteries would certainly not be out of place.¹⁰⁵

There may also have been a kind of procession at the beginning, as we cannot but be struck by the fact that larger associations clearly had several officials who had to carry something. In the great Dionysiac inscription of Torre Nova we hear of two *theophoroi*, ‘carriers of the god (Dionysos?)’, who immediately followed the hierophant (see below), a *phallophoros*, ‘carrier of the phallus’, who played a major role in the final stage of the initiation (see below) and a *pyrphoros*, ‘carrier of fire’, presumably for the sacrifice.¹⁰⁶ A painting from Pompei shows a goat being led to a sacrifice followed by a woman with the *cista* (see below), which suggests a Mysteries performance. If a sacrifice did indeed play a role in the ritual, there can be little doubt that it would have been this animal so closely connected to Dionysos.¹⁰⁷ In other inscriptions we have a *narthêkophoros*, ‘carrier of the narthex’ (Ch. III.2) and a *thyrsophoros*, ‘carrier of the thyrsos’, although the latter is limited to Ephesus. Both are carriers of objects that are already familiar from a Dionysiac context in the fifth century BC and clearly have a long Dionysiac tradition behind them.¹⁰⁸ We also have a *simiophoros*, ‘carrier of a statue’,¹⁰⁹ a *liknophoros*, ‘carrier of the winnowing basket’ and, clearly important, the *kistophoros*, ‘carrier of the *kisté*’, who was always a

104 SEG 28.141 (= 152 Jacc.)

105 Piglet: Turcan, *Liturgies*, figs. 64, 81–82, 92. Cockerel: Turcan, figs. 39, 66.

106 IGUR 160 = 188 Jaccottet, cf. Turcan, *Liturgies*, 84 (*phalloph.*), 89 (*theoph.*).

107 Verg. G. 2.393; Hor. C. 3.8.1–8; Ov. F. 1.353, with Frazer *ad loc.*; Plut. *Mor.* 527d; M. Blanchard, ‘La scène de sacrifice du bouc dans la mosaïque dionysiaque de Cuicul’, *Antiquités africaines* 15 (1980) 169–181; H.G. Horn, *Mysteriensymbolik auf dem Kölner Dionysosmosaik* (Bonn, 1972) 123–125; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 108, 137, fig. 33; F. Lissarrague, *La cité des satyres* (Paris, 2013) 283.

108 *Narthêkophoros*: IG Bulg 2.1517 = 47 Jaccottet; TAM V 1.822 = 108 Jacc.; CIL VI.2255 = 185 Jacc. *Thyrsophoros*: I. Ephesos 1268 = 139 Jaccottet; I. Ephesos 1601 = 137 Jacc.; I. Ephesos 1602 = 138 Jacc., cf. Turcan, *Liturgies*, 90.

109 IG Bulg 2.1517 = 47 Jaccottet, cf. Turcan, *Liturgies*, 87

woman.¹¹⁰ The size and composition of processions must have been dependent on local circumstances, but the many roles denoting a carrier strongly suggest the ubiquity of some kind of procession.

Given the Pompeii fresco with the goat, we may perhaps surmise a sacrifice for a good meal, possibly before the actual Mysteries started at night. This was the normal time for Mysteries, as we have seen frequently by now, and the Dionysiac Mysteries were no exception.¹¹¹ In Livy's description of the Bacchanalia we also hear of an oath. Although we have various representations from the famous Villa of the Mysteries from the time of Caesar, and elsewhere in Pompeii and in Rome, of people reading from a scroll, nothing suggests that the Mysteries of the imperial period contained an oath,¹¹² which anyway seems alien to the Greek Mysteries tradition as a whole. In the case of the Bacchanalia, it was probably inspired by Roman army traditions.¹¹³ It is not impossible that the scrolls represent the reading of a *hieros logos* or instructions to the initiand. As Turcan stresses, the intense and serious expressions on the faces of the initiand and priestess suggest the importance of this moment for the Mysteries.¹¹⁴ A sacred law from Smyrna concerning a Dionysiac sanctuary, albeit not an association, contains the stipulation, 'of the Titans to tell the *mystai* beforehand', at which point the text breaks off.¹¹⁵ It seems not impossible that the murder of Dionysos by the Titans was part of the *hieros logos* of some of the Dionysiac Mysteries (see also below). If so, this would be a clear influence from the Orphic-Bacchic tradition of the murder of Dionysos, which for us becomes clearly visible only in the early Hellenistic period, although it probably goes back to the early fifth century (Ch. III.2).

Lucian notes the significance of dancing for the Mysteries¹¹⁶ and the second-century AD philosopher Maximus of Tyre mentions dances and songs in connec-

110 *Kistophoros*: *IG X* 2.1.260 = 22 Jaccottet; *CIL* III.686 = 29 Jacc.; *IGBulg* 1.401 = 46 Jacc.; *IGBulg* 2.1517 = 47 Jacc.; *IGBulg* 1.23 = 53 Jacc.; *IGUR* 160 = 188 Jacc.; *ILS* 3368 = 197 Jacc.; A. Henrichs, 'Die Mänaden von Milet', *ZPE* 4 (1969) 223–241 at 230; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 76. *Liknophoros*: *IGBulg* 1.401 = 46 Jaccottet; *IGBulg* 3.1517 = 47 Jacc.; *IGUR* 160 = 188 Jacc.; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 77–78, 139.

111 *Verg. G.* 4.521, *Aen.* 4.303 with Pease *ad loc.*; *Liv.* 39.8.4; Nonnus, *D.* 4.271, 9.114, 12.391, 13.7 (both also dances), 14.291–292, 16.401–402; Synesius *Aeg.* 124b; *Et. Magnum* s.v. *Nyktelios*; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 3–4 (full collection of passages), fig. 38. Note also the *lychnaptria*, 'she who lights the torches' in *IGBulg* 3.1517 = 47 Jaccottet.

112 Burkert, *AMC*, 70; Turcan, *Liturgies*, figs. 4, 34, 47. No oath: *contra* A.-J. Festugière, *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris, 1972) 108; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 137.

113 *Liv.* 39.15.13 and 18.3, with Briscoe *ad loc.*

114 Turcan, *Liturgies*, 138.

115 *I. Smyrna* 728 = 126 Jaccottet.

116 *Luc. Salt.* 15. For his treatise *On Dance*, see C.P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge Mass., 1986) 68–75. Strangely, there is no entry 'dance' in the index of Burkert, *AMC*.

tion with Dionysiac Mysteries,¹¹⁷ surely accompanied by cymbals and tambourines, the music characteristic of the Dionysiac rites. The Romans did not like these instruments¹¹⁸ and we may wonder if they were as prominent in Rome as they were in the Greek world. Yet these dances must have been important. A first-century AD Pergamene inscription, which honours a certain Soter for having presided over the ‘divine Mysteries’ ‘in a pious and worthy manner’, mentions a *chorêgos*, ‘chorus-leader’, and an early second-century Pergamene inscription mentions ‘dancing [*boukoloï*]’. A second-century funerary epigram from Rome has a young man say that Dionysos Bakchios incorporated him in his *thiasoi* in order for him to dance,¹¹⁹ and a third-century epitaph from Asia Minor mentions a young man who was the fellow *mystês* of Dionysos for the latter’s own dances.¹²⁰ The presence of a *prôteurythmos* in the second-century Athenian inscription of the IoBacchants probably points in the same direction.¹²¹ Given that Lucian mentions the great popularity of pantomimic dances, it seems that sometimes a little play was performed through dance, as is suggested by two terms in an inscription from Magnesia:¹²² *appas* (*Dionysou*), ‘Daddy (of Dionysos)’, and *hypotrophos*, ‘secret nurse’.¹²³ As has long been seen, the two terms probably refer to performances depicting the youth of Dionysos when, according to myth, he was secretly fed and educated on Euboea in order to escape the wrath of Hera.¹²⁴ A reference to the death of Semele in another inscription probably indicates the same kind of performance.¹²⁵ The *Orphic Hymns*, a corpus of hymns from a Dionysiac association somewhere in western Asia Minor, even mention the celebration of the labour of Semele when giving birth to Dionysos during ‘the pure Mystery rites’ (44.6–9).¹²⁶ We might think of little plays or pantomimes

117 Strabo 10.3.10; Luc. *Salt.* 15; Max. Tyr. 32.7; Schol. Lyc. 211.

118 Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 295f.

119 Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, no. 180.

120 TAM V.1.477 = 112 Jaccottet.

121 Pergamum: *I. Pergamon* 485 = 94 Jaccottet; *I. Pergamon* 486a = 99 Jacc. *Prôteurythmos*: Jaccottet, *ibid.*, no. 4.125.

122 *I. Magnesia* 117 = 147 Jaccottet, cf. Nilsson, *Geschichte II*, 361; Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 2.248; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 55–56, 73–74.

123 For the latter title, see Turcan, *Liturgies*, 73f.

124 For this episode in his life, see Bremmer, ‘Transvestite Dionysos’, *The Bucknell Review* 43 (1999) 183–200 at 197–198.

125 *IGBulg* 4.1862 = 45 Jaccottet. For the mythical episode, see G. Casadio, ‘Dioniso e Semele: morte di un dio e resurrezione di una donna’, in F. Berti (ed.), *Dionisos: mito e mistero* (Comacchio, 1991) 361–377; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2. 375f.

126 See the observations of Fritz Graf in idem and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 155f.

starting with Dionysos' birth and continuing to his adulthood, which would reflect, in a way, the initiation of the new initiand.¹²⁷

Before the highpoint of the ritual, however, there had to be a low point. The pagan philosopher Celsus, who lived in the later second century AD, mentions *phasmata*, 'apparitions' (above, § 1.2, Ch. I.3) and *deigmata*, 'signs', in relation to the Dionysiac Mysteries. Could it be that the famous flagellation scene in the fresco of the Villa dei Misteri represents such an intimidation of the initiands? Here we see 'a kneeling girl, keeping her head in the lap of a seated woman and shutting her eyes, the seated woman grasping her hands and drawing back the garment from the kneeling girl's bare back, while a sinister-looking female behind is raising a rod – these are all quite realistic details of caning'.¹²⁸ Yet the threatening figure wielding the rod has black wings, as Burkert rightly notes. In other words, art may imitate life, but it is not a one-to-one imitation and without further details we cannot be sure what really happened. The fact remains that apparitions and more physical intimidation are well attested for the Mysteries, as we will see again in the case of those of Mithras (Ch. V.2).

After these humiliations and intimidation the final revelation will have occurred. There seem to have been several of these. Matching the Eleusinian Mysteries, where an ear of corn was shown, perhaps together with a statue of Demeter (Ch. I.3), inscriptions of Dionysiac Mysteries mention officials who had to show a statue or sacred objects: the hierophant, 'revealer of sacred objects';¹²⁹ the orgiophant, 'revealer of (sacred) objects';¹³⁰ and, in a Smyrnaean inscription, the theophant, 'revealer of the god (presumably Dionysos)',¹³¹ clearly an important position, as it was occupied by the dedicant of the inscription. We even have, in one case, a Sebastophant, 'revealer of an imperial statue', which illustrates the extent to which the imperial cult had penetrated all other cults and even the Mysteries (Ch. VI.4).¹³² Objects were clearly very important in the Mysteries, as even Greek *mystêria* can mean 'sacred objects' already in Aristophanes.¹³³

127 Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2. 376.

128 Burkert, *AMC*, 104; Nilsson, *Geschichte II*, 366–367 had already compared the flagellation scene with the intimidations of the Mysteries.

129 Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.128–130; Henrichs, 'Die Mänaden von Milet', 229 n. 21 has collected the passages connecting the hierophant with showing sacred objects.

130 *Anth. Pal.* 7.485 (in title), 9.688; *Orph. H.* 6.11, 31.5; *CIL* X.1583 = *ILS* 3364 = 172 Jaccottet; *I. Stratonikeia* 541; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 82–83. For *orgia* as objects rather than orgies or rituals, see Henrichs, 'Die Mänaden von Milet', 225–229; A. Motte and V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Aperçu des significations de *orgia*', *Kernos* 5 (1992) 119–140.

131 *I. Smyrna* 728 = 126 Jaccottet.

132 *IGBulg* 2.1517 = 47 Jaccottet.

133 *Ar. Ra.* 159, cf. Henrichs, 'Die Mänaden von Milet', 229 n. 19 with further examples.

From texts, coins and other iconographic representations we know that the *cista mystica* contained several objects, in particular a snake, but the Christian authors Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.22) and Firmicus Maternus (*De errore* 6.5) also mention sacrificial cakes and the heart of Dionysos after his murder by the Titans.¹³⁴ The latter may well have been connected with a *hieros logos* about this murder, a typically Orphic theme (Ch. III.2) that we have already encountered (above). The contents of the *cista* will have been a source of speculation and could vary from city to city.¹³⁵ The *liknon*, ‘winnowing fan’, contained a phallus.¹³⁶ Dionysos had a close connection with this member already in the classical period,¹³⁷ and its prominence in the Dionysiac *imaginaire* suggests that male lust was an integral part of the Dionysiac world. In this case, as Graf notes, the Mysteries ‘adopted and privatised a public ritual’.¹³⁸ One can only wonder what the female members of the *thiasos* will have thought about this macho demonstration. In any case, the revelation cannot have been a great surprise to the initiands. Numerous so-called cistophoric coins (below) show the snake in the *cista* and already Diodorus Siculus (1.22.7) mentions its place of honour in the Dionysiac Mysteries. Evidently, the degree of secrecy in these Mysteries was not as high as was the case in Eleusis (Ch. 1.4).¹³⁹ As time went on, Mysteries may well have become less mysterious than they were in the classical period.

After the revelation, there was probably drinking and feasting. And just as initiates of other Mysteries went home with a souvenir (Ch. II.1 and 2), so the Dionysiac initiates seem to have received a belt of fawnskin or even a whole fawnskin, the *nebris*, to denote their new status, which they would display at future meetings of their association. Once again the Mysteries drew upon the Dionysiac tradition, which often portrayed the god and his followers in fawnskins.¹⁴⁰ Its possession made the identification of the god with his followers even more intimate

134 See also *OF* 314–315 with Bernabé *ad loc.*; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 78–80, 154–155.

135 For the *cista*, see Henrichs, ‘Die Mänaden von Milet’, 230–231; with extensive bibliography, N. Bookidis and R. Stroud, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: topography and architecture = Corinth XVIII.3* (Princeton, 1997) 366–368; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 21–22, 136; I. Krauskopf, ‘kiste, cista’, in *ThesCRA* 5 (2005) 274–278; L. Winkler-Horaček, ‘Parthersieg und cista mystica. “Tradition” und “Reduktion” in Münzbildern unter Vespasian und Titus: Zwei Fallbeispiele’, in N. Kramer and C. Reitz (eds), *Tradition und Erneuerung. Mediale Strategien in der Zeit der Flavier* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 457–483.

136 For the *liknon*, see Burkert, *AMC*, 95–98; I. Krauskopf, ‘liknon’, in *ThesCRA* 5 (2005) 278–283. 137 R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 316–321.

138 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 148.

139 As is noted by Henrichs, ‘Die Mänaden von Milet’, 230 n. 25.

140 Turcan, *Liturgies*, 15–17, 53–55.

than all the drinking of wine would have done. Several texts also mention *symbola*, ‘passwords’ (Ch. VI.3) and physical tokens kept and hidden at home. The Orphic Gold Leaves teach us that these passwords need not be as profound (Ch. III.3.3, VI.3) as has sometimes been suggested, and the tokens could be small trinkets to remind the initiate of the murder of Dionysos, as reported by Clement of Alexandria.¹⁴¹

After the initiation the new initiates will have gone home. The next time they met with their fellow *mystai* they would be entitled to the full pleasures of Dionysiac life in their grottoes or Dionysiac halls.¹⁴² There they would meet a varied company of all kinds of ranks, ranging from the *archimystês*, ‘chief of the *mystai*’, *archiboukolos*, ‘chief of the *boukoloi*’, or *archibassara*, ‘chief of the foxes (female bacchants)’, to the lowest rank of *sigêtai*, ‘silent ones’, all depending on the size of the association. It was a world which evoked the idyllic places of the countryside in order to escape the pressures of urban life, but which had also created a hierarchy that might compensate somewhat for loss of political influence in the real world. It was constructed out of a long Dionysiac tradition, but was probably given a whole new impetus in Pergamum. Anne-Françoise Jaccottet has stressed the important role of the Attalid kingdom in the introduction of the rank of *boukolos* in the Dionysiac associations.¹⁴³ It is also in Pergamum, we may add, that around 167 BC King Eumenes II issued the first cistophoric coins with the representation of the *cista mystica* with the snake on the obverse.¹⁴⁴ As these Mysteries are so well represented in Pergamum, where the kings considered Dionysos their ancestor and were closely associated with the Dionysiac cult,¹⁴⁵ the Dionysiac Mysteries in their late Hellenistic form may well have been an important, albeit usually overlooked, legacy of the Attalid kingdom to the Roman Empire.

141 Passwords: Plut. *Mor.* 611d; Procl. *In Plat. Rempl.* I, p. 85, 9–10 Kroll. Tokens: Apul. *Apol.* 55.8; Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.18.1; Arnob. 5.19; Turcan, *Liturgies*, 27–30 (passwords and tokens); O. Levaniouk, ‘The Toys of Dionysos’, *HSCP* 103 (2007) 165–2002.

142 For a detailed description of such a hall, see A. Schäfer, ‘Religiöse Mahlgemeinschaften der römischen Kaiserzeit: Eine phänomenologische Studie’, in J. Rüpke (ed.), *Festrituale in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Tübingen, 2008) 169–199.

143 Jaccottet, *Choisir Dionysos*, 1.108–109, 2.182–188; see also H. Schwarzer, ‘Die Bukoloi in Pergamon’, *Hephaistos* 24 (2006) 153–167.

144 See most recently, on the basis of newly discovered hoards, R. Ashton, ‘The Hellenistic World: the cities of mainland Greece and Asia Minor’, in W.E. Metcalf, *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford, 2012) 191–210; A. Meadows, ‘The Closed Currency System of the Attalid Kingdom’, in P. Thonemann (ed.), *Attalid Asia Minor: Money, International Relations, and the State* (Oxford, 2013) 149–205 at 175–183.

145 Paus. 10.15.2–3; E. Ohlemtz, *Kulte und Heiligtümer der Götter in Pergamon* (Würzburg, 1940) 109–116; M. Maischberger, ‘Der Dionysos-Tempel auf der Theaterterrasse’, in R. Grüssinger (ed.), *Pergamon: Panorama der antiken Metropole* (Berlin, 2011) 242–247.

V The Mysteries of Isis and Mithras

In the previous chapters we have seen that lack of data is one of the great problems of studying ancient Mysteries. We have also concentrated on the Mysteries of divinities who were already part of the Greek pantheon in the classical period, if not before. In the Roman period there were also Mysteries of gods or goddesses who clearly did not originate within the area of Greek culture. For my penultimate chapter, before we look at the impact of the Mysteries on emerging Christianity (Ch. VI), I have selected those Oriental Mysteries about which we have a reasonable amount of information, namely those of Isis and Mithras. Of these Mysteries, those of Isis (§ 1) have long fascinated the Western world thanks to their description in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*,¹ whereas Mithras (§ 2) was popularised by Cumont (above, Preface) as the great competitor of nascent Christianity. Together they will allow us to form a better idea of how these Oriental Mysteries constructed their initiatory rituals in the first centuries of the Roman Empire.

1 Isis

The first mention of Egyptian Mysteries is in Herodotus. In the second book of his *Histories*, which is devoted to Egypt, he notes that in the sanctuary of Athena, i.e. the Egyptian goddess Neith, in Sais there is a tomb of a god whose name he cannot reveal for religious reasons. This is not unusual for Herodotus, who is very reticent about cults that require secrecy, especially those connected with or analogous to the Mysteries.² These words, then, prepare the reader for a possible connection with Mysteries. Herodotus proceeds to relate that there is also a sacred pond in the sanctuary and, 'it is on this pond that they put on, by night (as in Eleusis: Ch. I.2), performances of his sufferings, which the Egyptians call Mysteries' (2.171.1). Here too Herodotus does not report the name of the relevant god, who is evidently Osiris, as the performance on the pond belongs to the so-called 'Navigation of Osiris', which took place during the Khoiak Festival in the autumn/early winter.³ Yet we can be certain that the Egyptians did not call these perfor-

1 See the testimonies assembled in J. Assmann and F. Ebeling, *Ägyptische Mystereien. Reisen in die Unterwelt in Aufklärung und Romantik* (Munich, 2011).

2 See, most recently, S. Gödde, 'οὐ μοι ὄσιόν ἐστι λέγειν. Zur Poetik der Leerstelle in Herodots Ägypten-Logos', in A. Bierl *et al.* (eds), *Literatur und Religion 2* (Berlin and New York, 2007) 41–90; T. Harrison, *Divinity and History: the Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford, 2002²) 184–186.

3 For the festival, see E. Chassinat, *Le mystère d'Osiris au mois de Choiak*, 2 vols (Paris, 1966–1968); L.B. Mikhail, 'The Festival of Sokar: An Episode of the Osirian Khoiak Festival', *Göttinger*

mances Mysteries, which is clearly Herodotus' interpretation, as they did not have a general term or exact equivalent for what the Greeks called Mysteries.⁴

But which Mysteries did he have in mind? Elsewhere in Book II Herodotus interprets Osiris as Dionysos and Isis as Demeter.⁵ The identification of Osiris with Dionysos is not strange, as Osiris, too, was torn to pieces like Dionysos (Ch. III.3). He was therefore the prime suspect, so to speak, to become Dionysos' equivalent. This suggests that Herodotus associated the Khoiak Festival not with the Eleusinian Mysteries but with the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, the only ones in which the tragic fate of Dionysos played a role.⁶ In the – admittedly much later – treatise *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch notes that the dismemberment of Dionysos was one of the reasons to identify him with Osiris.⁷ Herodotus' passage, therefore, is a valuable testimony for the early occurrence of the murder of Dionysos in those Mysteries (Ch. III.3).

Herodotus is the only early author to connect Egypt with Mysteries, but he does not mention Isis in this connection. It is not until the Hellenistic period that we hear of her association with Mysteries.⁸ The oldest testimony occurs in a so-called aretalogy, a kind of self-revelation by the goddess, in which Isis enumerates her cultural and cosmological inventions. A total of six of these texts have been found inscribed on stone, dating from about 100 BC to the third century AD; they are all related to one another and probably go back to a specific archetype in the earliest Ptolemaic period.⁹ The most elaborate one, found in Kyme on the west coast of Turkey and dating to the first or second century AD,¹⁰ even thought it

Miszellen 82 (1994) 25–44; F. Gaudard, 'Pap. Berlin P. 8278 and Its Fragments: Testimony of the Osirian Khoiak Festival Celebration during the Ptolemaic Period', in V.M. Lepper (ed.), *Forschung in der Papyrussammlung* (Berlin, 2012) 271–286.

4 Burkert, *AMC*, 40; M. Bommas, *Heiligtum und Mysterium. Griechenland und seine ägyptischen Gottheiten* (Mainz, 2005) 6–7; L. Bricault, *Les cultes isiaques dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris, 2013) 430: 'Ces mystères égyptiens sont bien différents des mystères initiatiques du monde grec'.

5 Hdt. 2.59.2 (Isis), 144.2 (Osiris), 156.5 (Isis), cf. G. Casadio, 'Osiride in Grecia e Dioniso in Egitto', in I. Gallo (ed.), *Plutarco e la religione* (Naples, 1996) 201–228; L. Coulon, 'Osiris chez Hérodote', in idem *et al.* (eds), *Hérodote et l'Égypte* (Lyon, 2013) 167–190.

6 See also W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 153–159.

7 Plut. *Mor.* 364f–365a; note also 356b and 364de.

8 A very well-informed study of the Egyptian Mysteries, although not wholly up-to-date regarding the epigraphical material, is F. Dunand, 'Les mystères égyptiens aux époques hellénistique et romaine', in F. Dunand *et al.*, *Mystères et syncrétismes* (Paris, 1975) 12–62; see also ead., *Isis, Mère des Dieux* (Paris, 2000) 125–140.

9 A. Henrichs, 'The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretalogies', *HSCP* 38 (1984) 139–158 at 156f.

10 *RICIS* 302/0204 (with previous bibliography), of which now a close, second-century AD copy has been found in Macedonian Cassandreia (*RICIS* Suppl. I, 113/1201), in addition to the already

wise to confirm the Egyptian credentials of its praises by telling us at the start, ‘The following was copied from the stele which is in Memphis, where it stands before the temple of Hephaestus’ (= Egyptian Ptah). Such an ‘authentication’ is a well-known literary topos and goes back a long way in history: the prologue of the Gilgamesh epic already invites us ‘[Find] the tablet box of cedar, [release] its clasps of bronze! [Open] the lid of its secret, [lift] up the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out all the misfortunes, all that Gilgamesh went through’.¹¹ Such fictitious stelae were a common form of religious propaganda in the Hellenistic and Roman period. Usually they occur in contexts that show Alexandrian or Egyptian influence,¹² as is hardly surprising: the topos was already current in ancient Egypt.¹³

That does not mean that these praises can be reduced to a strictly Egyptian background. The stress on Isis’ status as a cultural heroine and former queen of Egypt would hardly be thinkable without the influence of the Sophist Prodicus.¹⁴ Yet Egyptian influence is not in doubt, as the beginning of the aretalogy already states: ‘I am Isis, the mistress of every land, and I was taught by Hermes (= Egyptian Thoth), and with Hermes I devised writing, both the hieroglyphic and the demotic, that all might not be written with the same letters’.¹⁵ Early students of this aretalogy stressed the Greek content, but increasing interest in contemporary demotic literature has brought to light a number of hymns that put beyond doubt the great Egyptian influence on these praises.¹⁶ At the same time, they also

known copies of Thessalonica (*IG* X 2.254 = *RICIS* 113/0545), Maroneia (*RICIS* 114/0202), Ios (*IG* XII 5.14 = *RICIS* 202/1101) and Telmessus (*RICIS* 306/0201: unpublished). For Isis’ temple in Kyme, see S. Lagona, ‘Cibebe e Iside a Kyme Eolica’, in H. Krininger (ed.), *Die Ägais und das westliche Mittelmeer* (Vienna, 2000) 143–148 (with previous bibliography).

11 *Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1.24–28, tr. A. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2003) 1.539; A.-J. Festugière, *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris, 1972) 272–274; W. Speyer, *Bücherfunde in der Glaubenswerbung der Antike* (Göttingen, 1970); W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 272; P. Piovanelli, ‘The Miraculous Discovery of the Hidden Manuscript, or the Paratextual Function of the Prologue to the *Apocalypse of Paul*’, in J.N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz (eds), *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul* (Leuven, 2007) 23–49; R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography II* (Oxford, 2013) 624–625; this volume, Ch. IV.1.2. For later periods: J. Herman and F. Hallyn (eds), *Le topos du manuscrit trouvé* (Leuven, 1999).

12 A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1950³) 1.319–324; Henrichs, ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion’, 152 n. 57.

13 For examples, see M.A. Stadler, *Weiser und Wesir. Studien zu Vorkommen, Rolle und Wesen des Gottes Thot im ägyptischen Totenbuch* (Tübingen, 2009) 70–89.

14 Henrichs, ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion’, 152–158.

15 See also the balanced survey of H.S. Versnel, *Ter Unus* (Leiden, 1990) 41–44.

16 T.M. Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis: on Some Continuities and Discontinuities in the Image of Isis in Greek Hymns and Demotic Texts’, in K. Ryholt (ed.), *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies* (Copenhagen, 2002) 149–184; J.F. Quack, ‘“Ich bin Isis, die Herrin der beiden

demonstrate that the author of this aretalogy was not a slavish copier but an independent author who made his own choices from the available Greek and Egyptian literature.

It is striking that the earliest, still Hellenistic, aretalogies, those of Maroneia and Andros, do not contain the claim, ‘I revealed Mysteries unto men’, which we do find in the first or second-century AD ones of Kyme (24–25) and Ios (23); an early second-century AD aretalogy on papyrus also calls Isis ‘*mystis* at the Hellespont’ (*P.Oxy.* 11.1380.110–11). Admittedly, the aretalogy of Maroneia (*ca.* 100 BC) states, ‘She (Isis) has invented writings with Hermes, and from these the holy ones for the initiates, but the public ones for everyone’ (22–24); a long digression credits Isis with first revealing the fruits of the earth in Athens and closely associates her with Triptolemos, so the author (and surely also the readers) wants to go hastily to Athens, where Eleusis is the jewel of the city (36–41). Although these lines connect Isis with Mysteries, they claim no more for her than the invention of books in the Mysteries and a close association with the most famous Mysteries of the day, those of Eleusis – not with her own Mysteries.¹⁷

All this seems an important indication that Mysteries were a relatively late arrival among the achievements of Isis as perceived by her propagandists. There are surprisingly few data for her Mysteries, despite the attention that initiation receives in Apuleius.¹⁸ This is not the *communis opinio* of the scholarly world, however. The famous Egyptologist Erik Hornung states: ‘Mit der Ausbreitung der Isiskulte über das gesamte römische Reich fanden auch die Isismysterien immer weitere Verbreitung. Von ihrer Bedeutung berichten viele antike Schriftsteller, dazu auch bildliche Darstellungen’.¹⁹ Miguel John Versluys even argues: ‘This aspect (i.e. Isis as a Mystery goddess) is, probably, the

Länder.” Versuch zum demotischen Hintergrund der memphitischen Isisaretalogie’, in S. Meyer (ed.), *Egypt – Temple of the Whole World* (Leiden, 2003) 319–365 (to be read with M.A. Stadler, ‘Zur ägyptischen Vorlage der memphitischen Isisaretalogie’, *Göttinger Miszellen* 204 (2005) 7–9); H. Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess: A Comparative and Annotated Re-edition of Six Demotic Hymns and Praises Addressed to Isis* (Berlin and New York, 2008); M. Stadler, ‘Spätägyptische Hymnen als Quellen für den interkulturellen Austausch und den Umgang mit dem eigenen Erbe – drei Fallstudien’, in M. Witte and J. Diehl (eds), *Orakel und Gebete. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Sprache der Religion in Ägypten, Vorderasien und Griechenland in hellenistischer Zeit* (Tübingen, 2009) 141–163 at 160–162 and ‘New Light on the Universality of Isis’, in J.F. Quack and C. Witschel (eds), *Religious Flows in the Roman Empire*, forthcoming.

¹⁷ *Contra* Bricault, *Les cultes isiaques*, 430, cf. U. Bianchi, ‘Iside dea misterica. Quando?’, in G. Piccaluga (ed.), *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome, 1980) 9–36.

¹⁸ See also Burkert, *AMC*, 40.

¹⁹ E. Hornung, ‘Altägyptische Wurzeln der Isismysterien’, in C. Berger *et al.* (eds), *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, 3 vols (Cairo, 1994) 3.287–293 at 287; similarly, Bommas, *Heiligtum*, 74f.

defining characteristic of the Hellenistic and Roman Isis in religious terms'.²⁰ Nothing could be further from the truth. There was indeed a Mystery cult of Isis in Rome, as several inscriptions show, and perhaps in some other Italian towns, such as Brindisi;²¹ we also have an altar dedicated to Isis Orgia in Thessalonica in the second century AD, an epithet that suggests Mysteries,²² and which may well explain a broken column in Cenchreae with 'Orgia' inscribed on it;²³ we also have references to Mysteries of Isis in Anatolian Prusa and Tralles, probably Samos and perhaps Bithynia and Sagalassos;²⁴ but that is all. Outside Italy, the epicentre is clearly the eastern Mediterranean. None of these Mysteries can be securely dated earlier than the second century AD and none of them provides us with any detail whatsoever of the actual initiation. In consequence, Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*, which is plausibly dated to the last decades of the second century,²⁵ is of exceptional value for its account of the initiation of its protagonist. It is a literary account and not an anthropological 'thick' description, but there is general agreement that Apuleius was very well informed about the cult of Isis.²⁶ We will therefore proceed to his account, even if with some trepidation, as there are no other reports to act as a check on Apuleius' imagination.

We have arrived at the eleventh and last book of the novel.²⁷ In the previous book, the man-turned-donkey Lucius had heard that he had to copulate in public

20 M.J. Versluys, 'Orientalising Roman Gods', in L. Bricault and C. Bonnet (eds), *Pantheé: Religious Transformations in the Graeco-Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2013) 235–259 at 253f.

21 Rome: *RICIS* *501/0127, 501/0165–66, 501/0168, 501/0185, *501/0188, *501/0190. Brindisi: 505/0101. Forlimpopoli: 512/0201. Modena: 512/0602.

22 *IG X.2.1*, 103 = *RICIS* 205/0104, cf. C. Steimle, *Religion im römischen Thessaloniki* (Tübingen, 2008) 103–106.

23 *RICIS* *102/0201, cf. J.L. Rife, 'Religion and Society at Roman Kenchreai', in S.J. Friesen *et al.* (eds), *Corinth in Context* (Leiden, 2010) 391–432 at 402–411.

24 Prusa: *I. Prusa* 48 = *RICIS* 308/0401. Tralles: *I. Tralles* 86 = *RICIS* 303/1301. Samos: *IG XII* 6.2, 600 = *RICIS* 205/0104. Bithynia: *RICIS* 308/1201. Sagalassos: *RICIS* *312/0501.

25 S.J. Harrison, *Apuleius: a Latin Sophist* (Oxford, 2000) 9.

26 Harrison, *Apuleius*, 238; J. Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods* (Leiden, 2008) 337.

27 I am of course heavily indebted to the standard commentary by J.G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros, The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)* (Leiden, 1975); note also J.-C. Fredouille, *Apulei Metamorphoseon Liber XI* (Paris, 1975); Bricault, *Les cultes isiaques*, 428–445; U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser, "'Ich war ihr steter Diener": Kultalltag im Isis-Buch des Apuleius', in C. Hattler (ed.), *Imperium der Götter* (Karlsruhe and Darmstadt, 2013) 150–155. From the older literature, see especially R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig, 1927³) 220–234 (too Egyptianising); A.D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford, 1933) 138–155; W. Wittmann, *Das Isisbuch des Apuleius* (Stuttgart, 1938) 100–121 (a clever book, but very much influenced by national-socialist ideology); M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion II* (Munich, 1961²) 632–638.

with a woman condemned to death for several murders. We might think that the simple fact of copulation with a human might have been somewhat off-putting, but not for this donkey. On the contrary, a wealthy Corinthian lady had already paid his trainer to have a night of love with him, and Lucius only too happily obliged in what must be the most outrageous love scene in ancient literature.²⁸ But even randy donkeys have their standards, and when he sees an opportunity Lucius flees the theatre and runs the six miles to the seaside of the neighbouring city of Cenchreae.²⁹

At the beach Isis appears to him in a dream and promises to change him back into a human being. The next day there will be a great religious festival and if he plucks the roses out of the hand of her priest he will become normal again. Lucius approaches the priest, devours the roses and, as he tells us, ‘at once my ugly animal form slipped from me’ (13).³⁰ The problem of his nakedness is immediately solved by the priest, who nods to a participant in the procession, who gives him his outer, white garment (14, 15).³¹ Subsequently, Lucius rents a house in Isis’ sanctuary, where the goddess continuously appears in his dreams, urging him to become initiated.³² Yet Lucius delays that final step, considering the many requirements of her cult, not least that of chastity (19).

Apuleius of course raises the suspense with Lucius’ deliberations, but there is perhaps also a more general reason behind this delay: important transitions in life cannot be made light-heartedly.³³ Such transitions have to be dramatised, and that is what Apuleius is doing here. At the same time, Lucius promotes his own importance, as not a night passes without the goddess appearing to him and trying to persuade him to let himself be initiated (19: *censebat initiari*).

After he has had another dream in which the chief priest offers him gifts that clearly have a symbolic meaning (20), Lucius is ready for his initiation, but now

28 A. Henrichs, ‘Missing Pages: Papyrology, Genre, and the Greek Novel’, in D. Obbink and R. Rutherford (eds), *Culture in Pieces. Essays on Ancient Texts in Honour of Peter Parsons* (Oxford, 2011) 302–322 at 317.

29 P. Veyne, ‘Apulée à Cenchrées’, *Rev. Philol.* 39 (1965) 241–251; for the sanctuary of Isis, see Bommas, *Heiligtum*, 109–112, whose reconstruction of the ritual is speculative; K. Kleibl, *Iseion. Raumgestaltung und Kultpraxis in den Heiligtümern gräco-ägyptischer Götter im Mittelmeerraum* (Worms, 2009) 192–195.

30 All references to chapter numbers are to Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*.

31 For the clothes, which are described by Apuleius in less detail and as more simple than they were in reality, see U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser, ‘Des Mysteren neue Kleider: Gewande(l)te Identität im Isisbuch des Apuleius’, in S. Schrenk and K. Vössing (eds), *Kleidung und Identität in religiösen Kontexten der Kaiserzeit* (Regensburg, 2012) 149–162.

32 For inns in Isis’ sanctuaries, see Kleibl, *Iseion*, 122–124.

33 J. Bremmer and N. Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* (London, 1987) 108–111.

the chief priest holds off (21).³⁴ He tells him that the day of the initiation is determined by a nod from the goddess, as is the selection of the administering priest and even the amount of money that has to be paid to be initiated. This is a recurring theme in Lucius' initiations and the frequency with which he mentions that theme suggests a certain ambivalence, if not outright criticism.³⁵ But, as the priest adds, Lucius is already starting to abstain from certain foods in order that he 'might more properly penetrate to the hidden mysteries of the purest ritual practice' (21). As this fasting is the beginning of the process of initiation, now is the right moment to touch briefly on a methodological question, to which previous analyses have not given enough thought. If the Isis Mysteries are indeed relatively recent – as they must be, as they are hardly attested before the second century AD – we must ask: where did the priests get their ideas as they constructed this new ritual of the Isis Mysteries?

