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EMPOUSA, DIONYSUS AND THE MYSTERIES: ARISTOPHANES, *FROGS* 285ff.

In *Frogs* Aristophanes presents the comic katabasis of Dionysus, whose quest is to bring back the recently deceased Euripides and restore him to the Athenian literary scene.[1] In the prologue Dionysus and his slave, Xanthias, seek out Heracles and ask his advice about the journey below. After some comic play, as they consider various short-cuts, Heracles finally gives Dionysus a serious lesson in Underworld geography (136–64). The various items on this itinerary – Charon, terrifying beasts, filth and excrement, sinners, μύσται – are all encountered on Dionysus' journey, each transformed for humorous effect. Dionysus crosses the lake on Charon's barque, but is forced to row (180–270). At this point we have the introduction of the off-stage chorus that gives the play its name. In what appears to be a kind of false parodos Dionysus engages in a metrical tug-of-war with the frogs that finally spoils his rowing rhythm. After disembarking, he is joined by Xanthias, who was forced to walk around the lake, and they find themselves in the place of σκότος καὶ βόρβορος (273), where they see the miscreants (here, comically, the audience). In place of ὄφεις and θηρία μυρία δεινότατα (144), our heroes are terrified by the figure of Empousa, who is seen by Xanthias alone (285–305).[2] When Empousa is gone, there appears the chorus of initiates, whose song (with comic interruptions from Dionysus and Xanthias) constitutes the parodos (316–459).

Particularly striking is the encounter with the unseen Empousa, a figure which stands apart from the other more familiar features of the Underworld. At 277ff. Xanthias is eager to move on, realizing that they have reached the place where, according to Heracles, there lurk τὰ θηρία τὰ δεινά. Dionysus, however, strikes a heroic pose, which is immediately punctured. Xanthias hears a noise that turns out to be a θηρίον μέγα (288). This apparition is able, it seems, to change its shape, turning at various times into a βοῦς, an ὀρεύς, and a γυνὴ | ὡραιοτάτη τις (290f.). This last manifestation prompts from Dionysus the usual comic response: φέρ' ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἴω (291).[3] But before Dionysus can give in to the urge, she has become a κύων. It is at this point that Dionysus identifies the spectre: Ἔμπουσα τοίνυν ἐστί (293). Xanthias agrees, noting her blazing face. We also learn that she has one brazen leg

[1] References to *Frogs* are to the Budé edition of V. Coulon (Paris, 1923–30). The following will be cited by author's name: W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (*RGVV* 32, Berlin and New York, 1972) = (Engl. ed., Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983); F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (*RGVV* 33, Berlin and New York, 1974); M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*[3] 1 (Munich, 1967).

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[2] It is unclear whether we are to imagine Empousa as real or simply a figment of Xanthias' imagination devised to terrify Dionysus; Xanthias' fear seems real enough at 296. The question, however, has no direct bearing on the present discussion.

[3] K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), p. 139, notes that 'sexual opportunism and uninhibited arousal are characteristic of the comic stage'.

and the other made of dung. There is a great deal of comic play as our heroes scramble about in terror, trying to escape the fearful apparition. At last Empousa is gone, and Xanthias is able to utter the infamous line from Euripides' *Orestes* (272) as delivered by Hegelochus: *ἐκ κυμάτων γὰρ αὖθις αὖ γαλῆν ὁρῶ*.[4]

Empousa is a creature of the popular imagination, a fearful monster.[5] Despite the ability to change shape, Empousa seems to have been regarded as primarily female, usually a hag-like creature. Alciphron (3.26.3) refers to her as an *ἐπιτύμβιος γραῦς*, and at *Eccl.* 1056f. the young man says that the second old woman must be some sort of Empousa: ... *Ἔμπουσά τις, | ἐξ αἵματος φλύκταιναν ἠμφιεσμένη*. Ussher (*ad loc.*) argues that the reference to her bloody appearance explains the blazing face in Xanthias' description (293f.). Empousa, then, is a creature of a familiar sort; we know of others, notably Mormo and Lamia (the subject of a comedy by Crates, frs 20–6 *PCG*). In the *Frogs* passage, the most pertinent question is whether this scene is anything more than a bit of comic business at the expense of Dionysus' heroic posturing.

The most important discussion of this scene is a learned paper by Borthwick, who concludes that 'the Empusa scene in the *Frogs*, like the *Deisidaimon* character-sketch of Theophrastus, is one of the richest documents in classical Greek literature for determining some of the commoner features of contemporary ritual and superstition.'[6] In discussing this passage, Borthwick is developing and deepening the general assessment of the passage by commentators. Stanford, for example, says that with this scene 'Ar. caricatures the average Athenian's fear of ghosts'.

Borthwick has focused attention on the allusion to Euripides' *Orestes*, a play produced three years earlier in 408 B.C., and Hegelochus' celebrated *lapsus linguae*. Borthwick argues that the Euripidean original has much in common with the language of prayer attested in various cults, and, moreover, that the *γαλῆ* of the corrupted line evokes a constellation of superstitious ideas.

