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Divine childhood: A study of selected *Homeric hymns* in relation to ancient Greek societal practices.

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of Master of Arts in Classics

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University of Cape Town
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Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

This dissertation broadly addresses *divine childhood*, with particular reference to the *Homeric hymns*. Included in the discussion is an overview of ancient Greek practices involving the subjects of birth, midwifery, *timai*, *kyrioi*, theft, parent-child relationships, maturation and the role of female children and women in society. In addition to the *Homeric hymns* a variety of other sources ranging from Homer to Apollodorus is drawn upon. The methodologies employed to analyse this diverse material are eclectic but a comparative approach has been particularly productive.

The comparative nature of this dissertation has allowed special emphasis to be placed on the relation between the human and divine worlds. The anthropomorphic nature of the Greek gods clearly allowed the mortal poets to superimpose their own conventions onto the divine realm. In sum this dissertation considers the way social practices shape myth and are themselves perpetuated and sustained by myth.

The tendency exhibited by the ancient Greeks to write about mythological happenings clearly allows them to explore alternative ways of life. These alternatives allowed them to explore in turn the consequences of subverting the norm (as seen in the figure of Pandora). Paradoxically, while playing with these alternative and subversive possibilities, the myths, which we assume were composed by men, succeed in reinforcing these norms (take for example the *Odyssey's* Penelope who represents an idealised version of how a woman was supposed to conduct herself).

Particular points of interest arise when non-divine conventions are not followed in the mythological representations of the anthropomorphic gods. Take for example the swaddling of Apollo – superficially, the poet seems to conform to the standard practices of antiquity but upon closer inspection we find that where the account diverges from the norms it serves to emphasise the divinity of the subject.

Significantly this project has determined that there was a great emphasis placed on young men *earning* their place in society, while no such emphasis was placed on young girls or women. When women reached the appropriate age of marriage, they were simply transferred from their natal *oikos* as a *parthenos* to their marital *oikos* as a *nymphē* and upon giving birth to their first child became a *gynē*. This is very different to the many stages a young man (and some gods) had to pass through to be considered an adult and a full member of the adult community. This is best illustrated by the second chapter concerning the maturation of Hermes. It should be emphasised here that in antiquity, as in our ‘modern’ era, the constructs of society were formed and maintained by adults.

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Introduction

My purpose in undertaking this project was to explore the dynamic and curious nature of the accounts of birth and childhood in the myths of the Greek gods. The initial motivation behind this project was to investigate the interesting nature of divine births. In general terms, I noticed that some male gods were afforded the opportunity of a birth and/or childhood narrative, whilst most female gods (hereafter goddesses) were not. The study grew out of this curiosity into an inquiry into narratives of divine childhoods and what sociological and anthropological information can be extracted from them.¹ An inquiry like this is valuable in its undertaking, combining both mythology and the evidence for actual antique practices to come up with a clearer picture of ancient society. This enhanced view of antiquity (combining both mythology and societal practices) will add to our understanding and view of the ancient world, hence the necessity of this type of inquiry.² A study like this must however be undertaken with the utmost caution. First and foremost we need to acknowledge a number of hurdles and we must try to overcome them. Some hurdles will be easier to surmount than others and whilst some cannot be overcome, they must either be circumvented or compensated for with the desire to move forward.

As such, our first hurdle is the remote nature of Greek myth. The myths were created millennia ago, by a different society from our own, and to the modern reader are often foreign and usually seem bizarre. This remoteness also leaves us with the problem of how to approach or treat any available comparative material. My aim throughout the project is to explore the effects that the myths had on ancient Greek society and the influence ancient

¹ Interestingly and importantly, we should note that childhood, as we know and understand it today is a construct which is both created and maintained by adults. The same can be said for the ancient view of childhood – all of our evidence comes from the adult members of the community.

² There did exist in antiquity the concept of life stages, see the stages of life found in Aristotle and Hippocrates discussed by Marrou (1956), 102, but I shall be adopting a less precise and more flexible typology of childhood.

society exerted on the formation and use of the myths.³ The remoteness (and often fragmentary nature) of both the sources for mythological material and the evidence of contemporary society are immense problems. We also run into the issue of the extent to which the accounts (specifically the *Homeric Hymns*) are in fact shaped by ancient practices. Being poetic narratives, the *hymns* themselves tend to be very selective in what they do portray and as such they do not provide us with a full picture of the actual practices. However, there is still much to be done with the material we do have, in spite of its selective and fragmentary nature. In order to work within the limits of the problem, it is informative to supplement the *hymns* and other mythological accounts with epigraphic and other available material from the ancient world. The most fruitful way forward is to try our best to interpret the mythological account in conjunction with the ancient material which *has* come down to us.

Our next hurdle is the obvious, pervasive, and unavoidable gendered bias of the sources. The texts I will examine were created, composed, written and recorded by males.⁴ They were created for consumption by a predominantly male audience in a period of time when many roles in society were reserved for or dominated by males. For us, women rarely have a voice in this world, their point of view is lost, and sadly, the same can and must be said for children. Whilst bearing this gendered bias in mind, it is extremely interesting to observe that in spite of the fact that women are without a doubt more important at certain stages of a person's life (for example at birth and during infancy and early childhood), it is still only the male point of view which is conveyed to us. Despite this problem, the sources are still viable

³ Greek mythology and the societies which both produced and consumed the mythology are delicately intertwined. It is more likely than not that the norms of ancient society influenced the details of mythology. But, we should also remember that the details in the mythology also served to maintain the norms of ancient society. The intertwining is an element which we cannot escape from, the mythological reinforcement of societal norms and the societal norms' influence on the mythology itself.

⁴ This problem presents itself not only in the written record but also in the visual record.

to the ancient historian. Our awareness of this gendered bias and our ability to interrogate the androcentricity allows us to compensate for this problem and indeed, to circumvent it; this in turn makes it possible to move forward.

Diachronicity is another problem with which we are presented. Change over time, from the archaic period (from which most of the mythological evidence I will use comes) to the classical (from which much of the comparative evidence comes) is a problem we cannot ignore. As you will come to notice, the main focus of this study is specific *Homeric Hymns*. The hymns themselves have been the subject of much debate; they are varied in terms of chronology, subject, nature and even length. Clay has noted that they vary in length “from 300 to 600 lines and in time from about the eighth to sixth centuries BC.”⁵ They cover a wide variety of subjects from the births of Apollo, Athena and Dionysus to the exploits of Hermes, Aphrodite and Artemis, to the simple acknowledgement and praise of specific gods and goddesses and finally to the grief of Demeter.⁶ The common thread throughout is the mythological nature of their narratives; they are poems composed in praise of or dedicated to the specific god or goddess. In spite of this seemingly incoherent body of poetry, the hymns are treated by scholars as a unit; it is with this in mind that we are able to move forward. The hymns however are not complete narratives when it comes to the main focus of this study: divine or mythological childhood. In order to overcome this I have had to supplement the hymns with other sources (different in genre, topic and date). These alternative sources have been treated cautiously. I am completely aware of the problems surrounding the use of alternative sources in this project, one of which is the differing societies and times from which these sources have been drawn.

⁵ Clay (1989), 5

⁶ See hymns 2, 28 and 1; 4, 5 and 9; 12, 15, 16 and 20 and 2 respectively

With all of these problems one would, could or should be discouraged from undertaking this kind of project – or any project in the classics. However, if these problems can be overcome this study promises to be terribly fruitful, exciting and enlightening. I hope that this comes across throughout this dissertation. I have where possible tried to overcome the constraints which the nature of Classics as a subject presents us, but for the most part I have had to work within the constraints of the subject. Even working within the restrictions of the field this project presents us with a wealth of information to examine and interpret (or perhaps re-interpret). As such I have had to be very selective and at times eclectic in my methodologies. I have not followed one theoretical framework exclusively as an explanation to be applied generically to everything – for example, the initiatory explanation favoured by Brelich. I have followed a variety of approaches and used varied scholarship.⁷

If any one framework can be applied to my study it would have to be termed broadly *anthropological*, and from this perspective I have found that a comparative approach tends to be the most useful and yields the most illumination. I have tried as far as possible to use for comparison accounts in the ancient texts which are contemporary or as contemporary as possible, but I have also found it useful, on the odd occasion, to bring in ‘modern’ frameworks which help to bring new possibilities to the fore.

The texts from antiquity I have chosen to use in this dissertation are, to say the very least, varied. They vary diachronically, geographically and in terms of genre. For the most part the central discussion of this thesis is based on specific *Homeric Hymns* (because they provide extended accounts of the life stages which form the focus of my study); the *hymn to Apollo* and the *hymn to Hermes* being two prominent examples, with inclusions here and there from

⁷ While I am aware of the psychological approach pioneered by scholars like Rank (2004²) and Jung & Kerenyi (1951), I have chosen to focus more on sociological and anthropological methodologies.

other hymns, however. I have also chosen to elucidate and amplify the discussion with certain medical texts, mime, comedy, drama, historiography, oratory, theogony, epic and on occasion the philosophical musings of Plato. Diachronically the texts vary from archaic poetry (Hesiod, Homer and the *Homeric Hymns*) to classical comedy, drama and philosophy (Aristophanes; Euripides and Plato), Hellenistic hymns, mime and epic (Callimachus, Herodas and Apollonius of Rhodes) and Roman biography and medicine (Plutarch and Soranus), to name but a small sample. Although an author like Soranus is writing in a different intellectual world from that which characterised the poets of the *Homeric Hymns* and was writing for a different audience, he at least offers fuller descriptions than are available elsewhere of certain basic birthing and perinatal processes. No matter how varied all of these texts are they have one thing in common. They all, in their own way, contribute to our understanding of birth, childhood and maturation, in the ancient world. They fill in each other's narrative gaps and help to broaden the picture; thus, in the first chapter, we have the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* considered in conjunction with Soranus' *Gynaecology*, and augmented with extracts taken from Apollodorus, Aristophanes, Callimachus, Euripides, Hesiod, Lysias, Plato, Plutarch, Thucydides and Xenophon, all of which give us a fairly elaborate picture of the perinatal processes and conventions in the ancient world. The same principle has been applied extensively to the chapter on Hermes as well as the chapter on the goddesses, although to a lesser degree. The question of the purpose of these texts does not concern me here. What interests me is the message that these texts provide us with, the anthropological information pertaining to ancient conventions that we may extract from them to add to our ever increasing body of knowledge on birth and childhood studies in the ancient world.

My major source for the details on the ‘birth of the gods’ – as you will notice and as I have already pointed out – are the *Homeric Hymns*.⁸ The hymns contain the most information for our purposes, particularly for the gods (as opposed to the goddesses, although this in itself speaks volumes). The nature of the hymns also proves useful. They are Panhellenic (used throughout the Greek world) and for the most part do not deal exclusively with local or regional myths, but rather the major myths which all of the Greek world would have identified and which it would have accepted.⁹ The hymns to gods (particularly Apollo and Hermes) tend to celebrate the god while he is in the process of acquiring his *timai*, while the hymns to the goddesses (Aphrodite, but also to a certain extent Demeter, although she is not considered in this project) tend to focus on an episode in her life where her powers are undermined by male authorities – particularly Zeus. A brief survey of the thirty-three *Homeric Hymns* sees two¹⁰ telling of the birth of a god, three¹¹ describing events and conventions which are important in the perinatal setting, and one¹² relating the childhood exploits of a god. Whilst the other hymns are important as sources of mythological and socio-cultural information, they have been largely discounted for this project; as such I will focus mainly on the *Homeric Hymns to Apollo* and *to Hermes*, referring occasionally to other *Homeric Hymns*.

⁸ A quick survey of the narratives of the childhood development of the gods shows that the childhoods of the gods tend to be telescoped. Most narratives concerning their youthful ‘years’ tend to be condensed into a very short period of time; Hermes is a good example, as is Apollo.

⁹ Clay (1989), 9 puts it more eloquently. “Around the eighth century B.C., a strong centripetal force arises, countering the centrifugal forces that splinter individual Greek communities. It manifests itself in the great Panhellenic shrines, like Olympia, Delphi, Delos, and Eleusis which draw Greek speakers from every city and community. It also manifests itself in the great Panhellenic epics of Homer and Hesiod and, above all, in the creation of a Panhellenic Olympian religion.” She also notes the purposeful avoidance of local legend (p. 10). Most importantly, Clay notes that “between theogonic poetry and epic there remains a gap, one that is filled by the Olympian narratives or the longer hymns;” this gap filled by the hymns integrates ‘new’ gods “into the Olympian order” (p. 15).

¹⁰ *Hom. Hymn Ap.*, this hymn narrates the birth of Apollo (which tells of not only the birth of Apollo but also in passing mentions the births of both Hephaestus and Athena) and *Hom. Hymn Ath.*, which simply mentions the circumstances of Athena’s birth. We must not forget the double birth of Dionysus in *Hom. Hymn Dion*.

¹¹ *Hom. Hymn Dem.*, *Hom. Hymn Aph.* and *Hom. Hymn Dion*. Demeter claims that she could act as a wet-nurse in lines 141-42 of her hymn.