The most plausible answer seems to be: from their own rituals and other Mysteries. The obvious candidates in the latter respect are of course the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Mysteries of Samothrace, the most prestigious Mysteries of the period, but the priests may also have considered Dionysiac Mysteries. At the same time, they had their own Isiac rituals in their own Isiac temples – rituals and architecture that must have contributed to the *bricolage* of the initiation. The existing rituals derived from the priests' own Egyptian tradition, but they had also been adapted to the Greek and Roman world. We must always be prepared to look both to Egypt and to the contemporary world of the Roman empire when we analyse our material.

So let us return to Lucius. Dreams are clearly an important part of the cult of Isis. The somewhat younger traveller Pausanias (10.32.9) tells us that in Tithorea in Phocis only those who had been summoned by Isis in a dream were admitted to her temple.³⁶ Incubation was practised in some sanctuaries of Egyptian gods, for example in Athens and Delos, and we even hear of dream exegetes there.³⁷ Moreover, many inscriptions to Isis mention that they were erected 'on the order

34 It is striking how Apuleius varies the terminology for the chief priest: 16, 20 (*summus sacerdos*), 17 (*sacerdos maximus*), 21 (*primarium sacerdotem*), 22 (*sacerdotem praecipuum*).

35 Apul. *Met.* 11.18.3, 21.4, 22.3, 23.1, 25.5, 28.4–6 and 30.1–2, cf. Fredouille, *Apulei Metamorphoseon Liber XI*, 12–13; Harrison, *Apuleius*, 245.

36 Cf. Nock, *Conversion*, 152–155; Bommas, *Heiligtum*, 105–108. For Tithorea, see also U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser, 'Exklusives Mysterium oder inszeniertes Wissen? Die ägyptischen Kulte in der Darstellung des Pausanias', dans A. Hoffmann (ed.), *Ägyptische Kulte und ihre Heiligtümer im Osten des Römischen Reiches* (Istanbul, 2005) 259–280.

37 Athens: *RICIS* 101/0206. Delos: 101/0221, 202/0209. For the Egyptian background, see M.A. Stadler, *Einführung in die ägyptische Religion ptolemäisch-römischer Zeit nach den demotischen religiösen Texten* (Berlin, 2012) 74–81.

of the goddess'.³⁸ Apuleius is thus referring to a well-known characteristic of the Isis cult when he mentions these dreams.

The same must be true of the reference to fasting and abstention from certain types of food. The Egyptian priest and Stoic philosopher Chaeremon, who was also a tutor of Nero, wrote a book, whose title is unknown but from which the third-century pagan philosopher Porphyry quotes in his own book *On Abstinence*. From this we know that the Egyptian priests did not eat bread, fish, carnivorous birds or, sometimes, even eggs. When preparing for an important function in some kind of ritual they had to abstain for a number of days from all animal food, vegetables and sex. From this tradition of ascetic abstention, the Isis priests had clearly made a selection for the initiates in Roman times, perhaps depending on the local ecology.³⁹

Lucius' patience is rewarded. One night the goddess appears and tells him that the day, so desired by him, has come. Of course she does not forget to tell him the cost of the ritual but, perhaps as a comfort, she also informs him that it is the high priest himself, Mithras, who will initiate him, being joined to him by a 'divine conjunction of stars'. This astrological detail points to the great interest in astrology at the time as well as to the attested astronomical activities of the Egyptian priests.⁴⁰ The name Mithras has often set off a discussion of syncretism in the first centuries of the Christian era.⁴¹ At the time of Cumont and long afterwards, the term 'syncretism' carried a pejorative sense and suggested a mixing of 'pure' Christianity or Roman religion with Oriental religious elements. Most scholars today are rather hesitant about using the term, as they have become increasingly aware that all religions constantly borrow elements from other religions or ideologies: there are no 'pure' religions.⁴² Nonetheless a reference to

38 See L. Bricault, *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques*, 3 vols (Paris, 2005) 2.790: index s.v. 'Impératives'.

39 Porph. *Abst.* 4.6–8 = Chaeremon fr. 10, to be read with the commentaries of Van der Horst and of Patillon and Segonds in their Budé edition of Porphyry *ad loc.*; note also Plut. *Mor.* 352f, 353d–f.

40 R.A. Parker and O. Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*, 3 vols (Providence, 1960–1969); G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton, 1993²) 67–68; J. Dieleman, 'Claiming the Stars. Egyptian Priests Facing the Sky', in S. Bickel and A. Loprieno (eds), *Basel Egyptology Prize 1* (Basel, 2003) 277–289 and 'Stars and the Egyptian Priesthood in the Greco-Roman Period', in S. Noegel *et al.* (eds), *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World* (University Park, 2003) 137–153. For the interest in astrology, see F. Cumont, *Astrologie et Religion chez les Grecs et les Romains*, ed. I. Tassinon (Brussels and Rome, 2000).

41 See already Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (1910¹) 29–30 = 1927³, 42f.

42 R. Gordon, 'Synkretismus I', in *Der Neue Pauly* 11 (2001) 1151–1155; C. Marksches, 'Synkretismus. V. Kirchengeschichtlich', in *TRE* 32 (2001) 538–552; C. Auffarth, 'Synkretismus. IV. Antike', in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*⁴, vol. 7 (Tübingen, 2004) 1962–1964; M. Tardieu, 'Les facettes

the competing god Mithras would be rather surprising here. Joachim Quack proposes to interpret ‘Mithras’ as a form of the Egyptian name Month-Re, traces of which can still be found in the magical papyri.⁴³ The proposed identification is hardly plausible from a phonetic point of view, but Apuleius also mentions the Egyptian Zatchlas, a first prophet, whose name has caused equal headaches for Egyptologists, who have not been able to give it a plausible explanation.⁴⁴ In fact, Mithras as a personal name was not unknown in antiquity, although usually written as Mithres,⁴⁵ and the name may well point the reader to the cosmological speculations of the Mithras cult, the more so as the description of Mithras as *meum iam parentem* is redolent of *Pater*, the highest position in the Mithraic grade system (§ 2).⁴⁶

After the usual ritual of the opening of the temple,⁴⁷ Mithras brings out some books ‘from the secret part of the sanctuary’, to which only the priests had access.⁴⁸ The books, as Lucius notes, were ‘inscribed with unknown characters. Some used the shapes of all sorts of animals to represent abridged expressions of liturgical language; in others ends of the letters were knotted and curved like wheels or interwoven like vine-tendrils to protect their meaning from the curiosity of the uninitiated’ (22.8). The last words look like a contemporary interpretation, but the description is fairly accurate and suggests that part of the books were

du syncrétisme: méthodologie de la recherche et histoire des concepts’, in G. Veinstein (ed.), *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l’Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe–XVIIe s.)* (Paris, 2005) 3–16; P. Kella, ‘“Syncrétisme” comme catégorie conceptuelle’, in C. Bonnet et al. (eds), *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain: cent ans après Cumont (1906–2006)* (Brussels and Rome, 2009) 134–150 (with detailed bibliography).

43 J.F. Quack, ‘Königsweihe, Priesterweihe, Isisweihe’, in J. Assmann (ed.), *Ägyptische Mystereien?* (Munich, 2002) 95–108 at 95 n. 2.

44 For Zatchlas and comparable Egyptian priests in Roman times, see J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites* (Leiden, 2005) 240–254.

45 Mithres: for example, H. Solin, *Die stadtrömischen Sklavennamen. Ein Namenbuch*, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 1996) 2.301 and *Die Griechischen Personennamen in Rom*, 3 vols (Berlin and New York, 2003²) 1.405; *SEG* 32.1236–1237, 38.1218, 46.1519, 54.1227, 57.1164–1165, 58.1664. Mithras: *Plut. Mor.* 1126e; *REG* 65 (1952) 1183; *Anatol. Stud.* 18 (1968) 94 no. 1, 01, 5f.; *IG XIV* 1815; *I. Tralles*: 180 (with thanks to Richard Gordon).

46 As is suggested by K. Dowden, ‘Geography and Direction in *Metamorphoses* 11’, in W. Keulen and U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser (eds), *Aspects of Apuleius’ Golden Ass III: The Isis Book* (Leiden, 2012) 156–167 at 166.

47 R. Merkelbach, *Isis Regina – Zeus Sarapis* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1995) 150–151; S. Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, tr. D. Lorton (Ithaca and London, 2000) 76–88; Kleibl, *Iseion*, 131–133.

48 Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 5.4.19.3 = Chaeremon fr. 20D, cf. J. Vergote, ‘Clement d’Alexandrie et l’écriture égyptienne. Essai d’interprétation de Stromates V, IV, 20–21’, *Le Muséon* 52 (1939) 199–221.

written in hieroglyphs or, perhaps, the hieratic script.⁴⁹ It cannot be stressed strongly enough that such a use of books was very uncommon in Greek and Roman religion, although we have seen that books also occurred in the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III.2). The books of the Egyptian scholarly priests, whom the Greeks called *hierogrammateis*, ‘temple scribes’,⁵⁰ were called ‘books of the gods’ or ‘divine books’ in Egyptian, which the Greeks in turn translated as *hierai bibloi*, ‘holy books’.⁵¹ These books were composed, copied and preserved ‘in the temple libraries and the House-of-Life, the cultic library that housed those texts that were seen as the emanations of the sun god Re’⁵² and which was the place where these writings were discussed.⁵³ In our case we do not know where exactly the priests preserved their books, but the Egyptian script must certainly have helped to raise the solemnity of the occasion, even if Lucius did not understand Egyptian, which the priest perhaps translated or paraphrased.

From the books the priest reads out what Lucius had to buy for his initiation. Unfortunately, he gives no details, but one thing is certain: there was no such thing as a free lunch in this ritual! Naturally, he has to take a bath, as such purificatory baths were very common in all kinds of rituals, including several Mysteries, as we have seen (Ch. I.1 and *passim*);⁵⁴ the fact that he even receives an

49 Wittman, *Das Isisbuch*, 108–109; Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 285; Quack, ‘Königsweihe’, 95–96; Bommas, *Heiligtum*, 7–9. For late hieroglyphics, see P. Derchain, ‘Les hiéroglyphes à l’époque ptolémaïque’, in C. Baurain et al. (eds), *Phoinikeia grammata: lire et écrire en Méditerranée* (Namur, 1989) 243–256.

50 For this position, see most recently K.-T. Zauzich, ‘Hierogrammat’, in *LÄ* 2 (1977) 1199–1201; Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 207.

51 Bremmer, ‘From Holy Books to Holy Bible: an Itinerary from Ancient Greece to Modern Islam via Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity’, in M. Popović (ed.), *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden, 2010) 327–360.

52 Dieleman, *Priests*, 207; emanations of Re, Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes*, 57–60; R. Jasnow and K.-T. Zauzich, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Thoth* (Wiesbaden, 2005) 27–29. House-of-Life: see most recently K. Ryholt, ‘On the Contents and Nature of the Tebtunis Temple Library’, in S. Lippert and M. Schentuleit (eds), *Tebtunis und Soknopaiu Nesos: Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum* (Wiesbaden, 2005) 141–170, with important new material on the contents of Egyptian temple libraries; K. Zinn, ‘Tempelbibliotheken im Alten Ägypten’, in H. Froschauer and C. Römer (eds), *Bibliotheken: Leben und Lesen in den frühen Klöstern Ägyptens* (Vienna, 2008) 81–91; Kleibl, *Iseion*, 118–120. The libraries are mentioned already by Hecataeus of Abdera *FGrH* 264 F 25 (as quoted by Diod. Sic. 1.49.3); Ael. Arist. Or. 8.29; G. Burkard, ‘Bibliotheken im alten Ägypten. Überlegungen zum (sic) Methodik ihres Nachweises und Übersicht zum Stand der Forschung’, *Bibliothek. Forschung und Praxis* 4 (1980) 79–115.

53 J. Osing, *Hieratische Papyri aus Tebtunis I* (Copenhagen, 1998) 22f.

54 R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 20.

additional sprinkling stresses its importance.⁵⁵ Water was very important in the sanctuaries of Isis and various dedications of fountains to the goddess have survived.⁵⁶ The priest then asked for forgiveness, another traditional theme in Egyptian priests' initiations.⁵⁷ Together with the bathing, it meant that the future initiate was now sufficiently pure of body and soul to approach the goddess. The priest next uttered some holy words and ordered Lucius to abstain from meat and wine for a period of ten days. That particular period occurs already in the Bacchanalian Mysteries of the early second century BC, but it is also the normal period of abstinence in the cult of Isis in the Late Republic and Early Empire, as we know from the complaints of Roman love poets who missed their girlfriends for that period.⁵⁸ There were even associations of worshippers of Egyptian gods that met every ten days.⁵⁹ Evidently, in the construction of the Mysteries the priests once again made use of the traditional rituals of the cult of Isis.

All these preliminary rituals happened during the day, but the actual initiation had to take place at night, the normal time of initiation in ancient Mysteries (Ch. I.2 and *passim*). Suddenly a crowd of worshippers turned up and honoured Lucius with presents, a custom which seems to have developed in Hellenistic times.⁶⁰ After all the uninitiated have been dismissed – Apuleius here alludes to the Vergilian *procul, o procul este, profani* (*Aen.* 6.258; Appendix 2.1),⁶¹ but this banishing of the uninitiated was traditional in the early Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries (Ch. III.2) – Lucius receives a linen robe, as was normal in the cult of

55 Wittmann, *Das Isisbuch*, 109–110.

56 Water: R. Wild, *Water in the Cultic Worship of Isis and Sarapis* (Leiden, 1981); Bommas, *Heiligtum*, 41–42, 45; Kleibl, *Iseion*, 102–114, 154f. Fountains: *RICIS* 202/0279 (Delos), 509/0201 (Helvia Ricina), 602/0301 (Alameda).

57 J.A. Hanson (Loeb) wrongly translates *praefatus deum veniam* with 'asking the gods' favour', but the priest asks for forgiveness, a traditional theme in the Isis cult, as Lucius does in 25.7, cf. Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 287; L. Koenen, 'Egyptian Influence in Tibullus', *Illinois Class. Stud.* 1 (1976) 127–159 at 129; R. Merkelbach, *Die Unschuldserklärungen und Beichten im ägyptischen Totenbuch, in der römischen Elegie und im antiken Roman* (Giessen, 1987); M.A. Stadler, 'Judgment after Death (Negative Confession)', in W. Wendrich *et al.* (eds), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* = http://escholarship.org/uc/melc_uee (Los Angeles, 2008), accessed 17-12-2013.

58 Bacchanalia: Livy 39.9. Love poets: Tib. 1.3.26; Prop. 2.33A.1–2, 2.28.62 (mention of the ten-day period); Ov. *Am.* 1.8.74, 2.19.42, 3.9.33f.

59 *RICIS* 202/0139 (Delos), 308/0401 = *I. Prusa* 48; *RICIS* 204/1002 (Cos), cf. Bricault, *Les cultes isiaques*, 292–294.

60 As is suggested by Ter. *Phormio* 48–50.

61 Apul. *Met.* 11.23.4: *semotis procul profanis omnibus*; note also Apul. *Met.* 3.15.1, which equally refers to the closing of the doors to the profane, cf. P. Van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods* (Cambridge, 2011) 94.

Isis.⁶² The priest takes his hand and leads him into the innermost part of the temple; unfortunately, it is not completely clear how we should imagine this temple, as there was no standardised form.⁶³ At this *moment suprême*, however, Apuleius fails us. ‘Dear reader’, he tells us, ‘you may awfully wish to know what was said and done afterwards. I’d tell if it were allowed ... But I shall not keep you in suspense with perhaps religious desire nor shall I torture you with prolonged anguish’ (23.5–6). He proceeds: ‘I approached the frontier of death, I set foot on the threshold of Persephone, I journeyed through all the elements and came back, I saw at midnight the sun, sparkling in white light, I came close to the gods of the upper and nether world and adored them from near at hand’ (23.7, tr. Burkert).

As has often been observed,⁶⁴ Apuleius has put the description in the form of the *symbolon* (Ch. VI.3), ‘password’, of the Eleusinian initiates: ‘I fasted, I drank the *kykeon* (like Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*), I took from the hamper, after working I deposited in the basket and from the basket in the hamper’ (Ch. I.1). Like these phrases, Apuleius’ solemn words are tantalising but ultimately not informative. Yet we should note that they in part refer back to the qualities of Isis we have already mentioned. First, we have the association with the universe, including the underworld, though there are no archaeological indications that this visit to the underworld was symbolised by visits to subterranean corridors or halls, as has sometimes been suggested.⁶⁵ This theme had been announced by the goddess in the dream to Lucius on the beach of Cenchreae, in which she pronounced a kind of aretalogy of herself. In her *Selbstoffenbarung* she mentions that she is the *regina manium*, ‘queen of the dead’ (5.1) – in fact, Lucius himself had already identified the goddess with Proserpina and Hecate, amongst many other goddesses (2) – and at the end of her revelation she mentions that after death Lucius will find her holding court in the underworld and the Elysian fields (6.6). The chief priest had mentioned that the gates of death were in Isis’ hands and that the initiation itself was ‘performed in the manner of voluntary death’ (21.7). In other words, when Lucius mentions that he approached the underworld but also returned, he is alluding to the power of Isis over life but also over death. We know this also from an inscription from Bithynia, in which an

⁶² Ov. *Met.* 1.747; Juv. 6.533; Plut. *Mor.* 352cd (reason for linen); Apul. *Met.* 11.3.5, 10.1–2, 14.3, 24.2, 27.4; *RICIS* 202/0428, 503/0301 (Nemi).

⁶³ See the full survey by Kleibl, *Iseion*, 70–90.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Wittmann, *Das Isisbuch*, 112; Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 294–296; Burkert, *AMC*, 98.

⁶⁵ See the discussion by Kleibl, *Iseion*, 66f.

initiate tells us that because of his initiation into the Mysteries of Isis he did not ‘walk the dark road of the Acheron’ but ‘ran to the havens of the blessed’.⁶⁶

Before Lucius returned to the upper world, he also, as he tells us, journeyed through all the elements. Burkert suggests that the elements had to do with purifications, but that is unpersuasive, as Lucius had already been extensively purified.⁶⁷ His passing through the elements seems rather to be a stage in his journey before returning to this world. These elements are also under the rule of Isis, for in the dream of Lucius we have just mentioned she refers to herself as the *elementorum omnium domina*, ‘mistress of all the elements’ (5.1), and Lucius later states that ‘the elements are the slaves’ of Isis (25). In Apuleius, elements always refer to the elements of nature, that is, earth, water, air and fire, which make up the sublunary world.⁶⁸ Lucius seems to have travelled to the boundaries of both the upper and the nether world, which enabled him to actually see the gods of both these worlds.

In his *Sacred Tales*, Apuleius’ contemporary Aelius Aristides refers to an initiation into the cult of Sarapis,⁶⁹ the Egyptian god often closely associated with Isis: ‘But that which appeared later contained something much more frightening than these things, in which there were ladders, which delimited the region above and below the earth, and the power of the gods on each side, and there were other things, which caused a wonderful feeling of terror, and cannot perhaps be told to all, with the result that I gladly beheld the tokens. The summary point was about the power of the god, that both without conveyance and without bodies Sarapis is able to carry men wherever he wishes. Such was the initiation, and not easily recognised, I rose’.⁷⁰ It seems hardly a coincidence that in this Egyptian context

⁶⁶ RICIS 308/1201, cf. C. Bonner, ‘Desired Haven’, *Harvard Theol. Rev.* 34 (1941) 49–67.

⁶⁷ Burkert, *AMC*, 98. Was Burkert, perhaps unconsciously, influenced by Mozart’s *Zauberflöte*, in which initiation into the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris is connected with a trial by water and fire, cf. J. Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte. Oper und Mysterium* (Munich and Vienna, 2005)?

⁶⁸ Apul. *De deo Socratis* 8, *Met.* 11.2.28, 3.15, 4.30, 6.22; in general, A. Lumpe, ‘Elementum’, in *RAC* 4 (1959) 1073–1100.

⁶⁹ For Sarapis, see most recently S. Schmidt, ‘Serapis – ein neuer Gott für die Griechen in Ägypten’, in H. Becker *et al.* (eds), *Ägypten – Griechenland – Rom. Abwehr und Berührung* (Frankfurt, 2005) 291–304; M. Bergmann, ‘Sarapis im 3. Jahrhundert v. Chr.’, in G. Weber (ed.), *Alexandria und das ptolemäische Ägypten* (Berlin, 2010) 109–135; N. Belayche, ‘Le possible “corps” des dieux: retour sur Sarapis’, in F. Prescendi and Y. Volokhine (eds), *Dans le laboratoire de l’histoire des religions* (Geneva, 2011) 227–250; M. Bommas, ‘Isis, Osiris, and Serapis’, in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012) 419–435; D. Devauchelle, ‘Pas d’Apis pour Sarapis!’, in A. Gasse *et al.* (eds), *Et in Aegypto et ad Aegyptum. Recueil d’études dédiées à Jean-Claude Grenier* (Montpellier, 2012) 213–225; J.F. Quack, ‘Serapis als neuer Gefährte der Isis. Von der Geburt eines Gottes aus dem Geist eines Stiers’, in Hattler, *Imperium der Götter*, 164–170.

⁷⁰ Ael. *Arist. Or.* 49.48, tr. Behr 1986.

we also find an experience of the gods on either side of the earth, even though we are left very much in the dark about how exactly we should imagine this experience.⁷¹

In the middle of Lucius' description, and thus clearly the highlight of the ritual, we find the mention of the sun at midnight. Egyptologists relate this to passages from the *Book of the Dead*.⁷² Although the *Book* itself had ceased to be copied when the Isis priests started to construct their Mysteries,⁷³ its ideas were still current and would remain so into the third century AD. We may therefore presume that at midnight a torch was lit, as torches were heavily imbued with solar symbolism.⁷⁴ The priests of Isis may well have looked to the prestigious contemporary Mysteries with which they would have to compete, and they could confidently compare their own fire with that of the great fire at the *moment suprême* of Eleusis (Ch. I.3). A recently published inscription has shown that the famous Mysteries of Samothrace had taken over not only the Eleusinian light but also the Eleusinian promises of a better position in the afterlife (Ch. II.1). The Mysteries of Isis would hardly have been less spectacular or promised less than the best known Mysteries of Greece.

At the end of his description, and perhaps its climax, Lucius mentions that he had adored the gods from close at hand. It is important to realise how different this is from classical Greek religion. Mythology tells us how Semele was burned to ashes when she saw Zeus in his full glory.⁷⁵ Here Lucius' proximity to the gods is stressed, just as he will be displayed on a platform opposite the statue of Isis after his initiation (below). It does not seem impossible that Lucius was confronted with images of the gods or perhaps with frescoes depicting them, though the latter is less likely, given the nocturnal setting of his initiation. The proximity fits the trend towards a closer connection between worshipper and the gods, as can be witnessed in the first centuries of the

71 Martin Stadler points out to me that in the Demotic first Setne-story a Book of Thoth is the object of desire because through its knowledge one can understand the birds of the sky, the fish in the water, and one can see the sun god. In the second Setne-story, Setne is brought to the underworld and sees Osiris himself. For translations of the two Setne-stories, see F. Hoffmann and J. F. Quack, *Anthologie der demotischen Literatur* (Berlin, 2007) 118–137; D. Agut-Labordère and M. Chauveau, *Héros, magiciens et sages oubliés de l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris, 2011) 71–94.

72 Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 303–308.

73 M. Coenen, 'On the Demise of the *Book of the Dead* in Ptolemaic Thebes', *Rev. d'Égyptologie* 52 (2001) 69–84.

74 M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity* (Oxford, 2009) 389–391.

75 Diod. Sic. 3.63.3–4, 4.2.2–3; Ov. *Met.* 3.256–315; Hyg. *Fab.* 167, 179; Apollod. 3.4.3; A. Kossatz-Deissmann, 'Semele', in *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) 718–726 at nos 6–17 and 'Semele', in *LIMC*, Suppl. 1 (2009) 448–450 at add. 3.

Christian era.⁷⁶ That is all we can say about what happened to Lucius in that fateful night: there is no mention of a sacred drama, no mention of Osiris' suffering. I stress this, as several scholars try to import into Apuleius all kinds of details that we are simply not told.⁷⁷

The next morning Lucius appeared, 'wearing a robe with twelve layers (?) as a sign of initiation', perhaps symbolising his passing through the zodiac.⁷⁸ He ascended a wooden platform in front of the goddess's statue in the very centre of the sanctuary. Once again he wore a linen garment. The text does not make clear if he had changed clothes in the meantime, but this time it is described as wonderfully embroidered and what 'the initiates call the Olympian stole' (24.3), which suggests that the initiation was seen as a kind of triumph in an Olympic contest.⁷⁹ He received a torch in his hand and a crown of palm leaves in order to make him look like a statue of the Sun. Here, too, one is inclined to see a certain resemblance to the Eleusinian Mysteries, as one of its most important officials, the *daidouchos*, 'the torch-bearer', had been made to resemble Helios, in line with the growing importance of Sol/Helios in Late Antiquity.⁸⁰ This all must have happened early in the morning, as now the curtains of the temple were opened and the people present were amazed by the view. The new status of the initiate was thus publicly dramatised and advertised. Afterwards, there were meals to celebrate his new 'birth in regard to the Mysteries'. And that was 'the perfection of the initiation', as Lucius remarks (24). He remains in the sanctuary for a few days to enjoy 'the ineffable pleasure of the holy image' – another

76 H.W. Pleket, 'Religious History as the History of Mentality: The "Believer" as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World', in H.S. Versnel (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship* (Leiden, 1981) 152–192; Versnel, *Ter unus*, 88–92.

77 For example, M. Malaise, 'Les caractéristiques et la question des antécédents de l'initiation isiaque', in J. Ries (ed.), *Les rites d'initiation* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1986) 355–362, which is a summarising update of his 'Contenu et effets de l'initiation isiaque', *Ant. Class.* 50 (1981) 483–498; Merkelbach, *Isis Regina*, 290–294 and, even, A. Chaniotis, 'Emotional Community Through Ritual: Initiates, Citizens and Pilgrims as Emotional Communities in the Greek World', in idem (ed.), *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean: Agency, Emotion, Gender, Representation* (Stuttgart, 2011) 264–290 at 267.

78 See the discussion by Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 308–310. As the subsequent description only mentions a linen tunic, either Lucius must have changed clothes or the expression refers to a robe with twelve parts.

79 Griffiths, *The Isis-Book*, 313–314 wrongly connects the term with Mount Olympus and the Olympian gods, cf. M. Zimmerman, 'Text and Interpretation ~ Interpretation and Text', in Keulen and Egelhaaf-Gaiser, *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass III*, 1–27 at 22–24.

80 Eus. *PE* 3.12; in general, M. Wallraff, *Christus Verus Sol. Sonnenverehrung und Christentum in der Spätantike* (Münster, 2001); S. Hijmans, *Sol: the Sun in the Art and Religions of Rome*, 2 vols (Diss. Groningen, 2009).

indication of the desire for a close relationship between goddess and worshipper, as for the Egyptians, like the Greeks, image and divinity were closely associated.⁸¹ The novel continues with initiations into the Mysteries of Osiris, but we shall leave it here and move on to a completely different type of Mysteries, those of Mithras.

2 Mithras

While the Egyptian origin of Isis is perfectly clear and the development of the goddess can be followed over many centuries, the case of Mithras is more complicated.⁸² It is difficult to get a grip on the god's advance from the ancient Near East to the Roman Empire and, whereas with Isis we at least have Apuleius, we lack any such narrative about the Mysteries of Mithras.⁸³ Our main sources for these Mysteries are archaeological,⁸⁴ whereas in the case of Isis they are

81 Egyptians: Porph. *Abst.* 4.6 = Chaeremon, fr. 10, cf. C. Aldred, 'Bild', in *LÄ* I (1975) 793–795 and W. Helck, 'Statuenkult', in *LÄ* V (1984) 1265–1267. Greeks: Bremmer, 'The Agency of Greek and Roman Statues: from Homer to Constantine', *Opuscula* 6 (2013) 7–21 (with full bibliography).

82 The point of departure must now be the excellent survey of R. Gordon, 'Mithras', in *RAC* 24 (2012) 964–1009, which supersedes all previous general studies; see also his 'Institutionalized Religious Options', in J. Rüpke (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Oxford, 2007) 392–405. The best monograph is M. Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras*, tr. and ed. by R. Gordon (Edinburgh, 2000), updated as *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium* (Darmstadt and Mainz, 2012); interesting but rather speculative, A. Mastrocinque, *Des Mystères de Mithra aux Mystères de Jésus* (Stuttgart, 2009). For the *Forschungsgeschichte*, see R. Beck, 'Mithraism since Franz Cumont', in *ANRW* II.17.4 (1984) 2002–2115 and Beck on *Mithraism* (Aldershot, 2004) 3–23, covering up to 2003; A. Chalupa, 'Paradigm Lost, Paradigm Found? Larger Theoretical Assumptions Behind Roger Beck's *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire*', *Pantheon* 7 (2012) 5–17; R. Gordon, 'Von Cumont bis Clauss. Ein Jahrhundert Mithras-Forschung', in Hattler, *Imperium der Götter*, 237–242.

83 Gordon, 'Mithras', 979 states that the only sources that clearly call the Mithras cult Mysteries are either Neo-Platonic (rather: Middle-Platonic) or Christian. This is true, but the convergence of pagan and Christian authors leaves little doubt about the existence of the Mysteries, cf. the list of relevant sources by Burkert, *ACM*, 138 n. 50; see now also Gordon, 'On Typologies and History: "Orphic Themes" in Mithraism', in G. Sfameni Gasparro *et al.* (eds), *Religion in the History of European Culture*, 2 vols (Palermo, 2013) 2.1023–1048 at 1031.

84 For the most recent bibliography, see M. Martens and G. De Boe, 'Bibliography of Mithraic Studies', in eid. (eds), *Roman Mithraism. The Evidence of the Small Finds* (Tienen, 2004) 363–385. For the most recent archaeological discoveries, see I. Klenner, 'Breaking News! Meldungen aus der Welt des Mithras', in P. Jung (ed.), *Utere felix vivas. Festschrift für Jürgen Oldenstein* (Bonn, 2012) 113–127; Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 183–184; add A. de Jong, 'A New Syrian Mithraic Tauroctony', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, NS 11 (1997) 53–63. For the most recent pictures of Mithraic frescoes, see E.M. Moormann, *Divine Interiors. Mural Paintings in Greek and Roman*

textual.⁸⁵ Even when we have textual sources for Mithras, they are in the main no more than the mention of his name: in fact, it is probably correct to say that the onomastic evidence, that is, names containing the element ‘Mithras’, is the most important access we have to the early worship of Mithras.

The god must have originated in the first half of the second millennium BC after the Indo-Iranians had left the Indo-European *Urheimat*. This early date is guaranteed by his occurrence in the *Rig Veda* (3.59) and in a treaty between the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I and Shattiwaza, king of the Mitanni, ca. 1380 BC.⁸⁶ The etymology of the god’s name is uncertain, but there is some consensus that it must originally have meant something like ‘contract’,⁸⁷ though this does not necessarily explain his function either in the ancient Iranian period or during the Roman Empire.

In the Persian tradition the god turns up much later. Theophoric names with the element Mithras start to appear only in the eighth century BC, the oldest in an Assyrian inscription of King Tiglath-Pileser III (745–726) of 737 BC.⁸⁸ These names – more than 45 different ones for over 300 persons in not only Persian but also Akkadian, Aramaic, Babylonian, Demotic Egyptian, Elamite, Greek and Hebrew⁸⁹ – show the great popularity of the god at the time of the Persian Empire. However, in classical times we find the god himself mentioned only in Persian inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (404–359) and Artaxerxes III (358–38),⁹⁰ while later Greek and Roman historians refer to the god also in connection with Darius III (336–330).⁹¹ The spelling of the name as Mithres in Strabo suggests that the god

Sanctuaries (Amsterdam, 2011) 163–183, with the corresponding colour plates; Claus, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, plates 1–16.

85 Cf. Burkert, *AMC*, 42: ‘The scarcity of literary references to mysteries of Mithras is strange when compared to the richness of the archaeological evidence’.

86 K. Kitchen and P. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 3 vols (Wiesbaden, 2012) 1.365–380 (= 55A) at § 16.55–56 and 387–402 (= 56A) at § 13.41, cf. P. Thieme, ‘The “Aryan” Gods of the Mitanni Treaties’, *J. Am. Or. Soc.* 80 (1960) 301–317; J. Gonda, *The Vedic God Mitra* (Leiden, 1972); N. Oettinger and G. Wilhelm, ‘Mitra, Mithra’, in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 8 (Berlin and New York, 1993–1997) 284–286.

87 M. Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindiarischen II* (Heidelberg, 1996) 354f.

88 R. Schmitt, *Iranische Personennamen in der neuassyrischen Nebenüberlieferung* (Vienna, 2009) 113f.

89 R. Schmitt, ‘Die theophoren Eigennamen mit altiranisch *Miθra-’, in J. Duchesne-Guillemin (ed.), *Études mithriaques* (Leiden, 1978) 395–455; R. Zadok, *Iranische Personennamen in der neu- und spätbabylonischen Nebenüberlieferung* (Vienna, 2009) 267–270; R. Schmitt, *Iranische Personennamen in der griechischen Literatur vor Alexander d. Gr.* (Vienna, 2011) 261–266.

90 R. Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achämeniden* (Vienna, 2009) 187–188, 194–195 (A. II), 195–197 (A. III).

91 Curt. Ruf. 4.13.12; Plut. *Alex.* 30.4; Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 969.

was mentioned already by an Ionian source, as perhaps could be expected.⁹² From these brief notices we see that the god was closely associated with the kings, whose protector he was, and that he was identified with the Sun.⁹³ It is thus not surprising that many kings were called Mithradates, the most famous being Mithradates VI, the great enemy of Rome. As satraps and other Persian grandees owned large estates in Asia Minor,⁹⁴ names with Mithras even occur in Lycian and Lydian.⁹⁵

The widespread worship of the god apparently survived the collapse of the Persian Empire at the hands of Alexander the Great, perhaps helped by surviving pockets of Magi,⁹⁶ the Median priests of the Persians, for in his *Life of Pompey* Plutarch mentions that in Lycian Olympos local pirates ‘performed certain secret rites (i.e., mystery cults), of which that of Mithras continues to the present day, having been first instituted by them’ (24.5). There is a very large chronological gap between these Cilician pirates and Plutarch and, given that the rites were secret, that the pirates were wiped out by Pompey and that Mithraic Mysteries are not attested before the late first century AD, we must conclude that it was Plutarch himself who made the connection between the late Republican pirate rites and contemporary Mithraic cult, and not that he had reliable information about the contemporary cult’s origin.

92 See Radt on Strabo 15.3.13, cf. R. Schmitt, ‘Greek Reinterpretation of Iranian Names by Folk Etymology’, in E. Matthews (ed.), *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastics* (Oxford, 2007) 135–150 at 145: ‘It is well known that eastern names passed to the Greeks above all via Ionic and in Ionic dialect form’ and ‘Greek – ης... reflects the nominative ending O.Iran*-ā(h)’.

93 For the identification with the sun, see also Strabo 15.3.13 with Radt *ad loc.*; Stat. *Theb.* 1.719–720; *P.Oxy.* 15.1802.64 (second/third century AD); Hsch. μ 1355; Clauss, *Mithras*, 146–155 = Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 139–147 (well illustrated).

94 See the studies by N.V. Sekunda: ‘Persian settlement in Hellespontine Phrygia’, in A. Kuhrt and H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (eds), *Achaemenid History* 3 (Leiden, 1988) 175–196, ‘Achaemenid settlement in Caria, Lycia and Greater Phrygia’, in ead. (eds), *Achaemenid History* 6 (Leiden, 1991) 83–143 and ‘Itabelis and the Satrapy of Mysia’, *Am. J. of Anc. Hist.* 14 (1989 [1998]) 73–102; P. Briant, *Histoire de l’empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre*, 2 vols (Paris, 1996 = Leiden, 1997) 1.718–720, 725–727; S. Mitchell, ‘Iranian Names and the Presence of Persians in the Religious Sanctuaries of Asia Minor’, in Matthews, *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastics*, 151–171; more generally about the survival of Persian settlers in Asia Minor, L. Ballesteros Pastor, ‘Nullis umquam nisi domesticis regibus. Cappadocia, Pontus and the resistance to the Diadochi in Asia Minor’, in V. Alonso Troncoso and E.M. Anson (eds), *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323–281 BC)* (Oxford, 2013) 183–198.

95 R. Schmitt, *Iranische Namen in den indogermanischen Sprachen Kleinasiens (Lykisch, Lydisch, Phrygisch)* (Vienna, 1982) 23–24 (Lycian), 31–32 (Lydian).

96 Strabo 15.3.15; Tac. *Ann.* 3.60–64; Paus. 5.27.5–6, cf. P. Herrmann, ‘Magier in Hypaipa’, *Hyperboreus* 8 (2002) 364–369; Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 969–971.

