

INTRODUCTION TO THE KORE

Story/persephone's dog

Craig San Roque

. . . we are dreaming creatures . . .

(Salman Rushdie, BBC radio, 17 September 2012)

On the poetics of being

Imagine original beings walking the earth, archetypal forms in the making, emerging out of the land. Emerging simultaneously from the human psyche. You might ask – am I discovering these beings walking toward me across the land, or am I creating them?

It is a human thing to dream creatures. Yet perhaps not every original being is invented by human beings. Perhaps the force of nature has a life of its own and comes to meet us in forms that nature chooses, firing our imagination as it does so. A special kind of sung poetry has developed among many peoples of the world that mingles the reality that we see with the reality that we create. There may not be one clear term in the English language that describes this intermingling of that which we imagine and that which is independently there. I prefer the term *ontopoiesis* – or, more simply, *ontopoetic* – suggesting a mingling of the Greek concept *ontos* (“that which is” – “I am” or “being”) with *poiesis* (indicating “coming into being” – “creation” or “bringing forth”).

Together these words *ontos* and *poiesis* synchronize into a sense of the poetic, creative relationships between beings. This intermingling is an intricate etymological and psychological matter and my sentence here merely hints at the subtlety of *ontopoetics*. Let us say that the term draws our attention to the poetic infrastructure of creation, the beauty and symmetry that may be found in the order of an insect, in the structure of seeds, in the composition of bird song, in the camouflage speckle on the skin of trout or deer . . . And then there is the response that a human being makes to these symmetries, for the human is a part of this design.

I seek for words in English that hold the notion of human communicative participation in the breath of nature, in the walking of archetypal forms, moments when human creatures and nature's forces collaborate, comingle. The philosopher Freya Mathews coined this term – *the onto poetic*, lovingly acknowledging that the world itself is open – “intimately psycho-active and disposed toward communicative engagement with us.”¹

This *Kore Story* is, for me, subjectively, an instance of onto poetic collaboration. It was composed at a marvelous ancient site, with no preconceived expectation. I had prepared the ground, as a painter prepares a canvas, but the words began to flow from voices in my inner ear, describing to me the two women traveling in that landscape at Delphi; and I obeyed, writing down the lines as though from dictation.

A note on style and context

The style of this text follows the mode I developed for the *Dionysos/Sugarman* performances in Central Australia, in 1996–9, two extracts from which appear in this volume as the invocatory *Creation Story* and the closing *Traveling Ariadne*. The mode is influenced by the rhythmic, colloquial humor of local storytellers. The narrative structures of *Kore Story* echo, but do not copy, the tone, simplicity of movement, and repetition that you might hear in Australian indigenous ceremonial song cycles. These involve chanted verses, accompanied by rhythmic beat and dance, revealing specific acts and travels of mythic, original creation beings. Such activities take place in ancient or ancestral time and continue in the present. Cultural lore and memory is held in place through such story/song lines, known in some Central Australian desert languages as *Jukurrpa* or *Altjerre*. These are the creation sagas of a hunter-gatherer people who live off the land.²

Similar compositions of cultural lore and memory are held in the song cycles and mythic narratives of old Europe. The Demeter/Persephone myth is one such cycle. A traditional version comes down to us through the Homeric Hymns. More primitive or folkloric forms of this story would have been circulating among the peoples whose hands were accustomed to digging the earth, bringing plants and vines to fruition. It is likely that the Demeter/Persephone story is located historically and mythically at a time of crucial transition in European life. It is a poetic account of the experience of peoples moving from the hunter-gatherer way of life toward a settled agricultural way of life.

I acknowledge the influence of Australian indigenous style and ontology upon my (echo) version of the Persephone story. The connection between ancient Greece and modern Australia is made for practical reasons. It is about hunger. This re-visioned story forms part of a contemporary food-security and land-use project in which I am involved in arid Central Australian Aboriginal regions.³ The project is concerned with how people in remote areas of Australia can produce decent and nutritious food from their land, now that traditional hunting is unreliable. Food supply has become an acute problem in Aboriginal life. Remote area food stores

are very expensive, fresh food is hard to get, processed sugar-rich foodstuffs and alcohol generate diabetes and obesity. The rigor of walking for hunting and gathering has been replaced by the convenience of motor vehicles and shops.

My purpose here is not to explain in detail the circumstances and complicated nature of developing and managing agricultural (and pastoral) developments on indigenous land in Central Australia – but these matters lie behind my interest in revisiting the European-Caucasian transition from a hunter-gather life to an agricultural life. Suffice it to say that a hunter-gatherer society develops specific, pragmatic ways of organizing land, waters, and social systems for food gathering and distribution. By contrast, farming/pastoral/industrial societies organize land, resources, and social relationships for food production and distribution in a different way. Over many generations people get into the habit of thinking as hunters or as farmers. The occupation breeds a mentality. If circumstances begin to change . . . if people lose control over their own food production and/or lose control over their own land and waters and trade . . . if the way of thinking upon which they depend becomes redundant . . . what happens then?

In Aboriginal Australia, there is acute and insidious conflict arising around this theme – hunter-gatherer practices are forced to give way to an industrialized food-supply system over which the hunters and gatherers have little or no control. The shop gives you food in exchange for money. The shop is not moved by “increase ceremonies,” and it matters not that the old man who bellies up to the shop counter is a man with vast cultural knowledge, who, in a hunter-gatherer economy would be supplied with food by men he had initiated into esoteric knowledge. Now there is no opportunity for trade, for the white people own the goods and the means of production. The equation of “food for money” and “money for work” is the equation that rules.

In Aboriginal Central Australia, the rules of food gathering are changing – including the rules of food distribution among specific kin – a system that prevails in the carefully managed indigenous hunter-gatherer economy. Furthermore, a cohesive poetic of being interweaves hunter-gatherer management of land, water, fire, animals, and the processes of natural cycles. Swift and blunt economic change, however, is changing the hunter-gatherer economy and the embedded ontopoetic mentality, as represented in the songs and ceremonies of *Jukurrpa/Altjerre*.

Psychologically, the hunters now rattle around in a state of cultural anxiety, marked by a sullen kind of existential anguish, intoxication, interpersonal violence, and passive aggression. This is not surprising.

Well then, how does an Australian hunter-gatherer family group get to think and work like a European farming family and run an agricultural company? Making a successful transition in civilization from one form of food production to another is not simple. How does one move from hunting to animal husbandry, from gathering to planting and cultivation? How long might it have taken the Caucasian or Semitic peoples to make that change? In what circumstances? By what steps did that adaptation proceed? Such questions are a part of the context of this *Kore Story*.

Cultural mentalities

Consider how the stories of the Peoples of the Book are entwined with the story of pastoralists and farmers. Many Judeo-Christian spiritual metaphors are linked to land-use. The histories of the Children of Abraham, the parables of Jesus, the metaphors of sacrifice, the lamb, the shepherd, the vine, the bread and the blood, are metaphors specific to a mentality formed by the everyday processes of cultivation, animal husbandry, land management, flock management, the settlement, and the kinship systems of such cultures. Indigenous Australian culture evolved from an entirely different system of environmental management. Thus do their mentalities differ.

A cultural mentality slowly becomes encoded into myth. This is why I am exploring a cultural story (a myth) from the time when the Caucasians changed food production toward agriculture. Australian indigenous people also structure law and culture around myths. A people's mentality is revealed in the myths upon which they draw.

The old Demeter Persephone/Triptolemus story marks a significant point of transition in European civilization. Understanding that historical transition may empathically help us appreciate the difficulty and the potential of what is being experienced today among Australian Aboriginal people, especially in settings where agricultural projects are being ambivalently developed around specific indigenous communities north of Alice Springs (Ti Tree and Ali Curung).

This is a complicated lead-up to saying that my purpose in retelling this old Greek story is to set out characters, images, events, and a mood that can be drawn on as we think together on themes of hunting, gathering, and farming practices. The *Kore Story* is part of a project in sharing or bridging cultural mentalities within a Central Australian region that is teeming with song lines (*Altjerre/ Jukurrpa*) related to native food and animal beings, including the important *Alekareng* Story, which features the activities of mythic traveling dogs. The thought of exchanging cultural stories in a culturally rich region like Central Australia is not unusual. Indeed, such an exchange is common sense. Understanding the myths that support the mentalities of both the hunters and the farmers may help these two peoples work together more efficiently to solve the hunger problem. At present, I observe that two ways of thinking (that of hunters and that of farmers) are in oppositional resistance.

Caution and connection

I am not naïve enough to believe that a “fairy story” from the past will make people change their behaviors in the present and turn them into farmers. This *Kore* project is not a propaganda exercise. I tell this story only so that people from diverse cultures can hear it, match it with indigenous experiences, and perhaps be stimulated to talk with each other, acknowledging the anxieties around food gathering, production, and distribution. Local indigenous people have hundreds of stories about

plants and animals pertaining to the nurture, gathering, distribution, and preparation of local foods, just as the Europeans and Asians also have cultural mythologies pertaining to the cultivation and uses of cereals, fruits, medicinal plants, flowers, fish, animal meats, fermentation and brewing, and all that sustains life.