¹² *Hom. Hymn Herm.*

A few more points remain to be considered before we can proceed with this dissertation. One observes a curious trend, which this dissertation will examine and test, when investigating accounts of the birth of the Olympian gods. In its most basic form the trend is as follows: gods are born as infants and perform exploits in (or at the very least have myths concerning) their younger, childhood years. Goddesses are *usually* ‘born’ fully mature and ready to participate in their relevant sphere of influence.¹³ The most notable examples in these two categories are Apollo and Hermes on the one hand and Aphrodite and Athena on the other. Apollo, born as an infant, rapidly matures upon consuming the food of the gods, but nonetheless he still had to endure being born an infant.¹⁴ Hermes, born as an infant, tricks his older brother, Apollo, steals his cattle, and invents a musical instrument, all while he is no more than a few *hours* old.¹⁵ Golden notes that whilst these gods must endure being born as infants, “they are certainly free from the usual limitations of their age group.”¹⁶ Aphrodite in the *Theogony* is ‘born’ from the foam surrounding the castrated genitalia of Ouranos as a fully mature woman and the moment she steps foot on land her powers of fertility are noticeable as “grass began to grow all around beneath her slender feet.”¹⁷ Athena, born from the head of Zeus, pops out fully clad in battle gear, ready to slot into her allotted province.¹⁸

The children of Rhea and Kronos,¹⁹ who dominate the Olympian pantheon, generally lack birth and childhood mythology. The first five children who are born²⁰ are consumed by

¹³ Boardman (2004), 112. He notes that “a baby warrior goddess or goddess of fertility, an Athena or Aphrodite, would be totally incongruous [as it reflects the social and gender attitude in ancient Greece]. [While] infant male gods, ... often have a narrative function, either from the nature of their birth or to demonstrate their special precocity, such as Hermes stealing Apollo’s cattle and inventing the lyre . . . but there are no images of infant Zeuses, Poseidons or Areses, since they would be incongruous too.”

¹⁴ *Hom. Hymn Ap.*

¹⁵ *Hom. Hymn Herm.*

¹⁶ Golden (1990), 5

¹⁷ *Hes. Theog.* 182

¹⁸ *Hom. Hymn to Ath.*; *Hes. Theog.* 929

¹⁹ Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon. (*Hes. Theog.* 451ff.)

Kronos before they have a chance to either develop into mature adults (if indeed they were born as infants) or lay the foundations for their respective spheres of influence (if they were born as mature adults), all with the one exception – Zeus. Taken away moments after his birth to a safe place in the care of either nymphs,²¹ his grandparents Ouranos and Gaia²² or the Curetes,²³ Zeus is allowed to develop along more ‘normal’ lines, certainly when compared with his siblings and many other Olympian gods and goddesses. He has a childhood²⁴ and what would seem to be a brief adolescence²⁵ and eventually he reaches adulthood. He then goes on to take his revenge on his father, with the help of Metis who, according to Apollodorus,²⁶ gave Kronos the drug which caused him to vomit up the stone (which would become the *omphalos*) and Zeus’ siblings.

And so it is with the aforementioned mountain of information in mind (both stifling limitations and interesting possibilities) that we can begin to explore the birth and childhood of the gods.

²⁰ It is impossible to say whether Hesiod envisioned them being born as either infants or as mature adults, but perhaps more than likely he saw them as infants from their father’s actions which follow, and from the subsequent birth of Zeus as an infant.

²¹ Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1.6

²² Hes. *Theog.* 470ff.

²³ Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1.6. The Curetes are curious characters in mythology; they are chthonic deities who are mostly associated with the protection and rearing of the infant Zeus. They prevented Kronos from knowing the truth about the existence of his youngest child by beating spears on their shields (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.1.6; Callim. *Hymn* 1.51-53), or by deterring him from coming close (Str. 10.3.11). Interestingly Strabo (14.1.20) records that the Curetes protected the children of Leto from the prying eyes of Hera (in the same manner in which they had shielded Zeus from Kronos, “with the din of their arms”) which if widely believed in ancient Greece sheds an interesting light on the current study, which, due to the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* sees Hera cunningly preventing Leto from delivering Apollo.

²⁴ Zeus seems to have been thrifty during his childhood, as Callimachus tells us that “though you were young your thoughts were full of years” (Callim. *Hymn* 1.56).

²⁵ Callimachus’ *Hymn to Zeus* seems to hint at a more normal maturation process for the king of the gods; although the process seems to have taken place relatively quickly, it is somewhat less speedy than his son Apollo’s almost comical, instantaneous growth in the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* “Raised in abundance, in no time at all you shot, heavenly Zeus, into a youth, and down quickly whiskered your cheeks” (Callim. *Hymn* 1.54-55).

²⁶ Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.1

CHAPTER ONE

Birth and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*

Boardman observed that the “Greeks were never quite ready to accept the supernatural at face value, without trying to rationalise it.”²⁷ The birth of Apollo, as narrated in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is a perfect example of human experiences and conventions being superimposed onto the divine world, thus it serves as a good example of the rationalising tendencies of the ancient Greeks. The *Homeric Hymn* provides us with the earliest²⁸ and fullest account of the birth of a god; as such it seems a good place to begin. The following chapter will attempt to answer the question: How does the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* relate to the birthing practices we find in ancient Greece? On the surface, the hymn seems to show, quite concisely, a narrative version of a (divine) birth. Apollo’s birth, whilst divine, does not seem to deviate too far from mortal birthing practices, as we will soon discover. We will also discover that the birth of Apollo, in the *Homeric Hymn* does not match up perfectly with the accounts we do have of mortal births. It is prudent to first examine one of the more natural or normal births we have evidence for before attempting to examine the bizarre supernatural births in Greek mythology. Therefore, I will examine not only the actual birth practices (in the mortal realm) but also events which occur perinatally. I will investigate the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in the context of the information it provides us with for conventions of perinatal processes.²⁹ Thus I will analyse the setting, conventions and events both before and after a birth in the ancient world and then, utilising the information contained in the hymn,

²⁷ Boardman (2004), 103

²⁸ Composed around 523 BC, see West (2003), 11.

²⁹ Rutherford (1988), 65-75, discusses Pindar’s version of the birth of Apollo. Pindar’s version is markedly different from the account we find in the *Hom. Hymn Ap.*, most of these differences seem to come down to the involvement of Zeus in the birth of his offspring. Rutherford argues that “Zeus is almost wholly absent from the *Hymn* but Pindar has him supervising. . .” (p. 73). Pindar’s version of the birth of Apollo does not contain a full account of his birth as the *Homeric Hymn* does, thus for the purposes of this dissertation I have chosen not to include it. For a fuller discussion see: Rutherford (1988), 65-75.

attempt a comparative analysis of the events experienced by both mortal and immortal mothers.

It is pertinent, before we proceed, to summarise the events of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* before we move on to the discussion of ancient birth practices. The hymn will be used as a framework to which ancient birthing practices and conventions will be compared. The birth scene in the hymn takes up lines 89 to 129, a short³⁰ but very descriptive chronicle of the archer-god's birth. It offers us a fairly detailed account of the procedures which the ancients probably viewed as significant³¹ in the whole process that resulted in the birth of a child.³² But before sweeping statements like that are criticised, it must be said that the hymn is a poetic account and can only be considered in light of 'other' accounts of birth. The 'other' accounts which will be considered are the later medical writings of Soranus (*Gynaecology*), references in Plato's *Republic* and the philosophical/biographical texts of Plutarch (*Education of Children*); an important modern examination of the Greek birth processes is Robert Garland's *The Greek Way of Life* (1990), which gives a thorough account of the process of birth in the ancient world.³³

³⁰ In terms of the 546 lines of the hymn itself the 40 line narrative is quite short, however in terms of birth narratives for the gods Apollo's is, by far, the most descriptive and complete.

³¹ It would seem (certainly from the texts examined) that birthing practices, and opinions regarding them, remained fairly static throughout the ages. The *Hom. Hymn Ap.*, Plato (*Thtt.* 149b – 151d) and Soranus (*Gyn.*) all seem to be of similar opinion regarding the importance and function of midwives. The same might be said for wet-nurses who were regarded as a necessary part of child-rearing, but who at the same time were viewed with slight suspicion (e.g. Plutarch *Mor.* 3c – e; who accuses wet-nurses of performing the job, not out of love for children or the well-being of the family, but out of love for pay - ἄτε μισθοῦ φιλοῦσαι) and generally kept as slaves. The *Hymn to Apollo* makes no specific mention of a midwife, but the fact that Leto does not feed her son is enough to imply their essential role. Plato (*Resp.* 2.373c) acknowledges their necessary role but also classes them as slaves (Plato *Resp.* 5.460 also makes some interesting points about the role of wet-nursing in the "just" city). While Plutarch (*Mor.* 3c – e) seems to be of the opinion that the mother, if capable, should nurse the child, but does acknowledge that wet-nurses do have a role to play. This will be fully discussed below.

³² As anthropomorphic gods it is likely that conventions and practices which occurred in the mortal realm were transferred into the divine realm. This would allow the ancients to understand their gods and relate to their mythology as there was something recognisable in their myths, something with which they could identify.

³³ Garland's work is based on the reconstruction and interpretation of a variety of ancient sources. Whilst, on the whole, I have chosen to follow Garland's work, I cannot agree with some of his interpretations and observations; where this is so I have supplied evidence to the contrary and argued as such.

In sum the events of the hymn are as follows: (i) having secured herself a suitable location for the birth of her son,³⁴ (ii) Leto was in labour for nine days and nights, attended by Dione, Rhea, Themis and Amphitrite (Hera kept the other goddesses – most notably Eileithyia – away).³⁵ (iii) The attending goddesses, realising that it was necessary for Eileithyia to be present, sent Iris to fetch her.³⁶ (iv) Iris successfully convinces Eileithyia to come to Leto’s aid (with the help of a grand gift).³⁷ (v) The instant that Eileithyia arrives on Delos, Leto clasps a palm tree and Apollo is delivered.³⁸ (vi) At the very moment that Apollo “sprang out into the light” (ἐκ δ’ ἔθορε πρὸ φώωσδε) the goddesses gave a ritual cry of relief (ὀλόλυξαν).³⁹ The goddesses then (vii) wash, (viii) wrap (in a white cloth, fine woven and unsullied) and (ix) tie the infant Apollo with a golden band.⁴⁰ (x) Themis then served him nectar and ambrosia, and Leto was proud.⁴¹ Upon consuming the nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods, Apollo suddenly grows up and reaches the age he will be for the rest of time.⁴² This concise version of events, considered apart from the poetic embellishments, gives us an idea of the processes which occur at a divine birth and the processes which may occur at a non-divine birth.⁴³ The events, processes and conventions we find in Apollo’s birth narrative in the *Homeric Hymn*, one would expect to find elsewhere, and it is this idea which I hope to explore. The hypothesis that Apollo’s birth in the *Homeric Hymn* is in some way influenced by non-divine birthing practices, will be tested further when considering the medical and philosophical texts, but for now suffice it to say that these actions were all

³⁴ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 89

³⁵ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 90-101

³⁶ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 102-108

³⁷ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 109-114

³⁸ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 115-119

³⁹ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 119

⁴⁰ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 120-123

⁴¹ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 123-126

⁴² *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 126-129

⁴³ It is important to emphasise the notion that the sequence, itself, seems to be a fundamental part of the birth process. ‘Sequence’ is an important part of many ritualistic performances (thus adding to the notion that the process of giving birth is highly ritualised) such as sacrifices, the creation of a poetic narrative and even preparing the body after death, the idea of *kata kosmon* - according to the universe - is thus very important at this point in the narrative.

important – with a few exceptions – in the delivery of a mortal child. The account alerts us to the many different practices, which should be carefully assessed when considering birth practices in the ancient Greek world.⁴⁴ It is most probable in this case (as with many other mythological phenomena) that those who fashioned the birth of a god into a mythological and poetic narrative relied on anthropomorphic conventions as there simply was no other precedent for the birth of a god. The tendency of the Greeks to superimpose their own mortal conventions onto the immortal realm allowed the audience to identify with and thus better understand the events of the poetic narrative. The mythology of the birth of the gods becomes somewhat more interesting when one considers certain events in the birth (or the childhood) which do not conform to practices that we find in the human ancient world. An example of this in the *Homeric Hymns* is the instantaneous growth of Apollo upon consuming the food of the gods, or even the birth of Athena, who springs out of the head of Zeus as a mature woman. It would seem that the anthropomorphic conventions utilised in some circumstances (i.e. the birth of Apollo) are done away with in others (i.e. the sudden growth of Apollo or the birth of Athena). Thus we move on to a more detailed examination of the birth of Apollo as told by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

The very first thing which we must consider is the location of the birth, after which points (ii) through (x) will be carefully discussed. After a successful negotiation, Leto is ready to give birth on the island of Delos – outside. This is the first curious happening in the hymn regarding the birth of the god. Garland tells us that “as there were no hospitals in ancient Greece, birth usually took place in the home” probably in quarters reserved for women, known as the *gunaikeion*.⁴⁵ The reason the *gunaikeion* was selected was two-fold: first as it

⁴⁴ Points ii – x are relevant to our discussion here as they are the procedures which will be discussed in the process of a non-divine birth.