I do not wish here to challenge Borthwick's conclusions (though it seems to me that he has perhaps loaded the *γαλῆ* with too much significance in the present passage, and given Empousa herself too little). My purpose is to suggest that this scene should be viewed within a more specific context. Here briefly, then, is the case that I propose to argue. Dionysus' encounter with the spectre of Empousa is a passage that plays on a specific feature of the Eleusinian Mysteries. We hear a good deal of *φάσματα* appearing during the celebrations of the Greater Mysteries.[7] I would argue that at a relatively early point in the proceedings the initiands were terrified by the appearance

[4] The paradosis in fact transmits both Hegelochus' *γαλῆν* and Euripides' *γαλήν'*; the former is more humorous and is almost certainly correct in the present passage. For some speculation on the nature of Hegelochus' mistake, see S. G. Daitz, *CQ* 33 (1983), 294–5. In addition to the *Frogs* passage, this slip provided comic material for Sannyrion (fr. 8 *PCG*) and Strattis (frs 1 and 63 *PCG*).

[5] A full collection of material has been assembled by O. Waser, *RE* 5 (1905), 2540–3, s.v. 'Empusa'; see also H. Herter, *Rhein. Jahrb. f. Volkskunde* 1 (1950), 112–43 = *Kl. Schr.* pp. 43–75, a detailed discussion of evil spirits and related beings in early Greek popular belief (119f. = 50f., on Empousa).

[6] E. K. Borthwick, *CQ* 18 (1968), 200–6 (quotation from 206).

[7] The earliest explicit reference is Pl. *Phdr.* 250b–c, *εἶδόν τε καὶ ἐτελοῦντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην ... καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μυούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ* .... Plut. fr. 178 Sandbach speaks of *σεμνότητας ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων*; Aristid. *Or.* 22.3 (Keil) speaks simply of the worshippers *ἐν τοῖς ἀρρήτοις φάσμασιν*, and Procl. *Resp.* 2.185.4 Kroll of *φάσματα ... γαλήνης μεστά*. We also learn from Origen, *Cels.* 4.10 of *φάσματα καὶ δείματα* in Bacchic mysteries. Cf. Burkert, p. 317 n. 64 = p. 288 n. 64. Most suggestive for our discussion is the Plutarch fragment (see below).

of a spectre like that which terrorizes Dionysus and Xanthias. I cannot say for certain that the apparition at Eleusis was officially called Empousa, but I suspect that Empousa was one of the names given to it by individual worshippers.

It is clear that the parodos of Aristophanes' play has a remarkable religious colouring, and there has been much discussion of the precise religious reference (or references) implicit in the text. Nonetheless, Graf seems to be right in holding that the first part of the play contains a number of details that would cause the audience to assume that the chorus is composed of initiates into the Eleusinian Mysteries.[8] Furthermore, it is hardly surprising that the religious reference has proved to be elusive. Any poet who drew on the Mysteries, especially one working in popular theatre, would have to be careful, lest he be subject to prosecution.[9] In this light it is understandable that the modern scholar must rely on circumstantial arguments to isolate allusions to Eleusinian material.

If we are correct in seeing the parodos as essentially an extended allusion to the Eleusinian Mysteries, it is not surprising that there is some preparation for the nature of the chorus in the prologue. Heracles identifies the choreutai as *οἱ μεμυημένοι* (158), and they occupy the culminating position in his itinerary. Accordingly, the details of the Underworld in the prologue may well reflect, at least in part, eschatological views encouraged by the Mysteries.[10] The prominence of Eleusinian allusions in the first part of the play, then, lends probability to our thesis that the Empousa scene is connected with the Mysteries, but it in no way proves the case. Consequently, we must offer some arguments for setting the encounter with Empousa within the context of Eleusinian cult.

There are a couple of passages that are suggestive with regard to the Empousa scene. The first is a fragment of the late fourth-century historian, Idomeneus of Lampsacus (*FGrHist* 338 F 2). This is an entry from a rhetorical lexicon edited by Bekker: *ἐκλήθη οὖν ἡ μήτηρ Αἰσχίνου Ἔμπουσα, ὡς μὲν λέγει Δημοσθένης* (18.130), *ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν (καὶ γὰρ τὸ φάσμα παντόμορφον), ὡς δὲ Ἰδομενεύς φησι⟨ν ἐν * Περὶ τῶν Ἀθήνησι⟩ν Δημαγωγῶν, ἐπεὶ ἀπὸ σκοτεινῶν τόπων ἀνεφαίνετο τοῖς μυουμένοις*. This is a suggestive passage; it is also problematic. Like many of these late compilations we cannot be sure of the pedigree of the material or its accuracy; we are probably dealing with the product of successive epitomization. Caution is necessary.

The entry in this lexicon concerns Aeschines' mother, Glaukothea, who is much discussed in the *De corona*. Demosthenes (18.130) calls her Empousa *ἐκ τοῦ πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν*. In this work Demosthenes is out to smear Aeschines, and, as commentators note, he is suggesting here that his enemy's mother was a prostitute.[11] There is some indication that prostitutes were often called by (or perhaps in some cases adopted) the names of female monsters of one sort or another; the middle comic

[8] Graf, pp. 40ff., who also provides a thorough survey of earlier views on the question.

[9] Cf. the well-known story of Aeschylus' prosecution for revealing the Mysteries on stage (the sources are collected by Radt as T 93a–d, 94). M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore, 1981), p. 68, is rightly sceptical of Heracl. Pont. fr. 170 Wehrli = T 93b Radt, but that the more reliable Aristotle preserves the story (*Eth. Nic.* 1111a8 = T 93a) suggests that it has some historical basis. To the bibliography assembled by Radt, add M. Ostwald, *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), pp. 528–30.