There is a deep problem that needs to be signaled, even if not analyzed here. The indigenous Australian is deeply versed in hunter-gatherer mentalities and conservative habits of thinking that have sustained life for millennia. Most admit that some kind of collapse of the culture is now taking place. Concerned economic and social development people, deeply versed in procedural mentalities that have served the European empires for centuries, also observe the social collapse. Concerned government agencies, desperate for a solution, habitually revert to pushing forward the “evidence-based” economic solution (aka “the white man’s solution”). Well-intended economic development agents revert to habits of thinking that have sustained European life. They cannot imagine any other solution. The hunter-gatherers, in turn, defend their habits of thinking and may not be able to imagine any other solution either. Two forms of habitual thinking are locked in a passive-aggressive dogfight.

The managers of the agricultural project in Central Australia with which I am involved are looking for links in thinking between these two completely diverse groups of peoples and their respective mentalities. Good business, they say, depends on good thinking – and on consensus in the minds of those involved in whatever the deal is. Good business involves linking the thoughts of indigenous hunter-gatherers with the thoughts of farmers. Good business also involves “left brain” rational, numerate ways of processing experience and managing money; linked with “right brain” imagistic, emotionally toned, artistic ways of processing experience and managing people. Communication between peoples of two distinct cultural histories means using all parts of one’s brain and all capacities of the active human body – the practical, the intellectual, the emotional, and the poetic.

You do not need to understand the complexity of this Australian situation, nor be convinced by my formulation. It is enough to know that this re-vision of the Demeter myth was evoked by a problem of hunger in desert communities. The text was set down during a visit to a significant European site (Delphi),⁴ and I tell it here out of respect for my European cultural history.

Placing Kore

I have taken Persephone’s story as a version of a Mediterranean cultivation narrative. I see Persephone’s return and the subsequent Triptolemus ventures as linked with similar Dionysos legends that recount the spreading of the vine culture.

From these myths, we get a sense of those peoples’ preoccupation with loss, disappearance, violent death, dismemberment, lament, yearning, and resurrections. Such preoccupation, linked with organic fertility cycles, sexuality, birth, and nurture lead us directly into themes of the old Mystery cycles, in which Egyptian

Osiris/Isis, Sumerian Inanna/Dumuzi, Grecian Dionysos and the Eleusinian Mysteries all have a place.

The Eleusinian Mysteries include ritualized, seasonal death and regeneration ceremonies and illuminations that were continuously celebrated for over 2,000 years until the Christian era. These events were located at Eleusis, near Athens, an acknowledged site of Demeter's search for her daughter Kore and then Kore's return. This central ceremony of the ancient Mediterranean is no longer celebrated at Eleusis. The place itself is surrounded by industrial suburbs. It is a memorial to loss.

It seems that the European Christian orthodoxy gradually came to prefer a mythologem of eternal return, not of a daughter like Persephone who dwells in the soil, but of a recycling spiritual son portrayed as an emanation of a divine father dwelling (elusively) in heaven and on earth. So be it. I feel, however, that the Kore story holds the older line of the land-dwelling mothers who cross country on foot. Land-dwelling mothers who cross country on foot are alive and well in contemporary indigenous Australia. Those mothers might appreciate this story of two traveling Caucasian women and their dog, seeking out plants and good things to eat.

Demeter's grief story probably marks a significant shift in the Caucasian people's security about the management of food supply. Something happened that brought about that shift. What was it? Perhaps a flood, an ice age, an invasion? Darkness and famine pervade the land – and then the daughter returns and all seems well again. Demeter commissions a young man, Triptolemus, to begin spreading the art of managed agriculture. He meets resistances. This is to be expected. The transitions from unreliable hunting and gathering to sometimes reliable agriculture would have been gradual, sporadic, ambivalent, and depressingly hard.

There are many variations of the Demeter/Persephone myth – fragments recorded on vase paintings, in sculpture, and in writings from early Greek sources. There are also many interpretations. I acknowledge in the notes the several authors whose works helped me absorb this elusive material.⁵

Names and definitions

The names of mythic characters tell much about their nature, and if one truly understood ancient Greek, one might perceive subtle, complex meanings. I give here some simple etymology as a guide.

Kore

The term *Kore*, in original Greek, denotes a young girl/woman/maiden before marriage. *Kore* is conventionally used to refer to young Persephone in the Demeter myth. Jules Cashford notes:

I've always taken heart from the fact that *kore* is the feminine form of "sprout" – *koros* – And that the "De" of Demeter may also come from the "dyai," barley grains of Crete, where the Homeric Hymn has her originating. Agricultural

meanings are already written into the etymology, giving us familiar images of a human plant waving in the wind, dropping its seeds – barley, wheat or corn – and coming back up as sprouts in one eternally returning cycle of life.⁶

Demeter

The term *De-Meter* signifies divinity + mother (*Meter*) with the prefix *De* or *Dyai*, suggesting a divinity and making an association to life-sustaining cereal plants (barley). Cashford also informs me that “. . . it is important to note that primarily the two forms of the Earth or Corn-goddess are not Mother and Daughter but Mother and Maiden, the older and younger form of the same person.”⁷ In this sense, Demeter/Kore is a unity and a couple, the older and younger aspects of the same feminized force of a natural living process. In storytelling, you need the play of personifications of archetypal processes. You need different characters to play out the drama, even though in ceremony and song the characters represent natural processes that are not “persons” as such. Because of the needs of drama, the characterization works better as mother and daughter – two characters, not one.

Persephone and her consorts

The etymology of *Persephone* is intriguing and somewhat obscure. Felix Guirand⁸ suggests:

. . . it is believed the last half of the word Persephone comes from a word meaning “to show” and evokes the idea of light. Whether the first half derives from a word meaning “to destroy” – in which case Persephone would be “she who destroys the light” – or from an adverbial root signifying “dazzling brilliance,” as in the name of Perseus, it is difficult to decide.

Names of mythological characters often have descriptors of their nature (epithets) attached. One version of a descriptor for Persephone suggests “wedded to destruction.” I draw on this description in the marital scene with Aidos (conventionally named Hades in English). Guirand suggests that Aidos’ name, in Greek, is derived from the prefix “a” + “to see” – indicating “not seeing” or “not seen,” that is, “invisible.” Aidos’ other name *Pluto* indicates “riches” hence, “. . . he was then considered the god of agricultural wealth. From the centre of the earth he exerted his influence on cultivation and the crops.”⁹

You will note that I have taken up and enhanced this fertile and productive notion of Aidos/Hades in my version of the story, rather than going for Aidos/Hades as the dark incestuous abductor from the underworld – a terror version favored, no doubt, by Demeter in her distress. The paradoxical double edge of the Greek naming system helps us grasp how Persephone, in her annual cycle, can be wedded to destruction and wedded to productivity, wedded to darkness and wedded to light and illumination.

“Triptolemus” usually figures as the son of the family at Eleusis who helps Demeter find her daughter. His name may signify “to plough or dig three times.” This makes sense when we think of Triptolemus as an agriculture mentor.

In this particular way of decoding the names of Demeter, Aidon, Persephone, Eleusinian Triptolemus, and associated characters, the figures present as essential elements in a comprehensive story about plant behaviors, ecosystems, and cultivation. It is all close to the ground. In the same manner, much of the Australian desert myth is close to the ground.

Before the art of writing was consolidated, our ancestors transmitted their observations in folkloric forms, probably in the same way that indigenous Australians transmit knowledge in song, dances, painting, and ceremony, suffused perhaps with magical and pantheistic ways of sensing the interweaving of natural process. Poetic sensibilities and scientific observation can tenderly match each other’s potencies. This tends to be referred to locally as “two way thinking.” I am all for “two way thinking.”

On the geography of Kore

. . . the fields of song are laid out . . .

(Homeric Hymn to Apollo, Line 21¹⁰)

The reader may need to consult a map and note routes and places to which I refer in the story. Demeter is said to have come ancestrally from Crete to the mainland and thus to Eleusis. Carl Kerényi¹¹ explores this notion in his work on Dionysos’ Cretan origins. George Mylonos,¹² in the introduction to his book on the Eleusinian Mysteries, outlines and also questions the diverse notions of four possible origins of the Demeter cult – Egypt, Thessaly, Thrace, and Crete. From an archeomythological point of view, sorting out the reality of origins and arrival points and times is important. From a tribal point of view, however, what counts is that the divinity arrived in this or that tribe’s country from such and such a place in a particular manner. This story becomes the folklore and legend of place and declares local ownership and participation in that divinity’s story. The sense of participation is what counts. I think this is the onto-poetic thing, where people communicate with numinous creatures who are felt to inhabit the landforms. Mystical participation with and identification with traveling gods in the ancient Greek stories is similar to the sense of psychic participation with traveling beings who dwell in Australian *Jukurrpa/Altjerre* stories.

It is natural to imagine and describe Demeter and Kore’s creation activities taking place at specific sites, close to the ground, at rocks, caves, and chasms, including the place where the Omphalos stone landed. The fateful mythic place where three ways cross near Thebes is a real place, not imaginary. The beach and caves of Eleusis are natural places and, at the same time, mysterious; timeless events take place there.

My story acknowledges the mother and daughter arriving from Crete, landing at Krisa below Delphi, and then ascending the cliff route to the Gaia rock site, now known as *Athena Pronia*. Pythia's cave and the natural features are as they are today, before temples and paths, ovals and theatre were constructed.