⁴⁵ Garland (1990), 61. He points out that there is no actual evidence for this, but also argues that it is the most likely location for it to occur. For further discussion on this topic see Garland (1990), and Blundell (1995).

was the most sheltered and protected part of the house and second it was able to contain the pollution associated with the birth.⁴⁶ Parker, at this point, adds to this inquiry's presently expanding body of knowledge in this regard by arguing, with reference to the Cyrene cathartic laws, that "pollution is incurred by entering the same roof."⁴⁷ He notes that the *oikos* can be interpreted in two ways, firstly, and most obviously, physically, which would thus make it tantamount to the roof of the house and, secondly, socially, thus making all members of the household vulnerable to pollution.⁴⁸ Parker does not enter into a discussion regarding the exact location within the *oikos* that would have played host to the birth, but he seems to be writing with the idea that the birth took place indoors. Regardless of whom we choose to follow, it is clear that the birth was meant to take place indoors, most likely in order to contain the contamination that was associated with giving birth (this is certainly the impression I get from Parker), and to allow the birthing party, especially the mother, a certain degree of privacy. Garland has pointed out that "if privacy could be guaranteed it is just as possible that some women may have preferred to give birth out of doors as is suggested by many divine myths"⁴⁹ citing Rhea in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* (line 11) and Leto in *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (lines 116-7). On the other hand Lefkowitz has pointed out (possibly in personal correspondence with Garland) that myths are of dubious value in determining 'real life' birth settings since a human dwelling might have been considered an inappropriate location for the birth of a deity. One must also be aware of the idea that the pollution associated with birth would have been difficult to contain if the birth took place outside. I think that it is important that we consider the occurrence of outdoor births a little further, as it may help to elucidate the reasons behind Apollo's outdoor birth.

⁴⁶ Garland (1990), 61

⁴⁷ Parker (1983), 50, discussing the pollution associated with birth itself.

⁴⁸ Parker (1983), 50

⁴⁹ Garland (1990), 306. He seems to rely solely on the poetic depictions of the births of Zeus and Apollo, taking place outdoors, for his assertion that mortal women may *choose* to do the same.

One must first be willing to accept that with the unpredictability of the natural process of childbirth, it is possible for a pregnant woman, close to her due date, to suddenly go into labour and give birth within a few hours, without the opportunity to move indoors or to a more suitable location – even in our modern society – let alone in the time of the ancient Greeks. That being said, there were some places which strictly forbade birth on the grounds such as: sanctuaries⁵⁰ and from the latter part of the 5th century BC, the island of Delos.⁵¹ It is also interesting to note that whilst the act of giving birth caused pollution, which could be contained by the *gunaikeion*, pregnant women themselves were not seen as a source of pollution; and in spite of being pregnant were allowed in religious areas, although birth in these places was strictly prohibited. While the pregnant women were not seen as a source of pollution until the moment of parturition, they were clearly susceptible to it, as can be seen in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where Iphigenia, the priestess, warns all pregnant women to stay away, before she leads the polluted Orestes through the streets.⁵²

Knowing now where births could not take place, it is prudent to discuss the most likely setting in which they did occur, before we can investigate the reasons for Apollo's outdoor birth. Thus we should consider the *gunaikeion* in a little more detail, as it is the most common – and most accepted – location in which births took place in ancient Greece. However archaeological evidence for the *gunaikeion* is scant as the women's quarters were usually on

⁵⁰ Some such instances are: Telephus' birth to Auge in a sanctuary of Athena which caused a plague to descend upon Tegea (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.7.4) and Iphigenia's remarks regarding those Artemis bars from her altars, "any man who has touched blood or a woman in labour or a corpse, Artemis calls unclean and bars him from her altars. . ." (Eur. *IT.* 381-2). The restrictions (as put forward by Iphigenia) show that a woman in labour (amongst the other people she mentions) is more than likely seen as a source of pollution, which would thus pollute the altars of the gods – an unacceptable occurrence. There is also evidence in Pausanias for this restriction; he comments "the sacred grove of Asclepius is surrounded on all sides by boundary marks. No death or birth takes place within the enclosure, the same custom prevails also in the island of Delos." (Paus. 2.27.1)

⁵¹ Thuc. 3.104.1 ". . . for the future it was commanded that no one should be allowed either to die or to give birth to a child on the island [of Delos]." Hornblower (1997), 30, dates the purification of Delos to 426/5 BC, whilst Parker (1983), 163 points out that to purify meant "to expel the existing graves from the sacred island and protect it in future from all taint of birth and death."

⁵² Eur. *IT* 1226-9, Iphigenia also warns every man; every consecrated temple servant and everyone who is to be married on that day, to stay away from Orestes and the pollution associated with him. See also Blundell (1995), 108.

the second storey of the house.⁵³ Walker adds to this by noting that it is extremely difficult to establish the existence and the form of an upper storey of an ancient mud-brick house.⁵⁴ Walker notes that “though the women’s quarters themselves are lost, many vestiges of the history of their inhabitants may be recovered.”⁵⁵ Thus it is necessary to look for other evidence of the *gunaikeion*. We find evidence in Lysias and Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* (7-10, especially 9.2-5). The examples we find in these sources help us to picture the *oikos* as a whole, and thus to understand it better. These texts also allow us to glimpse inside the *gunaikeion* and the service it would have provided in everyday life and possibly the raising of children. Lysias provides us with a simple but useful description of his house, which we should assume, was the average house of his time.

“I must tell you sirs . . . my dwelling is on two floors, the upper being equal in space to the lower, with the women’s quarters above and the men’s below. When the child was born to us, its mother suckled it; and in order that, each time that it had to be washed, she might avoid the risk of descending the stairs, I used to live above and the women below.”⁵⁶

Lysias’ speech tells us three things about housing in Athens. Firstly, that the *average* house consisted of two floors (that is not to say that all houses had two storeys); secondly that it was common for the women to have the run of the second floor (where the *gunaikeion* was situated) and the men to live on the first floor; and thirdly (which is relevant to my argument) that the infant was cared for in the *gunaikeion*. I do not think that it is necessary to delve any deeper into the exceptional circumstances that allowed for the *gunaikeion* to be situated on

⁵³ Walker (1983), 81 – 91.

⁵⁴ We may deduce from the idea that the *gunaikeion* was on the second storey of the house that it was indeed the most secure room. Secure from the point of view that it was the most difficult to get to from street level as one would likely have to traverse the whole house before reaching it (contrasted to the *andreion* which was the most easily accessible from the street).

⁵⁵ Walker (1983), 91

⁵⁶ Lys. I.9

the ground floor, it is simply important to note that the primary care of the child occurred within the *gunaikeion* and not in the *andreion* (certainly the child would have spent the earliest parts of its life in the *gunaikeion*). From this it is reasonable to deduce that the child was born in the *gunaikeion*.

Ischomachus, in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, shows his wife around their house, and reports the following when they arrive at the *gunaikeion*.

“I showed her the women's quarters too, separated by a bolted door from the men's, so that nothing which ought not to be moved may be taken out, and that the servants may not breed without our leave.”⁵⁷

In this instance we are not told if the house is single or double storey (more than likely it is not), but we are informed that the *andreion* and the *gunaikeion* are next to each other, separated by a bolted door. This door, apart from providing the master of the house with easy access to the *gunaikeion* to prevent the slaves from 'breeding without leave,' might also have served as an easy access point for a mother, nursing her child. The example we have in Ischomachus' house might also have prevented the problems experienced in Lysias' house, with the mother being free enough to have an affair. Ischomachus' house also allows us to see that slaves (almost certainly female as they were allowed access to the *gunaikeion*) were also allowed to come and go with a certain amount of freedom, although under the watchful eye of the man of the house. The bolted door allowed the man to keep an eye on the happenings in the *gunaikeion*, thus making it more secure, supporting the notion that the *gunaikeion* was the most protected room in the house.⁵⁸ However, the bolted door, while

⁵⁷ Xen. *Oec.* 9.5

⁵⁸ Garland (1990), 61

allowing the husband access, would also have provided a contrary service, of keeping unwanted intruders out, further adding to the secure nature of the room.

Regardless of whether the *gunaikeion* was on the second storey of the house or next to the *andreion*, accessed via a bolted door, it is safe to say that it was a protected, sheltered area of the house, in which the woman and her servant(s) operated. The daily tasks of the woman (e.g. weaving, looking after the children etc.) took place in the *gunaikeion*, as (more than likely) did the traumatic event of childbirth. The seclusion of women in the *gunaikeion* was a norm in antiquity. In time of childbirth, it stemmed from the need to contain the pollution associated with the process. At other times, it was the result of the need to produce legitimate children. The reason for separate male and female quarters is due to the fact that the practice of secluding women may have contributed to a family's status in the ancient world.⁵⁹ Walker points out that it was the

“transfer of citizenship from one generation of men to the next, that led the Athenians to place such high value on legitimate childbirth, and thus to seclude the women of the wealthy families who played so prominent a part in Athenian public life.”⁶⁰

If we know that the seclusion of women on a day-to-day basis was important (especially for the reason of the production of legitimate offspring) then we may further deduce that the seclusion of women during childbirth was of the utmost importance. Thus their seclusion, during childbirth (more than likely in the *gunaikeion*), would not only have been for reasons

⁵⁹ Walker (1983), 81. Walker also point out that seclusion can only really be “indulged by those who can afford it, and emulated by others striving for respectability,” clearly linking the seclusion of women to the maintenance of some kind of purity or propriety on their part. Perhaps due to the fact that separate quarters were needed for men and women, the need for a house of a reasonable size arose. Thus those with larger houses were able to have more comfortable and larger living quarters, than those who owned smaller houses (and by implication less wealth); those with larger houses were likely to have had more money – the same is true even to this day.

⁶⁰ Walker (1983), 82

of legitimacy but also to prevent the pollution associated with the birth from spreading throughout the whole house.⁶¹ The birth of Apollo outdoors is thus, rather, an exception to accepted practices, perhaps further denoting his divine status, as we shall see with other alterations on the birthing practices further on. Perhaps also due to the clear fact that birth was a ‘woman’s thing’, the use of the *gunaikeion* is obvious, since it was not the concern of men, and usually men were only involved in exceptional circumstances (see Hippocrates *Cutting up of the Embryo* 4). An apt comparison would be the preparation of corpses which was a woman’s duty.⁶²

It seems to me that births which occur outside the normal location for a birth happen for significant reasons. Let us consider Maia, who more than likely gave birth to Hermes in her cave,⁶³ a liminal space, far from what the ancients would have viewed as an appropriate place for the birth of a child.⁶⁴ Firstly, Hermes’ birth in a cave would have been largely secret, perhaps due to the fact that once again, Zeus had been unfaithful to Hera and Hermes was the result of his indiscretions. Maia might very well have chosen to give birth to her child in a secret location so that she did not incur the wrath of Hera,⁶⁵ as Leto had. But we may never be able to decide this for certain as the ancient poets do not write about any involvement Hera may or may not have had in Maia’s life. The second option for Maia’s choice of location could be that her son was not a legitimate son of Zeus. It is highly probable that in the ancient world, women who were pregnant, with illegitimate children, would have removed

⁶¹ Although it must be pointed out that the house(hold) did incur a certain amount of pollution due to the birth of a child. For further discussion see Parker (1983), 32-73.

⁶² Parker (1983), 32-48

⁶³ The birth of Hermes will be considered in detail at a later stage, but it is important at this point to at least consider it briefly. The early childhood adventures experienced by Hermes are detailed in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* Also consider the birth of Polyphemus (*Hom. Od.* 1.70ff) in a cave.

⁶⁴ The poet does not actively tell the audience that Hermes was born in Maia’s cave, but the impression we get is that it is almost certain that he was, or at the very least we do not get the impression that Hermes was born out in the open.

⁶⁵ As a nymph, the poet tells us that Maia “shunned the company of the blessed gods, dwelling within a cave’s shadow”. *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 4-6. It is clear from the description of Maia dwelling within the cave that it was meant to be viewed as her home, much in the same vein as Calypso in the *Odyssey*.

themselves from society in order to give birth, removing themselves from the city and the watchful eye of its citizens. One need only consider the deceitful actions of Mnesilochus' wife in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*⁶⁶ to appreciate the fact that women who had given birth to a female infant, a deceased infant, or who faked pregnancy, might go to any lengths to hide the true nature of their (and their offspring's) condition.