[10] For Eleusinian eschatology, see Graf, pp. 79ff. The most likely vehicle for the propagation of such views was epic poetry (see below).

[11] See W. Süss, *Ethos: Studien zur älterer griechischen Rhetorik* (Leipzig, 1910), p. 248 (cf. also pp. 249f., on the rhetors' use of sexual innuendo), Jacoby on *FGrHist* 338 F 2, and Wankel on Dem. 18.130.

poet, Anaxilas, provides a humorous catalogue (fr. 22 Kock) of such names, including δράκαινα, Chimaira, Charybdis, Scylla, Sphinx, Hydra, λέαινα, Echidna, Harpies, and Sirens (cf. also Callias fr. 28 *PCG*). Empousa is at home in such company.[12]

The usual way in which the reference to Idomeneus is explained is to appeal to a later section of the *De corona* (18.259–60; cf. 19.199, 249, 281), a well-known passage in which Demosthenes gives a lurid description of the religious activities of Aeschines' mother. Most commentators confidently hold that this passage provides a detailed account of the cult of Sabazius,[13] and on the strength of the Idomeneus fragment it is believed that Empousa was the title of the priestess of these strange rites. Despite the fact that this view has the support of some of the most distinguished students of Greek religion, I regard it as unlikely; for it is based on a dangerous assumption, namely that Demosthenes is telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth, that he was trying accurately to record the details of an out-of-the-way cult.[14] But his purpose in this speech is to attack Aeschines and destroy his reputation; and, as Philip Harding has recently argued at length, the fourth-century orators had little concern for truth if falsehoods served their purpose better.[15] In the present passage there is no explicit statement of the identity of the cult. That it is the Mysteries of Sabazius has essentially been inferred from the cry εὐοῖ σαβοῖ, one detail among many in the text.[16] I find it odd that Demosthenes did not make more of the identity of the cult, if indeed the usual identification is correct. After all, although ultimately assimilated to Dionysus,[17] Sabazius is a foreign god, and, despite the acceptance of such gods as Bendis from Thrace, conservative Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries tended to view the worship of such deities with suspicion.[18] In the *De corona* Demosthenes

[12] Alciphron (3.26.3) alludes to Dem. 18.130 in a description of a lustful, old serving-maid. At Philostr. *V.A.* 4.25 Empousai are described as man-eating creatures, addicted to sex (ἐρῶσι ... ἀφροδισίων), who use sexuality to ensnare their victims. It is noteworthy in this regard that one of the manifestations of Empousa in *Frogs* is a γυνὴ | ὡραιοτάτη τις (290f.); cf. also the libidinous old woman at *Eccl.* 1056f.

[13] The principal ancient support for this view is Str. 10.3.18 (quoted below, n. 16). The fundamental modern discussion is C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* (Königsberg, 1829), i.646–59 (who detects 'Orphic' elements as well); cf. E. Rohde, *Psyche*[9/10] (Tübingen, 1925), ii.110 with n. 1. More recent scholars have identified the rites as those of Sabazius, but without 'Orphic' elements: e.g. Jacoby on *FGrHist* 338 F 2; Nilsson, p. 836; Burkert, p. 317 n. 64 = 288 n. 64, and *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), p. 141 n. 34 (quoted below, n. 14); Graf, p. 105 with n. 53; Wankel on Dem. 18.259; S. Koster, *Die Invektive in der griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), p. 89; R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 302f.; M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 26f. A. Dieterich, *Nekyia*[2] (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 81f. and *RhM* 48 (1893), 279–80 = *Kl. Schr.* pp. 121–2, saw in Demosthenes' description on 'Orphic' rite of expiation (influenced by Asian cult), a view which won a certain amount of acceptance (bibliography in Graf, p. 105 n. 53).

[14] 'This is the most detailed description of *telete* in the classical period', Burkert, *Anc. Myst. Cults* (previous note), p. 141 n. 34.

[15] P. Harding, *Phoenix* 41 (1987), 25–39, pp. 30f. on the present passage. Cf. also Nisbet's remarks on the similar habits of Roman orators in his edition of Cic. *in Pis.*, p. 193.

[16] This is patently true of Strabo, whose identification of the cult is clearly an inference based on the ritual cries (10.3.18): τῶν δὲ Φρυγίων [sc. ἱερῶν μέμνηται] Δημοσθένης, διαβάλλων τὴν Αἰσχίνου μητέρα καὶ αὐτόν, ὡς τελούσῃ τῇ μητρὶ συνόντα καὶ συνθιασεύοντα καὶ ἐπιφθεγγόμενον εὐοῖ σαβοῖ πολλάκις καὶ ὗης ἄττης, ἄττης ὗης· ταῦτα γάρ ἐστι Σαβάζια καὶ Μητρῷα. Cf. also Amphitheos, *FGrHist* 431 F 1b, where the cult cry is emphasized.

[17] The earliest passage in which the identification is made explicit seems to be Amphitheos, *FGrHist* 431 F 1, but his date is uncertain: see Jacoby, *FGrHist* 3b (Komm.) i.258.