Like early Christianity, the cult of Mithras burst suddenly onto the Roman scene, albeit somewhat later, in the last decades of the first century AD. In the year 92 the Roman poet Statius ‘published’ his epic *Thebaid*, in which he compared Apollo to ‘Mithras twisting the horns wroth to follow in the rocks of Perses’ cavern’ (1.719–20, tr. Shackleton Bailey). He had begun his poem around AD 80 (*Theb.* 12.811), which gives us the timespan within which he will have made the acquaintance of Mithras’ cult.⁹⁷ Yet the oldest dedications to Mithras, which are from around the same time, were not found in Rome but in Germanic Nida, modern Hedderheim near Frankfurt, from about AD 90 (V 1098), in Steklen in Bulgaria from about AD 100 (V 2269)⁹⁸ and, perhaps a decade later, in Carnuntum in Austria (V 1718).⁹⁹

These data have given rise to a fierce debate about the geographical origin of the Mysteries. Against most current experts, Richard Gordon has argued for an origin in Anatolia rather than Italy,¹⁰⁰ but this seems unlikely. Anatolia was not far from the two most famous Mysteries, those of Eleusis (Ch. I) and Samothrace (Ch. II.1), and it would have been hard to compete with them, as is indeed illustrated by the rarity of Mithraea in mainland Greece and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰¹ It is more plausible to assume that the cult was invented in Rome, where Statius had already seen a statue of the bull-killing god before AD 92 (above).¹⁰²

97 For the passage, see R. Turcan, *Mithra et le Mithraïsme* (Paris, 2000²) 127–135; A.B. Griffith, ‘Mithras, Death and Redemption in Statius, *Thebaid* 1.719–720’, *Latomus* 60 (2001) 108–123.

98 Note that the Mithraeum in Bavarian Pons Aeni, modern Pfaffenhofen am Inn, which was dated to about AD 100 by J. Grabsch, ‘Das Mithraeum von Pons Aeni’, *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 50 (1985) 355–462, has been relocated to Ad Enum/Mühlthal and redated to about AD 150 by B. Steidl, ‘Neues zu den Inschriften aus dem Mithraeum von Mühlthal am Inn: *Pons Aeni, Ad Enum* und die *statio Enensis* des *publicum portorium Illyrici*’, *ibid.* 73 (2008) 53–85 and ‘Stationen an der Brücke – Pons Aeni und Ad Enum am Inn-Übergang der Staatsstraße Augusta Vindelicum–Iuvavum’, in G. Grabherr and B. Kainrath (eds), *Conquiescamus! longum iter fecimus* (Innsbruck, 2010) 71–110.

99 I quote the Mithraic inscriptions from M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae*, 2 vols (The Hague, 1956–1960).

100 Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 973.

101 See the detailed and up-to-date maps in Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 13, 185–189; note also the map in C. Witschel, ‘Die Ursprünge des Mithras-Kults: Orientalischer Gott oder westliche Neuschöpfung?’, in Hattler, *Imperium der Götter*, 200–218 at 206f.

102 For the statue, see most recently P. Roy, ‘Un nouveau relief de Mithra tauroctone’, *Pallas* 90 (2012) 63–74; C. Faraone, ‘The Amuletic Design of the Mithraic Bull-Wounding Scene’, *JRS* 103 (2013) 1–21, whose new interpretation of Mithras’ killing of the bull is refuted by D. Boschung, ‘Mithras: Konzeption und Verbreitung eines neuen Götterbildes’, in idem and A. Schäfer (eds), *Römische Götterbilder der mittleren und späten Kaiserzeit* (Munich, 2014), who also offers a new genealogy of the origin of Mithras’ iconography.

An origin in Rome is also supported by the architecture typical of Mithraea, in which the image of the god occupies the central position in the seating arrangements for the banquet, the best parallel for which is the seating installations for funeral banquets in Ostia and Pompeii, in which the grave occupies the central position amid the triclinia. A Roman origin is the more likely in that the cult rooms were clearly designed to contrast with normal Roman sanctuaries – something which is harder to imagine happening in Anatolia.¹⁰³

Nonetheless there are several Persian details in the cult, such as (1) the association of Mithras with the Persian Mithrakana festival which takes place on the fall equinox, (2) the presence of two attendants for Mithras in the *Miθra-Yašt*, just as the Roman Mithras has the accompanying twins Cautes and Cautopates, (3) the presence of the raven at a sacrificial scene on a Mithraic altar in Poetovio/Ptuj, which recalls the vulture in the *Bundahišn* who likewise flies off with a piece of the sacrificial meat,¹⁰⁴ and (4) the Iranian garments of the god and his companions.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, we should be looking for someone of Persian origin or with Persian connections, perhaps from Commagene,¹⁰⁶ but who also spoke Greek, because the initiatory grades seem to have been invented by a native Greek speaker.¹⁰⁷ The most likely explanation of all these data is that the founder came from Anatolia where, as we saw (above), the worship of the god had survived the collapse of the Persian Empire, but who designed the cult in Rome itself. The god must have been exported almost immediately to Germania, given the early dates of the finds there.

The worshippers met in dark artificial caves or, at least, grotto-like buildings, in the West called *spelaea*, ‘caves’, which were carefully constructed as a reflection of the Mithraic world but also shaped that world in turn.¹⁰⁸ These caves were

103 A. Klöckner, ‘Mithras und das Mahl der Männer. Götterbild, Ritual und sakraler Raum in einem römischen “Mysterienkult”’, in U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser *et al.* (eds), *Kultur der Antike* (Berlin, 2011) 200–225 at 210.

104 For these examples, see the more detailed discussion of R. Gordon, “‘Persaei sub rupibus antri’: Überlegungen zur Entstehung der Mithrasmysterien’, in *Ptuj im römischen Reich/Mithras-kult und seine Zeit = Archaeologia Poetovionensis* 2 (Ptuj, 2001 [2002]) 289–301. For the Mithrakana festival, see also Strabo 11.14.9 with Radt *ad loc.*

105 M. García Sánchez, ‘The dress and colour of Mithraism: Roman or Iranian garments?’, in Schrenk and Vössing, *Kleidung und Identität*, 123–134.

106 As is persuasively suggested by R. Beck, ‘The Mysteries of Mithras: A New Account of their Genesis’, *JRS* 88 (1998) 115–128 = *Beck on Mithraism*, 31–44.

107 R. Merkelbach, *Mithras* (Königstein, 1984) 109.

108 In the following paragraphs I closely follow Klöckner, ‘Mithras und das Mahl der Männer’. See also R. Gordon, “‘Glücklich ist dieser Ort...’ Mithras-Heiligtümer und Kultgeschehen’, in Hattler, *Imperium der Götter*, 211–218.

lieux de mémoire, places where the worshippers remembered and were reminded of the cave in which Mithras had killed the bull that had made him the ‘maker and father of all’.¹⁰⁹ In the centre of the rear wall they would see a relief of the god, representing him at the moment he kills the bull, the killing of which was the foundation of the present social and cosmological order. This representation of a god in action in relief form was highly unusual for ancient religion, as they now had to approach the relief to look at Mithras’ action rather than worshipping his statue.¹¹⁰ By adorning the caves with stars, the Sun and symbols of the planets, the worshippers expressed their belief in Mithras as the creator of an ordered cosmos who would guarantee the worshipper an ordered life.¹¹¹ Modern scholars have paid much attention to the astrological and cosmological speculations of ancient Mithraists¹¹² but, just as most modern Protestants have not ploughed through the 13 volumes of Karl Barth’s *Kirchliche Dogmatik* and most Catholics were not terribly interested in the latest dogmatic insights of Pope Benedict XVI, we need not suppose that most Mithras worshippers followed or were interested in these highly complicated speculations.

As the killing of the bull would normally have been followed by a sacrificial banquet, it is not surprising that on several reliefs we have a representation of such a banquet enjoyed by Mithras and Sol.¹¹³ It is clear from the many bones found in and near Mithraea that Mithras’ worshippers followed this example by dining and, especially, drinking together,¹¹⁴ but their sacrifices consisted mainly of suckling pigs and chickens, not bulls.¹¹⁵ In other words, the bull banquet represents the ideal sacrifice, not the real practice: representation of ritual and its actual practice should not be confused.¹¹⁶ In Greek and Roman sanctuaries, it was customary for

109 Porph. *De antro* 6.

110 Klöckner, ‘Mithras und das Mahl der Männer’, 214–116. For the normal practice regarding Roman statues, see B. Gladigow, ‘Zur Ikonographie und Pragmatik römischer Kultbilder’, in H. Keller and N. Staubach (eds), *Iconologia Sacra* (Berlin, 1994) 9–24.

111 The most recent insights regarding this aspect of Mithraism are surveyed by Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 975–979.

112 Especially, R. Beck, *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2006) but also his *Beck on Mithraism*; Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 984–988.

113 Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 132–33 with Abb. 15, 53, 148; Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 354–355; Clauss, *Mithras*, 110–113 = Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 104–109.

114 The importance of drinking is stressed by Ines Klenner, in a forthcoming Hamburg dissertation, on the basis of the many drinking vessels found in Mithraea.

115 See the various contributions to Martens and De Boe, *Roman Mithraism, the Evidence of the Small Finds*.

116 For some important observations in this respect, see A. Klöckner, ‘Votive als Gegenstände des Rituals – Votive als Bilder von Ritualen: Das Beispiel der griechischen Weihreliefs’, in J. Mylonopoulos and H. Roeder (eds), *Archäologie und Ritual* (Vienna, 2006) 139–152.

worshippers to dine in rooms adjacent to the temple after sacrificing on the altar in front of the temple. Mithras' worshippers, in contrast, dined inside the Mithraeum in the company of their god,¹¹⁷ reclining on two raised podia at either side of and close to the altar,¹¹⁸ although in many Ostian Mithraea there were also ancillary rooms, and outside Italy, where Mithraea were often situated at the edge of town, the food was prepared in dining rooms outside the cave. As the caves were relatively small, the 'congregation' had to be small too, about 20 to 50 people.¹¹⁹ This must have made the regular meetings into places of friendship and intimacy where close connections between the worshippers could be formed.

A final aspect deserves attention before we come to the initiation proper. The cult of Mithras was a real man's world, as women could not be initiated; we might even speak in this respect of a kind of 'immaculate conception', as the god was represented as being born from a rock, not from a woman.¹²⁰ This must have been a conscious choice in the design of the cult, which was later rationalised. 'Mithras hated the race of women', we are told by a Pseudo-Plutarchan text (*De Fluviis* 223.4),¹²¹ and a little known but relatively early author on Mithraism, the post-Hadrianic but pre-Porphyrian Pallas,¹²² says that the Mithraists called women 'hyenas', clearly not a compliment.¹²³ We simply

117 J.P. Kane, 'The Mithraic Cult-meal', in J. Hinnells (ed.), *Mithraic Studies*, 2 vols (Manchester, 1975) 1.313–351; Å. Hultgård, 'Remarques sur les repas cultuels dans le Mithriacisme', in C. Grappe (ed.), *Le repas de dieu* (Tübingen, 2004) 299–324; A.B. Griffith, 'Amicitia in a Religious Context: the Setting and Social Functions of the Mithraic Cult Meal', in M. Tamminen *et al.* (eds), *Passages from Antiquity to the Middle Ages III: De Amicitia* (Rome, 2010) 64–77; Gordon, 'Mithras', 979f.

118 R. Turcan, 'Les autels du culte mithriaque', in R. Etienne and M.T. Le Dihonet (eds), *L'espace sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'Antiquité* (Lyons, 1991) 217–225; Clauss, *Mithras*, 57–60 = Clauss, *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 60–62.

119 For some exceptions, see Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 358f. Ostia: L.M. White, 'The Changing Face of Mithraism at Ostia: Archaeology, Art and the Urban Landscape', in D. Balch and A. Weissenrieder (eds), *Contested Spaces: Houses and Temples in Roman Antiquity and the New Testament* (Tübingen, 2012) 435–492.

120 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 70; Commodianus, *Instruct.* 1.13; Firm. Mat. *Err. prof. rel.* 20.1; Hieronymus, *Adv. Iov.* 1.7 (= *PL* 23.228–231); Lydus, *Mens.* 3.26; M.J. Vermaseren, 'The Miraculous Birth of Mithras', *Mnemosyne* III 4 (1951) 285–301; Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 96–98; I. Neri, 'Mithra petrogenito. Origine iconografica e aspetti culturali della nascita dalla pietra', *Ostraka* 9 (2000) 227–245; W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften II* (Göttingen, 2003) 94–95; Gordon, 'Mithras', 983; Clauss, *Mithras*, 62–71 = *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 65–72.

121 For the date of composition of this text, see F. Jacoby, *Abhandlungen zur griechischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Leiden, 1956) 359–422.

122 For his date, see Porph. *Abst.* 2.58 (mention of Hadrian).

123 For the many negative connotations of the hyena, see R. Gordon, *Image and Value in the Greco-Roman World* (Aldershot, 1996) IV. 70, V.57–61, 63 and 'Magian Lessons in Natural History:

don't know why.¹²⁴ It may be that this exclusion of women is part of Mithras' Persian legacy, as the latter's Ossetic counterpart Wastyrži is also specifically a god of men.¹²⁵ Prosopographical and epigraphical studies have also increasingly elucidated the social composition of these males. It is now clear that they did not consist mainly of soldiers, as Cumont thought. Everything seems to indicate that, on the whole, they were neither very high nor very low on the social scale. There were few senators or very lowly slaves amongst them,¹²⁶ but rather the middle ranks of the army, imperial staff, and slaves and freedmen of the imperial household, as well as some ordinary citizens.¹²⁷

How did one get initiated into the Mysteries of this group of males? The precise nature of the initiation is highly debated because we have no narrative about it,¹²⁸ but we should try to combine the sparse literary and iconographical evidence with the epigraphical material, though the latter is in this respect hardly more informative. Three literary texts are of prime importance. The early (?) Pallas

Unique Animals in Graeco-Roman Natural Magic', in J. Dijkstra *et al.* (eds), *Myths, Martyrs and Modernity. Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer* (Leiden, 2010) 249–269 at 263–265. In general, see also J. North, 'Gender and Cult in the Roman West: Mithras, Isis, Attis', in E. Hemelrijk and G. Woolf (eds), *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West* (Leiden, 2013) 109–127.

124 For various explanations, none very persuasive, see Gordon, *Image and Value*, V.42–64; A.B. Griffith, 'Completing the Picture: Women and the Female Principle in the Mithraic Cult', *Numen* 53 (2006) 48–77; A. Chalupa, 'Hyenas or Lionesses? Mithraism and Women in the Religious World of the Late Antiquity', *Religio* 18 (2005) 198–229; Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 202.

125 A. Lubotsky, 'The Old Persian Month Name *viyax(a)na-*, Avestan *viīāx(a)na-* 'eloquent, bragging' and Ossetic Festivals', in V. Sadovski and D. Stifter (eds), *Iranistische und Indogermanistische Beiträge in memoriam Jochem Schindler (1944–1994)* (Vienna, 2012) 95–106 at 102.

126 For the senators, see now Z. Várhelyi, *The Religion of the Senators in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2010) 145–147.

127 M. Clauss, *Cultores Mithrae* (Stuttgart, 1992), summarised in Clauss, *Mithras*, 33–41 = *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 36–47; R. Gordon, 'Who Worshipped Mithras?', *JRA* 7 (1994) 459–474 and 'The Roman Army and the Cult of Mithras', in Y. Le Bohec and C. Wolff (eds), *L'armée romaine et la religion sous le Haut-Empire romain* (Paris, 2009) 379–450; O. Latteur, 'La diffusion du culte de Mithra dans les provinces danubiennes: l'exemple de la Pannonie Inférieure', *LEC* 78 (2010) 187–214.

128 The best discussions are: Gordon, *Image and Value*, V (first published in 1980 and sometimes too strongly influenced by the structuralist fashion of the day); Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 75–133 (the best collection of material, but idiosyncratic interpretations); M. Clauss, 'Die sieben Grade des Mithras-Kultes', *ZPE* 82 (1990) 183–194 (important for the attention to the epigraphical evidence); Turcan, *Mithra*, 81–92; Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 336–381; A. Chalupa, 'Seven Mithraic Grades: An Initiatory or Priestly Hierarchy?', *Religio* 16 (2008) 177–201 (the most level-headed discussion); Gordon, 'Mithras', 981–984.

tells us: ‘Thus they call the initiates (*mystas*) that participate in their rites (*metechontas*) “Lions”, women “hyenas” and the attendants (*hypêretountas*) “Ravens”. And with respect to the Fathers ... (some words are missing here), they are in effect called “Eagles” and “Hawks”.¹²⁹ The Christian author Ambrosiaster, a well-informed Roman clergyman working in Rome in the early 380s,¹³⁰ writes about the initiation: ‘their eyes are blindfolded that they may not refuse to be foully abused; some moreover beat their wings together like a bird, and croak like ravens, and others roar like lions; and yet others are pushed across ditches filled with water: their hands have previously been tied with the intestines of a chicken, and then someone comes up and cuts these intestines (he calls himself their “liberator”)¹³¹ It is striking that both passages, although more than a century apart, mention only the grades of ‘Raven’ and ‘Lion’, precisely the ones that, after the rank of Father, are mentioned most in the epigraphical evidence (Lion 41 times, Raven 5 times).¹³² As these two grades are the most important ones, the inventor of the Mithras Mysteries may well have been influenced by the fact that the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries had only two grades.

Yet around the time of Ambrosiaster, Jerome mentions seven grades in a letter to the Christian Laeta: ‘To pass over incidents in remote antiquity, which to the sceptical may appear too fabulous for belief, did not your kinsman Gracchus, whose name recalls his patrician rank, destroy the cave of Mithras a few years ago when he was Prefect of Rome? Did he not destroy, break and burn all the monstrous images there by which worshippers were initiated as Raven, Bridegroom, Soldier, Lion, Perses, Sun-runner and Father? Did he not send them before him as hostages, and gain for himself baptism in Christ?’¹³³ It may well be

129 Porph. *Abst.* 4.16, tr. Gordon, slightly adapted.

130 D.G. Hunter, ‘The significance of Ambrosiaster’, *J. Early Christ. Stud.* 17 (2009) 1–26.

131 Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteri et Novi Testamenti* 114.11, ed. M.-P. de Bussières (*SC* 512, 2007), tr. Gordon, slightly adapted: *Ne enim horreant turpiter dehonestari se, oculi illis velantur. Alii autem sicut ales alas percutiunt vocem coracis imitantes; alii vero leonum more fremunt; alteri autem ligatis manibus intestinis pullinis proiciuntur super foveas aqua plenas, accedente quodam cum gladio et inrumpente intestina supra dicta, qui se liberatorem appellet*, cf. Gordon, ‘Ritual and Hierarchy’, 346–348. For Ambrosiaster’s knowledge of pagan rituals, see J. Stüben, *Das Heidentum im Spiegel von Heilsgeschichte und Gesetz: ein Versuch über das Bild der Paganitas im Werk des Ambrosiaster* (Darmstadt, 1990).

132 Clauss, ‘Die sieben Grade’, 185.

133 Hieronymus, *Ep.* 107.2: *Et ut omittam vetera, ne apud incredulos nimis fabulosa videantur, ante paucos annos propinquus vester Gracchus, nobilitatem patriciam nomine sonans, cum praefecturam regeret urbanam, nonne specu Mithrae, et omnia portentuosissima simulacra, quibus Praex, Nymphius, Miles, Leo, Perses, Heliodromus, Pater initiantur, subvertit, fregit, exussit et his quasi obsidibus ante praemissis, inpetravit baptismum Christi?* For the date of Gracchus’ destruction of the shrine (AD 376–377), see A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011) 144.

significant that Jerome was living in Rome, as was Ambrosiaster and, perhaps, Pallas, because this grade system had clearly taken root most firmly in Rome and the surrounding areas. This is attested also by the seven grades in the floor-mosaic of the mid-third-century Mithraeum of Felicissimus in Ostia and the reference to the grades in the more-or-less contemporaneous Mithraeum of Santa Prisca in Rome.¹³⁴ The further away we move from Rome, for example in Dacia and Moesia, the less we hear of the individual grades.¹³⁵ Recent discussions therefore rightly assume that the grade system was fairly flexible and depended on local circumstances.¹³⁶ The smaller the ‘congregation’, the fewer the number of grades there must have been, one would think.

The seven grades were correlated with the seven planets, as we can see in the Mithraea of Felicissimus and Santa Prisca.¹³⁷ This has traditionally caused scholars of the Mithraic initiation to take the seven-grade system at face value and so to analyse one grade after the other. Yet this is an insider’s, emic presentation¹³⁸ and it is more helpful for us to look at the initiation from the outside, to take a so-called etic view. We then see that the grades fall clearly into two groups. The first group consists of Raven, Bridegroom and Soldier, and the second comprises Lion, Persian and Sun-runner, with the Father occupying a place all of his own.¹³⁹ It is important that Pallas (mentioned above) tells us that the Ravens had to serve. In other words, the lowest grade had to perform menial tasks, just as in Greek symposia the youths had to do the wine-pouring and the washing up.¹⁴⁰ And indeed, a raven-headed person offers a spit with pieces of meat to the reclining Mithras and Sol on the fresco of the Mithraeum of Dura Europos.¹⁴¹ Serving will

134 Felicissimus: V 299. Santa Prisca: M.J. Vermaseren and C.C. van Essen, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leiden, 1965) 155–158.

135 Clauss, *Mithras*, 132 = *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 127; I. and S. Nemeti, ‘Planets, grades and soteriology in Dacian Mithraism’, *Acta Musei Napocensis* 41–42 (2004–2005) 107–124; V. Bottez, ‘Quelques aspects du culte mithriaque en Mésie Inférieure’, *Dacia* 50 (2006) 285–296.

136 Turcan, *Mithra*, 81–83; Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 364–371; Chalupa, ‘Seven Mithraic Grades’, 190–191; Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 981.

137 For the correlation, see, most recently, Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 366–368.

138 This is not sufficiently taken into account by R. Gordon, ‘Ritual and Hierarchy in the Mysteries of Mithras’, in J.A. North and S. Price (eds), *The Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2011) 325–365 (first published in 2001 [2005]) at 327–336.

139 Basically, this was already seen by E.D. Francis, ‘Mithraic Graffiti from Dura Europos’, in Hinnells, *Mithraic Studies*, 2.424–445 at 440–445.

140 Bremmer, ‘Adolescents, Symposium and Pederasty’, in O. Murray (ed.), *Symptica* (Oxford, 1990) 135–148.

141 V 42.13; note also the raven-masked men on the relief from Konjic (V 1896.3 = Merkelbach, *Mithras*, Abb. 148) and Castra Praetoria (Rome: V 397); two ravens on a votive from Inveresk in Scotland, cf. F. Hunter, ‘Kastell Inveresk: Leibwächter, geköpfte Tote und Mysterienkulte in

also have been the duty of the Bridegroom, who is associated with an oil lamp on the mosaic in the Mithraeum of Felicissimus.¹⁴² Given the darkness of the caves, care of the lighting must have been an indispensable task and was presumably assigned to one of the lower grades. We do not know the duties of the Soldier,¹⁴³ but Tertullian tells us that when he was presented with a crown on his head, he had to remove it and say ‘Mithras is my crown!’¹⁴⁴ The acclamation suggests that the third grade was more closely identified with Mithras himself than the previous two and so constituted the transitional grade between the two groups.

Ascent up the Mithraic ladder did not come without a price. Two frescoes from the Mithraeum in Capua, dating from AD 220–240, and several late literary texts, such as the already quoted Ambrosiaster, depict and recount trials of humiliation and harassment for the initiates.¹⁴⁵ The precise details, such as ‘fifty days of fasting, two days of flogging, twenty days in the snow’, may be either Christian exaggeration or attempts to impress Mithraic outsiders, but the fact itself is hardly in doubt and is now supported by the discovery of a so-called *Schlangengefäß* in a Mithraeum of Mainz, dating to AD 120–140. This earthenware krater depicts what is generally agreed to be an initiatory test in which a seated, bearded man, obviously the Father, aims an arrow at a much smaller man whose hands are tied and genitals are showing, surely as a sign of humiliation.¹⁴⁶ It seems reasonable to suppose that the rough treatment of an initiate would

Britannien’, *Der Limes* 7.1 (2013) 14–21 at 18. For raven bones found in Mithraea, see Chalupa, ‘Seven Mithraic Grades’, 183 n. 24–25.

142 Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 91.

143 For the grade and its iconography, see A. Chalupa and T. Glomb, ‘The Third Symbol of the Miles Grade on the Floor Mosaic of the Felicissimus Mithraeum in Ostia: A New Interpretation’, *Religio* 21 (2013) 9–32.

144 Tert. *Cor.* 15.3, cf. I. Toth, ‘*Mithram esse coronam suam*: Bemerkungen über den dogmatischen Hintergrund der Initiationsriten der Mithrasmysterien’, *Acta Classica Debrecen.* 2 (1966) 73–79; M. Clauss, ‘Miles Mithrae’, *Klio* 74 (1992) 269–274; P. Beskow, ‘Tertullian on Mithras’, in J. Hinnells (ed.), *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome, 1994) 51–60 at 52–54; L. Nagy, ‘*Mithram esse coronam suam*. Tertullian und die Einweihung des Miles in den Mithras-Mysterien’, in Á. Szabó et al. (eds), *Cultus deorum*, 3 vols (Pécs, 2008) 2.183–202; Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 1001.

145 M.J. Vermaseren, *The Mithraeum at S. Maria Capua Vetere* (Leiden, 1971) Plates 22 and 26 (= Merkelbach, *Mithras*, Abb. 30–31); Greg. Naz. *Or.* 4.70, 89 (ed. Bernardi, *SC* 309, 1983), 39.5 (ed. Moreschini, *SC* 358, 1999); S. Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge, 1971) 169–170; Burkert, *AMC*, 102f.

146 R. Beck, ‘Myth, Doctrine, and Initiation in the Mysteries of Mithras: New Evidence from a Cult Vessel’, *JRS* 90 (2000) 145–180 = *Beck on Mithraism*, 55–92; I. Huld-Zetsche, *Der Mithraskult in Mainz und das Mithräum am Ballplatz* (Mainz, 2008); Gordon, ‘Ritual and Hierarchy’, 351f. For another representation of humiliation, see R. Gordon, ‘The Mithraic Body: The Example of the Capua Mithraeum’, in P. Johnston and G. Casadio (eds), *The Cults of Magna Graecia* (Austin,

take place at the beginning when he was still fairly unknown to the others. I would therefore assign these tests to the first grades, who at the banquet also, surely, had to recline, if at all, furthest from the relief with Mithras.¹⁴⁷

We move into a new group with the Lion, Persian and Sun-runner. The division is warranted because of the importance of the Lion, which is, after the Father, the grade that is mentioned most in epigraphy and seems to have held a normative status.¹⁴⁸ As we saw above, Pallas called the Lions ‘those who have been initiated in the rites’. In other words, the previous grades were preparatory in character. Expressions such as *pater leonum*, and *leonteum* as a designation for a Mithraic sanctuary, point in the same direction.¹⁴⁹ The Lions were especially associated with fire and they seem to have concerned themselves with the burning of incense, as we read on the walls of the Santa Prisca Mithraeum in Rome:

Receive the incense-burners, Father, receive the Lions, Holy One,
through whom we offer incense, through whom we are ourselves consumed!¹⁵⁰

Porphyry tells us that the Lions were initiates of fire, and that honey rather than water, which is an enemy of fire, was therefore poured on their hands to purify them and their tongues were purified of guilt by honey too.¹⁵¹ These purifications also show that this grade was the real start of becoming an initiate of Mithras. We should not forget that Isis initiates had to confess their sins too (§ 1) and that in later antiquity the Eleusinian initiates not only had to be free of bloodshed but also had to be ‘pure of soul’ (Ch. I.1). At the end of the purification, in order to confirm the initiation, the Father solemnly shook the hand of the new initiate, the mythical reflection of which can be seen on those Mithraic reliefs where Mithras

2009) 290–313; note also SHA *Commodus* 9.6 (although probably slander, it seems to suggest a fake execution in the ritual).

147 As is well observed by Turcan, *Mithra*, 80.

148 For the Lion, see especially C. Aloe Spada, ‘Il *leo* nella gerarchia dei gradi mitriaci’, in U. Bianchi (ed.), *Mysteria Mithrae* (Leiden, 1979) 639–648; Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 100–109; H.-M. Jackson, ‘The Meaning and Function of the Leontocephaline in Roman Mithraism’, *Numen* 32 (1985) 17–45; Gordon, *Image and Value*, V.32–39 and ‘Trajets de Mithra en Syrie romaine’, *Topoi* 11 (2001) 77–136 at 109–111; R. Bortolin, *Il leontocefalo dei misteri mitriaci: l’identità enigmatica di un dio* (Padua, 2012).

149 V 688 (*pater leonum*). U. Ciotti, ‘Due iscrizioni mitriache inedite’, in M. de Boer and T. Edridge (eds), *Hommages à M.J. Vermaseren*, 3 vols (Leiden, 1978) 1.233–239 (*leonteum*).

150 Vermaseren and Van Essen, *Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca*, 224–232 at lines 16–17: *accipe thuricremos, Pater, accipe, sancte, Leones/per quos thura damus, per quos consumimur*.

151 Porph. *De antro* 15.

shakes hands with Sol.¹⁵² The symbolic character of the handshake was so important that the initiates could also be called *syndexi*, ‘the united handshakers’.¹⁵³ Given the importance of the Lion grade, it is not surprising that we hear very little about the next grades, Persian (*Perses*) and Sun-runner (*Heliodromus*).

The top grade was the Father (*Pater*), which is also the grade mentioned most often epigraphically; we even hear of a Father of the Fathers (*p(ater) patrum*: V 403, 799; *AE* 1978: 641), presumably to mark his authority over other Fathers. We are reasonably well informed about his role.¹⁵⁴ He was clearly the head of the Mithraic ‘congregation’ and supervised both the meal and the setting up of votive altars, as his permission to do so is sometimes mentioned.¹⁵⁵ The fact that he is occasionally called Father and Priest (*pater et sacerdos*: V 511) confirms what we would have supposed anyway, viz. that he supervised the sacrifices.¹⁵⁶ Given that he solemnly shook the hand of the new initiates, he will also have supervised the initiations in his sanctuary.¹⁵⁷ Finally, as one Father mentions that he was a *stu[d(iosus) astrologia[e]* (V 708), we may safely assume that most other initiates were not. It is the Father who will have been the intellectual ‘archive’ and inspiration of the Mithraic worshippers.

The frequent occurrence of the Father in the epigraphic record might give the impression that anyone could become a Father. Yet this cannot have been true, and the reason should be obvious. In the hierarchical structure of the Roman Empire it would be impossible to imagine that an ordinary private soldier could give commands to an officer, or that an ordinary citizen could be superior to someone high up in the imperial household.¹⁵⁸ This must have been clear to those Lions who belonged to the lower social strata of the Mithraic ‘congregation’, and they probably did not bother to become initiated into the higher grades. The mention of the Father’s role by Jerome and his representation at the top of the

152 See V 1083, 1137, 1292, 1400, 1430(c4), 1579(1), 1584, and 1359 (restored).

153 Firm. Mat. Err. prof. rel. 5.2; V 423.7, note also V 54, 60, 63, 63a, 65, 423, cf. M. LeGlay, ‘La dexiôsis dans les Mystères de Mithra’, in Duchesne-Guillemin, *Études mithriaques*, 279–303; Clauss, *Mithras*, 151–152 = *Mithras: Kult und Mysterium*, 101.

154 F. Mitthof, ‘Der Vorstand der Kultgemeinden des Mithras: Eine Sammlung und Untersuchung der inschriftlichen Zeugnisse’, *Klio* 74 (1992) 275–290, to be read with Gordon, ‘Ritual and Hierarchy’, 329.

155 *Année Epigraphique* 1979: 425; 1980: 48; V 333, 774, 793.

156 Note also V 475, 511, 622, 626; *SEG* 52.1590; *I. Anazarbos* 9.7–9; the Fathers who call themselves *pater patrus* (V 706, 803), the title of the ancient Roman fetal priesthood, and *pater sacrorum* (V 1243).

157 Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 8.7.

158 This is well noted by Gordon, *Image and Value*, III.109 and ‘Ritual and Hierarchy’, 337–344.

grades of the Mithraeum of Felicissimus, then, must have been an ideal representation, rather than a realistic one, of the initiatory grade system.¹⁵⁹

3 Conclusions

What have we learned from this survey? There are five points I would like to stress:

First, when we now look back at Burkert's definition of Mysteries as discussed in the Preface ('initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred'), we can see that the examples of Isis and Mithras conform much better to Burkert's definition than the prototypical Eleusinian Mysteries.

Second, over time, a striking shift took place from collective to individual initiation and from territorially fixed Mystery cults to mobile ones. In classical Athens there was still a large group of people who went annually in official procession to Eleusis (Ch. I.2); similarly, in Samothrace there was a large hall where the initiations took place (Ch. II.1). Later we hear nothing of the initiatory experience or of special groups of Eleusinian initiates in Attica. The earliest Orphic-Bacchic worshippers may still have met communally, but the Gold Leaves are already the product of individual initiations without a detectable geographical centre. In the cases of Isis and Mithras, the initiations seem to have been individual from the very beginning, and their Mysteries were characterised by an ever-expanding mobility. We can see how ancient religion had developed in the late Hellenistic and earlier Roman period into a religious market that no longer identified itself with the civic community of the city. It had made space for smaller groups that were no longer under the immediate control of the civic elites but were instead the products of religious entrepreneurs.¹⁶⁰

Third, initiation required investments of money and time. This was already the case with the Eleusinian Mysteries but seems to have become a fixed element of all subsequent Mysteries. Consequently, these were not something for the poor and needy. More interesting, though, are the 'symbolic' costs. It is well known from modern research into processes of conversion that, in order to minimise the costs of conversion, people prefer to convert to religions or denominations that are fairly close to their current faith.¹⁶¹ The situation is of course different in a

159 *Contra* Gordon, 'Ritual and Hierarchy', 330–334.

160 Cf. R. Gordon, 'Individuality, Selfhood and Power in the Second Century: The Mystagogue as a Mediator of Religious Options', in J. Rüpke and G. Woolf (eds), *Religious Dimensions of the Self in the Second Century CE* (Tübingen, 2013) 146–172.

161 R. Stark and R. Fink, *Acts of Faith* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000) 123f.

polytheistic system, for which we can hardly speak of conversion in our sense of the word. Yet allegiance to a cult can have its ‘symbolic’ costs too, as we learn from Apuleius, who tells us that the initiates of Isis had to wear a linen garment (above) and have a fully shaven head (10).¹⁶² This must have meant that many upper-class males will have refrained from this initiation, and it is noteworthy that Apuleius does not mention the shaving of Lucius’ own head in his initiation into the Mysteries of Isis.

Was this different in the cult of Mithras? According to the Church Father Tertullian, the initiates of Mithras were marked (*signat*) on their foreheads. This information has been contested, but not persuasively.¹⁶³ The fact that Gregory of Nazianzus mentions burnings in the Mithraic initiations suggests that the worshippers of Mithras were only symbolically tattooed or that a term was used that could be interpreted in that way, because the term for tattooing was re-interpreted as ‘branding’ in Late Antiquity. The respectable worshippers of Mithras would certainly not have accepted real tattoos, as that would have characterised them as slaves.¹⁶⁴

Fourth, the worshippers of Mithras must have formed a relatively tight-knit group, even though their social identity will not have depended on the cult, which was not exclusive, for some Mithraists worshipped other gods as well. We usually do not know which ones,¹⁶⁵ but in the dominant polytheistic system total exclusivity was highly unusual. On the other hand, the worship of Mithras must have been very important for the worshippers, given the investments they had made. Mithras certainly fits the tendency towards the dominance of one god in the

162 For the fully shaven head, see K. Fittschen, ‘Lesefrüchte III’, *Boreas* 34 (2011) 165–184 at 172–177.

163 L. Renaut, ‘Les initiés aux mystères de Mithra étaient-ils marqués au front? Pour une relecture de Tertullien, De praescr. 40, 4’, in C. Bonnet *et al.* (eds), *Religioni in contatto nel Mediterraneo antico = Mediterranea* 4 (Pisa, 2008), 171–190, who wants to change *frontibus* into *fontibus*, but note the objections of J.-C. Fredouille, *Rev. Ét. Aug.* 55 (2009) 300.

164 For tattooing and branding in Late Antiquity, see C.P. Jones, ‘Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity’, *JRS* 77 (1987) 139–155; M. Gustafson, ‘*Inscripta in fronte*: Penal Tattooing in Late Antiquity’, *Class. Ant.* 16 (1997) 79–105; L. Renaut, ‘Le tatouage des hommes libres aux IV^e et V^e siècles de notre ère’, *Diasporas. Histoire et sociétés* 16 (2011) 11–27; Bremmer, ‘*Stigmata: From Tattoos to Saints’ Marks*’, in H.A. Shapiro and F. Waschek (eds), *Fluide Körper – Bodies in Transition* (Munich, 2014).

165 A. Hensen, ‘Mercurio Mithrae – Zeugnisse der Merkurverehrung im Mithraskult’, in C. Czysz *et al.* (eds), *Provinzialrömische Forschungen: Festschrift für Günter Ulbert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Espelkamp, 1995) 211–216 (Mithras and Mercurius); H. Schwarzer, ‘Die Heiligtümer des Iuppiter Dolichenus’, in M. Blömer and E. Winter (eds), *Iuppiter Dolichenus. Vom Lokalkult zur Reichsreligion* (Tübingen, 2012) 143–210 at 172–174 (worshippers of Mithras dedicated also in sanctuaries of Iuppiter Dolichenus and vice versa).

earlier Roman Empire¹⁶⁶ and his main epithet *Invictus*, ‘Unconquered’, may well have been a comfort to his worshippers.¹⁶⁷ Isis too was a powerful divinity of this kind¹⁶⁸ who was worshipped by various associations called *Isiastai* or *Isiakoi*, and even some of her initiates had formed a special association,¹⁶⁹ but numerically these remain well behind the ever increasing number of newly discovered *Mithraea*. Clearly, not every Mystery exerted the same fascination on the inhabitants of the Roman Empire.