The birth of Zeus is another interesting case to consider, as Rhea also gives birth outside, in secret. However the reason she chose to deliver Zeus in secret was widely known to the ancients,⁶⁷ even though it is not documented by Callimachus, in his *Hymn to Zeus*. Regardless of Rhea's reasons for keeping the birth of her youngest son a secret it still results in an outdoor birth, away from the watchful eye of 'society.' Parrhasia, Callimachus (*Hymn to Zeus* 10) claims, was the location of the primeval childbed of Rhea, which Garland also cites as a source⁶⁸ for a woman's preference to give birth out of doors. But this cannot be the case for mortal women would not have been hounded by Hera (as is the case with Leto) or an evil child-devouring husband (as is the case with Rhea) and hopefully they would not have found themselves in the position of Maia, giving birth to an illegitimate son of the king.⁶⁹ These cases are the exceptions, rather than the rule, and Garland's attempt to use them as sources for mortal women preferring to give birth out of doors is thus flawed. I think that it is

⁶⁶ Arist. *Thesm.* 507-509. Mnesilochus' wife had an old woman bring a baby into the house in a large pot. Once the old woman had done so, the wife told her husband to leave the room as she 'was about to give birth'. The old woman (in theory the midwife) then shouted that a strong baby boy had been born. We do not know the circumstances that resulted in Mnesilochus' wife's need to present him with a child that was not his own. We may however, guess the reasons: (a) she faked her pregnancy, (b) she had a miscarriage and did not tell the father, (c) she had delivered a still borne child or (d) she had a girl, any of which may have been the cause of her deceit.

⁶⁷ Hes. *Theog.* 455ff. and Apollod. (*Bibl.* 1.1.5) both detail the reasons for keeping Zeus' birth a secret, the impending danger of Kronos' intention to maintain his state of supreme power by eating all of his children.

⁶⁸ Garland (1990), 306

⁶⁹ If we follow Hes. *Theog.* 918-920, Leto was one of the wives of Zeus *before* he married Hera. In a sense then Apollo and Artemis are *not* illegitimate children. This does not however explain Hera's hounding of Leto in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

prudent in this case that we follow Lefkowitz⁷⁰ in arguing that it was inappropriate for goddesses to give birth in human dwellings, hence the births being situated outside.⁷¹

Next, and importantly for this part of the study, we must finally consider the birth of Apollo, outside, on the island of Delos. As has already been noted, the Athenians eventually made it illegal to give birth on the island of Delos.⁷² We need to bear in mind the circumstances which forced Leto to deliver Apollo in the place that she did. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Hera was hounding the pregnant Leto, making it impossible for her to give birth to her twins *anywhere*.⁷³ Eventually, after negotiations with the island of Delos (who in some cases is said to be Leto's sister, Asteria⁷⁴) she finds a place to give birth to her son (Artemis having been born a few days earlier on a different island).⁷⁵ The island of Delos was not exactly paradise, but was barren, rocky and unpopulated. Leto's negotiations with Delos provided for the future greatness and glory of the island, thanks in no small part to the birth of her famous son on its soil. As noted above, by Lefkowitz, a mortal *oikos* was not an appropriate place for a divinity to give birth;⁷⁶ this, coupled with the fact that Hera was hounding the poor pregnant Titaness, resulted in the birth taking place in a most unlikely,

⁷⁰ Cited by Garland (1990), 360 – possibly personal correspondence

⁷¹ Interestingly, there do not seem to be any cases where we can say for certain that a god was born on mount Olympus. Our strongest two candidates are Athena and Hephaestus. The first uncertain case is that of Zeus, in giving birth to Athene from his head, he could very well have been on Olympus at the time, but we cannot say for sure. A stronger case than this is that of Hephaestus, but this case is feeble. Hera upon parthenogenetically giving birth to her craftsman god son, discovers he is lame, and throws him from Olympus. This case, being our strongest, rests on two provisos, the first is that we need to be following the myth that Hera did throw him from Olympus as he was born lame (Hom. *Il.* 18.395-7), not the myth that claims Zeus threw him from Olympus, for freeing Hera from her golden bonds (Hom. *Il.* 1.590-2). The second proviso is that Hera would have had to throw him down to earth immediately after she had given birth (thus implying that Hephaestus had actually be born on Olympus) and not after a short period or lapse of time. Either way both of these provisos are tenuous, and, ultimately, do not further our search for a god who was born on mount Olympus. We are thus no closer to definitively stating that any god was born on Olympus.

⁷² For a short discussion of the purification of Delos, see note 48, otherwise Hornblower (1997), 30, for a much fuller discussion.

⁷³ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 45-50

⁷⁴ Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.4.1

⁷⁵ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 16. Artemis was born on the island of Ortygia.

⁷⁶ We also need to bear in mind that the island of Delos is presented to the audience of the hymn as a barren, desolate island; there simply were no mortal *oikoi*, in fact no *oikoi* of any sort, for Leto to give birth in.

inappropriate and inhospitable place. Garland's observation that "if privacy could be guaranteed, it was just as possible that some women may have preferred to give birth out of doors, as is suggested by many divine myths"⁷⁷ is somewhat short-sighted as it does not account for alternative reasons for a divine birth to take place outside, as I have just shown. Most mortal women would not have been hounded by Hera, or be producing illegitimate offspring. The deceptions which did take place regarding the birth of a mortal child usually took place in the *oikos*, as has been observed in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*. Thus we can conclude that the extraordinary location for the birth of Apollo is not to be taken as evidence for mortal women preferring to give birth outdoors (even if privacy could be guaranteed), but as possible evidence for illegitimate children having to be born beyond the watchful eye of society, and should be seen as an exception to the general rule of birth inside, in the *gunaikeion*.

Having covered the location of the birth we can now carefully consider points (ii) to (x) mentioned previously. Point (ii) informs the audience of the poem who attended (and who did not attend) the birth of the archer-god, Apollo. The goddesses in attendance are as follows: Dione (mother of Aphrodite in Homeric tradition⁷⁸ and in Hesiodic tradition one of the many Nymphs born to Okeanos and Tethys),⁷⁹ Amphitrite (wife of Poseidon⁸⁰ but also a daughter of Okeanos – and Doris),⁸¹ Themis (who belonged to the previous generation of Titans and – like so many other goddesses – had children with Zeus)⁸² and Rhea (who by this point in time

⁷⁷ Garland (1990), 306

⁷⁸ Hom. *Il.* 5.370-1

⁷⁹ Hes. *Theog.* 350 Regardless of the difference in Homeric and Hesiodic traditions it should be noted that Dione was clearly seen – at the very least – as a contemporary of Leto. In the Hesiodic tradition she seems to have been 'born' before Zeus (who is born in line 458) and certainly before Leto (who is only 'born' in line 402), thus making her either a contemporary or slightly more senior than Leto.

⁸⁰ Hes. *Theog.* 927

⁸¹ Hes. *Theog.* 241 or 252

⁸² Hes. *Theog.* 901ff. The Seasons, Peace, Order, Justice and the Fates are just a few of the offspring she and Zeus produced.

must clearly have given birth to the children of Kronos).⁸³ Also important to note is Artemis' presence. Certain literary evidence⁸⁴ points to her being fully mature by the time her younger twin was born, but her lack of involvement (or perhaps the poet's failure to mention her presence) in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (considering that she was the goddess of childbirth) leaves us with uncertainty as to her true involvement.⁸⁵

Garland believes that there were certain people who were prohibited from attending the birth; these were children,⁸⁶ men – except for a male obstetrician, in times of difficult labour or the husband⁸⁷ – and women who have not yet given birth.⁸⁸ He also points out that “in Greece delivery took place exclusively in the presence of women.”⁸⁹ Soranus provides us with additional information concerning those who do attend the birth; he tells us that it is preferable for a midwife and three women helpers to attend; he makes no mention of males attending the birth.⁹⁰ Soranus does however say that “in the cases of difficult labour the

⁸³ Hes. *Theog.* 451ff. I must point out here that all the members of Leto's birthing party are a part of her extended family (and in fact are all related to one another, albeit in some cases, very distantly), and we may be able to view them as the female representatives of the males with a stake in Leto's offspring.

⁸⁴ Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.4.1. Apollodorus states that Artemis was born first then rapidly matured in order to help deliver Apollo; Eileithyia is not included in this version of the myth. See also Callim. *Hymn* 3.20-25.

⁸⁵ The need to bribe Eileithyia down to earth to lend a hand points to the non-involvement of Artemis, as one would like to believe that her presence would be comparable to that of Eileithyia in the childbirth process. The reasons for non-participation of Artemis in the hymn cannot be assumed as the poet simply does not provide us with the necessary information. The two goddesses performed similar functions and Artemis bore the epithet Eileithyia as part of her cult titles (Roberts (2007), 144.).

⁸⁶ This could be why the poet of the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* does not mention Artemis in relation to the birth of her brother; perhaps he viewed her as still being a child.

⁸⁷ Aristophanes alludes to certain conventions of birth twice in his plays. The first instance is in the *Eccl.*, where Praxagora explains her disappearance from her bed in the middle of the night to her husband as “before dawn I was summoned to a friend whose pangs had just begun . . . to help her in her throes” (526-34). The second instance is in the *Thesm.* where Mnesilochus, speaking to the chorus tells of a husband who is deceptively evicted from the *gunaikeion* when his wife feels that the baby is about to be delivered (507-9).

⁸⁸ Garland (1990), 61. The prohibition of certain people from the birth place is undoubtedly a result of the pollution, which the ancient Greeks associated with birth, thus barring certain people for fear of their health. This reason for the prohibition of certain people from the birth place is comparable to the prohibition that no births were allowed in sanctuaries for reasons of contamination. This might be another reason for the silence on the presence or involvement of Artemis – she had not given birth.

⁸⁹ Garland (1990), 61

⁹⁰ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.3.5. The chapter and section numbers in this project correspond to the chapter numbers found in Temkin's translation of the *Gynaecology*.

physician should question the midwife”,⁹¹ thus showing the undoubted presence of a male obstetrician/physician in the times of a difficult labour, at least later in antiquity. The age of the attendants of Leto in the hymn is difficult to determine due to the fact that the poet is not concerned with providing this detail, but as has already been examined I think that it is safe to say that the goddesses in attendance had at least experienced childbirth by this point in ‘time.’

The duties of the attendants whilst necessary were obviously not as important as those of the midwife. Garland tells us that the midwife was responsible for the bulk of the duties (as one would expect) and procedures occurring immediately after the birth.⁹² Garland also states that the other women were present in the event that out of necessity, labour had to be induced and to “furnish the woman with the mental and physical support necessary for a successful delivery, and also to summon the birth goddesses.”⁹³ The idea of having friends and/or loved ones around in a time of great suffering and distress to lend both mental and physical assistance, seems, to me, to be a perfectly reasonable assumption. Thus it seems to me that the women were there not only for physical⁹⁴ and emotional support but were also present to perform necessary religious duties.⁹⁵

This then allows us to move on to points (iii) and (iv), outlined above, where the goddesses attending Apollo’s birth send Iris to fetch Eileithyia, Iris bribes Eileithyia (which could be

⁹¹ Sor. *Gyn.* 4.2.7

⁹² Garland (1990), 63-64. It would also seem that there was a certain amount of contact between the mother and the midwife prior to the birth so that (as Garland puts it) the mother would have full confidence in her chief helper and so that certain decisions could be taken (i.e., which deities they would pray to etc. . .) and the *oikos* and *gunaikēion* purified.

⁹³ Garland (1990), 64

⁹⁴ Soranus notes that if the midwife does not have a birthing stool, a robust woman may be sat upon to create the same effect. (*Gyn.* 2.3.6) This may have been the case if a pregnant woman suddenly went into labour, and the midwife did not have time or the opportunity to go and fetch her stool, it may also have been due to the midwife not having a birthing stool – perhaps if her ‘practice’ was relatively new and she could not yet afford one. Also note the importance of attendants in the cases where labour must be induced.

⁹⁵ It would seem that the religious duties undertaken by the attendants, much like those in the *Hom. Hymn Ap.*, were to summon the relevant birthing deities, in order to ensure a safe and speedy delivery.

viewed as a form of payment for services to be rendered) who then goes to Leto's aid. This clearly allows the attendants of Leto to fulfil their religious function of summoning the birth goddesses (as Garland has pointed out). In line 103 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the attendants realise that the reason that Leto has been struggling for nine days and nights to give birth, is that Hera has prevented Eileithyia from learning of the impending birth. By sending Iris to fetch Eileithyia, we may surmise that the attendants are thus summoning the relevant powers (in human terms ensuring someone with the correct expertise is present), which will allow Apollo to 'spring forth'. This is comparable to the mortal female attendants "intoning and incanting under instruction from the midwife . . . to summon the birth goddesses."⁹⁶ As with a few other things (as we will discover later), the hymn seems largely to conform to mortal birth practices, with a few minor adjustments; in this case, the goddesses send for the divine midwife, under their own guidance. In the case of a mortal birth, it would be the attendants of the mother, under the instruction of the midwife, who 'send for' Eileithyia, the divine midwife. It would thus seem that all parties involved in the birth (i.e. the mother, midwife and the attendants) played a role in the ritual security of the mother and child. Garland notes that Eileithyia "was believed to assume the leading role at the birth . . . [and] finds confirmation in the fact that it is [her] arrival on Delos which instantly triggers Leto's delivery of baby Apollo."⁹⁷ The attendant's 'bribery' of Eileithyia⁹⁸ in the hymn is easily compared to the offerings made by the mortal mother (and the rest of the birthing party) to the childbirth goddesses of her choice. Garland puts it aptly when he says:

⁹⁶ Garland (1990), 64

⁹⁷ Garland (1990), 66

⁹⁸ It would seem that the two principle goddesses of childbirth – Artemis and Eileithyia – were two separate entities in the Archaic period, but by the Classical period Artemis seems to have merged with Eileithyia, the more obscure of the deities, to become the full-blown goddess of childbirth (Blundell (1995), 30).