There is another track implied in my story – a walking track coming from the north, and Mt. Olympos, seat of the Olympian divinities, and thus another seat of Demeter. I think Hekate lives up there, too, in her cave where Demeter calls on her, dragging the reluctant Kore behind her. The present road from the north comes down through Lamia, Amfissa, toward the bay of Corinth, into Boeotia, and thus to Delphi. One assumes such routes follow early walking tracks, as would the routes heading east and south via Mt. Cithaeron/Kytheron. Thebes figures in the colonization legend of Phoenician Cadmus and is, of course, the site of Jocasta and Oedipus' ill-fated city. It seems right that Demeter stopped there, for Thebes is a city where many children were lost. The traveling women stop at Eleusis, near the coast, just west of present-day Athens. Eleusis, or *Elevisis* or *Elefsis* as it is named on the road signs, currently struggles to survive as an ancient sacred site, now threatened by industrial asphyxiation in the same manner as many similar sacred sites in Australia are now demolished, overbuilt, or ignored.

From Eleusis, in my story, Demeter and Kore walk through the peninsula, east and south of where Athens is today, to the promontory dedicated to Poseidon, who, in some myths, is a consort/lover to Demeter. There, you might find yourself gazing over the sea toward the Cyclades, volcanic Thira and Crete to the south. It is along this walk to the sea that I have imagined an event that establishes an origin of the olive.

Demeter/Persephone, as cultural personifications, would have traveled other routes, just as Australian mythic women traveled a maze of routes across the continent of Australia. Whichever country the icons travel through, the people of those countries claim them and their activities. It would not be surprising then, to find sites of Persephone's descent and return located at many places and in many time zones.

My story sites are limited to Delphi, Hekate's cave near or on Olympos, the Eleusis site, Mt. Kytheron, and the country along the coast toward the Attic peninsula. The Delphi site itself is on the cliffs overlooking the Pleistos river. This stream forms the Parnassos gorge. Two sites at Delphi must be mentioned. The original Delphi seems to include or be a site of primal maternal *Gaia* (now *Athena Pronia*). This is where, in my story, Kore and Demeter visit the "Mother Sitting," which may have been represented in ancient times as a large, animated rock – as are Australian mythic sites. There are now several formidable old olive trees on the Gaia/Athena site and the river flats and slopes below are rich with cultivated olives.

Higher up are places associated with the original, prehistoric, serpentine Pythia. There may have been several locations, over time, where snake nests, gaseous emissions, sibylline voices, and awesome enchantments were experienced – with or without the aid of hallucinogenic fungi.

Kore's vision of the cosmic seed refers to the legend of the stone that falls from the sky/Zeus and rests at Delphi as *Omphalos*, that is the central navel/womb/seed of the world. I feel this as a composite image of original sperm/*panspermia*, ovum, womb, and navel of the Original Mother – evoking Delphi as mythic locus of a Creation Point – a point from which creation emanates.

Text, time, and precedent

In many traditional story forms, including in Australia and Oceania, narrative lines follow a discipline of rhythmically told accounts of actions by mythic beings. The actions tell the story. That is to say – “He did this . . .”; “She did that . . .”. We get accounts of what he or she said or sang and sometimes thought, but this is mostly without intellectualizing, without abstract philosophizing or introspective reflections. The action tells the story. *Kore Story* is an action story.

In the Papua New Guinea highlands,¹³ similar story forms are in use where travels, sites, seasons, hunting, farming, conflicts, and adventures map into the country stories that imbue memory and ratify cultural practices and law. And in Papuan stories, mythic time is not chronologically bound to the past. As in *Jukurpa/Altjerre*, characters walk in ancestral mythic time and walk in the present. Persephone and her mother walk in ancestral time and walk the active present.

Kore Story/Persephone's Dog was not composed in order to instruct or influence indigenous people to become farmers. It is to remind those of us of European descent, who live on the surface of Australia, that we, too, have an old culture, and a history of struggle with the elements, a struggle with survival, collapse, and recovery – and we have a lineage of sung poetry that keeps the mind going.

This is a story about a mother and a daughter and a dog, and I hope you like it. I hope it keeps your mind walking a little bit further.

Acknowledgments

Alice Springs Centrefarm team, the indigenous directors, and members of the Alekareng Horticultural Company. The participants in the *Ancient Greece, Modern Psyche* Conference at the Nomikos Center in September 2012. Thomas Singer, Jules Cashford, *The Chorus of Women*, Glenda Cloughley, Freya Mathews, Marlene Nampijimpa Spencer, Lila San Roque, Jude Prichard, our family dogs, and the view from the *Hotel Hermes*, Delphi.

THE KORE STORY/ PERSEPHONE'S DOG

Craig San Roque

When Aidos lies down, earth rumbles, when Hades lies down, islands erupt.
Things go on beneath the ground. There is need to fear these things.
Things go on beneath the ground. There is no need to fear these things,
Things live, things die. This is the way of it.
(*Invocation to Hades*. Thira, 10 September 2012)

I begin to sing of her and her daughter, the surpassingly beautiful Persephone.
(*Invocation, Homeric Hymn XIII*)

Story sequence

- 1 At Delphi Parnassos
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Coda

1 At Delphi Parnassos

Demeter and her daughter Kore arrive at the site of Delphi; they mark the gorge of the Pleistos river, Gaia's seat on the edge of the gorge, later known as Athena Pronia. They visit Pythia's cave. Kore's birth and the secret of the Omphalos seed/stone that falls from the sky is shown to Kore.

Demeter was travelling. She came from the north. She came down through the mountain, Demeter, travelling with her daughter. Two women travelling; together, down through the mountain. They stopped on the hill. They looked to the south. They looked to the cliffs; they looked down. There is the gorge, she said, two sides of the cut. Remember this. Two sides of the cleft in the grey rock; they saw them. They named them, two sides of the mountain, two sides of the cut. *The Shining (Phaedriades)*, Demeter said. *The Shining*, said Kore, I remember this.

Looking at these things, the eyes of Kore began to form. This is how the eyes of Kore began; the scent, the taste of things, the touch. This is how these things began. Her mother showed her things and eyes formed in the body of Kore. Hearing formed in the body of Kore.

Listen, said her mother, you will hear the world beginning. Listen, Demeter said, your grandmother is here, Ge is here. This is the beginning; this is where all things begin. I love this place. Remember this.

Demeter climbed the hill. She sat down; she sat down over Delphi. She looked over the valley. Together they looked down. They could see below on the edge of the cliff, below *The Shining Ones*, they could see the Mother Rock. They could see the stones, rock on rock, circle upon circle. There on the cliff, Ge is there. She is there. Remember this.

What is this, said Kore, I see old rocks; I see nothing. How can this be? She said. Old rocks; how can your mother be born from rock? Demeter turned to

her daughter, she smiled at her. This is your grandmother sitting. This is the first mother – she does not move. The rivers move. The mountains move, but *She* does not move. She is sitting where everything begins. She is sitting where everything comes out. Everything comes out from her – smoke, mosquito, lizard, fish, snake, bird, kangaroo, dog . . . they all move, but she does not move.

Look, she said to the daughter. Look, she said to Kore. That is where you begin. Here is your grandmother sitting, the first mother. In the beginning. This is the place. Kore looked. She crossed her arms; she placed her two hands over her breast; like this. She said nothing. She was quiet. I will wait, said Kore.

They turn together, they lift their eyes, they look up to the python cave.

There on the cliff, said Demeter, there on the cliff, let us go up. They climbed to the python cave, they climbed the grey rock. Kore looked in the python cave. This is Pythia? she said. She said to her mother, is this the place? I see nothing, there is nothing here. This is the place, said her mother, you shall see. There . . . Pythia there . . . the snake; she can see you. Look, the smoke. The voice is there, there. Remember this.

Smoke comes up from a hole in the rock. The python turns like smoke in the wind. The python turns an eye to Kore. The snake turns her eye to Kore. The world begins. Look – said the python, look, said Pythia. This is the place, Kore, open your eyes to the smoke. Kore, open your breath to the smoke. The python opens her mouth, Kore sees inside, inside the open jaws of Pythia the python, Kore sees the world beginning . . . In the beginning.

She cried out – Mother, you grow bigger, you grow greater than the mountain. You rise up. You cover the sky. Her mother Demeter covered the sky. She rose up, she covered the whole world. The whole world inside her body; in the beginning. The whole sky inside her body. Two eagles flew around her, inside her. One flew to the east, one flew to the west. The two eagles flew right around the body of Demeter. They flew right around inside the skin of the sky; inside the body of the first mother. It took them days and days.

The eagles flew in circles. They cried. All the birds heard their cry – the cry and clatter of wings. All the birds of the world rose up. Clouds formed, and smoke. The lightning cracked . . . This Kore heard. This Kore saw.

The two eagles meet; in the sky over Delphi they meet. They circle the body of Demeter, the mother. They meet in the sky over Delphi – the cry, the clatter of wings.

Demeter spoke –

'I am the womb of the world, I am the seed of the world.
Today I give birth to women. Today I give birth to Kore'.

This Kore heard. This Kore saw. She saw her own birth, she saw her mother, she saw the four wings of two eagles, beating, beating; the wings beating. The beating settled. In her own heart it settled. This Kore heard. This Kore saw. A seed fell from the sky, a seed fell. It nestled in Delphi. It nestled in Kore. In her own heart it settled, it spoke; 'I am the seed of the world. You are the seed of the world. Nurture us'.

This Kore heard. This Kore saw.

The smoke lifts, the python rolls. She closes her mouth. She closes her eye; She gives Kore a drink. Here, she said, you need a drink. Yes, said Kore, I need a drink.

2 Digging Stick

Demeter marks out places. She makes the geography of the Pleisto river that runs in the gorge beneath the cliffs of Delphi.