[18] See Wankel on Dem. 18.259 (τῇ μητρὶ τελούσῃ). Cf. the Ὧραι of Aristophanes, probably written some time after 420, in which the 'new' gods are tried, condemned and deported (frs 577–89 *PCG*): cf. Cic. *Leg.* 2.37, 'nouos uero deos et in his colendis nocturnas peruigilationes

seems to be implying that Glaukothea was involved in some unsavoury foreign cult; but that he does not specify which cult suggests that Harding is correct in writing that Aeschines' mother 'was a minor priestess, possibly of Dionysus. There is only light innuendo that there was something improper about her conduct'.[19]

More important for our discussion is the tendency to set the name Empousa within the context of the cult description. It should be stressed that Demosthenes does not repeat the name in the later passage, and, as we noted above, the significance that he attaches to it is clear from the context. Consequently, the only basis for this understanding of the name is the fragment of Idomeneus. There it is evident from the μὲν ... δέ articulation that the two explanations of the name are regarded as alternatives. Accordingly, it may be that Idomeneus made the connection. But, if so, on what basis? He may have known something that we do not, in which case his reasoning is beyond recovery. Alternatively, he may have extrapolated from the later passage. If this is so, he may have exploited his knowledge of mystery cults in general. Although it is uncertain just what cult is being referred to by Demosthenes, Idomeneus may have known that Empousa was a name used in some mysteries (possibly even those of Sabazius). It is interesting, however, to note what Idomeneus actually says. He speaks simply of οἱ μυούμενοι, and, as Graf has shown (pp. 29 n. 36,

sic Aristophanes, facetissimus poeta ueteris comoediae, uexat, ut apud eum Sabazius [mentioned in fr. 578] et quidam alii dei peregrini iudicati e ciuitate eiciantur'. It is noteworthy that Sabazius is singled out alone among the *dei peregrini*. Sabazius is also referred to at *Vesp.* 9, *Au.* 873, *Lys.* 388; his worship may have been mentioned in the Βάπται of Eupolis (cf. fr. 94 *PCG*), but it is uncertain how it was treated. There seems to have been greater conservatism regarding θεοὶ ξενικοί in the fourth century than in the fifth: see Nilsson, pp. 837f.

[19] Harding (above, n. 15) 30. I would not, however, characterize the innuendo as 'light'; it seems to me to be very heavy indeed. Cf. also Süss (above, n. 11), p. 248 ('... dass sie eine Veranstalterin von Winkelmysterien von verdächtigem Charakter gewesen sei').

The majority of commentators, it seems, have been beguiled by the wealth of detail in Demosthenes' description into believing that an actual cult is being documented. It was, of course, his intention to persuade his audience, but this does not mean that his account is true. The description seems to be composed of features of conventional Dionysiac cult laced with a few details hinting at more obscure practices. The various details are all fully discussed by Wankel in his notes to the passage (although it should be noted that he believes the cult to be that of Sabazius). One practical result of a more agnostic view of the Demosthenes passage is that individual details should now be treated with some suspicion. It is possible that Demosthenes, drawing on his knowledge of cult practices, found every detail in some cult (not, of course, necessarily the same cult); but it is equally possible that some are merely plausible fictions. A problem in this regard is that many of the late lexicographical sources brought to bear on the interpretation of the passage are ultimately derived directly from it or from later discussion of it (e.g. Strabo, quoted above, n. 16), that is to say that these late sources have little value for establishing the cultic significance of any particular in the description. For example, the cry ἔφυγον κακόν, εὗρον ἄμεινον is elsewhere said to be a marriage formula and is not attested in mystery cult (Graf, p. 106 n. 54, where he also notes that marriage is a kind of initiation, but this point does not prove that the formula was ever used in mystery cult). The combination ὑῆς ἄττης ἄττης ὑῆς seems suspect as well. ὑῆς may derive from an epithet of Dionysus (Cleidemus, *FGrHist* 323 F 27 with Jacoby *ad loc.*; cf. Pherec. *FGrHist* 3 F 90, where Ὑη is a name for Semele), or it may be a name of a foreign god (Ar. fr. 908 *PCG*); as Wankel notes, the connection with Sabazius in late sources seems to have been prompted by the Demosthenes passage. Ἄττης, on the other hand, is apparently an eastern figure (Neanthes *FGrHist* 84 F 37). As Wankel points out, what little evidence there is for a link between Ἄττης and Dionysus–Sabazius is late. Accordingly, it is possible that the combination in our text rests on no religious authority. Demosthenes himself may have fashioned a plausible-sounding cult jingle from two unrelated elements (on the form of the jingle, cf. E. Fraenkel, *JRS* 51 [1961], 48 = *Kl. Beitr.* ii.119). In short, I would argue that, despite its richness of detail, Demosthenes' description of the religious activity of Aeschines' mother should not be accepted uncritically as evidence for cult.

43), a phrase like this used at Athens without qualification always refers to Eleusis. If this is correct, we may have here a detail from the Mysteries: Empousa (or at least something that could be so named) appeared to the initiands from the darkness.[20]

It is clear that, however suggestive, this fragment is hardly probative. Too much is uncertain: it is likely that what we have represents a stripped-down version, the original of which possessed more detail and perhaps a different context. The compiler of the lexicon entry seems to misunderstand Demosthenes' explanation, missing the sexual innuendo, and focuses on Empousa as a *φάσμα παντόμορφον*. It is possible that Idomeneus had a good deal to say about this sort of creature, and that his comment is excerpted from such a discursive treatment. Accordingly, I am reluctant to base my argument solely on this tantalizing passage. But there is other evidence that supports my case.