Fifth, how traditional were these cults? Readers will have noticed that they have heard surprisingly little about authentically Egyptian and Persian motifs. That is indeed true. Yet there is a great difference between the two Mysteries. In the sanctuaries of Egyptian gods in the Roman Empire there were many artifacts to remind the visitor of Egypt, such as obelisks, hieroglyphs, statues, sphinxes and *sistra*, to mention only the most striking objects.¹⁷⁰ In the *Mithraea*, on the other hand, there were far fewer visible or audible Persian elements. There was the Persian appearance of the god himself, the occasional use of a Persian word such as *nama*, ‘Hail!’, or the image of the Persian dagger, *akinakes*, which was correlated with the grade of the Persian, and that is more or less it.

So how are we to understand this difference? The reason may become clearer if we compare these cults with modern Buddhism. It has been observed that the forms of Asian Buddhism that have proved most congenial to Westerners are those that come closest to their own Enlightenment values, such as reason, tolerance, freedom and rejection of religious orthodoxy.¹⁷¹ In other words, if an Asian religion wants to be successful in the West, then it has to shed most of its Oriental features. Or, if we apply this to antiquity, the cults with an Oriental background that wanted to be successful had to be as un-Oriental as possible. An

166 See, most recently, P. Athanassiadi, *Vers la pensée unique. La montée de l'intolérance dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 2010); S. Mitchell and P. Van Nuffelen (eds), *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leuven, 2010) and *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2010); G. Sfameni Gasparro, *Dio unico, pluralità e monarchia divina* (Brescia, 2011).

167 Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 988.

168 For Isis, see H.S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods* (Leiden, 2011) 283–289, with previous bibliography.

169 Keibl, *Iseion*, 162–165; L. Bricault, ‘Associations isiaques d’Occident’, in A. Mastrocinque and C. Scibona (eds), *Demeter, Isis, Vesta, and Cybele. Studies ... Giulia Sfameni Gasparro* (Stuttgart, 2012) 91–104 and *Les cultes isiaques*, 294–297. Initiates: *RICIS* 113/0537 (Thessalonica), 303/1301 (Tralles), 308/0401 (Prusa), *501/0127 (Rome).

170 See the survey in Keibl, *Iseion*, 167–170; Bricault, *Les cultes isiaques*, 233–253.

171 D. Lopez (ed.), *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West* (Boston, 2002).

exotic tinge interested outsiders, but the cult had to remain acceptable in general – so not *too* exotic.¹⁷² This difference between the Mysteries of Isis and Mithras partly explains their varying degrees of success.

Finally, Franz Cumont (see Preface) imagined these Oriental cults as important rivals of early Christianity. We will see in our next and final chapter whether that was really true.¹⁷³

172 See also Versluys, ‘Orientalising Roman Gods’.

173 For comments, corrections and information regarding the ‘Isis’ part of this chapter, I am most grateful to Jacco Dieleman, Valentino Gasparini, Joachim Friedrich Quack and, especially, Martin Stadler as well as to Ines Klenner for information regarding the most recent findings of and in Mithraea. The chapter profited also from comments by Richard Gordon and audiences in Munich, Erlangen (2012), Montréal (2013) and Erfurt (2014).

VI Did the Mysteries Influence Early Christianity?

After a run of rather depressing years, life was looking up for Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) at the turn of the century. The later founder of anthroposophy had come into contact with a new kind of benefactor, Cay Lorenz Graf von Brockdorff (1844–1921), who had invited him to give regular lectures in his library. Steiner was only too happy to oblige, and from the 19th of October 1901 to the 26th of April 1902 he gave a weekly address to a mostly theosophical audience on the essence of Christianity and its place in the historical development of humanity. The lectures were immediately published under the title *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache und die Mysterien des Altertums*.¹ This small book allows us to see what in Germany, around 1900, an intellectual with esoteric interests thought of the influence of the Mysteries on early Christianity. The result of his study, to be honest and for some of my readers perhaps not wholly surprising, is not that encouraging.

Steiner began his lectures by explaining that the doctrine of the Greek Mysteries (*Mysterienlehren*) went back well into the eighth century BC, if not earlier, and had been enriched by the doctrines of the Egyptian, Persian and even Indian Mysteries. For Greece he did not begin with Eleusis but with Heraclitus, whom he made into an initiate of the Mysteries in his home town of Ephesus (38–45). As we have seen (Ch. III.3), Heraclitus actually railed against local private Mysteries. It is thus immediately clear that Steiner was not a very good guide for his interested, but no doubt poorly informed audience. This impression is only confirmed by the rest of his lectures. Like many predecessors, Steiner paid much attention to the Egyptian Mysteries (97–110), which, as we saw (Ch. V.1), never existed, but he also – and this was more daring, though equally unconvincing – stressed all kinds of parallels between the Buddha and Jesus (102–07). This Indological approach to Jesus, so to speak, had become popular in the later nineteenth century, as Buddhism gained in popularity amongst Germans looking for a new religion that could be reconciled with modern knowledge. Its absence of a transcendent sphere made Buddhism especially attractive in some circles as a source of new moral values, as still is the case today.²

1 R. Steiner, *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache und die Mysterien des Altertums* (Berlin, 1902, 1910²) = *Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe 8* (Dornach, 1989⁹), cf. H. Zander, *Rudolf Steiner* (Munich and Zurich, 2011) 153–158. The numbers in the text refer to the pages of the second, revised edition.

2 Cf. S.L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Washington DC and Cambridge, 2009) 270–279; V. Höfle, ‘The Search for the Orient in German Idealism’, *Zs. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch.* 163 (2013) 431–454.

When Steiner finally arrives at the Mysteries' influence on early Christianity we are in for a surprise. If I understand his somewhat obscure prose correctly, Steiner suggests that what the initiates once heard and saw in the Mysteries in the temples of Egypt was transformed into the historical Jesus. The cult drama of Osiris eventually produced the Jesus of the Gospels, in whose fate all Christians could now participate and in this way receive a share of the wisdom of the Mysteries, namely that the world was divine (105–07). The four authors of the Gospels thus derived their material from four different Mystery traditions (112), albeit, as I must stress, in mysterious ways, as Steiner does not explain how they reached their results. At this point, though, it is better to take temporary leave of Steiner. His book is obviously not the right guide in our labyrinth of Mysteries.

1 The Mysteries around 1900 and during the Enlightenment

Steiner's attention to the Mysteries was typical of the *Zeitgeist* in Germany in 1900.³ In particular, their relationship to emerging Christianity had become an important topic of debate. Both the growth in historical analysis of early Christianity, as exemplified by David Friedrich Strauss's (1808–1874) influential *Das Leben Jesu*,⁴ and the secularising trend in late nineteenth-century Germany had translated into attempts to derive early Christianity from its pagan surroundings. In other words, there was a hidden agenda here that was looking for support from antiquity for its own abandonment of the Christian Faith. That is why the more adventurous theologians, members of and sympathisers with the so-called *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* of Göttingen,⁵ started to derive the apostle Paul's theology from a Mithras cult in Tarsus,⁶ his birthplace, even though no Mystery cult of Mithras is attested in Tarsus nor is any Mithras Mystery found anywhere before the end of the first century (Ch. V.2).⁷ Others even derived Christianity as a

³ For a good survey of the religious situation in Germany at that time, see T. Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870–1914* (Munich, 1988).

⁴ D.F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols (Tübingen, 1835–1836).

⁵ G. Lüdemann and M. Schröder, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule in Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1987); G. Lüdemann and A. Özgen, 'Religionsgeschichtliche Schule', in *TRE* 28 (1997) 618–624; see also P. Gemeinhardt, 'Die Patristik um 1911 in ihrem Verhältnis zur Religionsgeschichte', *Zs. Ant. Christ.* 15 (2011) 75–98.

⁶ See, for example, A. Lannoy, 'St Paul in the early 20th century history of religions. "The mystic of Tarsus" and the pagan mystery cults after the correspondence of Franz Cumont and Alfred Loisy', *ZRGG* 64 (2012) 222–239.

⁷ For the older discussions, see G. Lease, 'Mithraism and Christianity: Borrowings and Transformations', in *ANRW* 2.23.2 (1980) 1306–1332. The most recent treatments are M. Clauss, *Mithras:*

whole from the Mystery religions, as they called the ancient Mysteries (see Preface).⁸ Meanwhile other, less adventurous theologians and more hard-headed ancient historians, such as Eduard Meyer (1855–1930),⁹ denied any influence from the surrounding religions except Judaism. The debates between these approaches helped to create an atmosphere in which both the study of the ancient Mysteries and the *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* flourished and which lasted until the 1920s, when they were superseded by new theological interests, such as those inspired by Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Rudolf Otto (1869–1937).

In addition to the influence of the secularising *Zeitgeist*, Steiner's book also displays a fascination with the Egyptian Mysteries that had been characteristic of Enlightenment scholars, who saw in ancient Egypt the mirror image of their own condition. Representing the Egyptian priests as living underground in caves and crypts where they performed their Mysteries, they had imagined them as occupying a position comparable to their own, as they were subject to censorship and often forced to publish illegally.¹⁰ They also took the supposed organisation of these priests as the model for the lodges of the Freemasons, Illuminati, Rosicrucians and other esoteric groups.¹¹ The rise of such secret brotherhoods has had a powerful grip on the popular imagination ever since, as we have witnessed more recently in the astonishing success of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*,¹² just as we still derive enjoyment from this interest in esoteric Egypt through Mozart's *Zauberflöte* of 1791, as Jan Assmann has splendidly shown.¹³

Kult und Mysterium (Darmstadt and Mainz, 2012) 159–167 and 'Mithras und Christus. Der Streit um das wahre Brot', in C. Hattler (ed.), *Imperium der Götter* (Karlsruhe and Darmstadt, 2013) 243–249.

8 Cf. V. Krech, *Wissenschaft und Religion: Studien zur Geschichte der Religionsforschung in Deutschland 1871 bis 1933* (Tübingen, 2002) 263–264; C. Auffarth, "'Licht vom Osten". Die antiken Mysterienkulte als Vorläufer, Gegenmodell oder katholisches Gift zum Christentum', *ARG* 8 (2006) 206–226; A. Lannoy and D. Praet (eds), *The Christian Mystery. Early Christianity and the Pagan Mystery Cults in the Work of Franz Cumont and in the History of Scholarship*, forthcoming.

9 E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, 3 vols (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1921–1923), cf. E. Plümacher, 'Eduard Meyers "Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums". Verhältnis zu Fachwissenschaft und Zeitgeist', in W.M. Calder III and A. Demandt (eds), *Eduard Meyer* (Leiden, 1990) 344–367.

10 M. Mulsow, *Prekäres Wissen: eine andere Ideengeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2012).

11 M. Neugebauer-Wölk (ed.), *Aufklärung und Esoterik* (Hamburg, 1999); J. Assmann and F. Ebeling, *Ägyptische Mysterien. Reisen in die Unterwelt in Aufklärung und Romantik* (Munich, 2011) 7–27.

12 W. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* (Cambridge, 2012) 212f.

13 J. Assmann: *Die Zauberflöte. Oper und Mysterium* (Munich, 2005); 'Verwandelnde Erfahrung. Die grossen Mysterien in der Imagination des 18. Jahrhunderts', in A. Bierl and W. Braungart (eds), *Gewalt und Opfer. Im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 343–362; and in Assmann and Ebeling, *Ägyptische Mysterien*, 162–176. In general, see also E. Hornung, *Das esoterische Ägypten* (Munich, 1999) 112–132.

To be fair to Steiner, we should remember that Egyptology was still a young discipline, as it was less than a century since Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) had deciphered the hieroglyphs in the early 1820s. Steiner's ideas may have looked less fantastic to his contemporaries than they do to us now. It was only at the moment of Steiner's writing that the leading Egyptologist of the period, Adolf Erman (1854–1937), tried to correct the many popular ideas about Egypt in Germany through a more scholarly approach, just as his pupil James Breasted (1865–1935) did in America.¹⁴

2 The Mysteries in the post-Reformation era

Steiner was only interested in the teachings of the Mysteries, not in their actual rituals. This, too, was not unusual in his day, but it was not true of the first modern study of the ancient Mysteries, which long remained one of the most influential ones, by the Huguenot Isaac Casaubon (1559–1614).¹⁵ Casaubon's main claim to fame today is as the brilliant philologist who first saw that the ancient *Corpus Hermeticum* contained words and doctrines alien to its postulated primeval date and thus could not be as old as it was believed to be. This notion of Casaubon as a great discoverer was popularised by the work of Dame Frances Yates (1899–1981) on Hermeticism and it is still cited by Fritz Graf in an important

14 Erman: B.U. Schipper (ed.), *Ägyptologie als Wissenschaft. Adolf Erman (1854–1937) in seiner Zeit* (Berlin, 2006); Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 203–206; T. Gertzen, *École de Berlin und "Goldenes Zeitalter" (1882–1914) der Ägyptologie als Wissenschaft. Das Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis von Ebers, Erman und Sethe* (Berlin and New York, 2013). Breasted: J. Abt, *American Egyptologist: The Life of James Henry Breasted and the Creation of his Oriental Institute* (Chicago and London, 2011).

15 I. Casaubon, *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI* (London, 1614) 541–567. On Casaubon, see H. Parenty, *Isaac Casaubon helléniste* (Geneva, 2009); A. Grafton, *Words Made by Words* (Cambridge MA and London, 2009) 216–230; idem and J. Weinberg, *"I have always loved the Holy Tongue". Isaac Casaubon, the Jews, and a Forgotten Chapter in Renaissance Scholarship* (Cambridge MA and London, 2011). On Mark Pattison, Casaubon's biographer, and the literary representation of Casaubon, see A.D. Nuttall, *Dead from the Waist Down* (New Haven and London, 2003). R. Gordon, 'Mysterienreligion', in *RGG*⁴ 5 (2002) 1638–1640 has Casaubon write after Jan van Meurs, *Eleusinia. Sive, de Cereris Eleusinae sacro, ac festo* (Leiden, 1619), but Van Meurs (1579–1639) published his book well after Casaubon's. On the precocious Meursius, see C. Heesakkers, 'Te weinig koren of alleen te veel kaf? Leiden's eerste Noordnederlandse filoloog Joannes Meursius (1579–1639)', in R.J. Langelaan *et al.* (eds), *Miro Fervore. Een bundel lezingen & artikelen over de beoefening van de klassieke wetenschappen in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Leiden, 1994) 13–26.

contribution on the Mysteries.¹⁶ From the 1980s onwards it has become increasingly clear that Casaubon merely improved upon the work of a series of scholars before him and could be credited with the fame of the discovery only because he did not cite his predecessors,¹⁷ an approach to scholarship that is still popular, as we have seen in Germany in recent years.

Like many of my readers, Casaubon was a workaholic, although perhaps fewer of them will note in their diaries: 'I rose at five: alas, how late!'.¹⁸ It is therefore not surprising that his last book would be an almost 800 page folio, containing an aggressive attack on Cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538–1607).¹⁹ The cardinal, no mean worker either, had written a twelve-volume history of early Christianity from the time of Jesus to the Middle Ages, the *Annales Ecclesiastici* (1588–1607).²⁰ As he was born in the century of the Reformation, it is perhaps unsurprising that he composed his work in answer to Protestant attacks on papal claims to spiritual authority and on the antiquity of Catholic institutions and practices, which, as he claimed, went back to the earliest time of Jesus and the Church Fathers. Unfortunately, Baronio was not equal to Casaubon in intellectual sharpness and erudition, and the latter virtually dismantled the first volume of his opponent's *Annales* by pointing out, time and again, a *Baronii hallucinatio*, as he called the cardinal's mistakes.²¹

Casaubon wrote during the Protestant-Catholic polemics about the Last Supper, the interpretation of which was a major bone of contention between Catholics and Protestants, as well as of course between Lutherans and Calvinists. It was in a discussion of the Eucharist that Casaubon had collected the ancient references to the Mysteries and the term *mystêrion*. Casaubon was primarily a philologist and not a historian, a collector rather than an interpreter of his material. Moreover, his assembly of the terminology, characteristics and grades of initiation of the Mysteries concentrated purely on the transfer of pagan rituals and vocabulary to early

16 F. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1964); F. Graf, 'Mysteries, Baptism, and the History of Religious Studies. Some Tentative Remarks', in F. Prescendi and Y. Volokhine (eds), *Dans le laboratoire de l'historien des religions. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Borgeaud* (Geneva, 2011) 91–103 at 100.

17 A. Grafton, *Defenders of the Text* (Cambridge MA and London, 1991) 145–155; M. Mulsow (ed.), *Das Ende des Hermetismus* (Tübingen, 2002). The relevant pages of Casaubon on the *Corpus Hermeticum* have been conveniently reprinted in Mulsow, *Das Ende des Hermetismus*, 381–396.

18 I. Casaubon, *Ephemerides*, ed. J. Russell, 2 vols (Oxford, 1850) 1.4.

19 Casaubon, *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI*.

20 C. Baronio, *Annales Ecclesiastici a Christo nato ad annum 1198*, 12 vols (Rome, 1588–1607), cf. C. Pullapilly, *Caesar Baronius, Counter-Reformation Historian* (Notre Dame, 1975); S. Zen, *Baronio storico* (Naples, 1994).

21 Casaubon, *De rebus sacris*, 304; the attacks on Baronio can be easily followed via the index s.v.

Christianity and did not consider possible Jewish influence on the latter. Nearly a quarter of a century ago, his learned study became the focus of a critical discussion by the leading American historian of religion, Jonathan Smith, in a book with the sub-title *On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*.²² Smith misrepresents Casaubon by stating that the latter defined *mystêrion* as *arcanum* (sic) *doctrinam*,²³ an expression that is not far from a term that later became popular, *arcani disciplina*, first used by the Calvinist pastor Jean Daillé (1594–1670) in 1666,²⁴ and now most common in German as *Arkandisziplin*.²⁵ In fact Casaubon merely ascribed this explanation to certain Greek grammarians (*Graeci grammatici*), which shows the breadth of his reading. However, Smith is right to observe that Casaubon's attention to the Mysteries as a whole contrasted with the reductive accounts of later scholars, who treated the Mysteries as being essentially concerned with secret teaching. In the nearly 400 years after Casaubon, our insight into early Judaism, the pagan Mysteries and the early Church has improved considerably, so let us take a fresh look at the possible verbal, ritual and doctrinal influences exerted by the pagan Mysteries on emerging Christianity.

3 The Mysteries and emerging Christianity

The long debates of the first half of the twentieth century were summarised and improved by the Englishman Arthur Darby Nock (1902–1963), who was arguably the greatest expert on the relations between Greco-Roman religion on the one

22 J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine* (Chicago and London, 1990) 55–58.

23 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 57, whereas, of course, Casaubon wrote *arcanam doctrinam* (542).

24 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 57 n. 10, although misspelling the title, rightly refers to J. Daillé (= Dallaeus), *De scriptis, quae sub Dionysii Areopagitae et Ignatii Antiocheni nominibus circumferuntur, libri duo* (Geneva, 1666) 142: 'unde certo, ac necessario concludimus totam hanc illius arcani, quarto adulto, et toto quinto saeculo solennem ac notissimam disciplinam primis et Apostolorum proximis saeculis nondum apud nostros fuisse cognitam'. Daillé's terminology was also accepted by Roman Catholics at an early stage, cf. E. Schelmstrate, *De disciplina arcani contra disputationem Ernesti Tentzelii dissertatio apologetica* (Rome, 1685).

25 For the *disciplina arcani*, see more recently L. Schindler, *Die altchristliche Arkandisziplin und die antiken Mysterien* (Tetschen, 1911); O. Perler, 'Arkandisziplin', in *RAC* 1 (1950) 667–676; D. Powell, 'Arkandisziplin', in *TRE* 4 (1979) 1–8; C. Jacob, *Arkandisziplin, Allegorese, Mystagogie* (Frankfurt, 1990), to be read with the review by A.M. Ritter, *Theol. Ltz.* 119 (1994) 250–252; F. Graf and W. Wischmeyer, 'Arkandisziplin', in *RGG*⁴ (1998) 743–746 (who date the term to 1686) and, especially, M.-Y. Perrin, 'Arcana mysteria ou ce que cache la religion: De certaines pratiques de l'arcané dans le christianisme antique', in M. Riedl and T. Schabert (eds), *Religionen – Die religiöse Erfahrung* (Würzburg, 2008) 119–142.

hand, and both early Christianity and Judaism on the other, in the period from about 1930 to 1960. Nock was a whiz kid, a *Wunderkind*.²⁶ At the age of twenty, he had already become the annual reviewer for Latin literature in the respected journal *The Year's Work in Classical Studies* and before he was thirty he was appointed professor at Harvard. In 1952 he published an authoritative review of the question that concerns us here under the title 'Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments',²⁷ which I, like virtually all scholars after him, will use as the starting point of my discussion.

Nock began with a presentation of the pagan Mysteries in the classical and Hellenistic period; despite some interesting references, the initial part is now mostly outdated due to subsequent discoveries. Yet Nock noted an important difference between the most famous Greek Mysteries, those of Eleusis (Ch. I) and Samothrace (Ch. II.1), and those of Dionysus (Ch. IV.4), Isis (Ch. V.1), Mithras (Ch. V.2) and others. The first, as he observes, were tied to a specific place, but the latter could be practised anywhere. In other words, the second group could and was spread widely over the Mediterranean world, though Nock rightly warned that we should not overestimate the extent of their dissemination.

As regards the verbal parallels, like others before him Nock noted the use of metaphors based on the vocabulary of the Mysteries. More recent research has greatly enlarged our knowledge in this field. It is now clear that Plato had already used a detailed metaphoric terminology, especially in his dialogues *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, that sometimes reflected the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries but was mainly inspired by the Eleusinian Mysteries.²⁸ In Plato's time such metaphors must still have been striking, though Aristophanes had already made use of Mystery metaphors in his *Clouds* (143, 258). This metaphoric use of Mystery terminology was probably an innovation of the Sophists.²⁹ A part of their *Selbstinszenierung*, which has recently been studied in a fine contribution by Martin

26 On Nock, see the obituaries by A.-J. Festugière, *Rev. Arch.* 1 (1963) 203–205; M.P. Nilsson, *Gnomon* 15 (1963) 318–319 and H. Chadwick and E.R. Dodds, *JRS* 53 (1963) 168–169 and Z. Stewart *et al.*, 'A Faculty Minute: Arthur Darby Nock', *HSCP* 68 (1964) xi–xiv; note also W.M. Calder III, 'Harvard Classics 1950–1956', *Eikasmos* 4 (1993) 39–49 at 41–42 and his *Men in their Books* (Hildesheim, 1998) 233–234; G. Casadio, 'Ancient Mystic Religion: the Emergence of a New Paradigm from A.D. Nock to Ugo Bianchi', *Mediterraneo antico* 9 (2006) 485–534; ungenerous, S. Price, 'The Conversion of A.D. Nock in the Context of his Life, Scholarship, and Religious View', *HSCP* 105 (2010) 317–339.

27 A.D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1972) 2.791–820.

28 See the bibliography in Chapter I note 5.

29 C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin, 1987) 69 n. 200, who, in addition to Aristophanes' *Clouds*, compares Plato *Men.* 76e, *Th.* 155ef, *Euthd.* 277e2f.

Hose, was their great oratorical competence and performance.³⁰ The use of Mystery metaphors may have attracted them for its suggestion of exclusive access to special knowledge.

The Mystery metaphor also appealed greatly to the Jewish philosopher Philo, a somewhat older contemporary of the apostle Paul. In his prolific work Philo made extensive use of Mystery terminology to argue that the Holy Scriptures, in his case especially the Pentateuch, contained a secret, symbolic meaning that could only be deciphered through allegorical exegesis. It is not surprising therefore that he often calls the Pentateuch *hieros logos*, the term used by Herodotus and the Orphics for sacred tales connected with the Mysteries (Ch. III.3). However there is no indication that Philo was initiated himself and he hardly ever refers to specific details of the Mysteries. For the most part he uses this predominantly Platonic terminology to make his language rhetorically more attractive and philosophically more profound.³¹

Philo was not the only Jewish scholar to make use of this terminology. In late books of the *Septuagint*, the most popular Greek translation of the Old Testament,³² we do find the term *mystêrion*, but nearly always with the meaning either of pagan Mystery cults or as a metaphor for secret plans that were not to be betrayed. More generally, the *Septuagint* seems to avoid the language of the Mysteries or employs it mainly for prohibited Canaanite practices.³³ There are really only two verses in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a book found in Roman Catholic but not Protestant Bibles, which use the term Mysteries in the same metaphorical manner as Philo. This late book, probably dating to about 50 BC, states that the ungodly do not know ‘the Mysteries of God’ (2.22) and, later, ‘As for wisdom, what she is, and how she came up, I will tell you, and will not hide Mysteries, *mystêria*, from you’ (6.22). Given Philo’s usage and the – admittedly rare – occurrence in the *Septuagint*, the early Christians, too, may have employed this Mystery terminol-

30 M. Hose, ‘Die Erfindung des Experten. Über Sophisten und ihr Auftreten’, in T. Fuhrer and A.-B. Renger (eds), *Performanz von Wissen* (Heidelberg, 2012) 29–47.

31 Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 70–115; M. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen, 1990) 77–81; both of these are overlooked by N. Cohen, ‘The Mystery Terminology in Philo’, in R. Deines and K.W. Niebuhr (eds), *Philo und das Neue Testament* (Tübingen, 2004) 173–187; C. Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)’, in *RAC* 25 (2013) 422–471 at 443f.

32 See most recently T. Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford, 2011²); S. Kreuzer et al. (ed.), *Die Septuaginta – Entstehung, Sprache, Geschichte* (Tübingen, 2012).

33 Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 102; B.L. Gladd, *Revealing the mysterion: the use of mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with its bearing on First Corinthians* (Berlin and New York, 2008).

ogy, as they seem to do in a few passages of the New Testament.³⁴ In the Gospels the most interesting passage is *Mark* 4.11, where Jesus says to his disciples about the parable of the sower, ‘To you has been given the secret, *mystêrion*, of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables’. Here Jesus apparently compares his message to a hidden meaning as revealed in Mystery cults to the initiated but not to outsiders.³⁵

The apostle Paul, too, occasionally uses Mystery terminology,³⁶ but sometimes at key points in his Letters. In the *First Letter to the Corinthians* he uses *mystêrion* for his message to them (2.1), and he compares himself and the apostles to the stewards of the *mystêria* (4.1). In his *Letter to the Romans* (11.25) he even uses *mystêrion* for the heart of his message, the key to understanding God’s plan. It is noteworthy that he and other, later Christian authors mostly use the word in the singular, whereas of course the Athenians spoke of *Mystêria* in the plural as the name of a festival (Preface), even though we can find the singular also in second-century AD pagan inscriptions (*SEG* 6.59.21). Yet there is general consensus among New Testament scholars that the usage of *mystêrion* does not indicate a serious influence from the Mysteries. Nonetheless, it seems unnecessary to assume with Guy Stroumsa that the rare usage was derived solely from Paul’s Jewish background.³⁷ Philo and the *Book of Wisdom* clearly demonstrate that Platonic Mystery metaphors had been appropriated by pagans and Jews alike.

Nock of course noted the near-absence of Mystery terminology in the New Testament, but he overlooked some clear cases of Mystery terminology in Christian authors of the second century.³⁸ Let us consider two of these terms. As we saw in our first chapter, at the *moment suprême* of the Eleusinian Mysteries the

34 For *mystêrion* in the New Testament and the early Church, see especially G. Bornkamm, ‘*mystêrion, mueð*’, in *TWNT* 4 (1942) 809–834 (with the older bibliography); A.E. Harvey, ‘The Use of Mystery Language in the Bible’, *JThS* 31 (1980) 320–336; R. Schulte, ‘Die Einzelsakramente als Ausgliederung des Wurzelsakraments’, in J. Feiner and M. Löhrer (eds), *Mysterium salutis* (Einsiedeln, 1973) 46–155 at 70–93; R. Stupperich, ‘Mysterium’, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 6 (Stuttgart, 1984) 263–267; Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*; Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)’, 444–446.

35 Thus, persuasively, Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 89 n. 69.

36 Note also *Letter to the Philippians* 4.11–13: μεμύημαι and *Letter to the Colossians* 2.18: ἐμβατεύω. For the latter term, see S. Eitrem ‘Ἐμβατεύω: note sur Col. 2,18’, *Studia Theologica* 2 (1948) 90–94; F. Graf, ‘Lesser Mysteries – not less Mysterious’, in M.B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries* (London and New York, 2003) 241–262 at 246f.

37 *Contra* G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom. Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, 2005²) 4.

38 See now D.-A. Giulea, ‘Seeing Christ through Scriptures at the Paschal Celebration: Exegesis as Mystery Performance in the Paschal Writings of Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, and Origen’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 74 (2008) 27–47.

high priest revealed a huge fire in the dark hall in which the initiands were gathered (Ch. I.3), and this light in the dark returns in many later philosophical writings to denote the highest insight or the seeing of God. Contrary to what Nock states, the term *phôtisma/os*, literally ‘illumination’, is already used for Christian baptism in the second-century Christian authors Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria. From the context it is clear that a Mystery metaphor is indeed intended. Its use here is not so strange: baptism, too, was a climax, the culmination of the process of incorporation into the Christian church.³⁹

Perhaps more interesting is the use of the term *symbolon/symbolum*, not mentioned by Nock. From the fifth century AD onwards, the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed and all kinds of other Creeds began to be known as *symbola* in the early Christian church. As the most recent study of the origin of the term notes: ‘Because this Apostles’ Creed functioned, and in my opinion must have been created, as a declaration pronounced before baptism – either in its interrogative form, to be answered with a simple *Credo* or by reciting the Apostles’ Creed in the first person – the semantic development is no longer a problem: a meaning “baptismal password” or “baptismal declaration” must have developed out of the well-attested profane meaning “password”’.⁴⁰ The derivation from profane passwords, however, overlooks the fact that the term *symbolon* is already used by Clement of Alexandria to mean a ritual password in the Orphic interpretation of the Mysteries of Demeter and by Plutarch in the context of Dionysiac, but certainly Orphically coloured, Mysteries.⁴¹ The term has now been found in the sense of ‘password’ in the fourth-century BC first Orphic Gold Leaf from Thessalian Pherae (OF 493 F), the perhaps third-century BC Gold Leaf from Sicilian Entella (OF 475 F ii.19) and the mid-third-century BC Orphic Gurôb Papyrus (OF 578 F, i.23).⁴² It is highly likely, then, that the term *symbolon*, which was first used as a baptismal password but later developed into the term for the Creed, derived, ultimately, from the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries.

³⁹ Justin Martyr *Apol.* I.61.12; Clem. Alex. *Paed.* 1.26.1–2, *Protr.* 12.120.1; cf. G. Anrich, *Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum* (Göttingen, 1894) 125–126; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 156f.

⁴⁰ L. Westra, ‘Cyprian, the Mystery Religions and the Apostles’ Creed – an Unexpected Link’, in H. Bakker *et al.* (eds), *Cyprian of Carthage. Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought* (Leuven, 2010) 115–125 at 117 (quote) and ‘How Did Symbolum Come to Mean “Creed”?’, *Studia Patristica* 45 (2010) 85–91; see also W. Müri, *Griechische Studien* (Basle, 1976) 37–44; A. Merkt, ‘Symbolum. Historische Bedeutung und patristische Deutung des Bekenntnisnamens’, *Römische Quartalschrift* 96 (2001) 1–36; W. Kinzig, ‘Glaubensbekenntnis und Entwicklung des Kirchenjahres’, in *idem et al.* (eds), *Liturgie und Ritual in der Alten Kirche* (Leuven, 2011) 3–41.

⁴¹ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.15.3; Plut. *Mor.* 611d.

⁴² For the *symbola* of the Mysteries, see also Bernabé *ad OF* 493.1 F.

There are thus some verbal parallels between early Christianity and the Mysteries, but the situation is rather different as regards early Christian ritual practice. Much ink was spilled around 1900 arguing that the rituals of baptism and of the Last Supper derived from the ancient Mysteries, but Nock and others after him have easily shown that these attempts grossly misinterpreted the sources. Baptism is clearly rooted in Jewish purificatory rituals, and cult meals are so widespread in antiquity that any specific derivation is arbitrary.⁴³ It is truly surprising to see how long the attempts to find some pagan background to these two Christian sacraments have persevered. Secularising ideologies clearly played an important part in these interpretations but, nevertheless, they have helped to clarify the relations between nascent Christianity and its surroundings.⁴⁴

What about doctrinal influence? Here too the search for parallels has been unsuccessful. This is not really surprising, as, to start with, the Mysteries were secret and it thus becomes very difficult to observe possible parallels. More importantly, the main Mysteries, those of Eleusis (Ch. I.3) and Samothrace (Ch. II.1), had no discursive content but limited themselves to showing things. The Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, on the other hand, did have such content, but the myth of the murder of Dionysus and the incest of Zeus with his daughter (Ch. III.3) could hardly have appealed to the early Christians.

Perhaps the most surprising development in all this has been the gradual disappearance of the comparison between Jesus and the ‘rising and dying gods’ of the Ancient Near East. As is well noted by Jonathan Smith, in the early twentieth century scholars tended to postulate an archaic pattern of ‘dying and rising deities’ such as Osiris,⁴⁵ Tammuz (Dumuzi: below), Adonis⁴⁶ and Attis,⁴⁷

43 See now C. Leonhard and B. Eckhardt, ‘Mahl V (Kultmahl)’, in *RAC* 23 (2009) 1012–1105; D.E. Smith and H. Taussig (eds), *Meals in the Early Christian World* (New York, 2012).

44 For good surveys, see J. Hamilton, ‘The Church and the Language of Mystery: The First Four Centuries’, *Ephem. Theol. Lovanienses* 53 (1977) 479–494; D.H. Wiens, ‘Mystery Concepts in Primitive Christianity and its Environment’, in *ANRW* II.23.2 (Berlin and New York, 1980) 1248–1284; D. Zeller, ‘Mysterien/ Mysterienreligionen’, in *TRE* 23 (1994) 504–526 at 519–522; A.J.M. Wedderburn, ‘Paul and the Mysteries Revisited’, in C. Strecker (ed.), *Kontexte der Schrift*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 2005) 2.260–269; Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)’, 444–446.

45 M. Heerma van Voss, ‘Osiris’, in *DDD*, 649–651.

46 M. Koortbojian, *Myth, Meaning and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1995); S. Ribichini, ‘Adonis’, in *DDD*, 7–10; A. Hermay, ‘Adonis’, in *LIMC, Suppl. I* (Düsseldorf, 2009) 20–23.

47 For Attis, see most recently G. Casadio, ‘The Failing Male God: Emasculation, Death and Other Accidents in the Ancient Mediterranean World’, *Numen* 50 (2003) 231–268; Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 267–302; J. Boardman, ‘Attis’, in *LIMC, Suppl. 1* (2009) 123–125; J. North, ‘Power and its Redefinitions: the Vicissitudes of

and the more adventurous among them, such as the famous Sir James Frazer of the *Golden Bough*, also included the death and resurrection of Christ.⁴⁸ However, more recently scholars have reversed the pattern, claiming that the pagan cults adapted themselves to Christianity. Smith reproaches contemporary scholars of early Christianity as follows:

ignoring their own reiterated insistence, when the myth and ritual complex appeared archaic, that analogies do not yield genealogies, they now eagerly assert what they (the scholars) hitherto denied, that the similarities demonstrate that the Mediterranean cults borrowed from the Christian. In no work familiar to me has this abrupt about-face been given a methodological justification.⁴⁹

This rather curious reproach lumps together virtually a century of scholarship. Why should scholarship not change over such a long period? Given Smith's many criticisms of Protestant scholars, we should note that it was a Catholic, the Fleming Pieter Lambrechts (1910–1974), who initiated this reversal of the fortunes of many a Late Antique cult.⁵⁰ Smith also overlooks the fact that Walter Burkert provided at least the beginning of an explanation for this turning of the scholarly tables. His discussion of these 'dying and rising gods' clearly shows that the basis for the views of Frazer and his contemporaries has been undermined by the continuing publication and analysis of materials from the Ancient Near East. For example, in 1951 a tablet was discovered with the hitherto missing conclusion of the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Dumuzi: instead of his expected resurrection Dumuzi is killed as a substitute for Inanna.⁵¹ A steady trickle of new artefacts,

Attis', in L. Bricault and C. Bonnet (eds), *Panthée: Religious Transformations in the Graeco-Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2013) 279–292.

48 For Frazer, see the collection of passages and discussion by Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 92–93; note also F. Prescendi, 'Du sacrifice du roi des Saturnales à l'exécution de Jésus', in A. Nagy and ead. (eds), *Sacrifices humains: discours et réalités* (Paris, 2013) 231–247f. For early protests, see K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, 3 vols (Tübingen, 1928–1932) 2.6–7; A. Lannoy, *Het christelijke mysterie: de relatie tussen het vroege christendom en de heidense mysterieculen in het denken van Alfred Loisy en Franz Cumont, in de context van de modernistische crisis* (Diss. Ghent, 2012) 229–230 (on studies by M.-J. Lagrange against Frazer around 1920).

49 Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 104. I update here my *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2002) 53.