Two women are travelling, they keep moving. Demeter looks out along the mountain line. They come down the mountain. Kore comes down from Pythia's cave, she turns for one more look; she thanks her. Demeter takes up a stick; she takes up her digging stick. She names it. *I remember this place.* Naming the digging stick, she says. *I remember this place.*

She marks out a line deep between the mountains. The shining mountains, she calls them. She makes the line deep. It cuts through her body. She cuts a long cut between her breasts. Water runs always along this cut. Down this line a river will run, she says. It will run to the sea, it runs all the way down. She names it – *Pleisto* – the best. This is the best of rivers she says. This river, I love.

What Demeter makes becomes. What you see today, Demeter makes for all time.

The lines Demeter draws are the lines we should not change. The places Demeter has placed are placed here for a reason. Those places hold the world in balance.

The cave, the granite, the tree, the river and the flow of clear water. She says, 'I love this place', and so, *we* love this place. She says – this is the time in which I walk, I love this time the most. *This is the beginning.* Remember this, she said to Kore. I will come here always; this is the mother place. People will come. They will walk up from the sea. People will come, they will walk down through the mountains. Coming here, they will remember the beginning of the world. I love this place.

What are these 'people'? said Kore. What are these 'people' of which you speak?

Never mind, says Demeter, they are yet to come.

Two women are travelling. They go along the valley. They scour out the valley. Look, says Demeter, seeds. These seeds, taste them. Kore gathers the seeds. She grinds them in her teeth. She smiles; I like them. Take them, says the mother; these are the seeds to remember. With these seeds you will make bread for the people to eat. With these seeds you will make bread, so the people are fed.

Kore says; what are 'people'? Never mind, says Demeter, they are yet to come.

3 Demeter Sings the Country

Demeter held the seeds in her hand. Give them a name Kore. And Kore gave them a name. As she walked Demeter hummed. Bees flew from her eyes. As she walked Kore sang; she carved the ground; she rustled the seeds. She walked. She turned her head this way and that. She smiled. As she walked she sang their names. Plants grew behind her. Kore carried her digging stick. She named it; *I remember this*.

Demeter lifted her eyes, she gazed over the country; she looked over all the plains. Demeter said; people will come. In the caves they sleep, in the caves they live, they walk around. They'll be hungry; they'll find these seeds, Kore. You show them the grinding stone. You teach them, poor things. 'Grind the seeds for your bread', you say. They are not like birds, she said.

4 Demeter Teaches Kore

They walked on; they went this way and that. Look, said Demeter, and she showed Kore all the seeds in the country. She showed her the seeds to collect; seeds good to grind, seeds good to mix with water and honey, good to roll in little cakes; the seeds good to bake. They will need hot coals, Kore; teach them to make hot coals. They are not birds, she said.

The plants of the country, she named them all, she named them in words that later the people would speak, old words that form the language of Kore's lands, words falling from the tongue of Meter. Words laid down in the mind of Kore. They covered the country; together, they covered the country. Kore smiled. We are like birds, she said.

Demeter showed her daughter where everything grows. Teach the people to walk, she said. Teach them to gather and crush; teach them to winnow and

grind. Show them the grinding stones, teach them to mix and bake. Show them the basket to carry the seeds.

Teach them the way to live, she said. They are not birds.

5 Mt. Kytheron

The mother travelled on. They were travelling fast. Down to Mt. Kytheron.¹⁴

On the way down they came to a place. Look, she said, tracks; vulture, lion, and dog; three tracks meeting. They passed through a narrow gorge. Demeter sat on a rock. She cried. She said, terrible things will happen here. People will die, she cried. Show them a better way to live, she cried.

6 Pan's Dog

They walked on down the mountain. They walked on through the valley, they were travelling through trees; Kore stopped. She saw a tall creature in the sunlight; she saw a small creature. She could not be sure, his shape changing. The creature had goats crying all about him; the goats licking his face, they were licking his beard. Who is that? said Kore. That is Pan, said Demeter, he is everything; he goes everywhere. You should marry him. You'll be happy.

Kore looked at the creature, sometimes tall, sometimes small; his face was smiling. She loved his face. I am not ready to marry, said Kore, but I love his face. Pan smiled at her. The goats followed her. A dog followed her, a beautiful dog, long and lean, soft red fur, bright eyes, clever eyes. Pan's dog followed her. The dog stopped. He turned back his head; he looked back to Pan. Go with Kore, said Pan. Go with Kore, he whistled.

7 Dog Travelling

They come down to a place now known as Eleusis, overlooking the bay of Saronis.

The dog travelled with them, the dog travelled with Demeter, the dog, travelling with Kore. They're good travellers. They travel down to the sea. This is a good place, said Meter. Name it, she said to Kore, and Kore named it. She named it *Eleusis*. I do not know what it means, she said, but I love the sound it makes on my tongue. Good, said her mother. Remember that sound; remember this place.

The two travelling women sat down at Eleusis. We will come here again, one day, said Demeter. I remember this place.

She stuck her digging stick in the ground; upright it stood. It gathered darkness; it grew leaves. It became a tree, dark and shapely, outlined on the hill. It gathered in the scent of pine, dark and shapely, outlined on the hill. I will call it *Kyprissa*, Demeter said, when people see this beautiful shape, they will think of you, *Kyprissa Koreai*.

She stood, she sighed. Why am I sighing, she said. You are tired, said Kore. Perhaps, said her mother; she turned her head, gazing back at the dark shape of the cypress tree, outlined against the hill.

She came down to Eleusis. At Eleusis she sat down. She sat there singing. She sang a sad song; she sang a lament. It was the first time she sang a lament. Why am I singing a sad song, said Demeter. I don't know, said her daughter. Keep singing. I will remember.

They walked on. They walked southeast, along the coast toward Poseidon. They were thinking about water, they were thinking about sea. I will show you the foam on the sea, said Demeter. They walk on.

The mother showed the daughter the wild berries growing in this place. Things are different here, she said; these things grew as I walked down to the sea. She showed her all the native fruit that grew along the shore. They walked along the hills. Look, she said, this one, the green one; this different berry. I like this tree, said Demeter. I like the silver leaves, said Kore. I like the old black berries, said the dog. He snuffled along the ground, he snuffled like a pig.

I tell you now, this tree they saw, it was an olive tree – the only one; the first one.

Before that day, the two women hadn't tasted those berries. They look like little plums, little peaches, she said. Demeter was worried about them. They came out of me, she said, but I forget what kind of day it was. I'll taste it, said Kore, watching her dog snuffing at green and blackening fruit scattering the ground. He picked up a black one in his teeth, he bit into it; he swallowed. He kept walking, his tail wagging. Looking for more, and maybe, looking for lizard.

I'll taste it, said Demeter. She reached up. She took a ripe one; her teeth bit the black flesh, she spat it out. The people won't like this, she said, it's only good for dogs . . .

The olives fell to the ground. Wherever Demeter walked, the olives fell to the ground. She walked over them but she would not eat them. Some things are

too bitter, she said, spitting them out. Where she spat them, more olives grew. Soon all the hills above the sea were covered with olive trees, but she did not eat them. Kore followed behind. The dog followed Kore. They walked among the trees. Kore collected olives; she wove a basket with grasses. She carried them in her basket.

This is my Khora, she said, this is my basket. I will carry this Khora wherever I go,
I will keep things in this and carry them. I will think about them.

She broke off a branch of the olive tree, She made a cutting; she carried it to a secret place. She stuck it in the ground, in a cleft of the rock, water flowed there, clean water; I will remember this, said Kore. This tree will grow here, she said, this will be a good one; I will call it 'the beloved'. This is the one to feed the people to come.

She took the ripe and bitter olives down to the sea; she washed them.
She thought about olives soaked in salt water.

She held her two hands to her head; one on the left, one on the right.
She was learning to think like a human-to-come.
She saw the way to soak them; she saw the way to make them kind to taste.
She saw the way to wash away the bitter taste. She said to the dog, some things my mother says are right, but she is not right all the time. There are ways to change things . . . and she held her two hands to her head. I will learn to think, she said. I will teach the people to think. My mother travels; she does what she does. My mother makes, but she does not think. I will teach the people to think.

8 Kore and the Pomegranate

She went travelling alone with the dog. They went tasting things.
They watched the birds. They stopped at a tree with red fruit. The shell of this one is hard, said Kore. But the birds still get in, said the dog, open it and have a look. I'll take it to my mother, said Kore; let's see what she says about this one.

She put some in her basket. She put the basket on her head. She carried it to her mother. Demeter said – this is *Pomegranate*, this beautiful fruit. Open it – see the red seeds shine in the sun. Touch the juice, it runs down your hand. I love it. When you open the skin, look inside and remember me. I am the womb of the world, she said. Take; eat this in remembrance of me.

9 Kore and the Dog Observe the World

In this way Kore travelled with the dog. The dog sniffed things, the dog licked things. What the dog licked and the tail wagged, Kore happily tasted. What the dog sniffed and turned from, Kore marked and turned away. This way they learned many things about the things that grew in the tracks of their mother. They learned the mother's moods as she crossed the country, this way and that. They followed old tracks of Demeter, where Demeter walked before – grasses grew. Where Demeter walked before – native fruits grew. Plants strung out in lines, singing, right across the country.

One day Kore said to her mother, when I follow your tracks I find white flowers.

In a different place I find yellow flowers. When I follow your tracks, sometimes I find red flowers, I find poppy, anemone, I find red pomegranate, sometimes I find quiet places near caves where figs grow, I find secret places hidden where vines and trees grow strong and tall. Why is this, she said, why do some plants grow in some places?