Let us turn to a passage from Lucian's *Kataplous*. This short satire in dialogue form concerns the fortunes of a number of dead men as they journey to face judgement at the hands of Rhadamanthys. The passage that interests us (22) is an exchange between a philosopher, Cyniscus, and a poor cobbler, Micyllus, that takes place just after Hermes leads the dead from Charon's boat. The cobbler remarks on the darkness (*ὦ Ἡράκλης, τοῦ ζόφου*),[21] reflects on the condition of the dead, and falls into step with the philosopher. Micyllus then poses an interesting question: *εἰπέ μοι – ἐτελέσθης γὰρ, ὦ Κυνίσκε, δῆλον ὅτι τὰ Ἐλευσίνια – οὐχ ὅμοια τοῖς ἐκεῖ τὰ ἐνθάδε σοι δοκεῖ;* Cyniscus answers in the affirmative: *εὖ λέγεις· ἰδοὺ γοῦν προσέρχεται δᾳδουχοῦσά τις φοβερόν τι καὶ ἀπειλητικὸν προσβλέπουσα. ἦ ἄρα που Ἐρινύς ἐστιν;* Micyllus agrees that the figure appears to be an Erinys; Hermes then identifies it as Tisiphone.

This is an interesting passage. We are usually told that in composing this work Lucian was relying on the model of Cynic satire, but it does not seem impossible that Aristophanes' *Frogs* was at the back of his mind as well.[22] In much the same way as Dionysus in that play, Cyniscus is forced to row Charon's barque because he does not have the fare (19). The dread figure of the Fury is encountered as soon as they disembark; it is at this same point in the journey that Dionysus has his brush with the unseen Empousa. This may simply be coincidence, but the similarities between the two passages are striking. What is important in the Lucian passage, however, is the explicit reference to Eleusis. The present circumstances of the dead *are* like the Eleusinian Mysteries; to prove the point (*γοῦν*) there appears a torch-bearing figure of terrifying aspect.[23] Furthermore, as in the case of Empousa in both *Frogs* and the Idomeneus fragment, the Erinys appears from the darkness.

This passage seems to imply that an apparition of this sort appeared before those undergoing initiation at Eleusis. The similarities between Lucian's text and Aristophanes' play suggest strongly that the encounter with Empousa alludes to the same cultic event.

[20] For the importance of darkness in the Greater Mysteries, see Burkert, p. 304 = p. 276.

[21] In view of the centrality of the tradition of Heracles' katabasis, the oath here may well be pointed.

[22] For the general view of the work, see R. Helm, *RE* 13 (1927), 1732f. Lucian quotes or alludes to *Frogs* at *Philopatr.* 25, *Cont.* 24, *Cat.* 14, *Fug.* 28. Other references to Aristophanes are collected by F. W. Householder, Jr., *Literary Quotations and Allusions in Lucian* (New York, 1941), pp. 4–5 (cf. also pp. 7–10, for references to uncertain comic fragments). I am grateful to Professor C. P. Jones for advice on Lucian.

[23] 'Much the commonest use of *γοῦν* is to introduce a statement which is, *pro tanto*, evidence for a preceding statement', J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*[2] (Oxford, 1954), p. 451 (with copious examples).

There is another feature of Empousa that supports our conjecture concerning her proposed rôle in the Mysteries, and that is her connection with Hecate, a difficult figure who from tragedy onwards was regularly associated with all that is dark and magical.[24] What is important for our discussion is her rôle in the Eleusinian Mysteries. In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* she aids Demeter in her search for her lost daughter (51ff.), and later becomes Persephone's πρόπολος καὶ ὀπάων (440);[25] archaeological evidence also indicates her presence at Eleusis.[26] Her position in this cult is doubtless determined to a large extent by her connection with Artemis and her function as κουροτρόφος.[27] It is unlikely, however, that her darker side was of no significance, especially in the minds of worshippers.

Hecate was believed to control φάσματα, both beneficent and especially malign.[28] According to a scholiast on *Frogs* 293, some think that Empousa is a demonic apparition sent by Hecate that changes its shape (φάντασμα δαιμονιῶδες ὑπὸ τῆς Ἑκάτης πεμπόμενον καὶ τὰς μορφὰς ἐναλλάττον).[29] Another ancient view identified Empousa and Hecate.[30] Evidence for this also comes from the same *scholion*, where

[24] See Nilsson, p. 725, and Herter (above, n. 5) 133f. = 65f. Empousa's association with Hecate is central to Borthwick's discussion of the superstitious background to the passage (see above, n. 6). For Hecate, see the standard discussion by T. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg, 1960); cf. also Nilsson, pp. 722–5; Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*[2] (Basel, 1956), i.169f.; S. I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira* (*Amer. Class. Stud.* 21, Atlanta, 1990).

[25] The use of ἐκ τοῦ in line 440 is aetiological: see N. J. Richardson *ad loc.*, and J. S. Clay, *The Politics of Olympus* (Princeton, 1989), p. 257.