50 On Lambrechts, see G. Sanders, 'Pieter Lambrechts', *Jaarboek Kon. Ac. België* 36 (1974) 370–403.

51 W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1979) 99–101, 105–111; H.-P. Müller, 'Sterbende und auferstehende Vegetationsgötter?', *Theol. Zs.* 53 (1997) 74–82 and 'Die Geschichte der phönizischen und punischen Religion', *J. Semitic Stud.* 44 (1999) 17–33; B. Alster, 'Tammuz', in *DDD*, 828–834; T. Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: Dying and Rising Gods in the Ancient Near East* (Stockholm, 2001); F. Wiggermann,

inscriptions and archaeological monuments has enabled scholars to construct a much more sophisticated view of Late Antiquity than was possible for their colleagues at the beginning of the last century. There is no reason not to see this reversal for what it is: a normal example of progress in scholarship.

In sum, we see that all efforts to derive earliest Christianity from the ancient Mysteries have been unsuccessful. Even the word *mystêrion* is rarely encountered in the earliest Christian writings.⁵² Yet this is not the end of our story. Before we continue with Christianity, we first have to return to the pagan Mysteries.

4 The pagan Mysteries in the earlier empire

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Mysteries of Isis and, especially, those of Mithras became popular in the course of the second century. They were not the only Mysteries that came to the fore at that time. For our purpose I would like to mention briefly three other new Mysteries.⁵³ First, when the emperor Hadrian's much younger boyfriend Antinoos drowned in the Nile before the emperor's very eyes in AD 130, several Mystery cults were instituted in memory of him, such as in Antinoopolis, the city that Hadrian founded on the site of the accident, in Klaudiopolis, Antinoos' birthplace in Asia Minor, but also in Mantinea on the Greek mainland, presumably in order to gain privileges from the emperor.⁵⁴ We know virtually nothing about how this new cult was organised, but it is striking that his memory was celebrated through a Mystery cult.

We are somewhat better informed about our second example: Mysteries created as part of the cult of the emperor. Not surprisingly, these new Mysteries were modelled on the most prestigious Mysteries of the ancient world, the Eleusinian Mysteries. In these imperial Mysteries, which we know only through a few inscriptions, there were singers of hymns, as in Eleusis, as well as a hierophant and a Sebastophant, in other words, functionaries who displayed holy objects and the image of the emperor, respectively, perhaps instead of the display

'The Image of Dumuzi', in J. Stackert *et al.* (eds), *Gazing on the Deep. Studies Tzvi Abusch* (Bethesda, 2010) 327–347.

⁵² As observed by C. Mohrmann, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens I* (Rome, 1961²) 234–236.

⁵³ For a local Mystery cult, see G. Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos* (New Haven and London, 2012)

⁵⁴ Or. *CCelsum* 3.36 (Antinoopolis); *I. Klaudiopolis* 7, 56, 65; Paus. 8.9.7–8; *IG V.2* 312, 281, cf. L. Robert, *A travers l'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1980) 132–138; P. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations* (Minneapolis, 2003) 296; C.P. Jones, *New Heroes in Antiquity: from Achilles to Antinoos* (Cambridge MA and London, 2010) 80 n. 11.

of a statue of Demeter as probably happened in Eleusis (Ch. I.3). There was also heavy eating and drinking, and initiation into these Mysteries was clearly not for free.⁵⁵

We are best informed about my third example, which is perhaps also the most interesting one. From about AD 150 a religious entrepreneur, Alexander of Abonoteichos, was travelling around the ancient world. Like Antinoos, he had started his career as the boyfriend of an older man, in his case a magician. After the latter's death, Alexander set up for himself and toured Greece with a friend, selling his magical tricks. In Macedonia they met an older woman, who was, according to our main source Lucian, 'past her prime but still eager to be charming', and travelling with her they encountered Macedonian women who kept great snakes that were tame and gentle. They bought one, and with its help Alexander set up an oracle in a temple in his home town. Those who wanted advice from this snake god had to put their questions on scrolls of papyrus sealed with wax, which Alexander artfully melted so he could give the right answer. He fashioned a head for the snake, which concealed its real head and was connected to pipes through which someone inside the temple could answer questions, while Alexander himself held the body of the snake in his arms.⁵⁶ Becoming very successful, he finally designed new Mysteries. These were clearly modelled on those of Eleusis but, as he was living in an age of entertainment, he jazzed them up with, as *gran finale*, the Moon coming down from the roof in the form of a pretty woman who kissed him in front of her husband. Womanising is not alien to religious entrepreneurs, as many an American fundamentalist television preacher has shown. It did not hurt Alexander, and the cult of his snake Glykon outlasted him by a century.⁵⁷

55 H.W. Pleket, 'An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries', *HTHR* 58 (1965) 331–347 (not without some misunderstandings of the traditional Mystery cults); Harland, *Associations*, 116–119, 128–132; I. *Ancyra* 8, to be read with the comments of C.P. Jones, *JRA* 25 (2012) 889.

56 A. Rostad, 'The Magician in the Temple: Historicity and Parody in Lucian's *Alexander*', *C&M* 62 (2011) 207–230.

57 Most recently, G. Bordenache Battaglia, 'Glykon', in *LIMC* IV.1 (1988) 279–283; A. Chaniotis, 'Old wine in a new skin: tradition and innovation in the cult foundation of Alexander of Abonoteichos', in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient World* (Cracow, 2002) 67–85; F. Steger, 'Der Neue Asklepios Glykon', *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 40 (2005) 1–16; D. Elm, 'Die Inszenierung des Betrugers und seiner Entlarvung. Divination und ihre Kritiker in Lukians Schrift "Alexander oder der Lügenprophet"', in ead. *et al.* (eds), *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 2006) 141–157; A. Petsalis-Diomidis, 'Truly Beyond Wonders'. *Aelius Aristides and the Cult of Asklepios* (Oxford, 2010) 12–66; R. Gordon, 'Individuality, Selfhood and Power in the Second Century: The Mystagogue as a Mediator of Religious Options', in J. Rüpke and G. Woolf (eds), *Religious Dimensions of the Self in the Second Century CE* (Tübingen, 2013) 146–172 at 155–161; G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Oracoli e teologia: praxis oracolare e riflessioni', *Kernos* 26 (2013) 139–156 (with a list of her many studies of Alexander in the bibliography).

These examples, which could easily be multiplied, demonstrate that Mysteries, the Eleusinian ones in particular, were an important model for new cults at the time of Christianity's rise. At the same time, it is clear that the Mysteries enjoyed a very high standing not only in religion but also in philosophy. It is remarkable that we find such positive comments about them in historians and philosophers, starting already with Varro in the later first century BC. From Augustine we learn that he had said, 'that there are many truths which it is not useful for the common people to know, and, moreover, that there are many false views which it is expedient that people should take to be true. This, he says, is why the Greeks held their initiations and Mysteries (*teletas ac mysteria*) in secret and behind closed doors'.⁵⁸ According to the philosophers, the Mysteries' hidden wisdom enabled them to escape the superstitious deformation of normal religious cults. For that reason they were greatly appreciated by philosophers in the early centuries of the Roman Empire, as they now saw the Mysteries as the loci of truth *par excellence*.⁵⁹

5 Christian reactions to pagan Mysteries

In the course of the second and later centuries, we note two opposing reactions to the Mysteries from the Christian side. On the one hand, Christians started to combat the Mysteries by trying to expose them and to ascribe their contents to the Devil. On the other hand, as time went on, mainstream Christianity could not escape the high prestige of the Mysteries, and in the course of Late Antiquity we do notice an influence from the Mystery cults on some Gnostic Christian groups as well as on baptism and the Eucharist, the main Christian rituals. Let us therefore conclude by taking a brief look at both developments.

As regards the negative reflections on the Mysteries, we find these already in the writings of one of the earliest Christian apologists, Justin Martyr, who was executed in AD 165. He was a convert and wrote an *Apology* for the Christian faith around AD 150. In his book Justin comments on the similarities between Christian institutions and pagan ones.⁶⁰ Regarding baptism he says that, having heard of the institution of baptism, demons instigated the pagans to rinse themselves

⁵⁸ Aug. *Civ.* 4.31 = Varro, *ARD* fr. 21, tr. R. Dyson.

⁵⁹ P. Van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods* (Cambridge, 2011) 47; add W.C. van Unnik, 'Flavius Josephus and the Mysteries', in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden, 1979) 244–279.

⁶⁰ See also J. Pépin, *De la philosophie ancienne à la théologie patristique* (London, 1986) Chapter VIII ('Christianisme et mythologie. Jugements chrétiens sur les analogies du paganisme et du christianisme', first published in 1981).

when entering a sanctuary and to wash themselves when leaving.⁶¹ It is important to note that Justin does not connect baptism with Mystery rites, though modern scholars have often done so. His comparison is also not very persuasive. Pagan purificatory rites with water usually took place at the beginning of a ritual or when entering a sanctuary.⁶² Unlike baptism, it was thus not a unique event that changed a person's position in life by making him the permanent member of a new group. Moreover, the Christians had a preference for 'living water',⁶³ which certainly was not always the case in pagan sanctuaries. So why would Justin compare baptism to pagan rituals?

Fritz Graf has attractively argued that the reason was probably because some pagans had pointed out similarities between their rites and those of Christianity. Presumably, these pagans had concluded that there was therefore no reason for the Christians not to participate in pagan rites. It must have been this polemic that induced Justin to compare Christian and pagan rituals.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Tertullian, who lived around AD 200, did actually compare baptism to Mystery cults. Having stated that the pagans 'ascribe power of equal effectiveness to their idols' (as the Christians to God), he proceeds by noting, 'They tell themselves lies, for their waters are barren. In certain rites they are initiated by means of a bath – of some Isis or Mithras'.⁶⁵ For him these pagan rituals do display similarities with baptism, but they are simply ineffective, as they lack deeper insight and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Pagan polemics will also have been in the background of Justin's defence of the Eucharist. When describing its institution by Jesus during the Last Supper, he comments, 'this is exactly what the wicked demons have handed down (*paredôkan*) by imitation in the Mysteries of Mithras, viz. that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain formulae (*epilogôn*) in the mystic rites of the initiate'.⁶⁶ With the formulae, which he unfortunately does not quote, Justin clearly alludes

61 Justin *Apol.* 1.62.1, cf. F. Graf, 'Mysteries, Baptism', 94–95, which partially overlaps with his 'Baptism and Graeco-Roman Mystery Cults', in D. Hellholm *et al.* (eds), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, 3 vols (Berlin and New York, 2011) 1.101–118.

62 Parker, *Miasma*, 20.

63 T. Klauser, *Gesammelte Arbeiten zur Liturgiegeschichte, Kirchengeschichte und christlichen Archäologie*, ed. E. Dassmann = *JAC Erg.* 3 (Münster, 1974) 177–184; A. Nestori, 'L'acqua nel fonte battesimale', in *Studi in memoria di Giuseppe Bovini*, 2 vols (Ravenna, 1989) 2.419–427; S. Ristow, *Frühchristliche Baptisterien* = *JAC Erg.* 27 (Münster, 1998) 50–52.

64 Graf, 'Baptism and Graeco-Roman Mystery Cults', 105.

65 Tertullian *De baptismo* 5.1, tr. E. Evans, slightly adapted.

66 Justin *Apol.* 1.66.4. Note that *paredôkan* is a technical term of the Mysteries, cf. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 6–7, where our passage has to be added; Ch. IV n. 79.

to the words of Jesus, ‘This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me’, and, ‘This is my blood’. As Fritz Graf notes, this comment of Justin also seems to be a reaction to pagan comments.⁶⁷ Once again, the comparison is not terribly persuasive, but it is true that we see bread rolls and grapes on several Mithraic reliefs.⁶⁸ The cup of water may well have been Justin’s interpretation, as water instead of wine was quite normal in the celebration of the early Christian Eucharist.⁶⁹

One may object that a pagan comparison of their Mysteries with the rituals of early Christianity, as suggested by Graf, is only one possibility. Yet we have a very interesting and often neglected pagan testimony for such comparisons, though an indirect one. In AD 248 Origen launched a major attack on the pagan philosopher Celsus, who probably lived around AD 180 and had written a treatise against the Christians, entitled *True Doctrine*. The book has not survived, but Origen incorporated sizable quotations from it in his own polemical work. Origen relates: ‘After having expounded the Mithraic mysteries, Celsus declares that he who would investigate the Christian initiation (*teletên*) with the aforesaid initiation (*teletên*) of the Persians, will, on comparing the two together, and on unveiling the (Mysteries) of the Christians, see in this way the difference between them’.⁷⁰ Even though Celsus subsequently compared the Mysteries of an obscure Christian group, the Ophites or Snake worshippers, the fact remains that some pagans evidently compared pagan Mysteries with what they considered to be Christian Mysteries. This is also clear from Lucian’s pamphlet on Peregrinus, in which he states that Jesus was crucified in Palestine because he had instituted ‘that new Mystery cult (*teletê*)’.⁷¹

There can indeed be little doubt that elements of the Mysteries had been appropriated by some Christian Gnostic groups. Orthodox Christian polemicists against what they considered to be heretics have given us several examples of this influence, though its actual impact is hard to gauge. It is certainly the case that

67 This is a more subtle approach than the reactions of Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 386–387 and Gordon, ‘Mithras’, 1001.

68 For bread and grapes, see Merkelbach, *Mithras*, 132–133; M. Claus, ‘Mithras und Christus’, *Hist. Zs.* 243 (1986) 265–285 at 267–272; E. Sauer, *Class. Rev.* 57 (2007) 497 (comparing the Mithraic reliefs from Hedderheim, Ladenburg and Dalmatian Konjic).

69 H. Roldanus, ‘Die Eucharistie in den Johannesakten’, in Bremmer (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (Kampen, 1995) 72–96; M. Daly-Denton, ‘Water in the Eucharistic Cup: A Feature of the Eucharist in Johannine Trajectories through Early Christianity’, *Irish Theol. Quart.* 72 (2007) 356–370.

70 Or. *CCels.* 6.24 and see also 3.59.

71 Luc. *Per.* 11. For Lucian’s noteworthy knowledge of Christianity, see Bremmer, ‘Peregrinus’ Christian Career’, in A. Hilhorst *et al.* (eds), *Flores Florentino* (Leiden, 2007) 729–747.

the word *mystêrion* in general has a cognitive content ('secret') rather than a ritual one in Gnostic writings, as is also the case in the writings of Mani, the founder of the only world religion that has become extinct.⁷² In various ways the Gnostics seem to have borrowed especially from the Orphics and the Orphic-Bacchic Mysteries, as scholars already began to note around 1900. The relationship between the Gnostics and the Orphics has received renewed attention due to the discovery of the many new Orphic-Bacchic texts that we discussed in our third chapter.⁷³

We can only speak of influence with some hesitation, as the Gnostics clearly reworked and appropriated Orphic themes in ways that suited their own systems, but there is a rather striking case in the Gnostic text *The (First) Apocalypse of James*. This Apocalypse was found among the Nag Hammadi writings, and a second witness has recently turned up in the so-called Codex Tchacos, which gave us the famous *Gospel of Judas*.⁷⁴ Here we read the following dialogue between the ascending spirit and the guardians, who are described as tax-collectors: 'One of them – because he is a guard – will ask you, "who are you, and where are you from?" You shall say to him, "I am the son, and I am from the Father"' (Codex Tchacos, p. 20). This dialogue, which then develops into a conversation about the pre-existent Father, is clearly related to the one we find in the Gold Leaves, especially those from Crete, where we read the following dialogue between the soul of the dead and the guardians: 'Who are you? Where are you from? – I am a son of Earth and starry Sky'.⁷⁵ There is unmistakably a family resemblance between the two texts in form and function.⁷⁶ Other parallels are less direct, and it is fair to say that the debate about the relationship between Gnosticism and Orphism with its Mysteries is still looking for the right questions rather than already finding persuasive answers.

72 N.A. Pedersen, 'The Term *mystêrion* in Coptic-Manichaean Texts', in C.H. Bull *et al.* (eds), *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices* (Leiden, 2011) 133–143.

73 Anrich, *Das antike Mysterienwesen*, 74–105; W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften III* (Göttingen, 2006) 45–46, 201; M. Herrero de Jáuregui, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (Berlin and New York, 2010) 104–107; E. Thomassen, 'Orphics and Gnostics', in J. Dijkstra *et al.* (eds), *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer* (Leiden, 2010) 463–473; G. Stroumsa, 'The Afterlife of Orphism: Jewish, Gnostic and Christian Perspectives', *Historia religionum* 4 (2012) 139–157 at 149–153; Auffarth, 'Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)', 446–447; F. Jourdan, 'Orpheus/Orphik', in *RAC* 26 (2014) 576–613.

74 R. Kasser and G. Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas: Critical Edition* (Washington DC, 2007) 119–161.

75 Cf. *OF* 478–480, 482–483.

76 Thomassen, 'Orphics and Gnostics', 465–467; note for the 'passwords' also Stroumsa, 'The Afterlife of Orphism', 151, quoting the *Gospel of Philip* in Epiphanius *Panarion* 26.13.2.

One thing, though, is clear from these examples from Justin, Tertullian and the Gnostics: pagans did see similarities between their Mysteries and the Christian sacraments, and some Christian groups were not averse to borrowing from the Mysteries. Presumably it is this close proximity that caused Clement of Alexandria, around AD 200, to use a late Hellenistic handbook of the Mysteries (Ch. III.2) to launch a blistering attack on the Mysteries and those who had introduced them into Greece, whom he calls: ‘the fathers of their impious myths and deadly superstition, who sowed in human life that seed of evil and ruin: the Mysteries’. Note how the Mysteries are placed here at the end of the sentence as its climax of evil. Clement continues, ‘I will prove their orgies to be full of imposture and quackery. And if you have been initiated, you will laugh all the more at these myths of yours which have been held in honour. I proclaim without reserve what has been involved in secrecy, not ashamed to tell what you are not ashamed to worship’.⁷⁷

Yet at the same time Clement’s writing is an illuminating example of the ambivalent attitude of the early Christians towards the Mysteries. He rejects actual initiation into Mysteries, but his language is suffused with metaphors from them. In the conclusion of his *Exhortation to the Gentiles*, in which he attacked the pagan Mysteries so fiercely, we find these ecstatic words: ‘O truly sacred Mysteries! O stainless light! My way is lighted with torches, and I contemplate the heavens and God; I become holy whilst I am initiated, but the Lord is the hierophant, and marks his initiate with the seal while illuminating him,⁷⁸ and presents to the Father him who believes, to be kept safe for ever. Such are the Bacchic rituals of my Mysteries’.⁷⁹

Sigmund Freud once coined the expression ‘the narcissism of minor differences’. In other words, social and, we should add, religious identities are defended most fiercely against those who are closest to us. That is why civil wars are so cruel and why we all try to defend *die feinen Unterschiede* (1982) to quote the German title of Bourdieu’s *La distinction* (1979), another reflection on this phenomenon.⁸⁰ There is something of this attitude in the vehemence with which Clement attacks the pagan Mysteries, which were clearly considered to be uncomfortably close to the Christian sacraments.

77 Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 2.13.5–14.1, tr. W. Wilson. For Clement’s attitude to the Mysteries, see H.G. Marsh, ‘The Use of *mystêrion* in the Writings of Clement of Alexandria’, *JThS* 37 (1936) 64–80.

78 Clement often refers to baptism as sealing, cf. J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology* (Nimwegen, 1962) 423; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 156f.

79 Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 12.120.1–2, tr. W. Wilson, cf. Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)’, 447–449.

80 For an interesting discussion of Freud and Bourdieu, see A. Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Oxford, 2001) 115–135.

As Christianity became better known in the course of the third century and steadily gained new converts, the threat of the pagan Mysteries receded, and we no longer hear of these comparisons or Christian attacks. At this point, we should not even rule out Christian influence on the pagan Mysteries. The research in this direction has only seriously started in the last decades, and the first interpretations were perhaps too quick to claim Christian influence.⁸¹ Yet a case like the belief in the resurrection of Attis, which we begin to find in the Mysteries of Cybele and Attis around AD 200, is perhaps an example of such influence of a Christian belief on a pagan Mystery cult.⁸² The resurrection of Jesus himself and his raising of others had made a great impression on the pagan world. References to an apparent death and resurrection start to proliferate in pagan novels already from the Neronian period onwards and several recent studies have suggested that the genre was probably influenced by the Christian Gospel narratives.⁸³ In the second century, even pagan magicians started to be credited with the power to resurrect,⁸⁴ and in the third-century biography of the pagan ‘saint’ Apollonius of Tyana there is a detailed description of the resurrection of a girl that looks very much like it was inspired by Jesus’ raisings from the dead in the Gospels.⁸⁵ A Christian influence on the development in the Cybele and Attis Mysteries is thus not to be rejected *a priori*.

6 Christian appropriation of the Mysteries in Late Antiquity

A completely new development suddenly occurred around AD 300. In the course of the first three centuries, Christianity had continuously gained new converts.⁸⁶

81 Cf. Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods*, 417–421; A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011) 151 keeps the possibility open regarding the *taurobolium*.

82 Hipp. *Ref.* V.8.22–24 (and 5.9.8); Firmicus Maternus *De errore profanarum religionum* 3.1, cf. the subtle discussion by P. Borgeaud, *La mère des dieux de Cybèle à la vierge Marie* (Paris, 1996) 79–88, 146–153, 155. I repeat here in a somewhat revised form a passage from my *Rise and Fall*, 54.

83 G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1994); add R. Kany, ‘Der Lukanische Bericht von Tod und Auferstehung Jesu aus der Sicht eines hellenistischen Romanlesers’, *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986) 75–90; V. Schmidt, ‘Lukian über die Auferstehung der Toten’, *VigChris* 49 (1995) 388–392.

84 Polemo *De physiognomia*, pp.160–164 Förster; Luc. *Philops.* 13 and *Alex.* 24.

85 Philostr. *VA* 4.45, cf. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 109f. Note also the often overlooked reference in SHA *Aurelianus* 24.3.8.

86 For this much discussed process, see most recently Bremmer, *The Rise of Christianity through the Eyes of Gibbon, Harnack and Rodney Stark* (Groningen, 2010²); C.K. Rothchild and J. Schröter (eds), *The Rise and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries of the Common Era* (Tübingen, 2013).

Their increasing presence in the Roman empire was reflected in the ‘conversion’ of Constantine after his victory at the Pons Milvius in 312. Suddenly, it seems, the Christians now lost their fear of using pagan terms and within a few years we start to find them using *mystêrion/mysterium* for baptism and, in particular, the Eucharist with ‘Mystery(ies)’ even largely displacing the older term *eucharistia* for the Eucharist.⁸⁷ This development also had an impact on the term for catechism, as can be seen from the title of the catechetical lectures of the late fourth-century Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, *Katêchêses mystagôgikai*, ‘Catechetical lectures that introduce into the Mysteries’. Evidently catechism now served to introduce the new members into the Mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Church Fathers now spoke of ‘participating in the Mysteries’ when meaning baptism or the Eucharist.⁸⁸ At the beginning of the Eucharist a deacon now called out ‘the doors, the doors’,⁸⁹ clearly meaning that they should be closed to those who were not allowed to participate. The cry of course recalls the beginning of the Orphic theogony, where it is said, ‘close the doors, o profane’ (Ch. III.2), and it is this secrecy that led to the already mentioned term *Arkandisziplin* (§ 2). The Church Fathers even talked about the Eucharist as *daidouchia* and *epoptia*,⁹⁰ the first meaning ‘illumination by torches’, the *daidouchos* being an important official of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the second meaning ‘Viewing’, the highest degree of initiation at Eleusis (Ch. I). They also used the terms *phrikôdês* and

87 Eus. *DE* 1.10.32 (*mystêrion*), 3.4.48 (*mystai*), 4.7.1 (*mystagôgos*), cf. most recently E.J. Yarnold, ‘Baptism and the Pagan Mysteries’, *Heythrop Journal* 13 (1972) 247–267; M. Wallraff, ‘Von der Eucharistie zum Mysterium. Abendmahlsfrömmigkeit in der Spätantike’, in P. Gemeinhardt and U. Kühneweg (eds), *Patristica et Oecumenica. Festschrift für Wolfgang Bienert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Marburg, 2004) 89–104 (to which I am indebted), overlooked by A. Weiss, ‘Vom offenbarten Geheimnis zur partiellen Verheimlichung: die Aussendarstellung der frühen Christen’, in B. Streck (ed.), *Die gezeigte und die verborgene Kultur* (Wiesbaden, 2007) 125–143; D.L. Schwarz, ‘Keeping Secrets and Making Christians: Catechesis and the Revelation of the Christian Mysteries’, in P. Townsend and M. Vidas (eds), *Revelation, Literature, and Community in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen, 2011) 131–151 (unsatisfactory).

88 Eucharist: John Chrysostom *Cat. Bapt.* 3.16, 17 (ed. Wenger, *SC* 50); Cyril of Jerusalem *Cat. myst.* 4.1, 5.20, 23 (ed. Piédagnel, *SC* 126); John Chrysostom *De paenitentia* 6 (= *PG* 49.323). Baptism: Greg. Naz. *Or.* 40.45; John Chrysostom *Cat. bapt.* 2.17, also John Chrysostom *Adv. Iud.* 4.7 (= *PG* 48.882), *De sanctis martyribus* (= *PG* 50.650), *Ep. ad Olymp.* 10.3 (ed. Malingry, *SC* 13bis); Cyril, *Cat. Myst.* 1.1; Socrates *HE* 5.19.9; Theodoret *Hist. rel.* 26.13.

89 *Const. Apost.* 8.11.11 (ed. Metzger, *SC* 336); S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, *L’Eucologio Barberini gr.* 336, 2 vols (Rome, 1995–2000) 1.11. For the function of late antique Christian church doors, see M. Wallraff, ‘“Ego sum ostium”’: Kirchenportale und andere Türen im antiken Christentum’, *Theol. Zs.* 62 (2006) 321–337.

90 *Daidouchia*: Hesychius of Jerusalem *Hom. pasch.* 1 (ed. Aubineau, *SC* 187). *Epoptia*: Ps.Dion. Areop. *EH* 3 A.B.

phrikτος – used by Plato to describe the shuddering of the Eleusinian initiate (Ch. I.3) – to describe the experience of the Eucharist.⁹¹ Among the Montanists, *mystês* even seems to have been the title of hermits.⁹²

At the same time, we should also note transformations in the actual liturgy. Whereas earlier Christian theologians, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian, had declared that Christian teachings were public and taught in public, we now hear a different note. ‘We do not talk to pagans about the Mysteries of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost nor do we speak openly about the Mysteries in front of the catechumens’, says Cyril (*Cat.* 6.29), and Athanasius writes, ‘We ought not then to parade the holy Mysteries before the uninitiated, lest the pagans in their ignorance mock them, and the catechumens being over-curious be offended’.⁹³ Ambrosius even writes, ‘the season now warns us to speak of the Mysteries, and to set forth the purport of the sacraments, which if we had thought it well to teach before baptism to those who were not yet initiated, we should be considered rather to have betrayed than to have portrayed the Mysteries’.⁹⁴ In other words, the sacraments had nearly reached the same status as the ancient Eleusinian Mysteries, which could only be made public at risk of capital punishment (Ch. I.4).⁹⁵

With these Church Fathers we have arrived at the end of the fourth century. The theologians had opposed the Mysteries while avidly appropriating their language and secrecy, but Christian rulers were much more radical: Emperor Theodosius I closed the Eleusinian sanctuary in AD 392. The last hierophant was a man ‘who held the rank of Father in the Mysteries of Mithras’.⁹⁶ The accumulation of positions in Mysteries had become fairly normal in Late Antiquity, but apparently more for prestige than out of piety.⁹⁷ A few decades after these measures we no longer hear of pagan Mysteries in antiquity. The ancient rituals that had existed for more than a thousand years had been unable to resist the powerful hand of the triumphant Christian church. Yet traces of their one-time existence survive in the vocabulary and ritual of the Christian tradition, although

91 Cyril of Jerusalem *Cat. myst.* 5.4.9; John Chrysostom *Hom. 23 in Eph.* (PG 62.165), *Hom 25 in Eph.* (PG 57.331); Lampe s.v. *phrikôdês, phrikτος*, cf. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 64f.

92 P. Lampe, ‘Paulinos Mystes’, in H.M. Schellenberg et al. (eds), *A Roman Miscellany. Essays in honour of Anthony R. Birley on his Seventieth Birthday* (Gdansk, 2008) 49–52.

93 Athanasius *Apologia contra Arianos*, 1.11.

94 Ambrosius *De mysteriis* 1.2.

95 For the development, with many examples, see Perrin, ‘*Arcana mysteria* ou ce que cache la religion’ and ‘*Norunt fideles*. Silence et eucharistie dans l’*orbis christianus* antique’, in N. Bériou et al. (eds), *Pratiques de l’eucharistie dans les églises d’orient et d’occident*, 2 vols (Paris, 2009) 2.737–762.

96 Eun. VS 476.

97 Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 152–153, where this example has to be added.

more in the Orthodox East than in the West, and we should not forget that our word ‘sacrament’ was also used by the Roman Christians for the Mysteries.⁹⁸ In the end, in some way, those ancient Mysteries are still amongst us.

7 Conclusions

Looking back on this chapter, it is clear that study of the relationship between the ancient Mysteries and early Christianity has been greatly stimulated by religious polemics. Debates in the aftermath of the Reformation initiated the comparison of the Mysteries with the rituals of the emerging Church. The debates between secularising and more orthodox scholars around 1900 laid the foundations for modern studies by creating a new category, the so-called ‘Mystery religions’, which were supposedly an influence on, or even a threat for, early Christianity (see Preface).

Modern research, on the other hand, has shown that the constructions of scholars around 1900 were ideologically motivated and were wrong in three important respects. First, there was no such category as ‘Mystery religions’ but only Mystery cults; the cult of Mithras was, perhaps, the only more-or-less exclusive Mystery cult, whereas other divinities were also worshipped outside their own Mystery cults. Second, these cults were not ‘Oriental’ religions, as Cumont claimed, but properly Greco-Roman, albeit with some exotic tinges (Ch. V.3). Thirdly, these cults had virtually no impact on the emergence of Christianity nor were they all interested in the afterlife (see Preface).

There never was a flood of ‘Oriental religions’, as suggested, once again, by Cumont. As we have seen, there were only a few Mystery cults of Isis, and although the number of followers of Mithras in the West was considerable, it should not be overstated. As far as numbers are concerned, Mystery cults never posed a serious threat to emerging Christianity. There are only a few possible references to pagan Mystery cults in the New Testament, which should not surprise us, as interest in the Mysteries flourished most in the second century AD. It is in that period that we start to notice a shared interest by both pagans and Christians in the Mysteries. Pagans seem to have been struck by similarities, but Christians stressed the differences.

The fact that initiation into the Mysteries could be a costly affair and that the Mithras cult was limited to males meant that pagan Mysteries were no competi-

⁹⁸ Mohrmann, *Études sur le latin des chrétiens I*, 233–244; Auffarth, ‘Mysterien (Mysterienkulte)’, 449–451 (with recent bibliography).

tion for Christianity on the religious market, as the latter always received young and old, rich and poor, male and female into its fold.⁹⁹ Moreover, unlike the Mysteries, Christianity was not esoteric but at first openly proclaimed its message, which was clear to all.

Finally, in our ecumenical times we no longer debate dogmatic points of difference with any intensity, and the question of whether we are believers or agnostics should no longer prevent us from agreeing on the circumstances of the emergence of Christianity. Yet the secretive character of the ancient Mysteries continues and will continue to fascinate. Their emphasis on light and darkness, their promises of happiness in this life and the next, and their experiences of agony and ecstasy keep touching a nerve in the modern mind. My book may not have solved the secrets of the Mysteries or cracked their secret codes, but I do hope that I have succeeded in making these age-old Mysteries just a little bit less mysterious.¹⁰⁰

99 Cf. Bremmer, 'The Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians', *Hephaistos* 24 (2006) 269–278.

100 This chapter has profited from a careful reading by Ton Hilhorst and also from audiences in Munich, New York (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World: 2012), Montréal, Ottawa, Princeton, Fort Worth, Harvard, New York (Fordham), Mainz (2013) and Erfurt (Max Weber Kolleg: 2014).

Appendix 1: Demeter and Eleusis in Megara

For Giulia Sfameni Gasparro

Robert Parker has demonstrated the importance of focussing on local cults in his impressive studies of Athenian religion,¹ so it may be useful to look at the place and the function of the goddess Demeter in a city close to Athens: Megara. The last time that Megarian Demeter was analysed at any length was by the Swedish ancient historian Krister Hanell (1904–1970).² Our material has hardly increased since, but the flourishing of the study of Greek religion in recent decades does enable us to look at the existing evidence with new eyes, and this may perhaps lead to some new insights. As always, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

1 The temples of Demeter

At one time Demeter was the most important divinity of Megara. This is clear from the fact that Demeter was closely connected with the foundation of Megara. Pausanias, our most informative source of Megarian religious and mythological traditions, relates: ‘they say that the city received its present name in the time of Car, the son of Phoroneus, who was the king in this land. It was then, for the first time, that the people erected sanctuaries for Demeter, then that the mortals called them Megara. This is what the Megarians say about themselves’ (1.39.5). The notice is interesting for more than one reason.

First, Pausanias himself had been to Megara several times and was evidently interested in the city. He even mentions ‘our guide (*exegêtês*) to local matters’ (1.41.2).³ Second, it is striking that Megara does not seem to have had a proper first king of its own stock. Phoroneus was always closely associated with Argos, where he was the first king, if not first human, and recently an epigram mentioning his grave, which Pausanias (2.20.3) could still see, has emerged during local

1 R. Parker, *Athenian Religion* (Oxford, 1996) and *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005).

2 K. Hanell, *Megarische Studien* (Lund, 1934).

3 Guides are also mentioned in Paus. 1.42.4, cf. C.P. Jones, ‘Pausanias and his Guides’, in S. Alcock *et al.* (eds), *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford, 2001) 33–39; W. Hutton, *Describing Greece. Landscape and Literature in the Periëgesis of Pausanias* (Cambridge, 2005) 245–247; for a list of Pausanias’ references to them, see T. Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Greek Novel* (Cambridge, 2011) 99 n. 148.

construction work.⁴ His presence in Megara is therefore an additional argument for the early cultic and mythological influence of Argos on Megara.⁵ Third, the connection between Car and the temples of Demeter fits a characteristic of Pausanias in that he regularly ascribes surviving buildings to heroic or legendary figures.⁶ Car himself must have been the *hêros eponymos* of Caria, the name of the eastern Megarian acropolis.⁷ His name can hardly be separated from the unique epithet Carinus of Apollo, who was the most important male god of Megara. Unfortunately, we cannot say anything about the epithet, even though in Roman times the pyramidal statue of the god appeared on Megarian coins.⁸

As frequently in Greek mythology, for example, serpentine Cecrops in Athens, the first king is still not wholly on the side of civilisation.⁹ It seems as if, in the thoughts of the Greeks, civilisation could not emerge suddenly but only gradually. The same idea can be observed among the Romans where civilised life, so to speak, starts with Numa rather than Romulus. In Megara civilisation started with the erection of temples of Demeter. In other words, we find here once again the connection of Demeter to civilised life which we also find elsewhere in Greece, even if not explicitly stated – which is often the case.¹⁰

Hanell argues that we should not combine the figures of Demeter and Car, as the latter is only a *Schattengestalt*.¹¹ This seems contestable. Although it is true that Car is only a shadowy figure, Pausanias was told that this king and Demeter were closely connected. We know much too little about the early history of Megara to reject this notice. Moreover, the connection of Demeter with political power is well attested. Herodotus (7.153) mentions the fact that the Sicilian Deinomenids were hierophants of Demeter and Persephone,¹² and Strabo (14.1.3) reports a special connection of the royal family of Ephesus with Demeter: the Thebans told Pausanias (9.16.5) that the temple of Demeter Thesmophoros once had been the house of

4 T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London, 1993) 198–199; add *SEG* 56.418 (epigram).

5 Hanell, *Megarische Studien*, 69–91, who, strangely, overlooked Phoroneus.

6 K. Arafat, *Pausanias' Greece* (Cambridge, 1996) 64f.

7 On Car, see C.P. Jones, 'Epigraphica', *ZPE* 139 (2002) 108–116 at 114–16. Acropoleis: Paus. 1.40.6, 1.42.1 with Frazer and Musti&Beschi *ad loc.*; Hutton, *Describing Greece*, 28 (photo).

8 Paus. 1.44.2, cf. Hanell, *Megarische Studien*, 83–91; Musti&Beschi *ad loc.*; U. Kron, 'Heilige Steine', in H. Froning *et al.* (eds), *Kotinos. Festschrift für Erika Simon* (Mainz, 1992) 56–70 at 62–63.

9 For Cecrops, see E. Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London, 1989) 175; B. Knittlmayer *et al.*, 'Kekrops', in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 1084–1091; R.L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000–2013) 2.447–453.

10 Parker, *Polytheism*, 280.

11 Hanell, *Megarische Studien*, 51.

12 C. Cardete del Olmo, 'Los cultos a Deméter en Sicilia: naturaleza y poder político', in S. Montero and C. Cardete (eds), *Naturaleza y religión en el mundo clásico* (Madrid, 2010) 85–94.

Kadmos, and in Boeotia we find the epithets Achaia and Amphiktionis of Demeter.¹³ There is, then, no reason to reject the combination of Car and Demeter as at least testifying to an old connection of Demeter with political power.

Somewhat later in his description Pausanias returns to Car and he adds: ‘After the sanctuary of Zeus we ascend the acropolis, which to the present day is still called Caria, after Car, the son of Phoroneus ... Here, too, is what is called the hall (*megaron*) of Demeter: they said it was made by King Car’ (1.40.6, tr. Frazer).¹⁴ This notice has clearly to be connected with the previous one, as the two together indicate a local folk etymology of Megara. It is indeed true that the Eleusinian *anaktoron* was sometimes called *megaron* or *magaron*, the term for subterranean cultic buildings of Demeter and Persephone, but also of the pits in which sacrifice was deposited during the Thesmophoria (§ 2).¹⁵ In this case, the name of the city was connected with a customary term for the sanctuary of Demeter. Yet the custom to call the Eleusinian *anaktoron* a *megaron* is fairly late,¹⁶ and the notice may well be one more testimony to the fame of Demeter and Persephone’s Eleusinian sanctuary.