Demeter said, where the white grows, there I spit. And she kept on walking, turning her back on Kore. Don't talk rubbish girl, she said, things grow where they grow. I don't know. The dog sat back on its haunches, sometimes your mother talks rubbish-shit, the dog said to Kore. Does she think I don't see where she goes; does she think I don't see what she does. Where the yellow grows, there she stops for a piss. Where the red poppies grow, there she bled. Where the trees grow strong in quiet places; there she stopped to shit. Don't you see these things?

And the figs, said Kore. The figs, said the dog, that's where she stops and lies down,

She thinks about her . . . what's his name?¹⁵ Sometimes your mother cries, she goes sorry.

Her lover boy was killed, she lost him; your father killed him. He's too jealous, your father. Where she stops to remember her man, the figs grow. She won't tell you this. You have to look.

Kore heard these things and she kept them in her heart. She thought about these things. She marked the places where plants grew best.

10 Eleusis Again

On this journey the dog and young Kore walked all the way to Poseidon's country. They went for a swim; then they turned back and walked along the

coast till they came back to the cave above Eleusis. There was no one there. Where's she gone? said Kore.

The dog looked at the tracks. Maybe she's gone to visit that old echidna.¹⁶ The dog sniffed the wind. Or maybe she visits that sister; what's-her-name? OK, said Kore, she'll be gone some time, let's go down to Eleusis; let's go down to the beach.

The mother'd gone gossiping, Demeter was sitting down with her old sister, Hestia. She was helping her make a kitchen, the first one ever. Demeter said, what is this? Hestia smiled, she said, it's the cooking fire; don't you see? Some people are coming for dinner. I've nothing to cook with. People are on the move; the people are coming. The people are here at last. They've nothing to cook with. It's like you said to Kore, they have to learn to make hot coals, they have to learn to crush the seeds and roll the bread. I'll help you, said Demeter; we'll work out a way to do it. We'll make the people happy, said her sister; gathering sticks for a fire.

Walking toward Eleusis in the morning, the dog stopped to sniff something. The leaves of the oak tree rustling in the wind. The dog sniffed around the roots of the tree. What's that? said Kore. Don't know, said the dog, smells good. It tastes ok, like old meat . . . and ate it. The dog staggered on its feet, the dog's eyes went white; the dog staggered and rolled over. The dog tried to vomit, but it was too late.

The dog lay still. Everything stopped.

Kore looked at the mushroom. This is poison, she said; you stupid dog, it makes you sick. She cursed the fungus; she gave it a name, *amanita phalloides* (*death cap*).

Kore cried out for her dog. Her dog did not move.
The wind moved, the sea moved, but the dog did not move.
What is this, said Kore, I have never seen this before.
She held her dog in her arms; she walked into the rocks.
She laid her dog down in the shade,
In a cleft in the rock, she laid her dog.
She crooned out for her dog,
She sang laments for her dog.

She saw the spirit of the dog move.
She saw the spirit of the dog rise,
She heard the spirit of her dog whimper.
The dog-spirit turned its head.
It turned to look at her. She saw the eyes.

Where are you going, she said.
 I'm going to Hades/*Aidos*; he's whistling me.
 I'll come too, said Kore.

She looked down the crack in the rock, she could see deep inside a cave, a cave going down in the dark. I can hear spirits crying down there. I can hear *Aidos* whistling, said the dog. I can hear dogs howling, said Kore, I can hear mothers howling for children.

I will come with you, she said. She went down, following the spirit of the dog. She carried the body of her dog in her arms. This is how Kore went down.

(Some say *Aidos*/Hades came and grabbed her. Some say he raped her. Some say the death cap was him; some say *amanita phalloides* (the poison penis) was him; 'that poison toadstool ruined her for sure'; they say. All the women rip their hair, they cry out. 'He came and took her away!' They say. They tell that story to keep their girls at home. Some people will say anything. But this that I tell you, this happened; Hades did nothing bad to Kore. He only had to whistle for her when the time was right and she came, carrying the body of her dog. Hades had a reason. Remember this.

11.i Kore Underground

Kore went down. This is *Aidos*' Cave, she said. It's like Cave Hill.¹⁷
 All the walls are black with smoke. There are drawings on the wall. What are those marks? said Kore. They are for you, said *Aidos*, these marks are there to teach you, he said. Look, he said; these are the plants, the ones you see up on country. These are the plants from outside; the plants from up above. Those are the ones you see when you follow your mother. Here are the plants from inside. Here are the marks. Here are the plants inside the skin of the world. These are the roots of things, the seedbed. You are very dark, she said, I can hardly see you; your hands move along the rocks and disappear. I am very dark, he said; you can hardly see me, you can feel me, he said; my hands move along the skin and disappear.

And he showed her drawings made in charcoal on the red walls of the cave. Charcoal and red and ochre white. Here, he said, here are the bison, gazelle, goat; all the animals with blood. Here are the fish, he said, and the serpents. Here is the serpent brain, he said, and the lizard. All these things are in your body now Kore, said *Aidos*, touching her forehead, his invisible fingers touching her solar plexus; I am placing these things inside you now – and all these things are inside the people to come. The people have come from this beginning; he said, touching all the marks of plant, insect, serpent, fish, bird, animal.

The people still are coming from this. All these things die. And begin again. I continue, Kore, I am the continuing of things. He showed her circles, he drew circles on the wall of the cave, he drew circles and lines turning and turning. You do not die, he said, you and I, we go on forever, we hold these things, we change these things; they turn and turn in our hand.

Here, he said; here are the seeds and roots. He drew the shapes. He drew lines and circles; he drew lines that flowed and lines that jagged like the teeth of lightning. He drew the flow of waters underground. See how the plants grow underground, see how they suck and curl. Did your mother show you this? No said Kore. No said Hades, that is because everything grows where she walks, everything grows where she sings. Your mother is beautiful but she does not know how these things are done.

When she sings, things listen. Things nestle here and wait for her, and as she passes they wake. Good; they say she is coming again and they wake – but what if one day she forgets, what if one day your mother forgets? What if one day she gets angry and does not come? I know how these things are done. You must learn how these things are done. Look at this and learn. You are here to learn. When you have learned everything, you go home. Then go home.

Hades and Kore travelled underground. They travelled the world inside the world.

The spirit of the dog travelled with them. Kore learned how the water flows underground. Where the fires flow underground. You are the one to teach the people, he said. You are the one ‘wedded to destruction’. In my hands you are destroyed. In my hands you are made again. My hands show you this. You are the one to show the people how life goes on.

I will show them dances, said Kore, I will show them how to remember all these things in a song, she said; and she began to practice a dance. And some words came to her with music, like a mirror in a mirror.

*‘When Aidos lies down, earth rumbles, when Aidos lies down, islands erupt.
Things go on beneath the ground. There is need to fear these things.
Things go on beneath the ground. There is no need to fear these things.
Things live, things die. This is the way of it.’*

11.ii Persephone’s Table

One night she rolled over in her bed; she said to the dog, I love Hades. She thought about figs. One night Hades rolled over in his bed. He said, I love the daughter of sister Demeter, what am I to do?

In the morning, when it was dawn in the world above, he said; one day I will give you a new name. You will come to live with me. What is that name, said Kore.

He said not a word. He took up a great rock, he laid the great, flat and shining rock before her, he spread out a table. He covered the table in fruit; he placed grape, pomegranate and bread. He placed figs. He invited friends; he invited witnesses.

He addressed her.

'You will be called Persephone'; said Hades, and you will come to live with me.

Your dog died and you took care of him. The people will come, they will die; they will come here to Aidos; they will come in the same way as your dog came when Aidos whistled. When they come, they may be afraid, they will look into my eyes and they will say 'we are being destroyed'; but you will say 'I am married to destruction and I continue on', and you will place your hand upon their heads.

Humans get lonely. You will take care of the human spirits. The ones who fall from the trees, the ones who fall from the rocks, the ones who fall in the hunt, the ones who die in childbirth, the ones who fall as seeds fall from the hands of the wind. Will you do that? he said.

I will do that, said Kore.

He placed wine before her. Take this. Drink this and remember me.

What is this? she said. This comes from your brother, Dioniso from the slopes of Nysa. Volcanic country, very fine, he said. Take this in remembrance of me.

I will do that, she said.

And she took the cup . . .

For a long time she forgot her mother. For a long time she forgot her mother. That was how it happened. I tell you, that is how it happened. For a long time she forgot her mother.

12 There's Always Another Story

People tell you different stories. What happened to Kore? It was nothing like that; they say. Well, those stories might be true. But this is how it happened; this is how I heard it. There's always another story.

The lizard from Eleusis tells a story – 'I saw Kore coming down the rocks, that dog was after her. I hate that dog. Her uncle was watching every day for nine

days; he was hiding, watching her – the lizard said. Kore came down the rocks. The sun was setting, the shadows long like us lizards, lizards lying quiet, all along the beach, birds drop in the water, fishing. Mother's spit on the hill, pretty white flowers catching flies. Stupid things, pretty smell . . . the black man came for her. He grabbed her hair. He snapped her up like me, lizard, snaps a fly. He took her away. The dog barked out. He threw a rock. Killed that dog. I hate that dog. No one saw, only me; lizard on the cliff saw this. He kept his mouth shut. Lizard. Me.'

That's the story they like to tell. A dark thing took the girl away. He took her down a hole; a crack in the cliff; a hole in the ground . . . this is the place, they say. This is the place where Kore went down. The dark man, dog barking, girl screaming – nobody listens. That's how it goes.