[26] See Richardson on *H.Dem.* 24–6; cf. also *ARV*[2] 1012.1 with the remarks of C. Bérard in *A City of Images* (Princeton, 1989), p. 115 (fig. 159). K. Clinton, *OAth* 16 (1986), 45, has argued that Hecate did not play a rôle in Eleusinian cult, noting that 'nowhere over a span of ca. 1,000 years does the name Hekate appear at Eleusis'. This position is in keeping with Clinton's attempt to minimize the connection between the *Hymn* and the Mysteries. Although his paper is in many ways a healthy corrective to the work of those scholars who treat the *Hymn* as a kind of blue-print for the Mysteries, his position on the rôle of Hecate seems unlikely. In the first place, Hecate seems to have been closely associated with Artemis (perhaps attested as early as Hes. fr. 23a.26 M–W), who had a place in Eleusinian cult (cf. Richardson, and L. R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* [Oxford, 1896–1909], ii.560f., 569). It is also possible that her name and function in the Mysteries were considered part of the ἄρρητον, and this would account for the relative silence of our sources. It is, however, striking to note Melanthius, *FGrHist* 326 F 2, who mentions in his work *On the Eleusinian Mysteries* that the τρίγλη and the μαινίς were sacrificed to Hecate (cf. Antiph. fr. 68 Kock, and Apollod. *FGrHist* 244 F 109 for these offerings). Clinton (45 n. 17a) objects that Melanthius does not say explicitly that this sacrifice was made in the Mysteries, but it seems likely, especially in view of the evidence of the *Hymn*, that Hecate's worship would not be discussed in Melanthius' treatise if it were not relevant to the Mysteries. Clinton's judgement has recently been endorsed by Clay (previous note), p. 218 with n. 62, who prefers to play down the relevance of external considerations to the understanding of the *Hymn*, holding in this case that 'The text itself sufficiently elucidates Hecate's role as a critical intermediary in the gradual process of revelation' (at p. 257 she is more sympathetic to an aetiological reference to line 440). Yet this position does not explain why it is Hecate and not some other intermediary figure.

[27] She is called κουροτρόφος at *Orph. Hy.* 1.8 (Quandt). See Friis Johansen and Whittle on Aesch. *Suppl.* 676, where her function as κουροτρόφος is discussed. Cf. *H.Dem.* 24, ἀταλὰ φρονέουσα with Allen–Sikes–Halliday as well as Richardson. It may be relevant to note that West prints Ἑκάτα (Badham) at Aesch. *Ag.* 140, a passage much concerned with the nurture of young.

[28] See Kannicht on Eur. *Hel.* 569–70, and Johnston (above, n. 24), pp. 34–5, 135–6.

[29] Cf. also ΣAp. Rh. 3.861 (p. 242 Wendel), ... φάσματα ἐπιπέμπειν τὰ καλούμενα Ἑκαταῖα (Brimo and Empousa are mentioned); Bekker, *Anec. Graeca* i.249.27f., Ἔμπουσα φάσμα ἐστὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τῆς Ἑκάτης πεμπομένων.

[30] It is suggestive in this regard to note the frequent association of Hecate with dogs (Johnston, op. cit. [n. 24], pp. 134ff.); in *Frogs* it is only after Xanthias says that the apparition has changed into a κύων that Dionysus identifies it as Empousa (293).

Aristophanes himself is quoted in support. In the *Ταγηνισταί*, the following exchange seems to link the two figures (fr. 515 *PCG*):[31]

(A.) χθονία θ' Ἑκάτη
σπείρας ὄφεων εἱλιξαμένη
(B.) ⟨...⟩ τί καλεῖς τὴν Ἔμπουσαν;

Although we have little information concerning the nature of this play, it is noteworthy that fr. 504 seems to be spoken by an enthusiast for the Underworld (Henrichs aptly calls him an 'Unterweltsfanatiker'), and this may indicate that eschatology was prominent. Accordingly, it is suggestive to see Empousa mentioned in such a context, for apart from the passage in *Frogs* there is no other strong evidence connecting her with the Underworld, although Alciphron's description (3.26.3) of her as an ἐπιτύμβιος γραῦς indicates an association with the dead. The detail concerning Hecate's serpentine hair is also attested in a passage from Sophocles' Ῥιζοτόμοι (fr. 535.5f. Radt): στεφανωσαμένη ... πλεκταῖς | ὠμῶν σπείραισι δρακόντων. Not only is the apparent identification of Empousa and Hecate suggestive, but so too is the detail of the snaky hair. In Lucian the apparition was an Erinys, and serpentine hair was perhaps their most salient physical characteristic at least in post-Aeschylean depictions (they can be more generally snaky as well).[32] In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* the goddess encounters Hecate carrying torches (52); Lucian's Erinys is also a torch-bearer. Torches, of course, had a special place at Eleusis.[33]

The motif that we have been considering – the appearance of a terrifying female apparition – may have occurred in a lost work of some importance. There is strong