“given the immense physical effort required to drive the baby through the birth canal, it is not surprising that the belief is widely reported by anthropologists that a successful delivery can only be achieved through the gracious intervention of a deity.”⁹⁹

Thus we see that the role of the birthing goddesses in a mortal birth was perceived to be vital for a successful and safe delivery for both mother and child. Dillon argues that “pregnant women were generally not debarred from religious life – in fact, it was apparently particularly appropriate for them to take part in religious activities”¹⁰⁰ to invoke the necessary deities to assist them in the possibly fatal process of labour and birth.¹⁰¹ Artemis and Eileithyia¹⁰² are the two obvious deities of childbirth but there are instances where sacrifices were made to the nymphs in order to ensure the safety of both mother and child. Dillon in *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* discusses four painted wooden *pinakes* from Pitsa, in the Peloponnese near Sicyon, dated to 540-520 BC.¹⁰³ These *pinakes* show that the nymphs are being “worshipped in some aspect particularly appropriate for women: as deities of childbirth and as *kourotrophoi*.”¹⁰⁴ Dillon has also observed that shrines favoured by pregnant women, were those to kourotrophic deities and to deities such as Artemis, Eileithyia and Demeter.¹⁰⁵ The abovementioned deities are not the only ones associated with childbirth; Hekate, Hera, the Furies, the Moirai and localised deities¹⁰⁶ are also included in the long list of options the pregnant woman has to choose from. As we have already seen the attendants were responsible for invoking the preferred deity of the labouring mother. The deities were

⁹⁹ Garland (1990), 66

¹⁰⁰ Dillon (2003), 250

¹⁰¹ Hence the participation of pregnant women in the Demeter procession, as told by Callimachus in his *Hymn to Demeter*.

¹⁰² Eileithyia should be “understood as the ideal personification of a safe and quick delivery who is invoked by a woman in labour and her assistants” (Garland (1990), 67).

¹⁰³ Dillon (2003), 228-9

¹⁰⁴ Dillon (2003), 229

¹⁰⁵ Dillon (2003), 250

¹⁰⁶ Garland (1990), 67

“deemed to be essential both in order to sanction and induce the delivery.”¹⁰⁷ The religious responsibilities of the attendants reach their pinnacle in the *ololugē*, to be discussed below. But we may now move on to point (v), the birth of Apollo, which will allow us to observe the duties of the midwife, culminating in the ‘receiving of the infant’.

I think that it is safe to assume that the midwife¹⁰⁸ in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is Eileithyia,¹⁰⁹ who is referred to as *μογυστόκος*¹¹⁰ - one who helps women in hard travail.¹¹¹ The midwife’s most important role, according to Soranus, is to “receive the infant,”¹¹² Eileithyia’s arrival on the barren island of Delos does not result in her ‘receiving’ Apollo as he simply springs forth, *ἐκ δ’ ἔθορε*,¹¹³ but her mere arrival is enough to deliver Apollo, something which Leto had been struggling with for “nine days and nine nights.”¹¹⁴ The arrival of the divine midwife makes Apollo’s birth possible, just as the presence of the non-divine midwife at a mortal birth makes the whole process achievable. The duties of the midwife extended beyond just the delivery of the child. These duties include deciding whether or not the infant should be reared or exposed, severing the umbilical cord,¹¹⁵ washing and swaddling the infant and attending to religious needs both before and during the birth.

According to Soranus, the midwife is the most important person present; she attends to all the necessary duties and instructs the other women helpers (Sor. *Gyn.* 2.3.4-6). Soranus also

¹⁰⁷ Garland (1990), 66

¹⁰⁸ Also known as the *maia* or the *omphalêtomos* (Garland (1990), 63-4).

¹⁰⁹ The goddess seems to assume a dual role in the hymn, acting as both a midwife and as a deity of childbirth.

¹¹⁰ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 115

¹¹¹ i.e. the goddess of birth labour

¹¹² Sor. *Gyn.* 2.3.6

¹¹³ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 119

¹¹⁴ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 91. Cf. the birth of Heracles where Eileithyia prolongs the labour of Alcmene and the simple uncrossing of her own (i.e. Eileithyia’s) legs and arms allowed the baby Heracles to be born (See *Hom. Il.* 19.117-120 and *Ov. Met.* 9.285-316).

¹¹⁵ As this does not appear in the hymn we will not consider it, beyond stating that it was the duty of the midwife to perform this task (see Sor. *Gyn.* 7.27.11, *How to sever the naval cord*). The question of child exposure is never confronted in the hymn as Apollo’s rearing is certain and thus it will not be dealt with.

points out the necessary involvement of the women attendants in cases where birth needs to be induced:

“Two of them should be at the sides and one behind holding the parturient woman so that she may not sway with <the> pains. . . . the servants standing at the sides should softly push the mass down towards the lower parts with their hands.”¹¹⁶

The observations on a midwife’s duties and the other important tasks which she performs are not present in the hymn. Although Soranus is very comprehensive¹¹⁷ in his discussions of the tasks following the birth, I will examine them separately (i.e. under each of the sections where it is relevant), and not under ‘the duties of the midwife,’ as the structure of the hymn does not allow for this. Many of Eileithyia’s tasks as the primary midwife (e.g. washing and swaddling) are performed by the attending goddesses. Her primary function in the hymn is to make the birth of Apollo possible; beyond that the other goddesses take over.

Point (vi), while short, also adds to the argument that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* seems to be influenced by mortal practices in its construction¹¹⁸ and thus is directly comparable to non-divine practices. The moment that the infant ‘springs forth,’ the attending goddesses utter a ritual cry of relief, ὀλόλυγή.¹¹⁹ Soranus makes no mention of this ritual cry and evidence for

¹¹⁶ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.3.6

¹¹⁷ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.10-12, deals with each of the midwife’s tasks under separate headings; the most pertinent ones are as follows: *What is the care of the woman after labour* (now lost); *ON THE CARE OF THE NEWBORN* which is divided into the following sections: *How to recognise the newborn that is worth rearing; How to sever the navel cord; How to cleanse; How to swaddle; On laying the newborn down; On food; On the selection of a wet-nurse; On testing the milk; How to conduct the regimen of the nurse; What one should do if the milk stops or becomes spoiled or thick or thin; How and when to give the newborn the breast.*

¹¹⁸ The idea here, being that non-divine human beings, when composing this poem – and all poems – had nothing to compare the birth practices to, thus it would seem that they projected their own standards into the divine realm, resulting in a strangely anthropomorphic birth for Apollo, with a few divine differences.

¹¹⁹ Garland (1990), 73. notes that the “women helpers uttered a ritual cry of joy, known as the *ololugē*.”

its use in relation to birth is scant¹²⁰ but there is precedence for the cry in other ceremonies and rituals. Sacrifices¹²¹ and funeral processions¹²² both utilised a ritual cry uttered by women, but the cry in this case was not one of joy. Ultimately though, the *ololugē* was a necessary part of the birth ritual. Thus supporting the interpretation that birth itself was perceived, by the ancients, as susceptible to ritual treatment, and also supporting the notion that mortal conventions may have had an influence upon immortal events or how immortal events were perceived by mortals.

The infant Apollo having been born moments earlier is now washed “in clear water . . . in a pure and holy fashion.”¹²³ In the *Gynaecology* Soranus tasks the midwife with this duty, but in the hymn it is done by the attending goddesses, although who of the goddesses actually performs the act is not named.¹²⁴ Firstly, the goddesses in the hymn use clear water (ὑδατι καλῶι) and the terms pure (ἀγνῶς) and holy (καθαρῶς) seem to be associated not only with the act of washing, but with the water itself.¹²⁵ Garland confirms the sacred nature of the water in his brief survey of post-partum washing practices.

¹²⁰ In fact, apart from the hymn I could find no evidence at all, apart from the observations of Garland (1990) and Blundell (1995) that the ritual cry of joy took place at the moment of birth.

¹²¹ Dillon (2003), 242. He points out that “women when they prayed at a sacrifice made a ritual cry: the *ololyge*”. Further he argues that the *ololugē* was a jubilant cry “to summon the deity to the sacrificial meal and to express joy at the sacrifice being made to honour the deity” (p. 242)

¹²² Garland (1985), 30. He observes that “in accompaniment to both parts of the [funeral] lament, a chorus of women utter a refrain of cries.” The cry in the case of a funeral (as one would expect) was one of grief, which contrasts to the one of joy, uttered at the moment of birth.

¹²³ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 120-1. This is point vii in the predefined list of important things to consider.

¹²⁴ It is interesting to note that in Callim. *Hymn* 1.16, Rhea, herself, washes Zeus after he is born. We may be able to take this as evidence for the notion that aspects of professionalism in midwifery (i.e. their specific duties) had yet to develop in the time of the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* (c. 6th cent. BC), and had fully developed by the time of Soranus (AD 98 – 138).

¹²⁵ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 120-121

“The mother and her new born baby then bathed together, most commonly in pure water which had been drawn from a sacred spring in order to purge away the defilement or the *lumata* of birth.”¹²⁶

Parker in turn seems to confirm the sacred nature of the bathing water (certainly for mortals), citing the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Callimachus’ *Hymn to Zeus* and Pausanias¹²⁷ as his main sources. In the case of Zeus’ birth the water also seems not to be sacred when Rhea makes use of it.¹²⁸ However, the water in the case of Pausanias seems to be sacred due to the fact that it was somehow used after the birth of Zeus, and there seems to be no indication that it was sacred before his birth, whereas, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* speaks of water being both sacred and pure, when it is used to cleanse the god. Parker states:

“the first bath of a mother and child was an important occasion. The story of a god’s birth was scarcely complete without mention of it, and even for mortals the water might be fetched from a sacred spring.”¹²⁹

This seems to suggest that (a) the use of a specific source of water in relation to the birth of a god (particularly Zeus) was enough to make it pure or holy and (b) it was possible for the gods to be bathed, post-partum, in water that was not necessarily pure or holy.¹³⁰ The bathing of Leto is not mentioned in the hymn, possibly due to the fact that the hymn up until the moment of the Apollo’s birth features her but after giving birth she seems to fade into the background, mentioned only to prove either how proud she is of her child or in relation to

¹²⁶ Garland (1990), 74. He relies on the poetic narratives of the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* and Callim. *Hymn 1* to support this assertion.

¹²⁷ Paus. 8.28.2. The source of water in this case seems to be sacred *because* Zeus was bathed in it after his birth, there is no indication that it was a sacred spring beforehand. 8.41.2 again notes the sacred nature of the spring, but it seems, once more, to be sacred *because* “the nymphs who cleansed her [Rhea] after her travail threw the refuse into this river;” there is no indication that the river was sacred before this act.

¹²⁸ Callim. *Hymn 1*.14-15

¹²⁹ Parker (1983), 50

¹³⁰ Clearly this is not the case with Apollo, as he was bathed in water which was clean (ὑδατι καλῶι), pure (ἀγνῶς) and holy (καθαρῶς), all at the same time.

Zeus as the mother of Apollo and Artemis. Although her bathing is not mentioned, we cannot assume it did not take place,¹³¹ but by the same token we cannot assume that it did. The shift in focus and subject of the hymn (from Leto to Apollo) does not allow us to make such judgements or assumptions regarding Leto's bathing; perhaps we should just accept that it probably did occur. Even Soranus in the *Gynaecology* does not mention whether or not the mother bathed,¹³² as after the birth, the text shifts in focus from the mother to the child, as can be seen from the chapters following the birth of the child. Perhaps then we should not judge the poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* too harshly for neglecting this part of the birth ritual.

Soranus is somewhat more descriptive when it comes to the question of the washing of the infant. His account on how to cleanse an infant is full of different conventions used by different peoples,¹³³ followed by an account of what is preferable. He suggests a concoction of fine powdery salt, mixed with honey or olive oil or juice of barley or fenugreek or mallow. This mixture is then rubbed on the infant, then "after having cleansed the body, one must bathe it with lukewarm water and wash away all the covering emulsion."¹³⁴ Soranus recommends that this process be repeated once more, but with the water slightly warmer the second time.¹³⁵ Interestingly, Soranus makes no mention of the sacred nature of the water, he does not say where it was drawn from or if it had been 'blessed' before hand or if it had any special religious trinkets added to it. Perhaps then, the sacred nature of the water used to clean the infant Apollo is sacred purely because it is used to cleanse a god. We might also say that the sacred nature of the water used to bathe Apollo sets him apart from mortal babies,

¹³¹ Consider also the birth of Zeus in Callim. *Hymn* 1.16, where Rhea immediately after giving birth to Zeus washes herself and her child.

