

A House Divided: Reading the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* through Household Roles

1. *Iliad* 15.496-499: Hector Speaking
“... οὐ οἱ ἀεικὲς ἀμυνομένῳ περὶ πάτρης
τεθνάμεν· ἀλλ’ ἄλοχός τε σὴ καὶ παῖδες ὀπίσσω,
καὶ οἶκος καὶ κληῖρος ἀκήρατος, εἴ κεν Ἀχαιοῖοι
χωνται σὺν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.”
“It is not unseemly for one defending his
fatherland to die; but his wife is safe, his
children after, and his household and
plot are unharmed if the Achaeans
would leave to their own fatherland.”
2. Raaflaub (1993), 68
“At any rate, while Tyrtaios still speaks to the citizens *about* the *polis*, Solon speaks *for* the *polis*, and in the law of Dreros as in an early sixth-century decree from Kyzikos the *polis* speaks for itself: ‘The *polis* has thus decided!’ (*had’ewade poli*) or ‘the *polis* gave this’ (*polis edoke*). The seventh and early sixth centuries thus appear to be the decisive period for the integration of the *polis*.”
3. Murray (1993), 41
“This change in status [for women] is probably related to the movement from an estate-centred life to a city-centred one: the urbanization of Greek culture in most communities saw the increasing exclusion of women from important activities such as athletics, politics, drinking parties and intellectual discussion...”
4. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 1-3
Δήμητρ’ ἠὔκομον σεμνήν θεὸν ἄρχομ’ αἰεΐδειν,
αὐτὴν ἠδὲ θύγατρα τανίσφυρον, ἦν Ἄϊδωνεύς
ἦρπαξεν, δῶκεν δὲ βαρύκτυπος εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς.
I begin to sing of lovely-haired Demeter,
reverend goddess, and her slender-
ankled daughter, whom Hades seized;
deep-booming, far-seeing Zeus gave her.
5. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 77-81: Helios Speaking
“... οὐδέ τις ἄλλος
αἴτιος ἀθανάτων εἰ μὴ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς,
ὅς μιν ἔδωκε Ἄϊδι θαλερὴν κεκληῖσθαι ἄκοιτιν
αὐτοκασιγνήτωι· ὃ δ’ ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόντα
ἀρπάξας ἵπποισιν ἄγεν μεγάλα ἰάχουσαν.”
“Not any of the immortals is to blame
except cloud-gathering Zeus, who gave
her to Hades, his own brother, to be
called his blooming bedmate; he, having
seized her, led her under the misty
gloom as she cried out loudly.”
6. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 54-56: Hecate Speaking
“πότνια Δημήτηρ ὠρηφόρε ἀγλαόδωρε,
τίς θεῶν οὐρανίων ἠὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
ἦρπασε Περσεφόνην καὶ σὸν φίλον ἦκαχε θυμόν;”
“Lady Demeter, bringer of the season, of
splendid gifts, who of the heavenly gods
or mortal men seized Persephone and
grieved your dear heart?”
7. Select examples of ἀρπάζω (DeBloois [1997], 4)
Paris seizing Helen (*Il.* 3.44) Zeus seizing Ganymede (*HAphr.* 203)
Apollo seizing Alcyone (*Il.* 9.564) Hermes seizing “mortal” Aphrodite (*HAphr.* 121)
Pirates seizing Eumaios’s nurse (*Od.* 15.427) Deiphobus seizing Askalaphos’s armor (*Il.* 13.528)

8. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 103-104
οἷαί τε τροφοί εἰσι θεμιστοπόλων βασιλῆων
παίδων καὶ ταμίαι κατὰ δώματα ἠγήνεντα.
[Demeter appeared] like the sort of women who are nurses of the children of law-giving kings and household managers in bustling homes.
9. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 147-148: Callidice Speaking to Demeter
“μαῖα, θεῶν μὲν δῶρα καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἀνάγκη
τέτλαμεν ἄνθρωποι· δὴ γὰρ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰσιν.”
“Mama, things given from the gods, we mortals – even grieving – suffer out of necessity; for they are far superior.”
10. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 216-217: Metaneira Speaking to Demeter
“ἀλλὰ θεῶν μὲν δῶρα καὶ ἀχνύμενοί περ ἀνάγκη
τέτλαμεν ἄνθρωποι· ἐπὶ γὰρ ζυγὸν αὐχένη κεῖται.”
“But things given from the gods, we mortals – even grieving – suffer out of necessity; for the yoke bears on our neck.”
11. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 248-249: Metaneira Speaking to Demophoon
“τέκνον Δημοφῶων, ξείνη σε πυρὶ ἔνι πολλῶι
κρύπτει, ἐμοὶ δὲ γόον καὶ κήδεα λυγρὰ τίθησιν.”
“My son Demophoon! The outsider hides you in large flames creating for me mourning and grieving concerns.”
12. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 411-416: Persephone Speaking to Demeter
“αὐτίκ’ ἐγὼν ἀνόρουσ’ ὑπὸ χάρματος, αὐτὰρ ὁ λάθρη
ἔμβαλέ μοι ῥοιῆς κόκκον, μελιιδέ’ ἐδωδήν,
ἄκουσαν δὲ βίη με προσηνάγκασσε πάσασθαι.
ὡς δέ μ’ ἀναρπάξας Κρονίδεω πυκινὴν διὰ μῆτιν
ᾧχετο πατρός ἐμοῖο φέρων ὑπὸ κεῦθεα γαίης,
ἐξερῶ, καὶ πάντα διίξομαι ὡς ἐρεεῖνεις.”
“At once I jumped for joy, but he secretly got a pomegranate seed in me, honey-sweet food; he compelled me, being unwilling, by force to eat. How he seized me by Zeus’s, my own father’s, cunning plan and went carrying me beneath the depths of the earth, I will relate and go through as you ask.”
13. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 429-433: Persephone Speaking to Demeter
“αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ δρεπόμην περὶ χάρματι, γαῖα δ’ ἔνερθεν
χώρησεν, τῆι δ’ ἔκθορ’ ἄναξ κρατερός Πολυδέγμων,
βῆ δὲ φέρων ὑπὸ γαῖαν ἐν ἄρμασι χρυσεῖοισιν
πόλλ’ ἀεκαζομένην, ἐβόησα δ’ ἄρ’ ὄρθια φωνῆτι.
ταῦτά τοι ἀχνυμένα περ ἀληθέα πάντ’ ἀγορεύω.”
“I was picking happily, but the earth below gave way, and the mighty lord, Detainer-of-Many, leapt out. He went carrying me, being greatly unwilling, below the earth in his golden chariot, and I cried aloud. Grieving, this is the entire truth I am telling.”

Select Bibliography

- Clay, J. S. 2006. *The Politics of Olympus: Form and meaning in the major Homeric Hymns*. (2nd ed.). London: Bristol Classical Press.
- DeBlois, N. 1997. “Rape, Marriage, or Death? Gender Perspectives in the Homeric ‘Hymn to Demeter.’” *Philological Quarterly* 76.3: 245-62.
- Foley, H. P. 1994. *The Homeric “Hymn to Demeter”: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gottschall, J. 2008. *The Rape of Troy: Evolution, Violence, and the World of Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Murray, Oswyn. 1993. *Early Greece*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Patterson, C. B. 1998. *The Family in Greek History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Raaflaub, K. A. 1993. “Homer to Solon. The Rise of the *Polis*. The Written Sources.” In Hansen, M. H. ed. *The Ancient Greek City-State*. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. 41-105.
- Richardson, N. J. 1974. *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Saller, R. 2007. “Household and Gender.” In Scheidel, W., Morris, I. and Saller, R. ed., *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 87-112.
- Snodgrass, A. 1993. “The Rise of the *Polis*. The Archaeological Evidence.” In Hansen, M. H. ed. *The Ancient Greek City-State*. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. 30-40.
- Vernant, J. P. 1983. *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.