[31] Cf. Hesychius s.v. Ἔμπουσα, Ἀριστοφάνης δὲ τὴν Ἑκάτην ἔφη Ἔμπουσαν. A. Henrichs has challenged the usual view of Ar. fr. 515 in part 3 of 'Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im attischen Drama', forthcoming in the proceedings of a colloquium held in honour of S. Radt. Henrichs argues that Hecate is a goddess of public and private cult, but that Empousa is a creation of the popular imagination without any rôle in cult. On his view, speaker B in terror undercuts the first speaker's solemn invocation of Hecate through the comic substitution of Empousa for Hecate, which makes his fear concrete on the level of popular superstition. This view seems to me to be problematic in a number of respects. That Empousa has no cultic identity is difficult to maintain in the face of Idomeneus F 2 (discussed above), a passage which Henrichs does not discuss. On any view, Idomeneus seems to suggest a link between Empousa and mystic initiation (of course, if the usual understanding of this passage were correct, Ἔμπουσα would stand as a cult-title), and this is not surprising. Empousa's association (though not identification) with Hecate is well attested in other sources (see above, n. 29), and it is therefore plausible to argue that Empousa had a place in certain cults as an extension of the figure of Hecate. Hecate is closely connected with what we generally describe as popular superstition (in which Empousa is regularly defined), and it is highly unlikely that these associations are irrelevant to Hecate's cultic identity. In this light I would argue that W. Burkert, *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (*Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 27, Vandoeuvres–Geneva, 1980), p. 118, is correct in saying with reference to Ar. fr. 515, 'Sie [i.e. Hekate] kann selbst als 'Ungeheuer' erscheinen'. Speaker A refers to Hecate in terrifying terms; speaker B uses the name Empousa, and thus specifies the relevant aspect of Hecate. Henrichs sees a discontinuity between the two speakers, arguing that they are differentiated in 'Stilhöhe'. But there is nothing in the text of the final line to suggest that there is any stylistic contrast with the paratragic solemnity of speaker A (the question τί καλεῖς is not alien to tragic usage: e.g. Soph. *Ph.* 737, *OC* 1459; Eur. *El.* 1123, *IT* 780, *Ph.* 617, 849).

[32] According to Paus. 1.28.6, Aeschylus was the first to present the Erinyes with snakes in their hair. It became common in later sources. Cf. Garvie on Aesch. *Cho.* 1049–50. For the Erinyes in general, see E. Wüst, *RE* Suppl. 8 (1956), 82–106, and H. Lloyd-Jones, *REG* 102 (1989), 1–9 = E. M. Craik (ed.), '*Owls to Athens*': *Essays on Classical Subjects Presented to Sir Kenneth Dover* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 203–11. On the iconography of the Erinyes, see H. Sarian and P. Delev, *LIMC* 3.1 (1986), 840f.

[33] See Nilsson, p. 656, and Richardson on *H.Dem.* 47. Note especially the prominence given to torches in the parodos of *Frogs* (340ff., 351ff., 448).

evidence to suggest the existence of an influential epic poem on the subject of Heracles' katabasis that was composed in the sixth century in the orbit of Eleusis, in which the hero received initiation to ensure success in his quest for Cerberus. This lost poem was first detected by Eduard Norden in his great commentary on *Aeneid* 6, and given substance by Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones in an important paper.[34] It is now believed that Apollodorus is following this poem in his account of Heracles' descent. For our discussion, one point deserves attention (2.5.12): as soon as Heracles enters Hades with his guide, Hermes, all souls flee before them with the exception of Meleager and the Gorgon, Medusa. Heracles draws his sword against the Gorgon, but is restrained by Hermes (cf. Bacch. 5.71ff.). There is a similar scene in *Aeneid* 6 (285ff.), where Aeneas draws his sword in fear before a number of apparitions, including the Gorgons. Lloyd-Jones has attractively suggested that the Empousa scene in *Frogs* was influenced by this earlier epic.[35] If so, it is possible that the lost poem based this episode on the very detail of cult that we have been discussing. The Gorgon is, of course, another snaky-haired monster.[36] Like the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, the lost epic may well have contained aetiological passages, alluding to and glossing the δρώμενα at Eleusis.[37]

I believe that we are dealing with a number of literary accounts deriving ultimately from a visual experience.[38] It seems nearly certain that there were no holy books at Eleusis; the emphasis of much of the *testimonia* is on *seeing*.[39] Although official terminology certainly existed for many features of the Mysteries (we can speak of the 'language' of the Mysteries), it is unlikely that everything was spelled out. Worshippers *saw* the rites, and in many cases described things in their own words when talking among themselves. This may account for some of the lack of uniformity among the *testimonia* for some features. So far as Empousa goes, I suggest that the initiands were confronted by something suggesting some sort of female monster,

[34] Norden on Verg. *Aen.* 6.309–12 (and *passim*); H. Lloyd-Jones, *Maia* 19 (1967), 206–29. Further discussion in J. Boardman, *JHS* 95 (1975), 6–10; R. J. Clark, *Phoenix* 24 (1970), 244–55, and *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom Tradition* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 79ff.; Graf, pp. 142–50, 182–5; N. Robertson, *Hermes* 108 (1980), 274–300 (who argues that the katabasis formed part of the Hesiodic *Aegimius* [frs 294–301 M–W], which he would attribute to Cecrops of Miletus). This poem seems to lie behind the summary of Heracles' journey to the Underworld preserved in [Apollod.] *Bibl.* 2.5.12, and to have influenced Bacch. 5, Pind. fr. dub. 346 Maehler, Ar. *Ra.*, and Verg. *Aen.* 6. Scepticism has been expressed by G. Thaniel, *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 237–45 (a response to Clark's paper in the same journal), and Austin, on Verg. *Aen.* 6.309ff.; but neither of these scholars actually offers any arguments against the hypothesis.