¹³² It is also possible that his 'silence' on the mother's bathing is not due to neglect on his part, but due to the corrupted nature of the text. The section entitled "*What is the care of the woman after labour*" (Sor. *Gyn.* 2.4) is lost.

¹³³ For example, he says that the conventions of the Germans, Scythians and even some of the Hellenes involve cold water, wine mixed with brine, pure wine, the urine of an innocent child or myrtle and oak gall. He firmly rejects all of these conventions and then explains why (Sor. *Gyn.* 2.8.12).

¹³⁴ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.8.13

¹³⁵ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.8.13

showing the audience that this baby is no regular baby, but a god. Perhaps then, too, the judgement made by Garland that the mother bathed in “pure water which had been drawn from a sacred spring” is biased by the sources he cites for evidence.¹³⁶

It is also important to consider, in the present discussion, the question of who washed the infant. Garland is oddly silent on this matter simply stating that the “mother and her newborn baby bathed together.”¹³⁷ Soranus, too, does not state outright that it is the role of the midwife. But considering the nature of the text (which is a ‘how-to’ manual for midwives) and the fact that the “*How to cleanse*” section follows on directly from the “*How to sever the umbilical cord*” section it seems implicit that the washing would be performed by the midwife. The *hymn to Apollo* (as already mentioned) delegates the washing of the infant to the goddesses. I think it is safe to say that no matter who does the cleansing, the mother, by now exhausted from parturition, does not perform the task.

The swaddling (point viii) of the infant Apollo occurs next in the hymn and it would seem that in Soranus’ account swaddling, too, was the next process to occur. The hymn diverges from convention on two particularly noticeable instances, the first being the use of a golden cord, which is tied around the infant Apollo’s swaddling bands, the second (which will be discussed shortly) is the instantaneous – almost comical – growth of the baby divinity upon consuming the food of the gods. In Soranus’ instructions to midwives¹³⁸ he makes no mention at all of a cord of any kind which secures the swaddling bands. Soranus is very comprehensive in his description about how to swaddle an infant, describing different materials used by different peoples, and the exact manner by which the infant should be swaddled and why. In his very detailed discussion on swaddling there is not a single mention

¹³⁶ Garland (1990), 74. Those sources being the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* and Callim. *Hymn 1*

¹³⁷ Garland (1990), 74

¹³⁸ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.9.14-15 (*How to swaddle*)

of a cord. It could be the case that the cord in the hymn is used to denote the divinity of the infant. It is something which sets him apart from other infants. Up until now Apollo's birth has basically conformed to all of the conventions that Soranus describes in his *Gynaecology*. This is the first instance that the perinatal conventions have differed from the 'manual,' to the extent that they are not even discussed or considered to be an option by the author. Thus we can see that the hymn's use of the golden cord (χρύσεον στρόφον)¹³⁹ slightly alters the prescribed conventions. It is used to make thoroughly clear to the audience that Apollo is no regular infant, it sets him apart from the rest of us mere mortals and thus allows the audience to both identify with the hymn (as it has thus far adhered to convention) and to see its unique nature indicating Apollo's divinity. It would also seem that the poet's use of the cord becomes significant a few lines further in the poem.

After the infant has been swaddled it is then fed (point x) by either the mother or a wet-nurse. Soranus describes the conventions for feeding the infant in his section *On care of the newborn* (2.6.10ff; particularly in the sections *On food* and wet-nurses, 2.11.17ff.). He discusses two possibilities for the feeding of the child; first is the use of a wet-nurse and second is the mother herself breastfeeding the newborn. He spends a substantial amount of time discussing wet-nursing (including the selection of a wet-nurse; her regime and what to do if her milk stops) and the pros and cons of the mother feeding the child herself. He seems to be somewhat undecided on the matter of mother versus wet-nurse and in the end resorts to a metaphor of the earth being over-farmed, which does not make the matter any more clear.¹⁴⁰ He mentions two other authors (Damastes and Biblas) who recommend the

¹³⁹ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 122

¹⁴⁰ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.18ff. "For just as the earth is exhausted by producing crops after sowing and therefore becomes barren of more, the same happens with the woman who nurses the infant . . . Consequently, the mother will fare better with a view to her own recovery and to further childbearing, if she is relieved of having her breasts distended too. For as vegetables are sown by gardeners into one soil to sprout and are transplanted into different soil for quick development, lest one soil suffer by both, in the same way the newborn, too, is apt to

immediate feeding of the child with the mother's breast milk after birth as they state that nature provided the mother with the ability to do so, thus she should.¹⁴¹ Soranus then argues that if the mother *must* feed the child herself, it is advisable that the first portion is removed before suckling the child, as it is too heavy.¹⁴² Overall, it is difficult to establish what exactly it is that Soranus would prefer the mother to do with regard to the feeding of her child. The short summary table below makes this ambiguity more apparent.¹⁴³

MOTHER	WET-NURSE
✘ The mother should NOT feed the child with her own milk in the first 3 days of its life. It is unwholesome, too thick, hard to digest and comes from a body in turmoil.	✓ Before mentioning the possibility of the mother feeding the child, Soranus states that the child should be fed by someone who is able to serve for about 20 days.
✓ She can feed it from the fourth day onwards (provided the colostrum is first removed).	✓ A wet-nurse is preferable, initially, as maternal milk is unwholesome.
✓ She may be used to feed the child, only if she has desirable character (i.e. equal to or better than the wet-nurse candidates).	✓ If circumstances allow, it is preferable to make use of a wet-nurse.
✓ If she is equal to the wet-nurse candidates, she should feed her child as (a) mothers become more sympathetic to their children and (b) it is more natural for the child to be fed by its mother before and after birth.	

Considering the information in the table above, it becomes difficult to ascertain what course of action Soranus would have prescribed. There are three reasons for the mother to feed the child and three reasons for a wet-nurse to feed the child. The only thing that swings the balance in favour of the wet-nurse is the first point in the 'mother' column, that the milk (particularly for the first three days) is

become more vigorous if borne by one woman but fed by another, in case the mother, by some affliction, is hindered from supplying the food."

¹⁴¹ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.17

¹⁴² Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.17. This, as we now know, is not the case!

¹⁴³ All information contained within the table is contained within Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.18. It should be noted that Soranus was writing for the wives and children of Roman aristocrats so it is understandable that his testimony may differ slightly for someone living in the Archaic period in Greece.

“unwholesome, being thick, too caseous, and therefore hard to digest, raw, and not prepared to perfection. Furthermore, it is produced by bodies which are in a bad state, agitated and changed to the extent that we see the body altered after delivery when, from having suffered a great discharge of blood, it is dried up, toneless, discoloured, and in the majority of cases feverish as well.”¹⁴⁴

One may argue that this is a rather substantial point against the mother feeding the child herself, but it would seem that the final point under the ‘mother’ column far outweighs all of the points under the ‘wet-nurse’ column, as it allows for mother-child bonding and it seems on the whole more natural for the mother to feed her child. Thus we leave Soranus’ advisory text in a somewhat confused state as to the preferred feeding of the child. Regardless of how we feel towards Soranus’ prescription (or perhaps lack thereof), it is clear that wet-nurses were used widely in antiquity and as such played an important role in society.

There is however other evidence, which we may turn to, to determine the value of wet-nurses in the ancient world. The two most pertinent sources in this case, which allow us to grasp the attitude towards both wet-nurses and feeding of the newborn infant, in antiquity are Plato’s *Republic* and Plutarch’s *Moralia*.

It is important to note that Garland claims that in the *Republic*, Plato classes wet-nurses as frauds.¹⁴⁵ Thus he comes to the conclusion that Plato is (as I have argued Soranus is) somewhat ambivalent towards wet-nurses, for reasons which through a comparison to later discussions in the *Republic* become clear. However I would like to argue that Plato does *not* class wet-nurses, along with poets, rhapsodists, actors, dancers, and theatrical agents as

¹⁴⁴ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.18ff

¹⁴⁵ Garland (1990), 114

imitators and thus frauds, but classes them *after* the imitators and frauds, as servants, along with footmen, dry-nurses, lady's maids, barbers, cooks and confectioners.¹⁴⁶ I think in this case, Plato sees them as a necessary part of society, fulfilling a vital role and, as such, most certainly does not class them as frauds. My argument is further enhanced when we consider the treatment of children in book 5 of the *Republic*; this section allows Garland to argue for the ambivalence of Plato towards wet-nurses having previously classed them as frauds. After having removed the children (of good parents) from their natal household to be raised in the "rearing-pen,"¹⁴⁷ the children are cared for by nurses and fed by the mothers of the community as a whole. The mothers in this case are all being used as wet-nurses, and great care is taken to ensure that the mother does not know her own child and does not spend too much time suckling one infant.¹⁴⁸ Plato, apart from the mothers of the community acting as wet-nurses, advises that if the mothers are not enough, wet-nurses be brought in.¹⁴⁹ This is to ensure that there is very little bonding between any mothers and any children, so that the mothers feel impartial devotion towards the whole community.¹⁵⁰ Thus we may argue that Plato felt great regard for wet-nurses and indeed, did see them as performing a vital service to the whole community.

Having considered Plato's views on midwives (which he views as necessary to growth and development of the community), we may now discuss Plutarch's views on them, which seem to be contradictory to Plato's. "Mothers," Plutarch comments, "must endeavour, if possible, to nurse their children themselves."¹⁵¹ Plutarch is very clear on where he stands on the issue of wet-nurses. He only recommends their use if the mother (through bodily weakness) is

¹⁴⁶ Pl. *Resp.* 2.373c

¹⁴⁷ Pl. *Resp.* 5.460b

¹⁴⁸ Pl. *Resp.* 5. 460c

¹⁴⁹ Pl. *Resp.* 5. 460c

¹⁵⁰ Garland (1990), 114

¹⁵¹ Plut. *Mor.* 3d

unable to feed the child, or if she is in a hurry to bear more children.¹⁵² He recommends the mother feed her child as it (a) allows for a strong bond to form between mother and child and (b) seems more natural as the mother has been provided with a way of feeding her child. He seems to be against the use of wet-nurses on the whole as they only do it ἄτε μισθοῦ φιλοῦσαι, out of love for pay.¹⁵³ Thus we see from Plutarch that the use of a wet-nurse may be necessary (in some instances) but should be avoided if possible.

The ancient sources examined, leave us with an uncertainty on how to judge the necessity of wet-nurses. Soranus appears to be uncertain but seems to be leaning towards their use. Plato, on the other hand seems to be a strong advocate for their use. Plutarch, however, seems to be entirely against them, in fact, they should be avoided if at all possible and the child should be fed by the mother. These sources do not, then, allow us to view the feeding of the infant Apollo by Themis and not Leto in any certain light. The ancient sources were all very aware of the presence of wet-nurses, but all had differing opinions of them and whether they should be employed.

The hymn tells us that “Themis then fed you nectar and lovely ambrosia.”¹⁵⁴ Garland has noted that

“it is evidently intended to be perceived as a mark of Apollo’s divinity, as well as the nutritional value of nectar and ambrosia that as soon as the infant god tasted this heavenly food ‘he could no longer be restrained by his golden cords

¹⁵² Plut. *Mor.* 3d

¹⁵³ Plut. *Mor.* 3c

¹⁵⁴ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 124

nor did the fastenings confine him, but their ends were loosed' (*Hom. Ap.* 127-9).¹⁵⁵

Thus, again, as with the golden cord, the use of the nectar and ambrosia¹⁵⁶ is meant to indicate to the audience that the infant, having just been born, is no regular infant, but rather a baby who will imminently reach full maturity as a god. It is however interesting to note that Soranus prescribes that the mortal infant, before being breastfed, is fed honey (prepared in the correct manner), which will open the gullet "by permeation and purgation of the ducts [and] the way is prepared for the distribution of food <and> the physique is nourished."¹⁵⁷ It is highly possible that the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was aware of this convention and thus feeding the divine baby Apollo nectar and ambrosia, is comparable to feeding a non-divine child honey, thus preparing the infants' physiques to be fully nourished. The non-divine infant then goes on to receive breast milk and reach maturity in about a decade's time, while the divine baby Apollo receives his nourishment from the nectar and ambrosia and instantaneously matures, loosening the golden cord, which marks his divinity, setting him apart from regular infants. Thus we see in these two episodes (the swaddling and the feeding) that Apollo is treated on a par with mortal infants but, with a few emendations to convention, the poet turns a mortal experience (with which his audience could have identified) into an immortal event, which was worthy of poetry.