'This is true', the lizard says. 'That's what happened. You, you give me money now', says lizard, licking his lips.

That's not the story I heard, I say; I heard another story from the beginning. I'm not paying you for this. You hear what you want to hear, says lizard, (looking round for flies) only lizard tells the facts; me, I tell you facts. Now you give me ten dollars. That's how it goes.

13.i Hekate and Demeter

Two sisters are sitting down, two old sisters. The mother and the dark one, the old lady, Hekate; maybe she's an old echidna. You can see them there sitting on the hill, looking down on the claypans; they see us, coming and going. Two women up there; gossiping. They talk about husbands; they talk about sisters. They slap their hands at this and that. The mother doesn't know that Kore is gone. Demeter sits. Hekate knows things, but she doesn't speak much. What she knows she keeps in the dark.

People like to say that when Demeter heard her daughter had gone she walked around tearing her hair, ripping her skin. They say she covered her head with dirt and hit her head with a rock . . . well not at first. It wasn't like that, at first. Demeter and Hekate are talking. Like a slow echidna unrolling, Hekate brings the talk round. Sister, when was the last time you saw your daughter? The mother doesn't answer that straight out. She remembers the day, not so long ago, when she went to visit Hekate, her sister, up in the mountains. She took Kore with her.

13.ii Demeter Remembers

She remembers what happened. She can see it as clear as day. I'm not coming, says Kore. You *are* coming, says Demeter; you are coming

to visit your Auntie. What Auntie? (Kore's eyes rolling) I'm not coming, the girl said.

Your Auntie Hekate has to see you. I don't want to see her, she smells; she lives like a rat in cave.

They went along the mountain line, north up toward Mt. Olympos. The sun was going down way out to the west. They went north along the mountain line to Hekate's cave; to see the old lady. The mother and daughter had to go. They had to put three women together in the one place. The young one, the mother, and the old lady – one, two, three – they have to be three like that, sitting together. That way things can start happening – that's the law, said Demeter. What law? said Kore, I don't want to know anything about that.

(Storyteller as an aside. – That's what happened between those two. Me, today, standing here, I'm showing you what happened, you look there across the country you can see where that mother and daughter went travelling a long time ago.) You see that – that's the Hekate track, the sister visiting track, the line of the mountains from here to the north, the sun going down on the west; see there, the shadows coming in. You can see where they walk; where the daughter gives her mother trouble. There, that rock, that's Kore stopping. There she's pulling back – I don't want to go, she says. Not me. You see that rock, her head turned away, looking back; there her mother caught up with her. There they had a fight. They took out their sticks and beat each other. See the cracks in the rock. There, Demeter dragged her daughter along, there where the rocks have fallen.

Kore didn't want to see that old lady Hekate. She heard too many bad stories about her. She looks like a porcupine, said Kore. She has children with two heads, said Kore. She's a dog with three heads, said Kore. She's a witchdoctor. Here, on this cliff, Kore argued again. She put out her lip. Here; she put down her head and followed; two women heading north to Hekate. The little hills below the range, you see that? Those are the tracks of the dog following, sniffing the north wind. They went on heading for Hekate.

13.iii Hekate's Cave, a Long Time Ago

They came to Hekate's place, a cave in the rocks, just like Kore said, not fit for a rat.

She was lying on her side. She was with another old lady. Old lady Echidne comes to visit her. That's how the story goes. Echidne, going through Hekate's hair, looking for nits. Two old ladies. Echidne and Hekate. Kore was frightened. She closed her eyes.

Hekate took one eye out of her head. She looked at it with her left eye still inside her head. She held the right eye in her hand. She spat on it. She started

polishing it, she polished the eye in her hand and she looked at Kore with the other one.

What's she doing? said Kore; shaking like a dog. She likes to look at you, her mother said, keep still. I don't like her looking at me, said Kore, trying to turn away.

Demeter smiled a bit. She remembers you; see . . . she's smiling at you. Go to her now. Touch her face; Hekate's face. Touch her eye. Let her smell you. See she remembers you from before. She remembers you as a baby. She looks out for babies.

Interlude. When Kore was a baby, Hekate took Kore in her arms,
She fixed her eye upon her. She made a fire with fragrant leaves;
Bay and mountain sage, myrtle and secret words, frankincense and myrrh.
She made a fire and calmed the coals and laid the leaves upon the coals.
Smoke rose up, fragrant. She held the baby Kore in the smoke.
Here, said Hekate, she gave the baby back to the mother,
I held the baby in the smoke; your daughter will live forever.

13.iv Back on the Hill

And then quietly Hekate said – (back in the present time, up on the hill, looking down on the claypans; gossiping with Demeter), Hekate said; when was the last time you saw your daughter? Oh, said the mother, she went visiting; she might go down to Eleusis with that dog of hers . . .

Oh, said Hekate. Sister do you remember the smoking leaves and the song I sang for you, a long time ago? I forget, said the mother. When was that? You know, said her sister, when you brought your baby to be smoked. We smoked her so she'd live forever . . . here, said Hekate, here's a bag of those leaves. Don't forget how we did that. She reminded Demeter how to make babies live forever. The smoke, she said. The smoke.¹⁸

Interlude.
When Kore was a baby Hekate took her in her arms,
She fixed her eye upon her. She fixed the shining eye upon her.
She took her other eye. The calming eye. She gave it to Kore.
She placed her calming eye in the baby's hand,
She placed it at her throat;
She placed the power at all the joints of limb and finger.
She smoothed her legs and thighs.
She placed her eye on the labyrinth, her liver and kidneys,
Her guts, her womb . . .

Kore has these things, she has all these things just like animals, birds and people have all these things, but these things are different in the body of Kore. How are they different? I don't know, perhaps the blood of Kore is different.

Hekate placed her eye on the labyrinth inside the baby Kore.
Grow like rivers, like caves, she whispered;
She whispered that song so no one can steal that song.
The old lady Hekate blessed the body of Kore.
She placed her eye within the Kore.
She placed her eye inside the brain of Kore,
Where all things join together.

'My eye will always be here, comforting you,
Holding you. My care will never leave you.
You are my sprout (*kore*), my basket (*khora*), my dance (*khoron*)¹⁹
When you dance in the circle all things hold together;
Remember this.'

You remember the day I did that, said Hekate. Little sister, Demeter, you remember that day? Yes I remember that day. Hekate rolled herself in her blanket. She turned her back on Demeter. When was the last time you saw your daughter? I don't know, said Demeter, poking ashes in the fire. Looking in the fire, the mother put a question to Hekate.

Can you see her in your eye there? I see her now, said old Hekate. She's found another way to live. You see that fella, she went to see that fella. What fella? Said the mother. That fella . . . the old lady showed her sister the face of her (maybe) son-in-law. Demeter couldn't see him properly; she turned her face away; avoiding him.

I don't believe you, she said (the mother said that); my daughter's not ready for that.

Oh, said Hekate, maybe yes, maybe not. She showed her Kore going down a hole like a lizard. Coming up through a crack in the rocks, looking for light. She's looking very pale, said the mother. Don't worry. She'll come out alright, said Auntie Hekate . . .

Suddenly it hit home. Suddenly it hit mother Demeter. Something's wrong with Kore! The mother nearly fell down in shock. Why didn't you tell me? Where is that place? What happened? Why didn't you tell me before?

You never properly asked me, said her sister. She rolled over and she spat on the ground. I told you I had my eye on her. Do you think I talk rubbish?

Demeter got up. She was really wild. She picked up her stick. She was really worried, I gotta find that little slut, she said. Hekate rolled herself in her blanket; the little coals were glowing in the dark. She picked up the bag of secret leaves; don't forget this bag, she said. She called out after her sister; her sister running down the hill, crossing the claypans in the dark. Hekate called out; her voice ringing over the claypans and the dark coming in; 'When you get really worried, go to Eleusis, go to Eleusis, ask that lizard'.

But don't believe a word he says; she muttered to herself, smiling a bit, rolling over like echidna, going to sleep.

14 Passing by Eleusis

Demeter went down to Eleusis. She went looking for her daughter, she was cold, she was boiling; she was full of anger. Where she walked, the plants died behind her.

She was trying to see that face, the face of the one who took Kore away. She got angry and angry. She walked for a long way. She went to all her relatives; she went to Kore's father. You seen that slut? What slut? You know, that slut of a daughter. She's no slut. You know nothing – she said to that father. She kept walking.

She went to her brothers. You seen that girl, she said. What girl? You know nothing, she said; turning her back. She went everywhere she could think of. Have you seen Kore? No . . . Have you seen Kore? No . . . You all see nothing, the mother said. Useless, she said, useless – and she kept on walking.

Everything growing in the world is connected to Demeter. Her womb contracting in fear and anger, everything growing in the world contracts in fear and anger. Everything in the world begins to crack. It all begins to boil, it all begins to freeze.

What's happening, say all the people? Nothing, don't worry, say Demeter's brothers. She'll get over it. That's how it goes.

It took the mother a long time to get to Eleusis. She was too proud. She looked down on the beach at Eleusis and saw the people camping; they had a little fire. Why go talk to those people? she said to herself. What would they know, camping in rubbish, down there on the beach; they just arrived from nowhere. What would they know?

15 Demeter's Search

Some say she searched for nine days. Some say, for nine cycles of the moon. Well that makes sense in one way. Nine months, that girl was lost underground.