François Chamoux opts for a different etymology in his Budé commentary and connects the name of Megara with the verb *megarizein*, ‘performing the chamber rite’, as Parker translates it.¹⁷ The rite is best known from an aition of the Thesmophoria in a passage of Clement of Alexandria and a scholion on Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, both of which go back to the same source.¹⁸ As the latter is rather more detailed, we will present its version:

The Thesmophoria was performed according to the more mythical account because, when Kore was carried off by Plouton while picking flowers, one Eubouleus, a swineherd, was pasturing pigs on that spot, and they were swallowed up in the pit of Kore. So in honour of Eubouleus the piglets are thrown into the pits of Demeter and Kore. The rotten remains of the items thrown into the chambers (*megara*) are brought up by women called bailers who

13 L. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States III* (Oxford, 1907) 68–75 well realised the political side of Demeter; see also A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia I* (London, 1981) 167–168; S.G. Cole, ‘Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside’, in R. Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2000) 133–154 at 146f.

14 For the failed attempts at identifying this *megaron*, see A. Muller, ‘Megarika’, *BCH* 104 (1980) 83–92 at 83–89.

15 This volume, Ch. 1 note 85.

16 K. Clinton, *Myth and Cult* (Stockholm, 1992) 126–132.

17 Chamoux on Paus. 1.39.5; Parker, *Polytheism*, 273. Note that this meaning of the verb *μεγαρίζειν*, as attested in Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.17.1, was overlooked by *LSJ* and occurs only in the *Supplement*.

18 Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.17.1; schol. Luc. *Dial. Mer.* 2.1; especially, N.J. Lowe, ‘Thesmophoria and Haloa: myth, physics and mysteries’, in S. Blundell and M. Williamson (eds), *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* (London and New York, 1998) 149–173.

have kept themselves pure for three days: they go down into the secret places (*adyta*) and bring up the remains and put them on the altars. They think that anyone who takes some of this and mixes it in when sowing will have good crops. And they say that there are also snakes underground in the pits, which eat most of what is thrown in. And so they make noises when the women bail out and when they deposit those figures again, to make the snakes which they regard as guardians of the secret places withdraw. The same rites are also called Arretophoria. They are conducted on the basis of the same rationale concerning the birth of crops and the sowing of men. Here too secret sacred objects are brought up made of wheat-dough – imitations of snakes and male genitals. They also take pine branches because of the plant's fertility. Into the secret places known as chambers (*megara*) are thrown these objects and piglets, as we have said already, these too chosen because of their abundant offspring as a token of the birth of crops and of men as a kind of thank-offering to Demeter, since she by providing Demetrian crops civilised the human race. The earlier account of the festival was mythical, but the one under consideration is physical. It is called Thesmophoria because Demeter is called Thesmophoros because she established laws or *thesmoi* by which men were to acquire and work for their food.¹⁹

The source of this aition was an Attic antiquarian, as appears both from the mention of the Attic Skirophoria and Arretophoria in the scholion and Clement, as well as from Clement calling Kore (the name in Lucian's scholion) Pherephatta, the Attic version of her name in inscriptions, comedy and other non-tragic literature (Ch. III.2). Clement thus has preserved the older, if more abbreviated layer. As he enumerated the mysteries in alphabetical order, his source does not predate the third century BC when Alexandrian philologists introduced this way of enumeration.²⁰ The eventual source of the aition, though, will have been an Attic Orphic poem, as Fritz Graf demonstrated nearly four decades ago; the stress on the civilising aspect of Demeter perfectly fits this origin.²¹ This makes it also probable that the scholion combines several data. As Clement does not give any information about the ritual, the scholiast or his source will have taken that part of his aition from a different source.

When we now return to Chamoux's etymology of Megara, we can see that the chambers indeed existed: they are archaeologically attested and may well have existed in Megara too.²² Yet it seems that the Megarians themselves did not

¹⁹ I mainly follow the translation by Parker, *Polytheism*, 273.

²⁰ C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin and New York, 1987) 119; M. Herrero de Jáuregui, 'Las fuentes de Clem. Alex. Protr. II 12–22: un tratado sobre los misterios y una teogonía órfica', *Emerita* 75 (2007) 19–50.

²¹ F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 160–163 (civilisatory aspect), 165–166 (belonging to Orphic poem).

²² U. Kron, 'Frauenfeste in Demeterheiligtümern: das Thesmophorion von Bitalemi', *Arch. Anz.* 1992, 611–650 at 617.

connect the etymology of their city with these particular *megara*. It would have been strange indeed, if they had preferred an etymology based on ritual pits, which were mainly used in women's rites that were secret (§ 2).

2 The Thesmophoria

That does not mean to say that the Megarian women did not celebrate the Thesmophoria. On the contrary, Pausanias mentions a sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros on the so-called Acropolis of Alcaeus. The Thesmophoria was a very widespread festival that went back to the second millennium BC, as witness its occurrence in Athens, Ionia, Rhodes and Crete.²³ Yet we are not that well informed about the Thesmophoria, even though a few anecdotes about males spying and Aristophanes' play attest to male curiosity about the festival.²⁴ The reason must be the exclusion of men from the women's sanctuaries, just as women were excluded from sanctuaries of the war god Enyalios. The gender segregation is very well put by, *nota bene*, the probably Megarian late third-century BC philosopher Teles (24): Οὐδὲ γὰρ νῦν εἰς τὸ Θεσμοφόριον ἐξουσίαν ἔχω, οὐδ' αἱ γυναῖκες εἰς τὸ τοῦ Ἐνυαλίου. As the festival was old and Panhellenic, it will have displayed local differences regarding the architecture of the sanctuaries, the time of the performance and the exact nature of its participants.

The festival has often been discussed, and its sociological and religious significance seems pretty well established. That is why I will limit myself here to some observations about its location and the actual course of events during the festival.²⁵

²³ Note that, unlike the Dorians, the Ionians did not have a month Thesmophorios, cf. C. Trümper, *Untersuchungen zu den altgriechischen Monatsnamen und Monatsfolgen* (Heidelberg, 1997) 50, 112, 278, 280. We lack an up-to-date article on the festival and its excavated sanctuaries, but see E. De Miro, 'Thesmophoria di Sicilia', in C.A. di Stefano (ed.), *Demetra* (Pisa and Rome, 2008) 472; L.E. Baumer, *Mémoires de la religion grecque* (Paris, 2010) 119–143.

²⁴ Parker, *Polytheism*, 276.

²⁵ The basis of the following discussion is my analysis in *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1994, 1999², reprinted Cambridge, 2006) 76–78, but I have tried to incorporate the most recent views: F. Graf, 'Frauenfeste und verkehrte Welt', in E. Klinger *et al.* (eds), *Geschlechterdifferenz, Ritual und Religion* (Würzburg, 2003) 37–51; Parker, *Polytheism*, 270–283; R. Chlup, 'The Semantics of Fertility: levels of meaning in the Thesmophoria', *Kernos* 20 (2007) 69–95 (a sophisticated article to which I refer for the various levels of meaning of the Thesmophoria); E. Stehle, 'Thesmophoria and Eleusinian Mysteries: the Fascination of Women's Secret Ritual', in M. Parca and A. Tzanetou (eds), *Finding Persephone* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2007) 165–185; S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter* (Cambridge, 2008) 174–176; A. Stallsmith, 'Interpreting the Athenian Thesmophoria', *Class. Bull.* 84 (2009) 28–45.

But before doing so, a few words are necessary about the meaning of the name Thesmophoria.²⁶ The festival probably gave its name to Demeter *Thesmophoros*, as the great Frazer was the first to argue.²⁷ The *thesmoi* that were carried were clearly the rests of the sacrifice that were deposited in the *megara* (§ 1) and gave their name to Demeter Thesmios in Arcadian Pheneos.²⁸ Later Greeks – and our sources are of course all from men – interpreted the term as ‘bringer of laws’, as is well illustrated by Vergil’s calque *legifera* (*Aen.* 4.58 with Pease *ad loc.*). But the meaning ‘law’ is a later development, which is not yet found in our earliest Greek literature,²⁹ and the connection of Demeter with civilisation and progress cannot be separated from the Sophists’ theories of the later fifth century.³⁰

Demeter Thesmophoros’ temple was clearly located at a highly important spot for Megarian history, as is illustrated by the presence of the tomb of Megareus, its eponymous hero according to the Boiotians (Paus. 1.39.5). The location on top of the acropolis was not the rule, as Demeter’s sanctuaries were usually located outside the city and on the slope of a hill.³¹ This is important to keep in mind. When Versnel concludes his discussion of the festival with: ‘Their [the women’s] specific procreative potential is celebrated as essential for the continuity of the community *and* this takes place in the [political] centre of the community: Kalligeneia close to the Pnyx....’,³² he spectacularly overlooks the fact that in Athens there existed no ‘city Thesmophorion’ but only Thesmophoric sanctuaries in the individual demes.³³ Megara’s location was not unique, and similar locations on an acropolis could also be found in Thebes, Mytilene and

26 For the bibliography of this problem, see Kron, ‘Frauenfeste’, 627 note 34.

27 J.G. Frazer, ‘Thesmophoria’, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, vol. 26 (Cambridge, 1911) 838–840 (with thanks to Robert Parker), followed by W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985) 243.

28 Paus. 8.15.4, cf. K. Tausend, ‘Heiligtümer und Kulte Nordostarkadiens’, in idem (ed.), *Pheneos und Lousoi* (Frankfurt, 1999) 342–62 at 352–355.

29 The examples of – *phoros* with an abstract quality, as adduced by A. Stallsmith, ‘The Name of Demeter Thesmophoros’, *GRBS* 48 (2008) 115–131, are either literary or late.

30 See especially A. Henrichs, ‘Two Doxographical Notes: Democritus and Prodicus on Religion’, *HSCP* 79 (1975) 93–123 and ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretologies’, *HSCP* 88 (1984) 139–158. The connection with these theories appears also very clear from Servius’ commentary on Verg. *Aen.* 4.58.

31 N.J. Richardson on *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 272; F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985) 273; Cole, ‘Demeter in the Ancient Greek City’; C. Işık, ‘Demeter at Kaunos’, in *Agathos daimon* (Athens and Paris, 2000) 229–240 at 230.

32 H.S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden, 1992) 275.

33 K. Clinton, ‘The Thesmophorion in central Athens and the celebration of the Thesmophoria in Attica’, in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis* (Stockholm, 1996) 111–125; Parker, *Polytheism*, 271.

Lepreon,³⁴ and these may well derive from the already mentioned connection of the goddess with political power.

Let us now turn to its place in the year and the actual events. ‘The Thesmophoria must have been the most striking interruption of the year in the routine of women’s lives.... Three days away from the wool basket!’, as Parker wonderfully puts it.³⁵ We can hardly imagine what a pleasure those days of 11–13 Pyanopsion, our autumn, must have been for the women concerned, but the philosopher Democritus gives us a glimpse of the fact that many Greek males realised this pleasure too, as he reportedly did his utmost not to die during the festival in order that his sister would not be prevented from attending.³⁶ Such an interruption of the normal order could not take place suddenly, and on Pyanopsion 9, just before the Thesmophoria, the Athenian women marked this break with the Stenia, a nocturnal festival at which they mocked one another, a clear sign of the disruption of the normal order as comparable festivals demonstrate.³⁷ The festival itself occurred just before ‘the busiest, most frantic and most critical period of the farming year for men’.³⁸

The Thesmophoria generally lasted three days, of which the Athenian names have been preserved, but they were celebrated in Sicily for ten days, since here Demeter and Kore occupied higher positions in the local pantheon.³⁹ That is perhaps why in Sicilian Catane both women and maidens performed the sacrifices of Demeter (Cicero, *Verr.* 4.99). In Athens, on the other hand, maidens were excluded from the festival in Athens as Callimachus (fr. 63.9–12 Pfeiffer/Harder) tells us, but a late scholion on Theocritus (4.25c) includes them. Both notices are not that clear and perhaps a sign of the lack of detailed male knowledge about the festival. In the small Thessalian town of Alponos,⁴⁰ as Demetrios of Kallatis (*FGH* 86 F 6) tells us,⁴¹ 25 maidens, who had run to a tower near the harbour to watch a

34 Thebes: Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.29. Mytilene: C. and H. Williams, ‘Excavations at Mytilene, 1990’, *EMC* 35 (1991) 175–191. Lepreon: H. Knell, ‘Der Tempel der Demeter’, *Athen. Mitt.* 98 (1983) 113–47.

35 Parker, *Polytheism*, 271.

36 Hermippus fr. 31; Anonymus Londinensis 37.34 Jones (slightly different).

37 Ar. *Thesm.* 834 with schol.; Eubulus fr. 146; Hsch. σ 1825, 1827; *IG* II²674; *Agora* XV.78.6–8; Parker, *Polytheism*, 480; Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 261–165 (comparable festivals); Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 176–177; R. Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca and London, 2011) 207.

38 L. Foxhall, ‘Women’s ritual and men’s work in ancient Athens’, in R. Hawley and B. Levick (eds), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments* (London and New York, 1995) 97–110 at 103.

39 V. Hinz, *Der Kult von Demeter und Kore auf Sizilien und in der Magna Graecia* (Wiesbaden, 1998) 28–30; note also Photius θ 134 with an even longer festival.

40 Cf. Billerbeck on Steph. Byz. α 229.

41 Demetrios probably lived in the late third century BC, as he was used by Agatharchides, who worked in the first half of the second century, cf. W. Ameling, ‘Ethnography and Universal

tsunami during the Thesmophoria, were swallowed up by the sea together with their tower.⁴² I would therefore be more hesitant than Robert Parker in rejecting the information of Lucian (*Dial. Meretr.* 2.1) that a mother with her daughter participated in the Thesmophoria on the basis of the so much earlier Aristophanes. We know nothing about the developments in Roman times and, given the antiquity of the festival, there must have been plenty of local variations.

In Athens, where participation was restricted to married women from noble families, the first day was known as *Anodos* because it started with the ‘Ascent’ of the women in procession with their equipment, food and shrieking piglets to the Thesmophoric sanctuaries of Demeter, which as we have seen, were often on higher places.⁴³ Here they built booths in which they stayed during the festivals.

The second day was called *Nesteia*, or ‘Fasting’, which the women spent fasting, sitting on the ground, and without the usual flowery garlands.⁴⁴ Moreover, they sat on ad hoc mats made of twigs of withy, flea bane and certain types of laurel – all antaphrodisiac plants.⁴⁵ On the level of myth this absence of sexuality was symbolized in Demeter’s gift of the Thesmophoria to an old woman (Corinth) or the already mentioned maiden daughters of the first king (Paros) – both belonging to categories on either side of licit sexuality; in a Peloponnesian version, the Danaids who had murdered their husbands during their wedding night had brought the festival from Egypt: an interesting indication of the festival’s perceived ‘otherness’, but also an indication, like the myth of Paros, that maidens could be associated with the festival.⁴⁶ Since the women temporarily had deserted marriage, the absence of sexuality was heavily marked during the seclusion – which may well have reassured the husbands.

This is also the day on which Aristophanes has situated a meeting of all Athenian women in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, although in reality Athenian women never celebrated the festival together but met only in their own demes (see

History in Agatharchides’, in T. Brennan and H. Flower (eds), *East & West. Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen W. Bowersock* (Cambridge MA and London, 2008) 13–59 at 16.

42 When I wrote these lines, the television was showing pictures of the Japanese tsunami on March 11, 2011, which gave an all too clear idea of the power of tsunami waves.

43 For the ‘going up’, see Ar. *Thesm.* 281, 585, 623, 893, 1045; *IG II²* 1177.23; Hsch. α 5234. For the names of the days: Parker, *Polytheism*, 272 note 11. Procession: Isaeus 6.50.

44 Sitting: Plut. *Mor.* 378e; Hsch. κ 3098. Garlands: Schol. Soph. *OC* 681.

45 U. Kron, ‘Kultmahle im Heraion von Samos archaischer Zeit’, in R. Hägg (ed.), *Early Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence* (Stockholm, 1988) 135–147 and ‘Frauenfeste’, 620–623; H. von Staden, ‘Spiderwoman and the Chaste Tree: The Semantics of Matter’, *Configurations* 1 (1992) 23–56; Parker, *Polytheism*, 274 note 16.

46 Cf. Servius, *Aen.* 1.430 (Corinth); Apollodorus *FGrH* 244 F 89 (Paros); Hdt. 2.171 (Danaids).

above).⁴⁷ It fits its ‘abnormal’ character that on this day Athens released its prisoners and suspended court sessions and council meetings: the ‘reversals’ strongly contrasted the ‘Fasting’ with the return to ‘normality’ on the last day when fertility of land and humans became the main focus of activities.⁴⁸ And just as the death of Sophocles was located on the most sombre day of the Anthesteria, so Plutarch located the death of Demosthenes on ‘the most gloomy day of the Thesmophoria’ in his *Life of Demosthenes* (30), typically, if most probably wrongly.

Demeter’s fasting during her search for Persephone came to an end when, in the Orphic version of the myth, an old lady, Baubo, made her laugh by lifting her skirt. As the Demeter myth was closely connected with the Thesmophoria in various places in Greece, it is attractive to connect the lifting of the ritual fasting with the reports about mocking and indecent speech during the festival: the return to ‘normality’ had to be marked by a period of very ‘abnormal’ female behaviour.⁴⁹ As we hear of a sacrifice called ‘penalty’,⁵⁰ it seems best to imagine this at the end of the second day, as a kind of ‘penalty’ for all the mocking and obscene behaviour. Herodotus mentions that not everything about the Thesmophoria could be freely told and these ‘secrets’ may well relate to this part of the festival in particular.⁵¹

On the third day, the *Kalligeneia*, ‘Beautiful Birth’, decayed remains of piglets were fetched up from the subterranean pits, where they had been left to rot for some time, and placed on altars as future manure, as we already saw from the

47 For the connection of the play with the festival see F. Zeitlin, ‘Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes’ Thesmophoriazousae’, in H. Foley (ed.), *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (New York, 1981) 169–217; A. Bowie, *Aristophanes* (Cambridge, 1993) 205–227; A. Bierl, *Der Chor in der Alten Komödie* (Munich and Leipzig, 2001) 105–299; A. Tzanetou, ‘Something to Do with Demeter: Ritual and Performance in Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria*’, *Am. J. Philol.* 123 (2002) 329–367.

48 Well expounded by Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 242–244.

49 Diod. Sic. 5.4.6; Apollod. 1.5.1; Cleomedes, *Caelestia*, 2.1.498–499; A. Brumfield, ‘Aporreta: verbal and ritual obscenity in the cults of ancient women’, in Hägg, *The Role of Religion*, 67–74.

50 Hsch. ζ 145.

51 Baubo: see most recently F. Graf, ‘Baubo’, in *Der Neue Pauly* 2 (1997) 499 (with previous bibliography); C. Masseria, ‘Una piccola storia di insolita devozione: Baubo a Gela’, *Ostraka* 12 (2003) 177–195; St J. Simpson, ‘“Baubo” at Merv’, *Parthica* 6 (2004) 227–233; M.C. Lentini, ‘Baubò a Gela’, *BABESCH* 80 (2005) 213–215; Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, 161–66; B. Reichardt, ‘Anasyrma und Liebeswerbung – Ein attisch schwarzfiguriger Skyphos vom Taxiarchis-Hügel in Didyma’, in R. Einicke et al. (eds), *Zurück zum Gegenstand. Festschrift für Andreas E. Furtwängler*, 2 vols (Langenweissbach, 2009) 1.235–243; V. Dasen, ‘Une “Baubo” sur une gemme magique’, in L. Bodiou et al. (eds), *Chemin faisant. Mythes, cultes et société en Grèce ancienne* (Rennes, 2009) 271–84. Secrecy: Hdt. 2.171.2; Ar. *Eccl.* 443; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 11.

scholion on Lucian; the concern for the fertility of the land appears also from the dedications of ploughs and hoes in the Thesmophoreion of Gela.⁵² In addition to this concern for the fertility of the land, there was also concern for human procreation: Kalligeneia gave her name to this day. It is probably these positive aspects of the day that were celebrated with the concluding sacrifice of pigs, Demeter's favourite sacrificial animal, even though our evidence for Athens in this respect is only unreliably attested.⁵³ In a famous study Marcel Detienne has argued that women themselves were not allowed to sacrifice, but that sacrifice was strictly male business.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Robert Parker has elegantly argued that, in the terminology of Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, women could be *sacriants* even if they were not *sacrificateurs*.⁵⁵ Yet this would presuppose the very presence of males at the Thesmophoria, which all our sources strongly deny. Moreover, literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidence attests to the sacrificial activity of women, and already in Bronze Age graves women were buried with sacrificial knives.⁵⁶

After the hectic second day with its fasting, mocking and obscenities, the last day must have ended on a positive note. It is on this day, then, that we should probably locate the so-called 'Chalcidic pursuit', which related the victory of the women in a war against Athenian enemies.⁵⁷ It would also fit the mention of a feast in Athens and the drinking of wine at the Alexandrian Thesmophoria,⁵⁸ which was normally forbidden for women.⁵⁹ In the end, though, normal life would resume its course, and at home waited the wool basket.

Apparently, Megarian women celebrated Demeter also in a different festival. Pausanias (1.43.2, tr. Jones and Ormerod, Loeb, slightly modified) tells us: 'Near the Prytaneion is a rock. They name it Anaklêthra, 'Calling up', because Demeter (if the story be credible) here too called her daughter up when she was wandering

52 Kron, 'Frauenfeste', 636–639.

53 M. Sguaitamatti, *L'Offrande de porcelet dans la coroplathie géléenne* (Mainz, 1984); K. Clinton, 'Pigs in Greek Rituals', in R. Hägg and B. Alroth (eds), *Greek Sacrificial Ritual, Olympian and Chthonian* (Stockholm, 2005) 167–179; Parker, *Polytheism*, 274 note 17.

54 M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant (eds), *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grecque* (Paris, 1979) 183–214.

55 Parker, *Polytheism*, 276 note 27; see also Parker, 'Τίς ὁ θύων', in Bodiou, *Chemin faisant*, 167–171.

56 Kron, 'Frauenfeste', 640–643, 650; R. Osborne, 'Women and Sacrifice in Classical Greece', *CQ* 43 (1993), 392–405, reprinted in Buxton, *Oxford Readings*, 294–313.

57 Hsch. δ 2036 with Suda χ 43; Chlup, 'Levels of Meaning', 94.

58 Athens: Isaeus 3.80; *IG II²* 1184. Alexandria: *P. Col. Zen.* 19.2.

59 F. Graf, 'Milch, Honig und Wein', in G. Piccaluga (ed.), *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome, 1980) 209–221.

in search of her. Even in our day the Megarian women still hold a performance that is a mimetic representation of the legend'. The Byzantine lexicographer Methodius (*apud* Et. Magnum s.v.) wrongly calls the stone Anaklêthris,⁶⁰ but persuasively adds that it received its name from the fact that Demeter sat on it as she called up her daughter, viz. from the underworld. Evidently, there was a cave or chasm nearby, symbolising the entry to the underworld, from where Demeter supposedly had called up her daughter.⁶¹

The Megarian stone is an interesting illustration of a phenomenon that we can see more often in Megara: the appropriation of famous myths that originally did not belong to Megara. Clear examples are the cases of Iphigeneia and Agamemnon. As Philodemus notes in his passage on Iphigeneia, 'some have seen a human's tomb (i.e. of Iphigeneia) in the city of Megara', and his information is confirmed by Pausanias who mentions a herôon. Similarly, the Megarians also claimed that Agamemnon had founded a sanctuary for Artemis in their city when he tried to enlist Calchas for the Greek expedition against Troy; in fact, they even claimed that their last king was a son of Agamemnon (Paus. 1.43.3).⁶²

We can note a similar way of acting in our case. Evidently, the Megarians had tried to appropriate the paramount place of Eleusis in the myth of Demeter and Persephone. To that end they had created their own stone, which was a calque on the Eleusinian Petra Agelastos, the rock on which Demeter sat, crying for her daughter. Moreover, and this is a noteworthy aspect of this appropriation, they had incorporated this stone in a women's ritual that clearly also had looked at Eleusis, where, as is likely the case, the Petra had been incorporated into the performance of the Mysteries.⁶³ However, the Eleusinian Mysteries were accessible to both men and women, free and slaves (Ch. I.1). According to Pausanias, this was not the case in Megara, and we can only guess what function it occupied in what ritual.

The prestige of the Eleusinian sanctuary may well have incited the Megarians to lay claim to it at an early stage. In any case, there were conflicting reports in

60 Muller, 'Megarika', 89 note 18 points out that the proper name of the stone must have been Anaklêthra.

61 Muller, 'Megarika', 89–92

62 Philodemus, *De pietate*, col. 248 III.13–16; Paus. 1.43.1; F. Jacoby, *Kleine philologische Schriften I* (Berlin, 1961) 368–369. For the myth of Iphigeneia, see Bremmer, 'Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: the case of Iphigeneia', in E. Noort and E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds), *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Leiden, 2001) 21–43; G. Ekroth, 'Inventing Iphigeneia? On Euripides and the Cultic Construction of Brauron', *Kernos* 16 (2003) 59–118.

63 Hsch α 431; Suda σ 49; schol. Ar. *Eq.* 785a,c, cf. J. Mylonopoulos, 'Natur als Heiligtum – Natur im Heiligtum', *ARG* 10 (2008) 45–76 at 70.

Athens and Megara about Dioklos/Diokles, who was mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* as an early Athenian king,⁶⁴ but whom the Megarians claimed was a king of Megara and Eleusis before Theseus took Eleusis from Megara,⁶⁵ whereas even other traditions claimed that Diokles had fled from Athens to Megara.⁶⁶ It seems impossible to retrieve the oldest forms of this myth. Noteworthy, perhaps, is that in the oldest tradition of Athens he was called Dioklos, whereas in Megara he seems to have always been called Diokles, just as his initiatory festival was called Diokleia;⁶⁷ moreover, in Athens we do not find the herophoric name Dioklos but more than 200 examples of Diokles, just as that version of the name was very popular in Megara.⁶⁸ However we explain all this, the conflicting versions of his myth suggest a lively competition between Athens and Megara for the domination of the tradition with respect to Eleusis.

3 Demeter Malophoros

Our last Demeter we also find in Pausanias, who tells us: ‘When you have gone down to the port, which to the present day is called Nisaea, you see a sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros. One of the accounts given of the epithet is that those who first reared sheep in the land named Demeter Malophoros. The roof of the temple one might conclude has fallen in through age’ (1.44.3, tr. Jones and Ormerod, slightly modified). The sorry state of the cult should not conceal the fact that it once was highly important, as Megarian settlers carried it with them to their colonies in the heyday of Greek civilisation. The month Malophoros is attested in the calendar of the Megarian colonies Byzantium and Callatis,⁶⁹ and this is reflected in a dedication to ‘the goddess Malophoros’ in Anchialus, a goddess that must have come from Megarian Mesambria.⁷⁰ Other dedications to Malophoros have been found in Selinus, where an important cult of Demeter Malophoros

64 *Hom. Hymn Demeter* 153, 474, 477 with Richardson *ad loc.*; *SEG* 53.48 A.fr.3.III.71 (state sacrificial calendar of 410/409 BC, where Dioklos receives a sheep together with other Eleusinian heroes and gods).

65 *Plut. Thes.* 10.

66 *Schol. Theocr.* 12.27–33e, cf. Austin and Olson on *Ar. Ach.* 774; Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica*, 156.

67 *Theocr.* 12.27–34; *Schol. Pind. O.* 7.157, 13.156a,g, P. 8.112, 9.161

68 Richardson on *Hom. Hymn Demeter* 153.

69 Trümpy, *Untersuchungen*, 147–153; A. Avram, ‘Les calendriers de Mégare et des colonies pontiques’, in O. Lordkipanidzé and P. Lévêque (eds), *Religions du Pont-Euxin* (Paris, 1999) 25–31.

70 *IGBulg* I² 370bis, cf. J. and L. Robert, *Bulletin Épigraphique* 1973, 70; V. Velkov, *Roman Cities in Bulgaria* (Amsterdam, 1980) 117–124.

existed,⁷¹ which was founded in the seventh century by Megara Hyblaea, which, in turn, was founded ca. 729 BC. The cult of Demeter Malophoros, then, must go back at least to the early centuries of the first millennium BC, if not earlier.

Pausanias' notice demonstrates that in his time the epithet was no longer properly understood, but had become the subject of discussions. The translation as 'Sheep bearer', which he seemingly favours, still has some support even to the present day.⁷² The relevant lemma in the authoritative *Brill's New Pauly* even argues that 'the word is possibly consciously ambiguous and points to the apples that people dedicated to the goddess at her harvest festival at the time of the Opora (cf. Theocr. 7,144; Paus. 9,19,5). These, as in the Boeotian cult of Hercules, were stylized to represent sheep by inserting small sticks (Hesych. s.v. Μήλων Ἡρακλῆς; Poll. 1,30f.)'.⁷³ Actually, this is all wrong.⁷⁴ It has long been seen that the connection with sheep is impossible from a linguistic point of view and should not be read back into the evidence.⁷⁵ As with Thesmophoros, eventually the epithet must have developed from the name of a festival, Malophoria, 'the bringing of apples', in a place we no longer know. It is therefore methodologically wrong to try to argue against this meaning on the basis of the climate or nature of the Megarian ground.⁷⁶ The name of the festival may well have preceded its establishment in Megara.

Unfortunately, we are only informed about the cult of Demeter Malophoros in Selinuntum. Apples do not seem to play a role in that cult, but there have been found terracotta pomegranates in the sanctuary.⁷⁷ Yet it seems difficult to see in these the reason for the epithet of the goddess. The findings in the sanctuary do not stress that aspect of the goddess, and the many statues of girls seem more to point to a protection of maidens than to a kind of fertility or eschatological meaning.⁷⁸ In

71 *IG XIV 268 = IGLMP 49* (ca. 450 BC); *SEG 12.411 = IGLMP 56 = IGASM 39* (ca. 475–450 BC), cf. M. Torelli, 'L'anathema di Theyllos figlio di Pyrrhias alla Malophoros di Selinunte', in *APARCHAI*, 3 vols (Pisa, 1982) 1.357–360; full further bibliography in M. Perale, 'Μαλοφόρος. Etimologia di un teonimo', in C. Antonetti and S. De Vido (eds), *Temi selinuntini* (Pisa, 2009) 229–244 at 229 note 1; Hinz, *Der Kult von Demeter und Kore*, 144–154; G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'Demetra al confine tra Greci e Punici: osservazioni sul culto della *Malophoros* a Selinunte', in M. Congiu *et al.* (eds), *Greci e Punici in Sicilia tra V e IV secolo a. C.* (Catania, 2008) 101–120.

72 E. Mantzoulinou-Richards, 'Demeter Malophoros: The Divine Sheep-Bringer', *Ancient World* 13 (1986) 15–21.

73 G. Baudy, 'Malophoros', in *Der Neue Pauly* 7 (1999) 781.

74 Although still taken seriously by Hinz, *Der Kult von Demeter und Kore*, 145f.

75 Most recently, with full bibliography, Perale, 'Μαλοφόρος. Etimologia di un teonimo'.

76 *Contra* Mantzoulinou-Richards, 'Demeter Malophoros'.

77 See most recently Hinz, *Der Kult von Demeter und Kore*, 150.

78 Hinz, *ibid.*, 144–154; E. Wiederkehr Schuler, *Les protomés féminines du sanctuaire de la Malophoros à Sélinonte*, 2 vols (Naples, 2004); R. Holloway, 'An Unpublished Terracotta from the Malophoros Sanctuary at Selinus', in Einicke, *Zurück zum Gegenstand*, 1.263–268.

the end, the epithet, the meaning of which was developed in the early first millennium at the latest, may well have lost its original significance in the course of the centuries.

4 Conclusion

With these observations we have come to the end of our study of Demeter in Megara. Yet there is one more observation we should make. Recent studies of the gods have become more interested in their place and role in the local pantheons.⁷⁹ It would carry us too far to look at the other gods in Megara as well, but it seems important to realise that in future discussions we should not overlook the fact that there was more than one Demeter to take into account in Megara, as was the case in some other Greek cities.⁸⁰ Further study of the epithets of the divinities may be able to establish a certain hierarchy between them,⁸¹ just as there was a hierarchy among the gods. But that is a different story.⁸²

79 Bremmer, *Greek Religion*, 14–15 and ‘The Greek Gods in the Twentieth Century’, in J.N. Bremmer and A. Erskine (eds), *The Gods of Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 2010), 1–18; I. Rutherford, ‘Canonizing the Pantheon: the Dodekathemon in Greek Religion and its Origins’, *ibid.*, 43–54; Parker, *On Greek Religion*, 70–73.

80 Cole, ‘Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside’, 141f.

81 For epithets, see R. Parker, ‘The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet’, *Opuscula Atheniensi* 28 (2003) 173–183; P. Brulé, *La Grèce d’à côté* (Rennes, 2007) 313–332; F. Graf, ‘Gods in Greek Inscriptions: some methodological questions’, in Bremmer and Erskine, *The Gods of Ancient Greece* 55–80 at 67–74; H.S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods* (Leiden, 2011) 60–80; S. Georgoudi, ‘L’alternance de genre dans les dénominations des divinités grecques’, *EuGeStA* 3 (2013) 25–42.

82 I am most grateful to Sarah Hitch for kindly and skilfully correcting my English.

Appendix 2: The Golden Bough: Orphic, Eleusinian and Hellenistic-Jewish Sources of Virgil's Underworld in *Aeneid VI*

The belief in an underworld is very old, and most peoples imagine the dead as going somewhere. Yet they each have their own elaboration of these beliefs, which can run from extremely detailed, as was the case in medieval Christianity, to a rather hazy idea, as was the case, for example, in the Old Testament.¹ The early Romans belonged to the latter category and do not seem to have paid much attention to the afterlife. Thus Virgil, when working on his *Aeneid*, had a problem. How should he describe the underworld where Aeneas was going? To solve this problem, he drew on three important sources, as Eduard Norden (1868–1941) argued in his famous commentary on *Aeneid VI*: Homer's *Nekuia*, which is by far the most influential intertext in *Aeneid VI*,² and two lost poems about descents into the underworld by Heracles and Orpheus (§ 3). Norden had been fascinated by the publication of the Christian *Apocalypse of Peter* in 1892,³ but he was not the only one: this intriguing text appeared in, immediately, three (!) editions;⁴ moreover, it also inspired the still useful study of the underworld by Albrecht Dieterich (1866–1908).⁵ A decade later Norden published the first edition of his commentary on *Aeneid VI*, and he continued working on it until the third edition of 1927.⁶ His book still impresses by its stupendous erudition, impressive feeling for style,

1 In general, see Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York, 2002).

2 For Homer's influence, see still G.N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1964) 107–147.

3 See E. Norden, *Kleine Schriften zum klassischen Altertum* (Berlin, 1966) 218–233 ('Die Petrusapokalypse und ihre antiken Vorbilder', 1893¹). In his monumental new commentary, N. Horsfall, *Virgil, "Aeneid" 6. A Commentary*, 2 vols (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 1.xxiii, 2.650 mistakenly states it was 1 *Enoch*.

4 For the bibliography, see the most recent edition: T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse* (Berlin and New York, 2004).

5 A. Dieterich, *Nekyia* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1893, 1913²). For Dieterich, see most recently H.-D. Betz, *The "Mithras" Liturgy* (Tübingen, 2003) 14–26; A. Wessels, *Ursprungszauber. Zur Rezeption von Hermann Useners Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (New York and London, 2003) 96–128; H. Treiber, 'Der "Eranos" – Das Glanzstück im Heidelberger Mythenkranz?', in W. Schlachter and F.W. Graf (eds), *Asketischer Protestantismus und der 'Geist' des modernen Kapitalismus* (Tübingen, 2005) 75–153 (many interesting glimpses of Dieterich's influence in Heidelberg); C.O. Tommasi, 'Albrecht Dieterich's Pulcinella: some considerations a century later', *St. Class. e Or.* 53 (2007) 295–321; F. Graf, 'Mithras Liturgy and "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule"', *MHNH* 8 (2008) 59–71.