Thus when reading the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* we are afforded the opportunity to 'witness' an account of (divine) birth that agrees substantially with other, later, (non-divine) sources on the topic. The fact that it has been cited as a source (by many modern scholars) for historical

¹⁵⁵ Garland (1990), 81

¹⁵⁶ Callim. *Hymn* 1, also alerts us to the convention of feeding a child honey. Lines 48-50 tell us that Zeus 'sucked the teat of Amatheia', a she-goat, and that he was fed 'sweet honey-comb.' This is very similar to the food that Soranus first recommends for the mortal infant (Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.17).

¹⁵⁷ Sor. *Gyn.* 2.11.17

human practice is significant as it clearly stands up to scrutiny and detailed comparison. It has, more than likely for poetic reasons, left out some of the more bloody and gory details, but on the whole, is short, concise and informative. Using non-poetic sources as a point of comparison as well as to fill in the missing gaps has provided us with a very detailed account of not only the moment of birth, but also perinatal conventions in the ancient world. It is also clear from the evidence examined that birth was a process and had certain rituals, which work with and in the process to enrich the experience for all parties concerned.

“ . . . rituals included the taking of omens, in advance of delivery, the invoking of deities in order to induce and expedite labour, the uttering of the *ololugē* or ritual cry at the moment of delivery, the ritual bathing of the newborn and of its mother and the various postpartum practices. . . .”¹⁵⁸

One cannot argue that the process of giving birth was without ritual, and this ritual is clear (although in its most basic form) in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.¹⁵⁹ We can thus conclude that it is highly likely that the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was influenced by mortal conventions in its construction. With a few alterations to convention the poet skilfully portrays an ‘everyday’ mortal event for his audience in a manner fit for the immortals.

¹⁵⁸ Garland (1990), 104

¹⁵⁹ It should be noted that the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* was not intended to be used as an informative text on the birth process; it is a poetic text and has been treated as such. Its primary purpose was to add Apollo to the pantheon of the gods; it is the outcome that is important, not necessarily the process. This is why we are left with a text which was clearly influenced by the practices of the day but, has holes in it regarding the more gruesome details.

CHAPTER TWO

Maturation and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*

Johnston noted that “maturation was a matter of great concern to the ancient Greeks, just as it is to most peoples, and Greek myth correspondingly presented young men as undergoing a variety of trials and tests as they moved towards honourable inclusion in the adult community.”¹⁶⁰ It is with the preceding quote in mind that we begin our chapter on Hermes and his quest for acceptance into the adult, Olympian community. Through the maturation and development of Hermes, in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, we are afforded the opportunity to explore the importance placed on the process of being accepted into the adult community in antiquity. It is interesting to note that Hermes has the function of the trickster figure and that the trickster figure is associated with a boy of this age.

In this chapter I hope to address a series of varied questions. I also hope that the answers to these questions will address the main focus of this chapter: the acquisition of *timai* (honours), more specifically how Hermes goes about acquiring his *timai*, a process which is most often associated with young men reaching adulthood, the final stage in the development of a child. The questions I hope to address are as follows: (1) does Hermes’ acquisition of *timai* correspond to the acquisition of certain rights in ordinary Greek societies? (2) Can we find any parallels for the way that Maia is treated (by Hermes) – and reacts (to her treatment by Hermes) – in the poetic as well as in the real world?¹⁶¹ And finally (3) do sons act as their mother’s voice in spheres where women were not permitted any level of autonomy or self-determination (for example in legal matters)? A theme which I do not intend to address directly is the role of the *kyrios* (lord or master) in the ancient family. In a chapter primarily

¹⁶⁰ Johnston (2002), 113

¹⁶¹ It is interesting to note that Hermes has the function of the trickster figure and that the trickster figure is associated with a boy of this age.

devoted to the maturation of young males, the theme of the *kyrios* recurs again and again, but it is not my primary concern. I do however, feel it necessary to devote a small amount of time to it since he does make an appearance on more than one occasion.

As with the previous chapter on Apollo, I will use an *Homeric Hymn*, in this case the one devoted to Hermes, as a fundamental source on which to base the rest of my discussion, which will be enhanced by the inclusion – at certain relevant points – of other young boys found in Greek narratives and the interesting information that they provide us with.

The *kyrios* in the ancient family, according to the LSJ, is the person who holds power and has authority in the house; he is the master of the house, the head of the family and the guardian of the women (and presumably slaves too) in the household. This term is clearly applied to the male head of the *oikos*, who whilst holding the ultimate authority within the house also seems to be responsible for the protection of the *oikos* including the women, children and slaves. The term in its feminine form (*kyria*) is also equally applicable to the mistress of the household (i.e. the *kyrios*' wife) and this notion too is apparent in the chapter which follows.¹⁶² A caveat must be issued when applying the term to women since women clearly did not have the same level of authority as men and as *kyriai* could not function outside the *oikos* without a *kyrios* to represent her.¹⁶³ As will be noticed throughout this chapter, the *kyrios* (be he present or noticeably absent) does make himself felt in more than one way and on more than one occasion.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Maia is the best example of a *kyria* in this chapter, although we cannot fail to notice the *Odyssey*'s Penelope, who in Odysseus' absence maintains this position. Aphrodite makes for an interesting case; in the *Argonautica* she is clearly married to Hephaestus but he does not seem to fulfil the role of *kyrios*, leaving her position obscure. Metrotime, of Herodas' third *Mime*, on the other hand has a husband but it is made explicit that it is she who is in charge of the *oikos*, not her unnamed elderly, deaf and blind husband.

¹⁶³ See Hunter, V. (1994), 29-37 for comprehensive discussion.

¹⁶⁴ Zeus is the ultimate *kyrios* (in fact it is one of his cult titles), but does not fulfil this role in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, which places Maia in charge of her own *oikos*. Hephaestus has already been briefly considered (see above note), Odysseus is absent from his *oikos* and Metrotime's unnamed husband proves inadequate as a

As the child advances through the stages of childhood through adolescence into adulthood, many changes may be observed.¹⁶⁵ The most easily observable are the physical changes which occur and whilst these changes form the basis of many studies they are of little help to us. Perhaps the only physical change of relevance to us is that of the height and strength development of boys, which affords them the physical capacity to enter (in ancient Athens) into the Athenian *ephebic* system. We need to look beyond physical changes to social ones which affect the acceptance of the child or adolescent into the adult community. The sociologist James Youniss has noted that:

“The concept of development does not signify a ‘natural’ process – it does, however, make reference to a socially constructed sense of change pertaining to the young individual which is encoded within a series of benchmarks relevant to the topical or predominant form of discourse: which can relate to political engagement, moral and criminal responsibility, sexual consent and patterns of consumption. Thus different codes move in and out of focus according to which aspect of the person we are attending to.”¹⁶⁶

Youniss has clearly alerted us to the difficult nature of defining the developmental stages of a child or adolescent. Development can be defined in terms of social, political, moral or physical structure. Underlying all of these structures is the pervasive influence of culture, from which one cannot escape. We also need to acknowledge the concurrent nature of development¹⁶⁷ and the influence that one sphere of development may have on another (for example, moral development may influence political development or vice versa). It would

kyrios. In a way it is through their attempt to be received into the community of adults that young men assert their authority, and as will become apparent shortly, it is this which brings them into conflict with their *kyrios* (if he is present), and allows them ultimately to assert their authority and to be accepted into the adult community.

¹⁶⁵ We must also bear in mind when considering the sociology of childhood that the concept of childhood is a construct developed and enforced by adults.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Jenks (2002), 86-87

¹⁶⁷ i.e. moral and social development may both occur at the same time.

also seem that cognitive development also plays a large part in the socialisation of an individual.

Judging by the large role they play in most of the sociology and childhood source material, the two areas of development that can be identified as most significant (which seem to be universal in their broadest sense, but again act in very culture-specific ways), are the acquisition of language and the role of education.

By way of language acquisition it would seem that the child needs to learn to cope with adult-child interactions in a group (of adults) as well as in a one-on-one setting. The child needs to develop an understanding of other people's (or rather adult) perspectives and thus conduct itself accordingly. Many studies have been conducted by sociologists over the past few decades and have pointed to a need for the acquisition of not only language skills (i.e. the ability to speak) but also the ability to interact with people on the same social level as oneself (i.e. peers) or on a higher social level (i.e. seniors or adults). There is also an indication that the parent plays a pivotal role in the development and acquisition of the social language skills of a child, by giving him or her behavioural or cultural cues, and encouraging the adoption of alternative perspectives.¹⁶⁸

Education, which seems to me to be complementary to the social development of language and communication, also plays a large role in the socialisation and acceptance of the child or adolescent into the adult community. Education, whilst also heavily affected by differing cultures, seems to absorb cultural norms and (for want of a better word) indoctrinate the youth as to the acceptable ways in which to behave and to act. Educational systems seem to

¹⁶⁸ See in particular Youniss (1992), 134-140

take the child out of the relatively limited domestic setting and introduce the child to the far wider setting of the community – or as many people term it ‘the big bad world.’¹⁶⁹

As with many social structures which have been defined and redefined over the millennia, education and language also evolved, and full understanding of them is difficult to achieve, without limiting the criteria to a specific time, place and culture. In short, the dynamic nature of language and the necessary development of the field of education is a natural result of the evolving needs of society itself. It stands to reason that as our knowledge advances and our culture develops our methods of communication and education must be dynamic enough to develop along with societal change. We can most certainly benefit from the general study of modern social structures but we must beware not to apply them too uncritically to cultures of other times. That said, the two important and seemingly universal social structures identified above (language and education) will serve to cement the findings of this chapter, and hopefully enlighten the discussion of Hermes’ acceptance into the community of gods.

In order to discuss how Hermes goes about acquiring his *timai*, it will be fruitful to define this rather tricky concept and understand how it functions in the ancient Greek world. The discussion of *timai* will inform the rest of this chapter which centres on how Hermes, through conflict with Apollo, acquires his due honours and his place in the Olympic pantheon. Throughout this chapter, Hermes will be compared to other interesting cases of badly behaved children, particularly those who cause their mothers a great deal of anxiety. Memorable examples of petulant brats can be found in Apollonius’ *Argonautica* III (Eros) and Herodas’ *Mimes* III (Cottalus). These two boys provide us with a great deal of material to

¹⁶⁹ For more on the role of education in the social development of the child see: Howes and James (2002) in *The Blackwell Handbook of Childhood Sociological Development*, 137-155.

discuss because although they differ from Hermes in many ways, there are some striking similarities to be found in their narratives and personalities.

Timē is a rather abstract concept and is something which we seem to take for granted. As students of antiquity we are taught that *timē* translates as “honour” or “respect.”¹⁷⁰ But for the most part, we are not given a full definition of what that might be in a specific context or how the word and the concept function within society.¹⁷¹ We are left with a distinct lack of clarity, and we end up with more questions than answers. How does one achieve *timē*? Do *timai* function as status symbols, or are they awarded as a result of one’s status? Moreover, can they only be awarded to some one of a particular social standing? If they do function as status symbols, what kind of status symbols are they; social, hierarchical, familial? What kind of rewards are associated with the achievement of *timai*? And what kind of responsibilities come with the honour? It should also be noted that a key concept associated with the acquisition of *timē* is *geras*, meaning a “gift of honour,” a “prize” or a “privilege.”¹⁷² It would seem that a *geras* is the physical or symbolic manifestation of honour, or awarded to someone who has achieved their *timai*. The two concepts are very tricky to define without the other; they are mutually dependent.

It would seem, if we can use the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* as a framework on which to build our understanding of *timai*, that an individual (or young man) must set out to achieve *timai*, but ultimately the *timai* themselves must be confirmed by your peers, or those socially or hierarchically superior to you. Hermes ignorantly goes about claiming some of his very own *timai* whilst he is in the process of attaining *timē* from others, particularly Apollo – his

¹⁷⁰ LSJ s.v. define *timē* as: “the price, cost or worth of a thing; the honour in which one is held, esteem or respect; a place or post of honour, rank or dignity; distinction; privilege” and so on . . .

¹⁷¹ It should also be pointed out that the word seems to function differently in the divine and mortal realms, with the divine having the extra connotation of ‘sphere of influence’.

¹⁷² LSJ s.v.

kleptomania is a good example of how Hermes coincidentally achieves one of his own spheres whilst he is in the process of staking his claim on others. Hermes, due to his late arrival in the divine realm, has to achieve his *timai* differently from the rest of the Olympian gods.¹⁷³ It seems that Hermes must achieve his *timai* in alternative ways as the Olympian *status quo* has basically already been established by the time he arrives on the scene, leaving him with no *timai* to claim as his own. Of the *timai* he attains, some were stolen, others were bartered and others still were given as a kind of *geras* from his Olympic companions.