The old men in the cafe say; Hades had her for nine years. He kept away from his mother in law . . . For nine years he didn't have to face his mother-in law, they say, laughing. Nine years, the farmers say; or maybe ninety; that's true. She'd need all that time to learn the secret life of plants. Agriculture's not easy, say the farmers.

Some say Demeter walked 900 years looking for her daughter; 900 years . . . (What do you think of that?) Some say 9,000; a long time ago. All that long time the world was covered in ice. Kytheron, Parnassus, all the mountain ranges covered in ice. The seas shrank down. The people of the world were walking, walking; they walked east looking for sun. They walked south looking for sun. People walked all over the world. Some say, where the sea is now there was no sea. People walked where the sea is now. Everyone was walking. Demeter was walking. She walked north and south, she walked east and west, travelling, travelling looking for Kore.

And behind her the people walked, looking for food, hunting, looking for firewood, looking for fruit, anything; looking for any seeds to crush and roll into flour. Walking through countries where no birds sing. This I tell you. Where Demeter walked, her feet stirred things under the ice, but nothing grew. The sun stayed black, calling out for Kore. The rivers stay still, calling out for Kore. Birds drop in flight, calling out for Kore. Small creatures go underground. Snakes and lizards crawl away; nothing moves. Bees lie frozen in the hive, flies drop dead, cicadas cease. Everything is silent. Countries where no birds sing.

16 Kore's Father Makes a Deal

Kore's father could not stay quiet forever; Kore's father had the water to manage. He had rain to organise. Everything is out of season, he said. The men in the café said the same thing. He can't stay quiet forever, they said. Kore's father can't stay drunk forever. Nine days he might lie down, but you can't lie around in bed forever. Not for 9,000 years.

Kore's father got up. He got up off his mountain. He took his lightning in his hands, he rolled across the plains; he went south. He travelled this way and that; down the country, looking for his brother. Where is that hole, he said; where's that hole my brother goes down. He was chewing his beard, looking right and left. Where's that arsehole brother of mine? Where is that prick?

Two eagles travelled with him. The wind was too cold. We can't fly, the eagles said. You go on alone . . .

Kore's father found his brother. Where he found him and what they said . . . that's not our business. If they did a deal; that's not our business. I don't mess in stuff that's not my business, anyway . . .

17 Demeter and Pythia

Demeter went back to Delphi. She sat down. She cried. She cried to Aunt Pythia; the snake in the rockhole, remember. Where is my daughter? she cried. Pythia rolled; she lifted her head, she uncovered her eyes.

I can't no longer see your Kore. She's got a new name now; I can't see her; that new name's in the way. What's that name? says the mother. Tell me auntie; come on tell me. Did she change her skin? Yea, said Pythia, she changed her skin. I can't see her now . . . What's that new name? Come on Auntie . . . Pythia rolls some more, smoke comes out from her mouth. Something beginning like me, like *P* for Pythia . . . I can't say it properly . . . What's that new name mean? Oh, said Pythia. I can see what that name means, I can't say it, but I can say what that name means. Tell me, said the mother. Pythia looked at Demeter a long time, she blew smoke in her face; I'm sorry, she said. It means she's 'Married to Destruction' – something like that . . .²⁰

Thanks, said Demeter; you've been a great help.

18 Dogs at Thiva

Demeter kept walking, Where she walked, dogs followed her. She came down the valley from Pythia's place. Maybe I'll go down to Kytheron. She walked down to the place where three tracks cross. She walked down the narrow gorge, a pack of dogs came after her, snarling, biting her ankles. The bitches are hungry, she said. She passed through a narrow gorge. The pack leader came up the gorge. He stopped; he bared his teeth at her. She struck him with her digging stick. She picked up a rock; she hit him in the eye, blood ran out of his eye, the dog backed off. She struck the place with her stick. She cursed it.

19 The Baby at Eleusis

She turns south; she goes to Eleusis. She looks down on the beach. She sees people huddling by a little fire. She walks up to the cave. They let her in.

Have you seen my daughter? Nobody answers. It is too cold. Everyone is cold.

They have nothing to eat. Demeter sits by the little fire. A baby is crying. The mother is worried for her baby. The little boy. My son is too cold, she says, we got nothing to eat, my milk dries up. He's hungry – Demeter looks at the baby a long time. She feels in her bag for those leaves from Hekate's place. Go fetch me more wood, she says to the older boy. It's ok, he says, all the trees are dead, we got plenty of wood. They burn the wood. They make hot coals, they make ashes.

Demeter takes the baby. The poor little sick one. She rubs the baby. She sprinkles leaves on the coals, she is crying. Bay and myrtle, secret words, frankincense and myrrh. The same leaves Hekate used for Kore, Demeter used for the sick baby at Eleusis. She tried to cure him; she tried to make him live forever.

20 Killer

Some people say she gave that baby a new name; she named that baby, 'killer' (*Demophon*). This might be true. (People get names mixed up; these things happened a long time ago, people tell different stories.) Some people say she smoked that baby to make him strong again – just so he'd be a killer, so strong no one could beat him. Some say she was thinking about payback for whoever that fella was who took her daughter. She was thinking about murder.

Some say, back then, that that mother wanted to kill every generation of that fella's family because he took her sweet skin baby away. She couldn't see his face but she knew he was there. That mother was maybe thinking revenge. Only just yet, she didn't know who really it was who took her Kore away. She didn't know the true story, did she? (She would have murdered her own brother.)

She was smoking the baby, singing the words to make him live forever. Rubbing his skin. The baby's real mother was worried. She could feel something in the air, she didn't know which way all this was going. She cried out to Demeter; don't say those words – don't say that, don't make that happen, give me back my baby. Give me back my baby, she cried.

When Demeter heard those words she cried out, she broke down, she cried very softly, sitting in the ashes, sitting in the smoke; 'Give me back my baby' she cried. Then something happened.

People say that that was the moment when Demeter's heart broke and all the ice began to melt. All the water in the world began to run. Maybe it was then that Demeter stopped splitting the world, she stopped killing the world. She gave the baby back. Something in the air changed around. The wind is changing, said the older brother.

He picked up his spears. He stood up.

21 Give Me Back My Baby

All the mothers of the country stood up at that moment. They stood up. They walked to Eleusis. They walked to the crack in the rock. The baby's older brother showed them all the way. Look, he said; that's the place. Where

the lizards come and go. Look, he said. He picked up a grinding stone left by the women from before the famine. He named it, 'Kore's Call'. She will remember this, he said. He picked up that stone and he pounded deep into the crack in the rock. He pounded three times. It made a sound like thunder. The wind began to roar. 'Dig out that rubbish; clear the ground. Clear the way'. (This is the older brother. Remember him. They call him the grinder, the pounder, *Triptolemos* in the old language.)

Look, he said, look carefully; look at the place, see the tracks of the dog. See the tracks of Kore. She's heavy; she carries the weight of her dog. Look, someone was standing, watching. See his footprint. (This young man is clever; his eyes are sharp. He sees things.) Demeter sees the tracks. She can tell the story. She knows those prints; she knows this place. She knows who lives inside the rocks.

Demeter strikes the ground. The rocks crack open. Listen. As the rock opens, the ice cracks. Demeter begins to rock back and forward, she begins to croon. The ice melts. The earth rumbles. The stones roll away.

When Aidos lies down, earth rumbles,

When Aidos lies down, islands erupt.

Things go on beneath the ground. There is need to fear these things.

Things go on beneath the ground. There is no need to fear these things.

Things live, things die. This is the way of it.

Demeter looks in the eyes of the mothers of Eleusis. She touches the baby; He will be alright, she says. Now he will suck, she says. I am singing for Kore and she is coming up; now the babies will eat. She struck the rock again, splitting the rock like a fruit, splitting it open like a pomegranate. She took the young man by the hand. They went into the cave. She kept on singing for Kore. Her words rippled with water through the ground. Her words soaked with water, through the ground; down, down; seeds stirred. Kore stirred in her bed in the dark, Kore stretched.

22 Persephone Returns

She reached for the fruit Hades had placed near the bed. She reached for the pomegranate. She split the hard shell of the red fruit in the way her mother split the fruit so long ago. She was lying there dreaming about her mother. She opened the pomegranate – she felt the seeds, thinking about her mother. She is the 'womb of the world', she said.

In the dark bed, Kore reached for the red seeds. Sweet, red seeds. 'Eat this in remembrance of me'. She slipped the seeds in her mouth. She rolled the seeds on her tongue. She remembered her mother. She rose from the bed.

THE KORE STORY/PERSEPHONE'S DOG

The dog was sleeping on the bed. She patted the bed. Stay here, she said.

I think I'll give you a new name; I think I'll call you Hermes, she said, smiling at him. Stay here. I'll be back. Hermes raised his head; he whined a bit, his eyes followed her steps all the way.

She climbs up. Through the crack in the rocks, Kore climbs up. She has a new name now, remember. Through the crack in the rocks, Persephone climbs up. She can feel the water soaking her feet, she can feel water drip on her face. She can hear the singing of women. She comes up. Kore comes up. She comes up through the crack in the rock, she is like a fig tree in the morning. The birds gather, wings flicker; birds shimmer in the leaves of the fig tree.

Coming up by the rock hole in the morning, Persephone, water shining along the roots, water shining on the leaves of the tree, birds flickering. She comes up.

I can feel on my tongue, the taste of my mother, I am coming out, she cried. I am coming out . . .

Coda

Two dogs sit by the water hole,
Their bellies are full,
The dogs are happy.
Our bellies are full, said the two dogs.
Our bellies are full.