6 E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis VI* (Leipzig, 1903¹, 1927³) 5 (sources).

ingenious reconstructions of lost sources and all-encompassing mastery of Greek and Latin literature, medieval apocalypses included. It is, arguably, the finest commentary of the golden age of German Classics.⁷

Norden's reconstructions of Virgil's Greek sources for the underworld in *Aeneid VI* have largely gone unchallenged in the post-war period,⁸ and the next worthwhile commentary, that by the late Roland Austin,⁹ clearly did not feel at home in this area. Now the past century has seen a number of new papyri of Greek literature as well as new Orphic texts, and, accordingly, a renewed interest in Orphic traditions (Ch. III). Moreover, our understanding of Virgil as a poetic *bricoleur* or mosaicist, as Nicholas Horsfall calls him,¹⁰ has much increased in recent decades.¹¹ It may therefore pay to take a fresh look at Virgil's underworld and try to determine to what extent these new discoveries enrich and/or correct Norden's picture. We will especially concentrate on the Orphic (Ch. III), Eleusinian (Ch. I), and Hellenistic-Jewish backgrounds of Aeneas's descent. Yet a Roman poet hardly can totally avoid his own Roman tradition or the contemporary world, and, in a few instances, we will also comment on these aspects. As Norden observed,¹² Virgil had divided his picture of the underworld into six parts, and we will follow these in our argument.¹³

7 For Norden, see most recently E. Mensching, *Nugae zur Philologie-Geschichte*, 14 vols (Berlin, 1987–2004) 2.5–16, 5, 6.8–112, 11.83–91; J. Rüpke, *Römische Religion bei Eduard Norden* (Marburg, 1993); B. Kytzler et al. (eds), *Eduard Norden (1868–1941)* (Stuttgart, 1994); W.M. Calder III and B. Huss, “*Sed servendum officio...*” *The Correspondence between Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Eduard Norden (1892–1931)* (Berlin, 1997); W.A. Schröder, *Der Altertumswissenschaftler Eduard Norden. Das Schicksal eines deutschen Gelehrten jüdischer Abkunft* (Hildesheim, 1999); A. Baumgarten, ‘Eduard Norden and His Students: a Contribution to a Portrait. Based on Three Archival Finds’, *Scripta Class. Israel.* 25 (2006) 121–140; Horsfall, *Virgil, “Aeneid” 6*, 2.645–654, with additional bibliography at 645 n. 3, although overlooking K.A. Neuhausen, ‘Aus dem wissenschaftlichen Nachlass Franz Bücheler’s (I): Eduard Nordens Briefe an Bücheler (1888–1908)’, in J.P. Clausen (ed.), *Iubilet cum Bonna Rhenus. Festschrift zum 150jährigen Bestehen des Bonner Kreises* (Berlin 2004) 1–39 (important for the early history of the commentary) and J. Rüpke, ‘Dal Seminario all’esilio: Eduard Norden a Werner Jaeger (1934–1939)’, *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* (Siena) 30 (2009) 225–250; see now also O. Schlunke, ‘Der Geist der lateinischen Literatursprache. Eduard Nordens verloren geglaubter Genfer Vortrag von 1926’, *A&A* 59 (2013) 1–16.

8 For a good survey of the *status quo*, see A. Setaioli, ‘Inferi’, in *EV II*, 953–963.

9 R.G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber sextus* (Oxford, 1977). For Austin (1901–1974) see, in his inimitable and hardly to be imitated manner, J. Henderson, *Oxford Reds* (London, 2006) 37–69.

10 N. Horsfall (ed.), *A Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden, 2000²) 150.

11 See especially N. Horsfall, *Virgilio: l’epopea in alambicco* (Naples, 1991).

12 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 208 (six parts).

13 As Horsfall, *Virgil, “Aeneid” 6*, has used my previous articles for his commentary, I will refer to him only in cases of substantial disagreements or improvements of my analysis. I freely make use of

1 The area between the upper world and the Acheron (268–416)

Before we start with the underworld proper, we have to note an important verse. At the very moment that Hecate is approaching and the Sibyl and Aeneas will leave her cave to start their entry into the underworld,¹⁴ at this emotionally charged moment, the Sibyl calls out: *procul, o procul este, profani* (258). Austin (*ad loc.*) just notes: ‘a religious formula’, whereas Norden (on 46, not on 258) only comments: ‘Der Bannruf der Mysterien ἐκὰς ἐκὰς’. However, such a cry is not attested for the Mysteries in Greece but occurs only in Callimachus (*H.* 2.2). In Eleusis it was not the ‘uninitiated’ but those who could not speak proper Greek or had blood on their hands that were excluded,¹⁵ but Norden was on the right track. The formula alludes to the beginning of the, probably, oldest Orphic *Theogony* (Ch. III.2), which has now turned up in the Derveni papyrus (Col. VII.9–10, ed. Kouremenos *et al.*), but allusions to which can already be found in Pindar (*O.* 2.83–5), Empedocles (B 3.4 DK), who was heavily influenced by the Orphics, and Plato (*Symp.* 218b = *OF* 19): ‘I will sing to those who understand: close the doors, you uninitiated’ (*OF* 1 and 3).¹⁶ A further reference to the Mysteries can probably be found in the poet’s subsequent words *sit mihi fas audita loqui* (266), as it was forbidden to speak about the content of the Mysteries to the non-initiated.¹⁷

my ‘Orphic, Roman, Jewish and Christian Tours of Hell: Observations on the *Apocalypse of Peter*’, in T. Nicklas *et al.* (eds), *Other Worlds and their Relation to this World* (Leiden, 2010) 305–321; ‘Tours of Hell: Greek, Roman, Jewish and Early Christian’, in W. Ameling (ed.), *Topographie des Jenseits* (Stuttgart 2011) 13–34 (somewhat revised and abbreviated as ‘De *katabasis* van Aeneas: Griekse en Joodse achtergronden’, *Lampas* 44, 2011, 72–88) and ‘Descents to Hell and Ascents to Heaven’, in J.J. Collins (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford, 2014) 340–357.

14 For the entry, see H. Cancik, *Verse und Sachen* (Würzburg, 2003) 66–82 (‘Der Eingang in die Unterwelt. Ein religionswissenschaftlicher Versuch zu Vergil, Aeneis VI 236–272’, first published in 1980).

15 This volume, Ch. I.1.

16 For the verse, see this volume, Ch. III.2 and 3. For further versions of this highly popular opening formula, see O. Weinreich, *Ausgewählte Schriften II* (Amsterdam, 1973) 386–387; C. Riedweg, *Jüdisch-hellenistische Imitation eines orphischen Hieros Logos* (Munich, 1993), 47–48; A. Bernabé, ‘La fórmula órfica “Cerrad las puertas, profanos”. Del profano religioso al profano en la materia’, *Itlu* 1 (1996) 13–37 and on *OF* 1; P.F. Beatrice, ‘On the Meaning of “Profane” in the Pagan-Christian Conflict of Late Antiquity. The Fathers, Firmicus Maternus and Porphyry before the Orphic “Prorrhesis” (*OF* 245.1 Kern)’, *Ill. Class. Stud.* 30 (2005) 137–165, who at p. 137 also observes the connection with *Aen.* 6.258.

17 In addition to the opening formula, see also *Hom. H. Dem.* 476; *Eur. Ba.* 471–472; *Diod. Sic.* 5.48.4; *Cat.* 64. 260: *orgia quae frustra cupiunt audire profani*; *Philo, Somn.* 1.191; Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.266. For the secrecy of the Mysteries, see Horsfall on *Aen.* 3.112 and 6.266.

The ritual cry, then, is an important signal for our understanding of the text,¹⁸ as it suggests the theme of the Orphic Mysteries and indicates that the Sibyl acts as a kind of mystagogue for Aeneas.

After a sacrifice to the chthonic powers and a prayer, Aeneas and the Sibyl walk in the ‘loneliness of the night’ (268) to the very beginning of the entrance of the underworld, which is described as *in faucibus Orci*, ‘in the jaws of Orcus’ (273), an expression that also occurs elsewhere in Virgil and other Latin authors.¹⁹ Similar passages suggest that the Romans imagined their underworld as a vast hollow space with a comparatively narrow opening. Orcus can hardly be separated from Latin *orca*, ‘pitcher’, and we seem to find here an ancient idea of the underworld as an enormous pitcher with a narrow opening.²⁰ This opening must have been proverbial, as in [Seneca’s] *Hercules Oetaeus*. Alcmena refers to *fauces* (1772) only as the entry of the underworld.²¹ All kinds of ‘haunting abstractions’ (Austin), such as War, Illness and avenging Eumenides, live here.²² In its middle there is a dark elm of enormous size, which houses the dreams (282–4).²³ The elm is a kind of *arbor infelix*,²⁴ as it does not bear fruit (Theophr. *HP* 3.5.2, already compared by Norden), which partially explains why the poet chose this tree, a typical arboreal *Einzelgänger*, for the underworld. Another reason must have been its size, *ingens*, as the enormous size of the underworld is frequently mentioned in Roman poetry,²⁵ unlike in Greece. In the tree the empty dreams dwell. There is no Greek equivalent for this idea, but Homer (*Od.* 24.12) also situates the dreams at the beginning of the underworld. In addition, Virgil places here all kinds of hybrids and monsters, some of whom are also found in the Greek underworld, such as Briareos (*Il.* 1.403), if not at the entry. Others, though, are just frightening figures from Greek mythology, such as the often closely associated Harpies and Gorgons,²⁶ or hybrids like the Centaurs and Scyllae. According to Norden (p. 216), ‘alles ist griechisch gedacht’,

18 For similar ‘signs’, see Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 103–116 (‘I segnali per strada’).

19 Verg. *Aen.* 7.570 with Horsfall *ad loc.*; Val. Flacc. 1.784; Apul. *Met.* 7.7; Gellius 16.5.11.6; Arnob. 2.53; *Anth. Lat.* 789.5.

20 H. Wagenvoort, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion* (Leiden, 1956) 102–131 (‘Orcus’); for a, possibly, similar idea in ancient Greece, see West on Hes. *Th.* 727.

21 See also *ThLL* VI.1, 397.49–68.

22 For a possible echo of Empedocles B 121 DK, see C. Gallavotti, ‘Empedocle’, in *EV II*, 216f.

23 For a possible Greek source, see Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 126f.

24 Most important evidence: Macr. *Sat.* 3.20.3, cf. J. André, ‘Arbor felix, arbor infelix’, in *Homages à Jean Bayet* (Brussels, 1964) 35–46; J. Bayet, *Croyances et rites dans la Rome antique* (Paris, 1971) 9–43.

25 Lucr. 1.115; Verg. *Aen.* 8.193, 242, 251 (*ingens!*); Sen. *Tro.* 178.

26 Horsfall on *Aen.* 7.323–340; Bernabé on *OF* 717 (= *P. Bonon.* 4).33.

but that is perhaps not quite true. The presence of Geryon (*forma tricorporis umbrae*: 289) with Persephone in a late fourth-century BC Etruscan tomb as Cerun may well point to at least one Etruscan-Roman tradition.²⁷

From this entry, Aeneas and the Sibyl proceed along a road to the river that is clearly the real border of the underworld. In passing, we note here a certain tension between the Roman idea of *fauces* and the Greek conception of the underworld separated from the upper world by rivers. Virgil keeps the traditional names of the rivers as known from Homer's underworld, such as Acheron, Cocytus, Styx,²⁸ and Pyriphlegethon,²⁹ but, in his usual manner, changes their mutual relationship and importance. Not surprisingly, we also find there the ferryman of the dead, Charon (298–304). Such a ferryman is a traditional feature of many underworlds,³⁰ but in Greece Charon is mentioned first in the late archaic or early classical Greek epic *Minyas* (fr. 1 Davies/Bernabé),³¹ a lost Boeotian epic dating, perhaps, from the early fifth century.³² The growing monetization of Athens also affected belief in the ferryman, and the custom of burying a deceased with an obol, a small coin, for Charon becomes visible on Athenian vases in the late fifth century, just as it is mentioned first in literature in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (137–42, 269–70) of 405 BC.³³ Austin (*ad loc.*) thinks of a picture in the background of Virgil's description, as is perhaps possible. The date of Charon's emergence probably precludes his appear-

²⁷ See Nisbet and Hubbard on Hor. *C.* 2.14.8; P. Brize, 'Geryoneus', in *LIMC* IV.1 (1990) 186–190 at no. 25.

²⁸ A. Henrichs, 'Zur Perhorreszierung des Wassers der Styx bei Aischylos und Vergil', *ZPE* 78 (1989) 1–29; H. Pelliccia, 'Aeschylean ἀμέγαρος and Virgilian *inamabilis*', *ZPE* 84 (1990) 187–194; Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.438.

²⁹ Note its mention also in *OF* 717.42.

³⁰ L.V. Grinsell, 'The Ferryman and His Fee: A Study in Ethnology, Archaeology, and Tradition', *Folklore* 68 (1957) 257–269; B. Lincoln, 'The Ferryman of the Dead', *J. Indo-European Stud.* 8 (1980) 41–59.

³¹ C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Reading' *Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford, 1995) 303–361; J.H. Oakley, *Picturing Death in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 2004) 108–125; J. Boardman, 'Charon I', in *LIMC*, Suppl. 1 (2009) 142.

³² A. Debiasi, 'Orcomeno, Ascra e l'epopea regionale minore', in E. Cingano (ed.), *Tra pannelismo e tradizioni locali: generi poetici e storiografia* (Alessandria, 2010) 255–298 at 266–279.

³³ Oakley, *Picturing Death*, 123–125, 242 n. 49 with bibliography; add R. Schmitt, 'Eine kleine persische Münze als Charonsgeld', in *Palaeograeca et Mycenaea Antonino Bartoněk quinque et sexagenario oblata* (Brno, 1991) 149–162; J. Gorecki, 'Die Münzbeigabe, eine mediterrane Grab-sitte. Nur Fahrlohn für Charon?', in M. Wittger and P. Fasold (eds), *Des Lichtes beraubt. Totenehrung in der römischen Gräberstrasse von Mainz-Weisenau* (Wiesbaden, 1995) 93–103; G. Thüry, 'Charon und die Funktionen der Münzen in römischen Gräbern der Kaiserzeit', in O. Dubuis and S. Frey-Kupper (eds), *Fundmünzen aus Gräbern* (Lausanne, 1999) 17–30.

ance in the poem on Heracles' descent (§ 3),³⁴ although he seems to have been present already in the poem on Orpheus' descent (§ 3).

Finally, on the bank of the river, Aeneas sees a number of souls and he asks the Sibyl who they are (318–20). The Sibyl, thus, is his 'travel guide'. Such a guide is not a fixed figure in Orphic descriptions of the underworld, but a recurring feature of Judeo-Christian tours of hell and going back to *1 Enoch*, which can be dated to before 200 BC but is probably not older than the third century.³⁵ This was already seen, and noted for Virgil, by Ludwig Radermacher, who had collaborated on an edition with translation of *1 Enoch*.³⁶ Moreover, another formal marker in Judeo-Christian tours of hell is that the visionary often asks: 'who are these?', and is answered by the guide of the vision with 'these are those who...', a phenomenon that can be traced back equally to Enoch's cosmic tour in *1 Enoch*.³⁷ Such demonstrative pronouns also occur in the *Aeneid*, as Aeneas' questions at 318–20 and 560–1 can be seen as rhetorical variations on the question 'who are these?', and the Sibyl's replies, 322–30 contains *haec* (twice), *ille*, *hi*.³⁸ In other words, Virgil seems to have used a Hellenistic-Jewish apocalyptic tradition to shape his narrative,³⁹ and he may have used some other Hellenistic-Jewish motifs as well, as we will see shortly (§ 2 and 5).

2 Between the Acheron and Tartarus/Elysium (417–547)

Leaving aside Aeneas' encounter with different souls (333–83) and with Charon (384–416), we continue our journey on the other side of the Styx. Here Aeneas

34 *Contra Norden, Aeneis VI, 237.*

35 L.T. Stuckenbruck, 'The Book of Enoch: Its Reception in Second Temple Jewish and in Christian Tradition', *Early Christianity* 4 (2013) 7–40.

36 L. Radermacher, *Das Jenseits im Mythos der Hellenen* (Bonn, 1903) 14–15, overlooked by M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell* (Philadelphia, 1983) 49–50 and wrongly disputed by H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Epic, Lyric and Tragedy* (Oxford, 1990) 183, cf. J. Flemming and L. Radermacher, *Das Buch Henoch* (Leipzig, 1901). For Radermacher (1867–1952), see A. Lesky, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Munich and Berne, 1966) 672–688; Wessels, *Ursprungszauber*, 129–154.

37 As was first pointed out by Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 41–67.

38 Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 49–50; J. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles* (Oxford, 2007) 502–503, who also notes 'that 562–627 contains three instances each of *hic* as adverb (580, 582, 608) and demonstrative pronoun (587, 621, 623), a rhetorical question answered by the Sibyl herself (574–577), and several relative clauses (583, 608, 610, 612) identifying individual sinners or groups'. Add Aeneas' questions in the *Heldenschau* in 710ff and, especially, 863 (*quis, pater, ille...*), and further demonstrative pronouns in 773–774, 776 and 788–791.

39 Differently, Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.320.

and the Sibyl are immediately ‘welcomed’ by Cerberus (417–25), who first occurs in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (769–73), but must be a very old feature of the underworld, as a dog already guards the road to the underworld in ancient Indian, Persian and Nordic mythology.⁴⁰ After he has been drugged, Aeneas proceeds and hears the sounds of a number of souls (426–9). Babies are the first category mentioned. The expression *ab ubere raptos* (428) suggests infanticide, which is also condemned in the Bologna papyrus (*OF* 717.1–4), a *katabasis* in a third- or fourth-century papyrus from Bologna, the text of which seems to date from early imperial times and is generally accepted to be Orphic in character.⁴¹ This papyrus, as has often been seen, contains several close parallels to Virgil, and both must have used the same identifiably Orphic source.⁴² Now ‘blanket condemnation of abortion and infanticide reflects a Jewish or Christian moral perspective’. As we have already noted Jewish influence (§ 1), we may perhaps assume it here too, as ‘abortion/infanticide in fact occurs almost exclusively in *Christian* tours of hell’.⁴³ And indeed, the origin of the Bologna papyrus should probably be looked for in Alexandria in a milieu that underwent Jewish influences, even if much of the text is of course not Egyptian-Jewish.⁴⁴ We may add that the so-called *Testament of Orpheus* is a Jewish-Egyptian revision of an Orphic poem and thus clear proof of the influence of Orphism on Egyptian (Alexandrian?) Judaism.⁴⁵ Yet some of the Orphic material of Virgil’s and the papyrus’ source must be older than the Hellenistic period, as we will see shortly.

40 M.L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007) 392.

41 For the text, with extensive bibliography and commentary, see Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similibus testimonia et fragmenta. II, 2*, 271–287 (= *OF* 717), who notes on p. 271: ‘omnia quae in papyro leguntur cum Orphica doctrina recentioris aetatis congruunt’.

42 This has been established by N. Horsfall, ‘P. Bonon.4 and Virgil, Aen.6, yet again’, *ZPE* 96 (1993) 17–18; see also Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.548–636 and 7.182.

43 Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 513 (quotes), who compares *1 Enoch* 99.5; see also Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 71–72, 74–75; D. Schwartz, ‘Did the Jews Practice Infant Exposure and Infanticide in Antiquity?’, *Studia Philonica Annual* 16 (2004) 61–95; L.T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108* (Berlin and New York, 2007) 390–391; D. Shanzer, ‘Voices and Bodies: The Afterlife of the Unborn’, *Numen* 56 (2009) 326–365, with a new discussion of the beginning of the Bologna papyrus at p. 355–359, in which she argues that the papyrus mentions abortion, not infanticide.

44 A. Setaioli, ‘Nuove osservazioni sulla “descrizione dell’oltretomba” nel papiro di Bologna’, *Studi Ital. Filol. Class.* 42 (1970) 179–224 at 205–220.

45 Riedweg, *Jüdisch-hellenistische Imitation eines orphischen Hieros Logos* and ‘Literatura órfica en ámbito judío’, in A. Bernabé and F. Casadesus (eds), *Orfeo y la tradición órfica* (Madrid 2009) 379–392; F. Jourdan, *Poème judéo-hellénistique attribué à Orphée: production juive et réception chrétienne* (Paris 2010).

After the babies we hear of those who were condemned innocently (430), suicides (434–6),⁴⁶ famous mythological women such as Euadne, Laodamia (447),⁴⁷ and, hardly surprisingly, Dido, Aeneas' abandoned beloved (450–76).⁴⁸ In this way Virgil follows the traditional Greek combination of *ahōroi* and *biaiothanatoi*.⁴⁹ The last category that Aeneas and the Sibyl meet at the furthest point of this region between the Acheron and the Tartarus/Elysium are famous war heroes (477–547). When we compare these categories with Virgil's intertext, Odysseus' meeting with ghosts in the *Odyssey* (11.37–41), we note that before crossing Acheron Aeneas first meets the souls of those recently departed and those unburied, just as in Homer Odysseus first meets the unburied Elpenor (51). The last category enumerated in Homer are the warriors, who here too appear last. Thus, Homeric inspiration is clear, even though Virgil greatly elaborates his model, not least with material taken from Orphic *katabaseis*.⁵⁰

3 Tartarus (548–627)

While talking, the Sibyl and Aeneas reach a fork in the road, where the right-hand way leads to Elysium, but the left one to Tartarus (541–3). The fork and the preference for the right are standard elements in Plato's eschatological myths, which suggests a traditional motif.⁵¹ Once again, we are led to the Orphic milieu, as the Orphic Gold Leaves regularly instruct the soul 'go to the right' or 'bear to the right' after its arrival in the underworld,⁵² thus varying Pythagorean usage for the upper world.⁵³ Virgil's description of Tartarus is mostly taken from *Odyssey* Book 11,

46 Y. Gris , *Le suicide dans la Rome antique* (Montr al and Paris, 1982) 158–164.

47 These two heroines were clearly popular in funereal poetry in Hellenistic-Roman times: *SEG* 52.942, 1672.

48 For the place of Dido in Book VI and her connection with Heracles' *katabasis*, see R. Nauta, 'Dido en Aeneas in de onderwereld', *Lampas* 44 (2011) 53–71.

49 See, *passim*, S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1999); Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.426–547.

50 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 238–239.

51 Pl. *Grg.* 524a, *Phd.* 108a; *Resp.* 10.614cd; Porph. fr. 382; Corn. Labeo fr. 7.

52 A. Bernab  and A.I. Jim nez San Crist bal, *Instructions for the Netherworld* (Leiden, 2008) 22–24 (who also connect 6.540–543 with Orphism); F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London and New York, 2013²) no. 3.2 (Thurii) = *OF* 487.2, 8.4 (Entella) = *OF* 475.4, 25.1 (Pharsalos) = *OF* 477.1. For the exceptions, preference for the left in the Leaves from Petelia (no. 2.1 = *OF* 476.1) and Rhethymnon (no. 18.2 = *OF* 484a.2), see the discussion by Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 108, 111. The two roads also occur in the Bologna papyrus, cf. *OF* 717.77 with Setaioli, 'Sulla descrizione', 186f.

53 R.U. Smith, 'The Pythagorean Letter and Virgil's Golden Bough', *Dionysius* NS 18 (2000) 7–24.

but the picture is complemented by references to other descriptions of Tartarus and to contemporary Roman villas. What do our visitors see? Under a rock there are buildings (*moenia*),⁵⁴ encircled by a threefold wall (548–9). The idea of the mansion is perhaps inspired by the Homeric expression ‘house of Hades’, which must be very old as it has Hittite, Indian and Irish parallels,⁵⁵ but in the oldest Orphic Gold Leaf, the one from Hipponion, the soul also has to travel to the ‘well-built house of Hades’.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Hesiod’s description of the entry of Tartarus as surrounded three times by night (*Th.* 726–7) seems to be the source of the threefold wall.⁵⁷ Around Tartarus there flows the river Phlegethon (551), which comes straight from the *Odyssey* (10.513), where, however, despite the name Pyriphlegethon, the fiery character is not thematized. In fact, fire only gradually became important in ancient underworlds through the influence of Jewish apocalypses.⁵⁸ The size of the Tartarus is again stressed by the mention of an *ingens* gate that is strengthened by columns of adamant (552), the legendary, hardest metal of antiquity,⁵⁹ and the use of special metal in the architecture of the Tartarus is also mentioned in the *Iliad* (VIII.15: ‘iron gates and bronze threshold’) and Hesiod (*Th.* 726: ‘bronze fence’).

Finally, there is a tall iron tower (554), which according to Norden and Austin (*ad loc.*) is inspired by the Pindaric ‘tower of Kronos’ (*O.* 2.70). However, although Kronos was traditionally locked up in Tartarus,⁶⁰ Pindar situates his tower on one of the Isles of the Blessed. As the tower is also not associated with Kronos here, Pindar, whose influence on Virgil was not very profound,⁶¹ will hardly be its source. Given that the Tartarus is depicted like some kind of building with a gate, *vestibulum* and threshold (575), it is perhaps better to think of the towers that sometimes formed part of Roman villas.⁶² The *turris aenea* in

54 Cf. A. Fo, ‘Moenia’, in *EV III*.557–558.

55 *Il.* VII.131, XI.263, XIV.457, XX.366; Emp. B 142 DK, cf. A. Martin, ‘Empédocle, Fr. 142 D.-K. Nouveau regard sur un papyrus d’Herculaneum’, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 33 (2003) 43–52; M. Janda, *Eleusis. Das indogermanische Erbe der Mysterien* (Innsbruck, 2000) 69–71; West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 388. Note also *Aen.* 6.269: *domos Ditis*.

56 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, no. 1.2 = *OF* 474.2.

57 For Hesiod’s influence on Virgil, see A. La Penna, ‘Esiodo’, in *EV II*, 386–388; Horsfall on *Aen.* 7.808.

58 Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 514.

59 *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos I* (Göttingen, 1955) s.v.; West on Hesiod, *Th.* 161; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 494f.

60 On Kronos and his Titans, see Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 73–99.

61 For rather different positions, see R. Thomas, *Reading Virgil and His Texts* (Ann Arbor, 1999) 267–287 and Horsfall on *Aen.* 3.570–587.

62 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 274 rightly compares *Aen.* 2.460 (now with Horsfall *ad loc.*), although 3 pages later he compares Pindar; E. Wistrand, ‘Om grekernas och romarnas hus’, *Eranos* 37

which Danae is locked up according to Horace (C. 3.1.1) may be another example, as before Virgil she is always locked up in a bronze chamber (Nisbet and Rudd *ad loc.*).

Traditionally, Tartarus was the deepest part of the Greek underworld,⁶³ and this is also the case in Virgil. Here, according to the Sibyl, we find the famous sinners of Greek mythology, especially those that revolted against the gods, such as the Titans (580), the sons of Aloeus (582), Salmoneus (585–94) and Tityos (595–600).⁶⁴ However, Virgil concentrates not on the most famous cases but on some of the lesser-known ones, such as the myth of Salmoneus, the king of Elis, who pretended to be Zeus. His description is closely inspired by Hesiod, who in turn is followed by later authors, although these seem to have some additional details.⁶⁵ Salmoneus drove around on a chariot with four horses, while brandishing a torch and rattling bronze cauldrons on dried hides,⁶⁶ pretending to be Zeus with his thunder and lightning, and wanting to be worshipped like Zeus. However, Zeus flung him headlong into Tartarus and destroyed his whole town.⁶⁷ Receiving nine lines, Salmoneus clearly is the focus of this catalogue, as the penalty of Tityos, an *alumnus*, ‘son’,⁶⁸ of Terra, ‘Earth’ (595), is related in 6 lines, and other famous sinners, such as the Lapiths, Ixion,⁶⁹ and Pirithous (601), are

(1939) 1–63 at 31–32; idem, *Opera selecta* (Stockholm, 1972) 218–220. For anachronisms in the *Aeneid*, see Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 135–144.

63 *Il.* VIII.13, 478; Hes. *Th.* 119 with West *ad loc.*; G. Cerri, ‘Cosmologia dell’Ade in Omero, Esiodo e Parmenide’, *Parola del Passato* 50 (1995) 437–467; D.M. Johnson, ‘Hesiod’s Descriptions of Tartarus (*Theogony* 721–819)’, *Phoenix* 53 (1999) 8–28.

64 Except for Salmoneus, they are also present in Horace’s underworld: Nisbet and Rudd on Hor. C. 3.4.

65 Compare Soph. fr 10c6 (making noise with hides, cf. Apollod. 1.9.7, to be read with R. Smith and S. Trzaskoma, ‘Apollodorus 1.9.7: Salmoneus’ Thunder-Machine’, *Philologus* 139 [2005] 351–354 and R.D. Griffith, ‘Salmoneus’ Thunder-Machine again’, *ibidem* 152 [2008] 143–145); Man. 5.91–94 (bronze bridge); Greg. Naz. *Or.* 5.8; Servius and Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.585 (bridge).

66 In line 591, *aere*, which is left unexplained by Norden, hardly refers to a bronze bridge (previous note: so Austin) but to the ‘bronze cauldrons’ of Hes. fr. 30.5, 7.

67 For the myth, see Hes. fr. 15, 30; Soph. fr. 537–541a; Diod. Sic. 4.68.2, 6 fr. 7; Hyg. *Fab.* 61, 250; Plut. *Mor.* 780f; *Anth. Pal.* 16.30; Eust. on *Od.* 1. 235, 11.236; P. Hardie, *Virgil’s Aeneid: cosmos and imperium* (Oxford, 1986) 183–186; D. Curiazi, ‘Note a Virgilio’, *Musem Criticum* 23/4 (1988/9) 307–309; A. Mestuzini, ‘Salmoneo’, in *EV IV*, 663–666; E. Simon, ‘Salmoneus’, in *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) 653–655.

68 Austin translates ‘son’, as Homer (*Od.* 7.324, 11.576) calls him a son of Gaia, but Tityos being a foster son is hardly ‘nach der jungen Sagenform’ (Norden), cf. Hes. fr. 78; Pherec. F 55 Fowler; Apoll. Rhod. 1.761–762; Apollod. 1.4.1. For *alumnus* meaning ‘son’, see *ThLL* s.v.

69 Ixion appears in the underworld as early as Ap. Rhod. 3.62, cf. Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles*, 517.

mentioned only in passing. It is rather striking, then, that Virgil spends such great length on Salmoneus, but the reason for this attention remains obscure.

Moreover, the latter sinners are connected with penalties, an overhanging rock and a feast that cannot be tasted (602–6), which in Greek mythology are normally connected with Tantalus.⁷⁰ We find the same ‘dissociation’ of traditional sinners and penalties in the Christian *Apocalypse of Peter*:⁷¹ Apparently, specific punishments gradually stopped being linked to specific sinners. Finally, it is noteworthy that the furniture of the feast with its golden beds (604) points to the luxury-loving rulers of the East rather than to contemporary Roman magnates.⁷²

After these mythological *exempla* there follow a series of mortal sinners against the family and *familia* (608–13), then a brief list of their punishments (614–17), and then more sinners, mythological and historical (618–24).⁷³ In the Bologna papyrus, we find a list of sinners (*OF* 717.1–24), then the Erinyes and Harpies as agents of their punishments (25–46), and subsequently again sinners (47ff.). Both Virgil and the papyrus must therefore go back here to their older source (§ 2), which seems to have contained separate catalogues of nameless sinners and their punishments. But what is this source and when was it composed?

Here we run into highly contested territory. As we noted in our introduction, Norden identified three *katabaseis* as important sources for Virgil, the ones by Odysseus in the Homeric *Nekuia*, by Heracles,⁷⁴ and by Orpheus.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, he did not date the last two *katabaseis*, but thanks to subsequent findings of

70 J. Zetzel, ‘Romane Memento: Justice and Judgment in Aeneid 6’, *Tr. Am. Philol. Ass.* 119 (1989) 263–284 at 269–270.

71 Bremmer, ‘Orphic, Roman, Jewish and Christian Tours of Hell’.

72 Note also Dido’s *aurea sponda* (*Aen.* 1.698); *Sen. Thy.* 909: *purpurae atque auro incubat*. Originally, golden couches were a Persian feature, cf. *Hdt.* 9.80, 82; *Esther* 1.6; *Plut. Luc.* 37.5; *Athenaeus* 5.197a.

73 P. Salat, ‘Phlégyas et Tantale aux Enfers. À propos des vers 601–627 du sixième livre de l’*Énéide*’, in *Études de littérature ancienne, II: Questions de sens* (Paris, 1982) 13–29; F. Della Corte, ‘Il catalogo dei grandi dannati’, *Vichiana* 11 (1982) 95–99 = *idem, Opuscula IX* (Genoa, 1985) 223–227; A. Powell, ‘The Peopling of the Underworld: *Aeneid* 6.608–627’, in H.-P. Stahl (ed.), *Vergil’s Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context* (London, 1998) 85–100.

74 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 5 n. 2 notes influence of Heracles’ *katabasis* on the following lines: 131–132, 260 (cf. 290–294, with Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Epic*, 181 on Bacch. 5.71–84, and F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 145 n. 18 on *Ar. Ra.* 291, where Dionysus wants to attack Empusa), 309–312 (see also Norden, *Kleine Schriften*, 508 note 77), 384–416, 477–493, 548–627, 666–678; Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.120.

75 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 5 n. 2 notes influence of Orpheus’ *katabasis* on lines 120 (see also Norden, *Kleine Schriften*, 506–507), 264ff (?), 384–416, 548–627; Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.120.

papyri we can make some progress here. On the basis of a probable fragment of Pindar (fr. dub. 346), Bacchylides, Aristophanes' *Frogs*,⁷⁶ and the second-century mythological handbook of Apollodorus (2.5.12), Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1922–2009) has reconstructed an epic *katabasis* of Heracles, in which he was initiated by Eumolpus in Eleusis before starting his descent at Laconian Taenarum.⁷⁷ Lloyd-Jones dated this poem to the middle of the sixth century, and the date is now supported by a shard in the manner of Exekias of about 540 BC that shows Heracles amidst Eleusinian gods and heroes.⁷⁸ The Eleusinian initiation makes Eleusinian or Athenian influence not implausible, but as Robert Parker comments: 'Once the (Eleusinian) cult had achieved fame, a hero could be sent to Eleusis by a non-Eleusinian poet, as to Delphi by a non-Delphian'.⁷⁹ However, as we will see in a moment, Athenian influence on the epic is certainly likely.⁸⁰ Given the date of this epic we would still expect its main emphasis to be on the more heroic inhabitants of the underworld, rather than the nameless categories we find in Orphic poetry. And in fact, in none of our literary sources for Heracles' descent do we find any reference to nameless humans or initiates seen by him in the underworld, but we hear of his meeting with Meleager and his liberation of Theseus (see below).⁸¹ Given the prominence of nameless, human sinners in this part of Virgil's text, then, the main influence seems to be the *katabasis* of Orpheus rather than the one of Heracles.

There is another argument as well to suppose here use of the *katabasis* of Orpheus. Norden noted that both Rhadamanthys (566) and Tisiphone (571) recur in Lucian's *Cataplus* (22–23) in an Eleusinian context;⁸² similarly, he observed that the question of the Sibyl to Musaeus about Anchises (669–70) can be paralleled by the question of the Aristophanic Dionysos to the Eleusinian initiated where Pluto lives

76 The commentary of W.B. Stanford on the *Frogs* (London, 1963²) is more helpful in detecting Orphic influence in the play than that by K.J. Dover (Oxford, 1993).

77 H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Heracles at Eleusis: P. Oxy. 2622 and P.S.I. 1391', *Maia* 19 (1967) 206–229 = *Greek Epic*, 167–187; see also R. Parker, *Athenian Religion* (Oxford, 1996) 98–100.

78 J. Boardman *et al.*, 'Herakles', in *LIMC* IV.1 (1988) 728–838 at 805–808.

79 Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 100.

80 Graf, *Eleusis*, 146 n. 22, who compares Apollod. 2.5.12, cf. 1.5.3 (see also Ov. *Met.* 5.538–550; *P. Mich. Inv.* 1447.42–43, re-edited by M. van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?* (Leiden, 1997) 336; Servius on *Aen.* 4.462–463), argues that the presence of the Eleusinian Askalaphos in Apollodorus also suggests a larger Eleusinian influence. This may well be true, but his earliest Eleusinian mention is Euphorion 11.13, and he is absent from Virgil. Did Apollodorus perhaps add him to his account of Heracles' *katabasis* from another source?

81 *Contra* Graf, *Eleusis*, 145–146. Note also the doubts of R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford, 2005) 363 n. 159. Meleager: Bacch. 5.76–175, with Cairns *ad loc.*

82 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 274f.

(*Frogs* 161ff, 431ff). Norden ascribed the first case to the *katabasis* of Orpheus and the second one to that of Heracles.⁸³ His first case seems unassailable, as the passage about Tisiphone has strong connections with that of the Bologna papyrus (*OF* 717.28), as do the sounds of groans and floggings heard by Aeneas and the Sibyl (557–8, cf. *OF* 717.25; Luc. *VH.* 2.29). Musaeus, however, is mentioned first in connection with Onomacritus' forgery of his oracles in the late sixth century and remained associated with oracles by Herodotus, Sophocles and even Aristophanes in the *Frogs*.⁸⁴ His connection with Eleusis does not appear on vases before the end of the fifth century and in texts before Plato.⁸⁵ In other words, it seems likely that both these passages ultimately derive from the *katabasis* of Orpheus, and that Aristophanes, like Virgil, had made use of both the *katabaseis* of Heracles and Orpheus. To make things even more complicated, the descent of both Heracles and Orpheus at Laconian Taenarum (above and below) shows that the author himself of Orpheus' *katabasis* also (occasionally? often?) used the epic of Heracles' *katabasis*.⁸⁶

We have one more indication left for the place of origin of the Heracles epic. After the nameless sinners we now see more famous mythological ones. Theseus, as Virgil stresses, *sedet aeternumque sedebit* (617). The passage deserves more attention than it has received in the commentaries. In the *Odyssey*, Theseus and Pirithous are the last heroes seen by Odysseus in the underworld, just as in Virgil Aeneas and the Sibyl see Theseus last in Tartarus, even though Pirithous has been replaced by Phlegyas. Originally, Theseus and Pirithous were condemned to an eternal stay in the underworld, either fettered or grown to a rock. This is not only the picture in the *Odyssey*, but seemingly also in the *Minyas* (Paus. 10.28.2, cf. fr. dub. 7 = Hes. fr. 280), and certainly so on Polygnotos' painting in the Cnidian lesche (Paus. 10.29.9) and in Panyassis (fr. 9 Davies = fr. 14 Bernabé). This clearly is the older situation, which is still referred to in the hypothesis of Critias' *Pirithous* (cf. fr. 6). The situation must have changed through the *katabasis* of Heracles, in which Heracles liberated Theseus but, at least in some sources, left Pirithous where he was.⁸⁷ This liberation is most likely another testimony for an Athenian connection of the *katabasis* of Heracles, as Theseus was Athens' na-

83 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 275.