[35] Lloyd-Jones (previous note) 219, who also discusses other details that may reflect the influence of the Heracles epic. It might be objected that it is unlikely that Aristophanes could have been influenced by both Eleusinian cult and the lost Heracles poem. But I see nothing implausible in positing complementary influences: Aristophanes was in no way constrained to follow one 'source'.

[36] Cf. Pind. *Ol.* 13.63, *Pyth.* 10.47; Aesch. *Cho.* 1049–50; [Aesch.] *PV* 799; [Apollod.] 2.4.2; Ov. *Met.* 4.771. In general, see K. Ziegler, *RE* 7.1 (1912), 1630–55. For possible links with Hecate and the Erinyes, see J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959), pp. 287f.

[37] The poem seems to have contained an αἴτιον for the preliminary initiation in the Lesser Mysteries: see Lloyd-Jones (above, n. 34) 211f. with n. 8, and Boardman (above, n. 34) especially 9f.; cf. Burkert, pp. 292ff. = pp. 265ff.

[38] There is the possibility that the experience was aural. At some point, it is possible that the μύσται were blindfolded or at least veiled (Burkert, pp. 303f. = p. 275). It may be that at this time they were told of an approaching phantom. This view can be reconciled easily with the passage in *Frogs*, where Dionysus is told of Empousa, but does not himself see her. Nonetheless, I regard this possibility as less likely, since the other passages discussed point to something seen.

[39] Cf. *H.Dem.* 480–2 (with Richardson *ad loc.*), Pind. fr. 137a Maehler, Soph. fr. 837 Radt, and terms like ἐποπτεία.

perhaps with snaky hair, perhaps with other animal aspects. Some of the worshippers understood this figure to be Hecate, others Empousa, still others an Erinys, and so on. And it is in these various forms that this figure is alluded to in the literary works that we have been discussing.

If I am right, about the scene in *Frogs*, Aristophanes' Empousa falls into line with the other Eleusinian elements in the prologue and parodos. Moreover, this part of the play seems to preserve, albeit refracted through the lens of comedy, the general pattern of the initiation in the τελεστήριον, a motion from darkness to light and from fear to hope. Particularly suggestive in this regard is a passage from Plutarch's Περὶ ψυχῆς (fr. 178 Sandbach), which recounts the experience of οἱ τελεταῖς μεγάλαις κατοργιαζόμενοι.[40] Before the τέλος, there is the experience of fear and terror (τὰ δεινὰ πάντα, φρίκη καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἱδρὼς καὶ θάμβος), which is followed by (ἐκ δὲ τούτου) a revelation in light (φῶς τι θαυμάσιον ἀπήντησεν καὶ τόποι καθαροὶ καὶ λειμῶνες ἐδέξαντο, φωνὰς καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότητας ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων ἔχοντες).[41] Terror followed immediately by images of special bliss is precisely the pattern that we find in *Frogs*: as soon as Empousa is gone the chorus enters singing the parodos proper. Although there are many comic elements (some of them perhaps suggesting the αἰσχρολογία of the cult),[42] the song of the choreutai has at its centre a vision of the beatitude of the initiate with meadows bathed in a special light.[43] In much the same way the worshippers at Eleusis, who pass through the dark night of initiation, leave the τελεστήριον at dawn reassured about death and confident in the continuation of human life and in the fertility of the earth.[44]

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[40] The language here makes it very probable that the reference is to the Eleusinian Mysteries. Against the scepticism of G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, 1961), pp. 264ff., see Graf, pp. 132ff.

[41] With the image of the λειμῶνες, cf. *Frogs* 326 and 374, where meadows are the goal of the mystic procession; such places of beatitude may have been the end of the way travelled by the initiate in the Underworld: cf. [Diph.] fr. 136.6 *PCG*; Posidip. fr. 705.22 *SH* (with H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 83 [1963], 93f.). It is, of course, possible that the image in the parodos of *Frogs* is due simply to a general association of λειμῶνες with Demeter (for which see Richardson's edition of *H.Dem.*, p. 143), but this seems unlikely. The meadow has a firm place in the traditional picture of the Underworld, which was developed in the eschatologies of various mystery cults: cf. *Od.* 11.539, 573, 24.13; Pind. fr. 129.3 Maehler; Pl. *Resp.* 614c2, 616b2, *Gorg.* 523e4, 524a2; Verg. *Aen.* 6.637ff. (with the commentaries of Norden and Austin); Gold Leaf A 4 Zuntz (= Orph. fr. 32f. 6 Kern); Orph. frs 222.3 and 293 Kern; perhaps Emped. *Kath.* fr. 5 Zuntz = 31 B 121 DK. In general, see Norden's edition of *Aen.* 6, pp. 25f.; Dodds' edition of Pl. *Gorg.* p. 375; Dieterich, *Nekyia* (above, n. 13), pp. 19ff.; G. Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 253f.

[42] I propose to discuss elsewhere the relevance of the parodos to our understanding of cultic αἰσχρολογία.

[43] Cf. especially 448ff., a passage which has strong affinities with Pind. fr. 129 Maehler: see Graf, pp. 82ff., and H. Lloyd-Jones in *Pindare* (*Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique* 31, Vandoeuvres–Geneva, 1985), pp. 245–83, on the nature and context of Pindar's eschatological poetry.

[44] See Burkert's compelling reconstruction of the initiation in the τελεστήριον (pp. 303ff. = 274ff.)