End
(To be continued)

Kore Story/Persephone's Dog

This version composed Delphi, September 2012 – completed Alice Springs, October 2013.

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Dedicated with thanks to Frankie Yamma, Central Australian Singer – his CD Countryman. And to the influence of New York mythic storyteller, Diane Wolkstein, who passed away while on a performance tour, 31 January 2013.

Notes

- 1 Freya Mathews, "Invitation to onto-poetics," *PAN: Philosophy, Action, Nature, Special Edition on Ontopoetics*, 2009, No. 6, Available HTTP: <www.panjournal.net.webloc>. See also *PAN*, 2011, No. 8.

A charming note on Wikipedia on *poiesis* is worth referencing:

Martin Heidegger refers to it as a “bringing-forth,” using this term in its widest sense. He explained *poiesis* as the blooming of the blossom, the coming-out of a butterfly from a cocoon, the plummeting of a waterfall when the snow begins to melt. The last two analogies underline Heidegger’s example of a threshold occasion: a moment of ecstasis when something moves away from its standing as one thing to become another.

(Wikipedia, accessed 31 December 2013)

- 2 Craig San Roque, *On Tjukurrpa, Painting Up and Building Thought*, in J. Mimica, (ed.) *Explorations in Psychoanalytic Ethnography*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2007. Reprinted in slightly revised form in *PAN, Ontopoetics*, 2009, No. 6. See endnote 1.
- 3 This conjoint horticultural project is managed by *Centrefarm*, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, and the indigenous, Alekarenge Horticultural Pty Ltd., in Ali Curung. See <http://www.centrefarm.com>.
- 4 This “Delphic Kore” text was composed at Delphi, beginning at 5 pm, Sunday, 2 September 2012, and into the day of 3 September. The text that you read here “fell out” unexpectedly under the influence of the sites at Delphi. The penciled text was written for the recitation at the Ancient Greece, Modern Psyche event hosted in Santorini by the Nomikos Conference Center on 7 September 2012. It is still a work in progress.

Sections of *Kore Story* were subsequently presented in October 2012, with large accompanying paintings at a gathering of some 60 indigenous and white Australian adults and children at the Aboriginal settlement where the agricultural project is tentatively developing. Since then, the text has been expanded and refined after a performance workshop in Canberra, 1 and 2 February 2013, that included members of “The Chorus of Women.” See <http://www.chorusofwomen.com>. The Chorus of Women is a community group of musicians and singers based in Canberra, Australia, who are engaged in social commentary and constructive cultural advocacy inspired by the model of the Greek chorus in Aeschylus’ works.

See, especially, *The Gifts of the Furies*, composed by Glenda Cloughley et al., performed 2010, at the Museum of Australian Democracy, Canberra, Australia, and elsewhere. Also Glenda Cloughley, personal communications, and doctoral material from the University of Western Sydney, along with several presentations (2000–12) in which she cited Maria Gimbutas, Dorothy Cameron, et al., exploring archeomythology sources pertaining to old Europe, the flood, and feminine-settled culture in the Black Sea regions.

- 5 The main reference sources consulted include Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, London, Viking Arcana, Penguin, 1991; Jules Cashford (trans.), *Hymn to Demeter II, The Homeric Hymns*, Harmondsworth, UK, Penguin Classics, 2003, pp. 5–26. Jules Cashford, *The Moon, Myth and Image*, London, Cassell Illustrated, 2003; Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Harmondsworth, UK, Penguin Books, 1960; Carl Kerényi, *Dionysos*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Princeton, Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, 1976; George Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961; and Edward Tripp, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, London, Collins Reference, 1970.
- 6 Jules Cashford, personal communications, October 2012.
- 7 *Ibid.*

- 8 Felix Guirand, "Greek mythology" in *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, London, Hamlyn, 1959–86, section on "Persephone."
- 9 Ibid., section on "Persephone and Aidos."
- 10 Cashford, *Homeric Hymns, Hymn to Apollo*.
- 11 Kerenyi, *Dionysos*, pp. 52–89.
- 12 Mylonos, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, pp. 14–15.
- 13 A. Rumsey and D. Niles (eds), *Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands*, Canberra, Australian National University E Press, 2011.
- 14 Mt. Kytheron is where Oedipus was abandoned as an infant, but then rescued, fostered, and brought up believing he was the son of the royal couple of Corinth. As a young man Oedipus consults Pythia at Delphi and here he learns his fate – "you will kill your father and marry your mother." He descends from Delphi toward Mt. Cithaeron/ Kytheron and Thebes.
- Tripp in his *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* writes, "not far from Delphi, Oedipus comes . . . to the Cleft Way where the road to Daulis divides from that of Boeotia . . ." p. 421. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* the fateful confrontation occurs where three roads cross, in a gorge where the young man encounters the older man in a chariot who, in the altercation, is killed by Oedipus. The killer/Oedipus eventually turns up in Thebes, answers the Sphinx's riddle, is rewarded with the hand of the deceased king's wife, Jocasta, unknowingly, Oedipus' mother. And so continues the fate of the House of Cadmus. The Sphinx (a composite body of lion, wings of bird, and head of a woman), is a daughter of Echidne. It is in that gorge that Demeter sits and feels the terrible fate of the future.
- 15 Guirand, *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, p. 152. Iasion (Yasion) is referred to as a mortal lover of Demeter. It seems that the sexual relationship between a female/maternal power and a young mortal male recurrently underlies agricultural fertilization and regeneration mythologies. Some say jealous Zeus killed Iasion and others say the young man lived with Demeter and introduced her cult into Sicily. The Demeter/Persephone agricultural mystery cult characters include Iasion and Triptolemus, Iakkos and Dionysos as consorts to the female avatars/ incarnations of the triple goddess.
- 16 In my version Hekate and Hestia and Echidne (the Gorgon's sister) are Demeter's elder companions. Hestia is the originator of the hearth fire/the first kitchen, and I have associated Hekate totemically with an Echidna. Apparently the Echidna is named after the Greek mythological being. The Australian *echidna*, affectionately known as the spiny anteater, is, like a platypus, an egg-laying mammal. This is very unusual. Though externally similar in appearance to the porcupine, it is unique, as is the Echidna male's reproductive system. Echidna is a solitary, persistent, slow-moving spiny creature that (doggedly) burrows and curls into a spiny ball when alarmed, perplexing dogs that try to worry it. There is a sacred site of two hills overlooking claypans near Mbantua/Alice Springs devoted to an Echidna mother and daughter. Such a hill, is, in my mind, a suitable location for when Demeter gets the hint from Hekate about Kore's disappearance. *Echidne*, in primal Titan Greek myth, is depicted as part woman, part speckled snake, sister of Medusa, the Gorgon, cousin of the Harpies. See Robert Graves, *Greek Myths*, sect. 33. There are associations mixed up with the Moon and Pigs. Sometimes Hekate is associated with Echidne. I find this association fertile. Hekate is a complex figure, the dark aspect of moon cycles, deathly and prophetic, and paired with Artemis the young moon, wild and beautiful, as Cashford illumines in her references to Hekate in *Moon, Myth and Image*. She writes, ". . . this complexity speaks of an ancient grandeur, for

Hekate and Artemis are both survivals of the old European Great Goddess . . .” and “. . . in Hesiod’s Theogony, Hekate is given as the original triple Goddess . . . responsible for increasing herds and nursing the young” (p. 125). It makes sense (to me) that Hekate has her eye on Kore, the wild young daughter of Demeter, and that darkly serpentine Hekate knows what happens to Kore when she goes underground. Hekate and Hades have a subterranean kinship association. I prefer this more primal underground female version over the story that the sun/Apollo had his eye on Kore.

- 17 Cave Hill in central Australia is a special and beautiful cave with overlaid ochred circular paintings. This site is associated with the indigenous Seven Sisters story. There are many and varied rockface paintings in Australian country, for instance, “The Bradshaw Paintings,” Kimberley region; the Kakadu rock galleries; and throughout the Central desert regions. Refer to the Australian Rock Art Research Association website, www.ifrao.com/aura/web.webloc, and the Bradshaw rock art site, www.bradshawfoundation.c#7274B2.
- 18 This matter of the smoke is a double cultural reference. It refers to the myth that Demeter placed the baby from the Eleusis family in the fire to make him immortal, and it refers to a central Australian indigenous custom where newly born babies are held over a special quiet fire by grandmothers and/or other close relatives and bathed in the aromatic smoke of particular foliage to cleanse and strengthen the baby spiritually. This is called “smoking the baby.” Sometimes, people say, in the old days the mother might also have been smoked after childbirth.
- 19 As I have understood it, these words are variations on terms in ancient Greek and modern Greek that form part of the cluster of associations around the word and sounds of *kore*: *khora*, *khoros*, or *horos* (dance), *horoi* (dances) including *chorus* – hence a word net that places the figure of Kore/Persephone (and *koroi*/young men) into a cluster of meanings, for instance, seed, sprout, young men and women, basket, container, circular dance, song ceremony, and ceremonial chorus/singers. With thanks to John Kassoutas, Sydney, Australia, and to Jules Cashford; also see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horon_\(dance\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horon_(dance)).
- 20 The complex etymology of *Persephone*, which includes notions of light and death, beauty and being in the dark, being destroyed and coming back to life as cyclic is acknowledged here, but I feel that the term “married to destruction” is a bit too respectable. I think Pythia probably said, “It means she’s really fucked over but look on the bright side . . .”