84 Hdt. 7.6.3 (forgery: *OF* 1109 = Musaeus, fr. 68), 8.96.2 (= *OF* 69), 9.43.2 (= *OF* 70); Soph. fr. 1116 (= *OF* 30); Ar. *Ra.* 1033 (= *OF* 63).

85 Pl. *Prot.* 316d = Musaeus fr. 52; Graf, *Eleusis*, 9–21; Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Epic*, 182–183; A. Kaufmann-Samaras, 'Mousaios', in *LIMC* VI.1 (1992) 685–687, no. 3.

86 As is also observed by Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 237 (on the basis of Servius on *Aen.* 6.392) and *Kleine Schriften*, 508–509 nos 77 and 79.

87 Hypothesis Critias' *Pirithous* (cf. fr. 6); Philochoros *FGrH* 328 F 18; Diod. Sic. 4.26.1, 63.4; Hor. *C.* 3.4.80; Hyg. *Fab.* 79; Apollod. 2.5.12, *Ep.* 1.23f.

tional hero. The connection of Heracles, Eleusis and Theseus points to the time of the Pisistratids, although we cannot be much more precise than we have already been (above). In any case, the stress by Virgil on Theseus' eternal imprisonment in the underworld shows that he sometimes also opted for a version different from the *katabaseis* he in general followed.⁸⁸

Rather striking is the combination of the famous Theseus with the obscure Phlegyas (618),⁸⁹ who warns everybody to be just and not to scorn the gods.⁹⁰ Norden unconvincingly tries to reconstruct Delphic influence here, but also, and perhaps rightly, posits Orphic origins.⁹¹ His oldest testimony is Pindar's *Second Pythian Ode* (21–4), where Ixion warns people in the underworld. Now Strabo (9.5.21) calls Phlegyas the brother of Ixion,⁹² whereas Servius (*ad loc.*) calls him Ixion's father. Can it be that this relationship plays a role in this wonderful confusion of sources, relationships, crimes and punishments? We will probably never know, as Virgil often selects and alters at random!

4 The Palace and the Bough (628–636)

After another series of nameless human sinners,⁹³ among whom the sin of incest (623) is clearly shared with the Bologna papyrus (*OF* 717.5–10),⁹⁴ the Sibyl urges Aeneas on and points to the mansion of the rulers of the underworld, which is built by the Cyclopes (630–1: *Cyclopum educta caminis moenia*). Norden calls the idea of an iron building 'singulär' (p. 294), but it fits other descriptions of the underworld as containing iron or bronze elements (§ 3). Austin (*ad loc.*) compares Callimachus, *H.* 3.60–1 for the Cyclopes as smiths using bronze or iron, but it has escaped him that Virgil combines here two traditional activities of the Cyclopes. On the one hand, they are smiths and as such forged Zeus' thunder, flash and lightning-bolt, a helmet of invisibility for Hades, the trident for Poseidon and a shield for Aeneas

⁸⁸ For this case, see also Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 49.

⁸⁹ D. Kuijper, 'Phlegyas admonitor', *Mnemosyne* IV 16 (1963) 162–170; G. Garbugino, 'Flegias', in *EV* II, 539–540 notes his late appearance in our texts.

⁹⁰ Even though it is a different Phlegyas, one may wonder whether Statius, *Thebais* 6.706 *et casus Phlegyae monet* does not allude to his words here: *admonet* ... "discite iustitiam *moniti*..."? The passage is not discussed by R. Ganiban, *Statius and Virgil* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁹¹ Norden, *Aeneis* VI, 275–276, compares, in addition to Pindar (see the main text), Pl. *Grg.* 525c, *Phaedo* 114a, *Resp.* 10.616a.

⁹² To be added to Austin *ad loc.*

⁹³ D. Berry, 'Criminals in Virgil's Tartarus: Contemporary Allusions in *Aeneid* 6.621–624', *CQ* 42 (1992) 416–420.

⁹⁴ Cf. Horsfall, 'P. Bonon.4 and Virgil, Aen.6'.

(*Aen.* 8.447).⁹⁵ Consequently, they were known as the inventors of weapons in bronze and the first to make weapons in the Euboean cave Teuchion.⁹⁶ On the other hand, early traditions also ascribed imposing constructions to the Cyclopes, such as the walls of Mycene and Tiryms, and as builders they remained famous all through antiquity.⁹⁷ Iron buildings thus perfectly fit the Cyclopes.

In front of the threshold of the building, Aeneas sprinkles himself with fresh water and fixes the Golden Bough to the lintel above the entrance. Norden (p. 164) and Austin (*ad loc.*) understand the expression *ramumque aduerso in limine figit* (635–6) as the laying of the bough on the threshold, but *figit* seems to fit the lintel better.⁹⁸ One may also wonder from where Aeneas suddenly got his water. Had he carried it with him all along? Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.1.6) tells us that washing was necessary when performing religious rites for the heavenly gods, but that a sprinkling was enough for those of the underworld. There certainly is some truth in this observation. However, as the chthonian gods were especially important during magical rites, it is not surprising that people did not go to a public bath first. It is thus a matter of convenience rather than principle.⁹⁹ But to properly understand its function here, we should look at the Golden Bough first.¹⁰⁰

The Sibyl had told Aeneas to find the Golden Bough and to give it to Proserpina as ‘her due tribute’ (142–3, tr. Austin *ad loc.*). The meaning of the Golden Bough has gradually become clearer. Whereas Norden rightly rejected the interpretation of Frazer’s *Golden Bough*,¹⁰¹ he clearly was still influenced by his *Zeitgeist* with its fascination with fertility and death and thus spent too much attention on the comparison of the Bough with mistletoe.¹⁰² Yet by pointing to the Mysteries (below) he already came close to an important aspect of the Bough.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Hes. *Theog.* 504–505; Apollod. 1.1.2 and 2.1, 3.10.4 (which may well go back to an ancient *Titanomachy*); see also Pindar fr. 266.

⁹⁶ Istros *FGrH* 334 F 71 (inventors); *POxy.* 10.1241, re-edited by Van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers’ Digests?*, 68.92–98 (Teuchion).

⁹⁷ Pind. fr. 169a.7; Bacch. 11.77; Soph. fr. 227; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 87 = F 88 Fowler; Eur. *HF* 15, *IA* 1499; Eratosth. *Cat.* 39 (altar); Strabo 8.6.8; Apollod. 2.2.1; Paus. 2.25.8; *Anth. Pal.* 7.748; schol. on Eur. *Or.* 965; *Et. Magnum* 213.29.

⁹⁸ As is argued by H. Wagenvoort, *Pietas* (Leiden, 1980) 93–113 (‘The Golden Bough’, 1959¹) at 93.

⁹⁹ See also S. Eitrem, *Opferfritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Kristiania, 1915) 126–131; Pease on Verg. *Aen.* 4.635.

¹⁰⁰ For Aeneas picking the Bough on a mid-fourth-century British mosaic, see D. Perring, “Gnosticism” in Fourth-Century Britain: The Frampton Mosaics Reconsidered’, *Britannia* 34 (2003) 97–127 at 116.

¹⁰¹ Compare J.G. Frazer, *Balder the Beautiful = The Golden Bough* VII.2 (London, 1913³) 284 n. 3 and Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 164 n. 1.

¹⁰² As observed by Wagenvoort, *Pietas*, 96f.

¹⁰³ Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 171–173.

Combining three recent analyses, which have all contributed to a better understanding, we can summarize our present knowledge as follows.¹⁰⁴ When searching for the Bough, Aeneas is guided by two doves, the birds of his mother Aphrodite (193). The motif of birds leading the way derives from colonisation legends, as Norden (pp. 173–4) and Horsfall have noted, and the fact that there are two of them may well have been influenced by the age-old traditions of two leaders of colonising groups.¹⁰⁵ The doves, as Nelis has argued, can be paralleled with the dove that led the Argonauts through the Clashing Rocks in Apollonius of Rhodes' epic (2.238–40, 561–73; note also 3.541–54). Moreover, as Nelis notes, the Golden Bough is part of an oak tree (209), just like the Golden Fleece (*Arg.* 2.1270, 4.162), both are located in a gloomy forest (208 and *Arg.* 4.166) and both shine in the darkness (204–7 and *Arg.* 4.125–6). In other words, it seems a plausible idea that Virgil also had the Golden Fleece of the *Argonautica* in mind when composing the episode of the Golden Bough. This is not wholly surprising. The expedition of Jason and his Argonauts also was a kind of quest, in which the Golden Fleece and the Golden Bough are clearly comparable. In addition, Colchis was situated at the edge of Greek civilisation so that the journey to it might not have been a *katabasis* but certainly had something of a *Jenseitsfahrt*.¹⁰⁶

Admittedly, the Argonautic epic does not contain a Golden Bough, but in a too long neglected article, Agnes Michels (1909–1993) pointed out that in the introductory poem to his *Garland* Meleager mentions 'the ever golden branch of divine Plato shining all round with virtue' (*Anth. Pal.* 4.1.47–8 = Meleager 3972–3 Gow-Page, tr. West).¹⁰⁷ Virgil certainly knew Meleager, as Horsfall notes, and he also observes that the allusion to Plato prepares us for the use Virgil makes of Plato's eschatological myths in his description of the underworld, those of the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and Er in the *Republic*.

104 In this section on the Golden Bough, I refer just by name to D.A. West, 'The Bough and the Gate', in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1990) 224–238; Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 20–28 (with a detailed commentary on 6.210–211) and D. Nelis, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Leeds, 2001) 240f. The first two seem to have escaped R. Turcan, 'Le laurier d'Apollon (en marge de Porphyre)', in A. Haltenhoff and F.-H. Mutschler (eds), *Hortus Litterarum Antiquarum. Festschrift H.A. Gärtner* (Heidelberg, 2000) 547–553.

105 West, *Indo-European Poetry*, 190; Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 59f.

106 For the myth of the Golden Fleece, see Bremmer, *Religion and Culture*, 303–338. For the expedition of the Argonauts as *Jenseitsfahrt*, see K. Meuli, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2 vols (Basel, 1975) 2.604–606, 664–665, 676; R. Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius: literary studies* (Cambridge, 1993) 182–188.

107 A.K. Michels, 'The Golden Bough of Plato', *Am. J. Philol.* 66 (1945) 59–63. For Agnes Michels, a daughter of the well-known Biblical scholar Kirsopp Lake (1872–1946), see J. Linderski, 'Agnes Kirsopp Michels and the Religio', *Class. J.* 92 (1997) 323–345.

However, there is another, even more important bough. Servius tells us that ‘those who have written about the rites of Proserpina’ assert that there is *quiddam mysticum* about the bough and that people could not participate in the rites of Proserpina unless they carried a bough.¹⁰⁸ Now we know that the future initiates of Eleusis carried a kind of pilgrim’s staff consisting of a single branch of myrtle or several held together by rings (Ch. I.2). In other words, by carrying the bough and offering it to Proserpina, queen of the underworld, Aeneas also acts as an Eleusinian initiate,¹⁰⁹ who of course had to bathe before initiation.¹¹⁰ Virgil will have written this all with one eye on Augustus, who was an initiate himself of the Eleusinian Mysteries.¹¹¹ Yet it seems equally important that Heracles too had to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries before entering the underworld (§ 3). In the end, the Golden Bough is also an oblique reference to that elusive epic, the *Descent of Heracles*.

5 Elysium (637–678)

Having offered the Bough to Proserpina, Aeneas and the Sibyl can enter Elysium, where they now come to *locos laetos*, ‘joyful places’ (cf. 744: *laeta arva*) of *fortunatorum nemorum*, ‘blessed woods’ (639).¹¹² The stress on joy is rather striking, but on a fourth-century BC Orphic Gold Leaf from Thurii we read: “Rejoice, rejoice” (Χαῖρε<ε>, χαῖρε). Journey on the right-hand road to holy meadows and groves of Persephone’.¹¹³ Moreover, we find joy also in Jewish prophecies of the Golden Age, which certainly overlap in their motifs with life in Elysium.¹¹⁴ Once again Virgil’s description taps Orphic poetry, as *lux perpetua* (640–1) is also a typically Orphic motif, which we already find in Pindar and which surely must

108 Servius, *Aen.* 6.136: *licet de hoc ramo hi qui de sacris Proserpinae scripsisse dicuntur, quiddam esse mysticum adfirmat ... ad sacra Proserpinae accedere nisi sublato ramo non poterat. inferos autem subire hoc dicit, sacra celebrare Proserpinae.*

109 The connection with Eleusis is also stressed by G. Luck, *Ancient Pathways and Hidden Pursuits* (Ann Arbor, 2000) 16–34 (‘Virgil and the Mystery Religions’, 1973¹), if often too specifically.

110 R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983) 284 nos 12–13.

111 Suet. *Aug.* 93; Dio Cassius 51.4.1; G. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford, 1965) 68.

112 For woods in the underworld, see *Od.* 10.509; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, no. 3.5–6 (Thurii) = *OF* 487.5–6; Verg. *Aen.* 6.658; Nonnos, *D.* 19.191.

113 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, no. 3.5–6 = *OF* 487.

114 *Oracula Sibyllina* 3.785: ‘Rejoice, maiden’, cf. E. Norden, *Die Geburt des Kindes* (Stuttgart, 1924) 57f.

have had a place in the *katabasis* of Orpheus, just as the gymnastic activities, dancing and singing (642–4) almost certainly come from the same source(s),¹¹⁵ even though Augustus must have been pleased with the athletics which he encouraged.¹¹⁶ The Orphic character of these lines is confirmed by the mention of the *Threicius sacerdos* (645, with Horsfall *ad loc.*), obviously Orpheus himself.

After this general view, we are told about the individual inhabitants of Elysium, starting with *genus antiquum Teucris* (648), which recalls, as Austin (*ad loc.*) well saw, *genus antiquum Terrae, Titania pubes* (580),¹¹⁷ opening the list of sinners in Tartarus. It is a wonderfully peaceful spectacle that we see through the eyes of Aeneas. Some of the heroes are even *vescentis* (657), ‘picnicking’ (Austin), on the grass, and we may wonder if this is not also a reference to the Orphic ‘symposium of the just’, as that also takes place on a meadow.¹¹⁸ Its importance was already known from Orphic literary descriptions,¹¹⁹ but a meadow in the underworld has also emerged on the Orphic Gold Leaves.¹²⁰

The description of the landscape is concluded with the picture of the river Eridanus that flows from a forest, smelling of laurels (658–59).¹²¹ Neither Norden nor Austin explains the presence of the laurels, but Virgil’s first readership will have had several associations with these trees. Some may have remembered that the laurel was the highest level of reincarnation among plants in Empedocles (B 127 DK; note also B 140), whereas others will have realised the poetic and Apolline connotations of the laurel.¹²²

After Trojan and nameless Roman heroes (648–60), priests (661) and poets (662), Aeneas and the Sibyl also see ‘those who found out knowledge and used it for the betterment of life’ (663: *inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artis*, tr.

115 Pind. fr. 129; Ar. *Ra.* 448–455; Plut. fr. 178, 211; *Visio Pauli* 21, cf. Graf, *Eleusis*, 82–84.

116 Horsfall, *Virgilio*, 139.

117 For the Titans being the ‘olden gods’, see Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture*, 78.

118 Graf, *Eleusis*, 98–103.

119 Pind. fr. 129; Ar. *Ra.* 326; Pl. *Grg.* 524a, *Resp.* 10.616b; Diod. Sic. 1.96.5; Bernabé on *OF* 61.

120 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, no. 3.5–6 (Thurii) = *OF* 487.5–6, no. 27.4 (Pherae) = *OF* 493.4.

121 The Eridanus also appears in Apollonius Rhodius as a kind of otherworldly river (*Arg.* 4.596ff.), but there it is connected with the myth of Phaethon and the poplars, and resembles more Virgil’s Lake Avernus with its sulphur smell than the forest smelling of laurels in the underworld. For the name of the river, see now X. Delamarre, ‘Ἠριδανός, le “fleuve de l’ouest”,’ *Etudes Celtiques* 36 (2008) 75–77.

122 N. Horsfall, ‘*Odorum lauris nemus* (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.658)’, *Scripta Class. Israel.* 12 (1993) 156–158. Perhaps, later readers may have also thought of the laurel trees that stood in front of Augustus’ home on the Palatine, given the importance of Augustus in this book, cf. A. Alföldi, *Die zwei Lorbeerbäume des Augustus* (Bonn, 1973); M. Flory, ‘The Symbolism of Laurel in Cameo Portraits of Livia’, *Mem. Am. Ac. Rel.* 40 (1995) 43–68.

Austin). As has long been seen, this line closely corresponds to a line from a cultural-historical passage in the Bologna papyrus where we find an enumeration of five groups in Elysium that have made life livable. The first are mentioned in general as those ‘who embellished life with their skills’ (αἱ δε βίον σοφίῃσιν ἐκόσμεον = *OF* 717.103), to be followed by the poets, ‘those who cut roots’ for medicinal purposes, and two more groups which we cannot identify because of the bad state of the papyrus. Inventions that both improve life and bring culture are typically sophistic themes, and the mention of the archaic ‘root cutters’ instead of the more modern ‘doctors’ implies an older stage in the sophistic movement.¹²³ The convergence between Virgil and the Bologna papyrus suggests that we have here a category of people seen by Orpheus in his *katabasis*. However, as Virgil sometimes comes very close to the list of sinners in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, both poets must, directly or indirectly, go back to a common source from the fifth century,¹²⁴ as must, by implication, the Bologna papyrus. This Orphic source apparently was influenced by the cultural theories of the sophists. Now the poets occur in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (1032–34) too in a passage that is heavily influenced by the cultural theories of the sophists, a passage that Fritz Graf connected with Orphic influence.¹²⁵ Are we going too far when we see here also the shadow of Orpheus’ *katabasis*?

Having seen part of the inhabitants of Elysium, the Sibyl now asks Musaeus where Anchises is (666–78). Norden (p. 300) persuasively compares the question of Dionysus to the Eleusinian initiates where Pluto lives in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (431–3).¹²⁶ In support of his argument Norden observes that normally the Sibyl is omniscient, but only here asks for advice, which suggests a different source rather than an intentional poetic variation. Naturally, he infers from the comparison that both go back to the *katabasis* of Heracles. In line with our investigation so far, however, we rather ascribe the question to Orpheus’ *katabasis*, given the later prominence of Musaeus and the meeting with Eleusinian initiates. Highly interesting is also another observation by Norden. He notes that Musaeus shows them the valley where Anchises lives from a height (678: *desuper ostentat*) and compares a

123 Cf. M. Treu, ‘Die neue ‘Orphische’ Unterweltsbeschreibung und Vergil’, *Hermes* 82 (1954) 24–51 at 35: ‘die primitiven Wurzelsucher’.

124 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 287–288; Graf, *Eleusis*, 146 n. 21 compares *Aen.* 6.609 with *Ar. Ra.* 149–150 (violence against parents), 6.609 with *Ra.* 147 (violence against strangers) and 6.612–613 with *Ra.* 150 (perjurers). Note also the resemblance of 6.608, *OF* 717.47 and *Pl. Resp.* 10.615c regarding fratricides, which also points to an older Orphic source, as Norden already saw, without knowing the Bologna papyrus.

125 Graf, *Eleusis*, 34–37.

126 Neither Stanford nor Dover refers to Virgil.

number of Greek, Roman and Christian Apocalypses. Yet his comparison confuses two different motifs, even though they are related. In the cases of Plato's *Republic* (10.615d, 616b) and *Timaeus* (41e) as well as Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*Rep.* 6.11) souls see the other world, but they do not have a proper tour of hell (or heaven) in which a supernatural person (Musaeus, God, [arch]angel, Devil) provides a view from a height or a mountain. That is what we find in *1 Enoch* (17–18), Philo (*SpecLeg* 3.2), *Matthew* (4.8), *Revelation* (21.10), the *Testament of Abraham* (10), the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (21), the *Apocalypse of Peter* (15–16), which was still heavily influenced by Jewish traditions, and even the late *Apocalypse of Paul* (13), which drew on earlier, Jewish influenced apocalypses. In other words, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Virgil draws here too, directly or indirectly, on Jewish sources.¹²⁷

6 *Anchises and the Heldenschau* (679–887)

With this quest for Anchises we have reached the climax of book VI. It would take us much too far to present a detailed analysis of these lines but, in line with our investigation, we will concentrate on Orphic and Orphic-related (Orphoid?) sources.

Aeneas meets his father, when the latter has just finished reviewing the souls of his line who are destined to ascend 'to the upper light' (679–83).¹²⁸ They are in a valley, of which the secluded character is heavily stressed,¹²⁹ while the river Lethe gently streams through the woods (705): the Romans paid much more attention to this river than the Greeks, who mentioned Lethe only rarely and in older times hardly ever explicitly as a river.¹³⁰ Here those souls that are to be reincarnated drink the water of forgetfulness. After Aeneas wondered why some would want to return to the upper world, Anchises launched into a detailed Stoic cosmology and anthropology (724–33) before we again find Orphic material: the soul locked up in the body as in a prison (734), which Vergil derived almost certainly straight from Plato, just like the idea of engrafted (738, 746: *concreta*) evil.¹³¹

127 *Contra* Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.792.

128 For the reference to metempsychosis, see Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.724–751.

129 679–680 *penitus convalle virenti inclusas animas*; 703: *valle reducta*; 704: *seclusum nemus*.

130 Theognis 1216 (plain of Lethe); Simon. *Anth. Pal.* 7.25.6 (house of Lethe); Ar. *Ra.* 186 (plain of Lethe); Pl. *Resp.* 10.621ac (plain and river); *TrGF* Adesp. fr. 372 (house of Lethe); *SEG* 51.328 (curse tablet: Lethe as a personal power). For its occurrence in the Gold Leaves, see Riedweg, *Myster-ienterminologie*, 40.

131 Soul: Pl. *Crat.* 400c (= *OF* 430), *Phd.* 62b (= *OF* 429), 67d, 81be, 92a; [Plato], *Axioch.* 365e; G. Rehrenbock, 'Die orphische Seelenlehre in Platons *Kratylos*', *Wiener Stud.* 88 (1975) 17–31;

The penalties the souls have to suffer to become pure (739–43) may well derive from an Orphic source too, as the Bologna papyrus mentions clouds and hail, but it is too fragmentary to be of any use here.¹³² On the other hand, the idea that the souls have to pay a penalty for their deeds in the upper world twice occurs in the Orphic Gold Leaves.¹³³ Orphic is also the idea of the cycle (*rota*) through which the souls have to pass during their Orphic reincarnation.¹³⁴ But why does the cycle last a thousand years before the souls can come back to life: *mille rotam volvere per annos* (748)? Unfortunately, we are badly informed by the relevant authors about the precise length of the reincarnation. Empedocles mentions ‘thrice ten thousand seasons’ (B 115 DK) and Plato (*Phaedr.* 249a) mentions ‘ten thousand years’ and, for a philosophical life, ‘three times thousand years’, but the myth of Er mentions a period of thousand years.¹³⁵ This will be Virgil’s source here, as also the idea that the souls have to drink from the river Lethe is directly inspired by the myth of Er where the souls that have drunk from the River of Forgetfulness forget about their stay in the other world before returning to earth (*Resp.* 10.621a).

It will hardly be chance that with the references to the end of the myth of Er, we have also reached the end of the main description of the underworld. In the following *Heldenschau*, we find only one more intriguing reference to the eschatological beliefs of Virgil’s time. At the end, father and son wander ‘in the wide fields of air’ (887: *aëris in campis latis*), surveying everything. In one of his characteristically wide-ranging and incisive discussions, Norden argued that Virgil alludes here to the belief that the souls ascend to the moon as their final abode. This belief is as old, as Norden argues, as the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where we already find ‘die Identifikation der Mondgöttin Hekate mit Hekate als Königin der Geister und des Hades’.¹³⁶ However, it must be objected that ‘verifiable associations between the two (i.e. Hecate and the moon) do not survive from

A. Bernabé, ‘Una etimología Platónica: *Sôma* – *Sêma*’, *Philologus* 139 (1995) 204–237. For the afterlife of the idea, see P. Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même de Socrate à Saint Bernard*, 3 vols (Paris, 1974–1975) 2.345–380. Engrafted evil: Pl. *Phd.* 81c, *Resp.* 10.609a, *Tim.* 42ac. Plato and Orphism: A. Masaracchia, ‘Orfeo e gli “Orfici” in Platone’, in idem (ed.), *Orfeo e l’Orfismo* (Rome, 1993) 173–203, reprinted in his *Riflessioni sull’antico* (Pisa and Rome, 1998) 373–396.

132 Treu, ‘Die neue ‘Orphische’ Unterweltsbeschreibung’, 38 compares *OF* 717.130–132; see also G. Perrone, ‘Virgilio Aen. VI 740–742’, *Civ. Class. Crist.* 6 (1985) 33–41; Horsfall on *Aen.* 6.739.

133 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts* 6.4 (Thurii) = *OF* 490.4; Graf and Johnston 27.4 (Pherae) = *OF* 493.4.

134 *OF* 338, 467, Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 5.5 (Thurii) = *OF* 488.5, with Bernabé *ad loc.*

135 Pl. *Resp.* 10.615b, 621a. Curiously, Norden does not refer to this passage in his commentary on this line, but at p. 10–11 of his commentary.

136 Norden, *Aeneis VI*, 23–26, also comparing Servius on 5.735 and 6.887; Ps. Probus p. 333–334.

earlier than the first century A.D.¹³⁷ Moreover, the identification of the moon with Hades, the Elysian Fields or the Isles of the Blessed is relatively late. It is only in the fourth century BC that we start to find this tradition among pupils of Plato, such as, probably, Xenocrates, Crantor and Heraclides Ponticus, who clearly wanted to elaborate their Master's eschatological teachings in this respect.¹³⁸ Consequently, the reference does indeed allude to the souls' ascent to the moon, but not to the 'orphisch-pythagoreische Theologie' (Norden, p. 24). In fact, it is clearly part of the Platonic framework of Virgil.¹³⁹

In the same century Plato is the first to mention Selene as the mother of the Eleusinian Musaeus,¹⁴⁰ but he will hardly have been the inventor of the idea, which must have been established in the late fifth century BC.¹⁴¹ Did the officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries want to keep up with contemporary eschatological developments, which increasingly stressed that the soul went up into the *aether*, not down into the subterranean Hades?¹⁴² We do not have enough material to trace exactly the initial developments of the idea, but in the later first century AD it was already popular enough for Antonius Diogenes to parody the belief in his *Wonders Beyond Thule*, a parody taken to even greater length by Lucian in his *True Histories*.¹⁴³ Virgil's allusion, therefore, must have been clear to his contemporaries.

137 S.I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira* (Atlanta, 1990) 31.

138 W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge MA, 1972) 366–368, who also points out that there is no pre-Platonic Pythagorean evidence for this belief; see also F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* (Paris, 1949) 175–178; H.B. Gottschalk, *Heraclides of Pontus* (Oxford, 1980) 100–105.

139 Wilamowitz rejected the 'Mondgöttin Helene oder Hekate' already in his letter of 11 June 1903 thanking Norden for his commentary, cf. Calder III and Huss, "Sed servendum officio...", 18–21 at 20.

140 Pl. *Resp.* 2.364e; Philochoros *FGrH* 328 F 208, cf. Bernabé on Musaeus 10–14 T.

141 A. Henrichs, 'Zur Genealogie des Musaios', *ZPE* 58 (1985) 1–8.

142 *IG I³* 1179.6–7; Eur. *Erechth.* fr. 370.71, *Suppl.* 533–534, *Hel.* 1013–1016. *Or.* 1086–1087, fr. 839.10f, 908b, 971; P. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica Graeca saeculi IV a. Chr. n.* (Berlin and New York, 1989) no. 535, 545, 558, 593.

143 For Antonius' date, see G. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, LA, London, 1994) 35–39, whose identification of the Faustinus addressed by Antonius with Martial's Faustinus is far from compelling, cf. R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons* (Leiden, 2002) 67–68 n. 96. Bowersock has been overlooked by P. von Möllendorff, *Auf der Suche nach der verlogenen Wahrheit. Lukians Wahre Geschichten* (Tübingen, 2000) 104–109, whose discussion also supports an earlier date for Antonius against the traditional one in the late second or early third century.

7 Conclusions

When we now look back, we can see that Virgil has divided his underworld into several compartments. His division contaminates Homer with later developments. In Homer virtually everybody goes to Hades, of which the Tartarus is the deepest part, reserved for the greatest sinners, the Titans (*Il.* XIV.279). A few special heroes, such as Menelaus and Rhadamanthys, go to a separate place, the Elysian Fields, which is mentioned only once in Homer.¹⁴⁴ When the afterlife became more important, the idea of a special place for the elite, which resembles the Hesiodic Isles of the Blessed (*Op.* 167–73), must have looked attractive to a number of people. However, the notion of reincarnation soon posed a special problem. Where did those stay who had completed their cycle (§ 6) and those who were still in process of doing so? It can now be seen that Virgil follows a traditional Orphic solution in this respect, a solution that had progressed beyond Homer in that moral criteria had become important.¹⁴⁵

In his *Second Olympian Ode* Pindar pictures a tripartite afterlife in which the sinners are sentenced by a judge below the earth to endure terrible pains (57–60, 67), those who are good men spend a pleasant time with the gods (61–67) and those who have completed the cycle of reincarnation and have led a blameless life will join the heroes on the Isles of the Blessed (68–80).¹⁴⁶ A tripartite structure can also be noticed in Empedocles, who speaks about the place where the great sinners are (B 118–21 DK),¹⁴⁷ a place for those who are in the process of purification (B 115 DK),¹⁴⁸

144 For Hades, Elysium and the Isles of the Blessed, see most recently Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Reading' *Greek Death*, 17–107; S. Mace, 'Utopian and Erotic Fusion in a New Elegy by Simonides (22 West²)', *ZPE* 113 (1996) 233–247. For the etymology of Elysium, see R. Beekes, 'Hades and Elysion', in J. Jasanoff (ed.), *Mír curad: studies in honor of Calvert Watkins* (Innsbruck, 1998) 17–28 at 19–23. Stephanie West (on *Od.* 4.563) well observes that Elysium is not mentioned again before Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

145 For good observations, see U. Molyviati-Toptsis, 'Vergil's Elysium and the Orphic-Pythagorean Ideas of After-Life', *Mnemosyne* IV 47 (1994) 33–46. However, recent scholarship has replaced her terminology of 'Orphic-Pythagorean', which she inherited from Dieterich and Norden, with 'Orphic-Bacchic', due to new discoveries of Orphic Gold Leaves (Ch. III.1). Moreover, she overlooked the important discussion by Graf, *Eleusis*, 84–87; see also Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 100–108.

146 For the reflection of this scheme in Pindar's threnos fr. 129–131a, see Graf, *Eleusis*, 84f. Given the absence of Mysteries in Pindar, *O.* 2 and Mysteries being out of place in Plutarch's *Consolatio* one wonders with Graf if τελετᾶν in fr. 131a should not be replaced by τελευτᾶν.

147 For the identification of this place with Hades, see A. Martin and O. Primavesi, *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg* (Berlin and New York, 1999) 315f.

148 F. D'Alfonso, 'La Terra Desolata. Osservazioni sul destino di Bellerofonte (*Il.* 6.200–202)', *MH* 65 (2008) 1–31 at 14–20.

and a place for those who have led a virtuous life on earth: they will join the tables of the gods (B 147–8 DK). The same division between the effects of a good and a bad life appears in Plato's *Jenseitsmythen*. In the *Republic* (10.616a) the serious sinners are hurled into Tartarus, as they are in the *Phaedo* (113d–114c), where the less serious ones may be still saved, whereas 'those who seem [to have lived] exceptionally into the direction of living virtuously' (tr. C.J. Rowe) pass upward to 'a pure abode'. But those who have purified themselves sufficiently with philosophy will reach an area 'even more beautiful', presumably that of the gods (cf. 82b10–c1). The upward movement for the elite, pure souls, also occurs in the *Phaedrus* (248–9) and the *Republic* (10.614de), whereas in the *Gorgias* (525b–526d) they go to the Isles of the Blessed. All these three dialogues display the same tripartite structure, if with some variations, as the one of the *Phaedo*, although the description in the *Republic* (10.614bff) is greatly elaborated with all kinds of details in the tale of Er.

Finally, in the Orphic Gold Leaves the stay in Tartarus is clearly presupposed but not mentioned, due to the function of the Gold Leaves as passport to the underworld for the Orphic devotees. Yet the fact that in a fourth-century BC Leaf from Thurii the soul says: 'I have flown out of the heavy, difficult cycle (of reincarnations)' suggests a second stage in which the souls still have to return to life, and the same stage is presupposed by a late fourth-century Leaf from Pharsalos where the soul says: 'Tell Persephone that Bakchios himself has released you (from the cycle)'.¹⁴⁹ The final stage will be like in Pindar, as the soul, whose purity is regularly stressed,¹⁵⁰ 'will rule among the other heroes' or has 'become a god instead of a mortal'.¹⁵¹

When taking these tripartite structures into account, we can also better understand Virgil's Elysium. It is clear that we have here also the same distinction between the good and the super good souls. The former have to return to earth, but the latter can stay forever in Elysium. Moreover, their place is higher than the one of those who have to return. That is why the souls that will return are in a valley below the area where Musaeus is.¹⁵² Once again, Virgil looked at Plato for the construction of his underworld.

149 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 5.5 = *OF* 488.5; Graf and Johnston 26a.2 = *OF* .485.2. Dionysos Bakchios has now also turned up on a Leaf from Amphipolis: Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 30.1–2 = *OF* 496n.1–2.5.

150 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1 (all Thurii), 9.1 (Rome) = *OF* 488.1, 490.1, 489.1, 491.1.

151 Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 8.11 (Petelia) = *OF* 476.11; Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts*, 3.4 (Thurii) = *OF* 487.4 and *ibidem* 5.9 (Thurii) = *OF* 488.9, respectively.

152 This was also seen by Molyviati-Toptsis, 'Virgil's Elysium', 43, if not very clearly explained.

But as we have seen, it is not only Plato that is an important source for Virgil. In addition to a few traditional Roman details, such as the *fauces Orci*, we have also called attention to Orphic and Eleusinian beliefs.¹⁵³ Moreover, and this is really new, we have pointed to several possible borrowings from *1 Enoch*. Norden rejected virtually all Jewish influence on Virgil in his commentary,¹⁵⁴ and one can only wonder to what extent his own Jewish origin played a role in this judgement.¹⁵⁵ More recent discussions have been more generous in allowing the possibility of Jewish-Sibyline influence on Virgil and Horace.¹⁵⁶ And indeed, Alexander Polyhistor, who worked in Rome during Virgil's lifetime and wrote a book *On the Jews*, knew the Old Testament and was demonstrably acquainted with Egyptian-Jewish Sibylline literature.¹⁵⁷ Thus it seems not impossible or even implausible that among the Orphic literature that Virgil had read, there also were (Egyptian-Jewish?) Orphic *katabaseis* with Enochic influence. Unfortunately, we have so little left of that literature that all too certain conclusions would be misleading.¹⁵⁸ In the end, it is still not easy to see light in the darkness of Virgil's underworld.¹⁵⁹

153 For the Orphic influence, see also the summary by Horsfall, *Virgil, "Aeneid" 6*, 1.xxii–xxiii.

154 Horsfall, *Virgil, "Aeneid" 6*, 2.650 is completely mistaken in mentioning Norden's 'pressing and arguably misleading, belief in the importance of Jewish texts for the understanding of *Aen.6*': Norden, *Aeneis Buch VI*, 6 actually argued that from the 'jüdische Apokalyptik ... kaum ein Motiv angeführt werden kann, das sich mit einem vergilischen berührte'.

155 For Norden's attitude towards Judaism, see J.E. Bauer, 'Eduard Norden: Wahrheitsliebe und Judentum', in B. Kytzler *et al* (eds), *Eduard Norden (1868–1941)* (Stuttgart, 1994) 205–223; R.G.M. Nisbet, *Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (Oxford, 1995) 75; Bremmer, 'The Apocalypse of Peter: Greek or Jewish?', in *idem* and I. Czachesz (eds), *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Leuven, 2003) 15–39 at 3f.

156 C. Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983) 218–299 (on Horace's *Epode* 16.2); Nisbet, *Collected Papers*, 48–52, 64–5, 73–5, 163–164; L. Watson, *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes* (Oxford, 2003) 481–482, 489, 508, 511 (on Horace's *Epode* 16); L. Feldman, 'Biblical Influence on Vergil', in S. Secunda and S. Fine (eds), *Shoshannat Yaakov* (Leiden, 2012) 43–64.

157 Alexander Polyhistor *FGrH* 273 F 19ab (OT), F 79 (4) quotes *Or. Sib.* 3.397–104, cf. Norden, *Kleine Schriften*, 269; Lightfoot, *Sibyline Oracles*, 95.

158 Horsfall, 'Virgil and the Jews', *Vergilius* 58 (2012) 67–80 at 68–69 has contested my views in this respect, but his arguments are partly demonstrably wrong and partly unpersuasive, see my 'Vergil and Jewish Literature', *Vergilius* 59 (2013) 143–150.

159 Various parts of this paper profited from lectures in Liège and Harvard in 2008. For comments and corrections of my English I am most grateful to Annemarie Ambühl, Danuta Shanzer and, especially, Nicholas Horsfall and Ruurd Nauta.

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1 I have usually omitted books published before 1890, commentaries, editions, encyclopedias, grammars, handbooks, translations, etc.

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