The relationship of the *timai* to the social status of the holder of any particular honour seems to be mutually dependent. In other words the *timai* you are able to hold are directly related to your position in society; the higher your position the more *timai* you are able to claim. Conversely, it is the *timai* that you are able to attain that determine your position or your social status within the community, hence the relationship of mutual dependence. In Hermes' case the *timai* function as status symbols, marking him out as an Olympian god. But at the same time, as a result of his divine status, which he realises in the hymn, he is rewarded with certain additional *timai*. It would seem (certainly in Hermes' case) that *timai* can only be awarded to someone of a high social standing. It is not until the young god confronts his father, and has his paternity, and thus his Olympic heritage confirmed, that Zeus awards him his particular spheres of influence or *timai*. In a way then, *timai* function as status symbols, demarcating those who are worthy of a particular rank or status. In the case of Hermes, the *timai* function as social, hierarchical and familial status symbols. Social in that they allow him to be accepted into the community of the Olympian gods (although his acceptance does seem dependent on his holding of some *timai*), hierarchical since they are not equal to

¹⁷³ Clay (1989), 100

Apollo's (although that was his original goal),¹⁷⁴ and they by no means come close to the *timai* that Zeus enjoys. Due to the fact that the gods are ultimately all related to one another, the question of the familial status of *timai* is slightly less clear cut. With certainty we can say that he does not enjoy the same *timai* as his *kyrios* – Zeus; and we have already noticed that he does not enjoy the same number of *timai* as his older half-brother Apollo, thus we do get a sense that *timai* do indeed function as status symbols within a family. It seems certain that *timai* do most certainly function as familial status symbols, marking out one's place in the family in relation to one's *kyrios*, mother and siblings. Certainly within the family, if we consider Homer's Telemachus, we find that *timai* do function as familial status symbols, marking out status, but also allowing development and progression, in the case of the relationship between mother and son. With regard to familial *timai* in a household where the father is present and thus acting as *kyrios*, logic dictates that it is not until the father is removed (either by death or war) that the oldest son can achieve his full *timai* within the family. An Olympian example of the familial status of *timai* of two brothers can be found in the cases of Apollo and Hermes. Apollo, the older, and thus more senior, brother has the power to give a share of his *timai* to Hermes; he also has sufficient influence amongst the Olympians to ensure that Hermes is granted additional *timai*. For Hermes the rewards associated with the achievement of *timai* were that he was able to join his father and family on Olympus. Furthermore, it granted him the ability to exercise his authority in certain fields with ease, although his authority was limited to the areas over which *he* held sway. One must always remember however that "the will of Zeus always outweighs the interests of the individual divinity."¹⁷⁵ Thus as the father, Zeus is ultimately the one with the authority to

¹⁷⁴ In the *hymn to Hermes* the young god sets out to gain rights, the same as those of Apollo (*Hom. Hymn Herm.* 173-174)

¹⁷⁵ Clay (1989), 150

confer or rescind *timai*. Responsibilities came with the job; he became, to name but one function, the “patron of all human heralds.”¹⁷⁶

Having outlined what *timē* is, some of its major characteristics and how it functions, we can now move on to the god who is central to our discussion, Hermes. Hermes, if we follow the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, seems to be one of the youngest gods of the pantheon, and he seems to be one of the last immortals to gain membership to this exclusive club.¹⁷⁷ Before Hermes is even introduced into the action, the audience through his parentage and through the poet’s description know that this is not any ordinary child, but an immortal one destined for great things. Supporting this statement, the poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* tells us the following “and when great Zeus’ purpose came to fulfilment, and her tenth moon was set in the sky, she [Maia] brought forth, and notable things came to pass. . .”¹⁷⁸ Hermes seems destined for greatness; from the moment he enters the poetic narrative, his spheres of influence are immediately anticipated in outline by the poet, as well as the rather unscrupulous but amazing actions he will perform on the day of his birth. When the poet brings the god into the action, he does it as follows:

“And she gave birth to a son resourceful and cunning, a robber, a rustler of cattle, a bringer of dreams, a night watcher, a gate-lurker, who was soon to display deeds of renown among the immortal gods: born in the morning, by midday he was playing the lyre, and in the evening he stole the cattle of far-shooting Apollo – on the fourth of the month, the day lady Maia bore him.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Clay (1989), 146

¹⁷⁷ If we take Hesiod’s chronology into account, Hermes is the second last Olympian god to be born, followed closely by Dionysus. See Hes. *Theog.* 885-943 for the birth accounts of most of the Olympian gods, see in particular 936-943 for the births of Hermes and Dionysus.

¹⁷⁸ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 10-12

¹⁷⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 13-16

This is a clear foreshadowing by the poet of the greatness that Hermes will soon achieve. The poet sets out his purpose; he is going to trace the deeds of Hermes, deeds which resulted in his acceptance by the gods into the pantheon, and deeds which earned him the titles that the poet has just outlined.

Before delving fully into the poem, we should briefly consider the performative context of the hymn, as this will help strengthen certain elements of our argument. In 1989, Clay argued that “we now seem far less certain of the circumstances surrounding the performance of the major hymns than earlier generations of scholars.”¹⁸⁰ Clay then goes on to highlight the difficulties of placing the major hymns in both time and place and even attributing them to a specific occasion.¹⁸¹ Specifically referring to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, she notes that:

“*Hermes* has been linked to Athens on linguistic and other grounds, but its composition has also been localised in Boeotia and Arcadia because both are mentioned in the course of the poem. Nevertheless, no conclusive evidence links *Hermes* to a specific festival.”¹⁸²

With this in mind Clay then goes on to speculate, with no supporting evidence that, in line with the ‘Song of Demodocus’ in *Odyssey* 8, the hymns may have been performed in the closing stages of a feast or possibly even a symposium.¹⁸³ West has argued that “the hymn was composed for performance at Olympia,”¹⁸⁴ which gives us a possible place but neither a festival nor occasion. However, Johnston convincingly, and with a great deal of evidence, argued that the “hymn would most appropriately have been performed during a festival of

¹⁸⁰ Clay (1989), 6

¹⁸¹ Clay (1989), 6-7

¹⁸² Clay (1989), 7

¹⁸³ See Clay (1989), 7, for discussion; I remain unconvinced.

¹⁸⁴ West (2003), 14. There is no reason to think that West is implying that due to its possible location (at Olympia) the hymn was performed at the Olympic Games.

Hermes that encouraged or celebrated the maturation of males.”¹⁸⁵ I think that Johnston’s compelling argument will afford us a sound platform from which to work and can only serve to facilitate our discussion.

So how then does Hermes go about proving that he is worthy of all the qualities he is given? A brief, but very useful summary of the poem and the remarkable deeds the young god – who at this stage is still an infant – performs can be found in Johnston’s 2002 article. She outlines a series of occurrences, all of which lead to Hermes achieving his goal (acceptance by his father and acceptance into adult society), which we will now consider. Johnston outlines the following:

“He finds a tortoise, kills it, and from its shell creates the first lyre. Then, having developed a craving for meat, he raids the cattle that his older brother Apollo has been herding. He invents firesticks and sacrifices two of the cattle to twelve gods, hiding the rest of them. When finally discovered by Apollo, he feigns innocence but is forced to defend himself in front of Zeus and the other gods. Eventually, Apollo befriends his younger brother and exchanges gifts with him: Apollo receives the remaining cattle¹⁸⁶ and the newly invented lyre and in return gives Hermes a cow whip, a caduceus, and oversight of prophetic bee maidens. Apollo also promises to make sure that Zeus bestows other responsibilities and honours on Hermes.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Johnston (2002), 116, Johnston not only cites evidence for the connection of Hermes to young maturing men in this same article but also includes a very interesting discussion on the Hermaia (an athletics festival for young men) as evidence for Hermes’ involvement in the protection of young men.

¹⁸⁶ I think some confusion has arisen here. Zeus instructs Hermes to lead Apollo to the stolen cattle (and to return them) however, ultimately the cattle are exchanged for the newly invented lyre, so Apollo does not receive the remaining cattle, they are given to Hermes.

¹⁸⁷ Johnston (2002), 111-112

His first act was to begin his search for Apollo's cattle, but he was very quickly distracted – as infants can be. *En route* to the cattle he goes about crafting a lyre out of a tortoise,¹⁸⁸ and by so doing he began to display the first of many great deeds. By crafting the lyre, not only does he fulfil the poet's prophecy that "by midday he was playing the lyre," but he also (whether or not he knows at this stage) has created the instrument by which he will gain prestige and win his role as a cattle herder, with his "shining goad," one of his *timai*.¹⁸⁹ The creation of the lyre by Hermes leads to another important stage in his development: he sings a song accompanied by the newly invented lyre.

Singing is an art young Greek men were expected to be trained in, thus Hermes' use of song at this point in the narrative (and again later in his interactions with Apollo) is important as an educational motif. Garland acknowledged two forms of Athenian education, which when combined are of relevance to us at this time. The first is the learning of letters (learning to read and write) and "committing to heart the works of Homer and other edifying poets" and the second, which is of greater importance to us, was the musical education which a child received "learning to play the lyre or *kithara* while singing in accompaniment."¹⁹⁰ If we consult Aristophanes' *Clouds* we can, to a certain degree, confirm the areas of education identified by Garland.¹⁹¹ In one of the many debates in the play Right who argues for the 'old system' of education identifies music (both learning songs by heart and being able to sing along to traditional tunes) and physical education (obtained in the gymnasium) as areas of

¹⁸⁸ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 21-28

¹⁸⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 477 and 498 respectively

¹⁹⁰ Garland (1990), 134

¹⁹¹ As further confirmation we can turn to Xenophon, who, in his consideration of the Spartan Constitution and how education in particular differed from education in other areas in the Greek world noted that "in other Greek states parents . . . send them to a school to learn letters, music and the exercises of the wrestling-ground" (Xen. *Lac.* 2.2.1). This clearly identifies the three areas of education which were deemed important. Interestingly, Xenophon claims to be discussing how the Spartan education system "differs from other systems," (Xen. *Lac.* 2.2.1), in his discussion he does not consider these three areas thus implying that they too were viewed as important educational areas to the Spartans, thus enhancing their overall importance.

importance.¹⁹² Wrong on the other hand, argues for the rhetorical and oratorical system of education, the ‘new system’ offered by Socrates and the sophists in the ‘Thinkery.’¹⁹³ Dover elucidates their debate by observing that

“Right talks about ‘secondary education’ constituted by music, poetry and physical training to which boys were sent by their fathers . . . after they had learned to read and write.”¹⁹⁴

Garland’s observations, which include the learning of letters (reading and writing) and musical training, refer back to the ‘old’ system of education, supported by Right in the play. Initially performed in about 423 BC,¹⁹⁵ the character ‘Right’ in the play must be referring to the system of education which had been most popular and thus most widespread up *until that time*. The character ‘Wrong’ who advocates an oratorical education must then be referring to the sophistic education offered by Socrates and the philosophers, which at the time was becoming more popular. Dover is helpful in explaining Wrong’s side of the debate:

“Wrong . . . talks about ‘tertiary education’ now becoming available for the first time, from the sophists, to leisured young men who had already been through the hands of the music-master and the gymnastics teacher.”¹⁹⁶

Wrong’s side of the debate will become relevant to us later in this chapter when Hermes needs to prove himself in a sphere where debate is important, thus we will leave the discussion until later. Right, however, does confirm the important role of music in a young man’s education. Focusing on the main text of importance to us, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, we see that Hermes automatically embarks on an educational path and develops his

¹⁹² Ar. Cl. 961-983

¹⁹³ Ar. Cl. 1055-1062

¹⁹⁴ Dover (1989), 21

¹⁹⁵ Dover (1989), x

¹⁹⁶ Dover (1989), 21

skills as a musician and performer of epic poetry, a set of skills a young man was clearly expected to have.

His second act, the raid of Apollo's cattle is done with great ease and with great cunning. After brutally extracting the innards from the tortoise, constructing his lyre and singing like a rhapsode, Hermes craved meat and contemplated "a piece of sheer trickery such as thieves carry out in the dark nighttime."¹⁹⁷ Lines 73 – 89 show us how he did this; he astonishingly managed to get the cows to walk backwards and so deceive Apollo as to the true direction in which the cows were travelling. If we follow Johnston (discussed above) in allowing the performative context of the hymn to be "during a festival of Hermes that encouraged or celebrated the maturation of males,"¹⁹⁸ the cattle raiding part of the myth thus provides us with a more important function than merely showcasing Hermes' treacherous and thieving nature. We are told by Johnston that:

"cattle raiding was understood to prepare a young man for life as a warrior, a role that every adult male was expected to assume; by raiding cattle a young man proved that he was capable of becoming a warrior and thus a man."¹⁹⁹

So, Hermes by acting in this way, was not only challenging Apollo, and creating the means by which he would be taken up to Olympus to meet his father, but he was also acting in a way appropriate for young men. By acting as such Hermes forces Apollo to react, in response to the fact that Apollo's physical *timai* in the form of his *geras* have been abducted. A successful raid or recovery "demonstrated the individual's physical strength, daring, resourcefulness and initiative – qualities considered intrinsic to manhood."²⁰⁰ Thus Hermes is

¹⁹⁷ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 64-67. Notice also: meat is the food of a *man*, not an *infant* who is only a few hours old.

¹⁹⁸ Johnston (2002), 116. This could explain why music and speech play such an important role in the *hymn*.

¹⁹⁹ Johnston (2002), 112

²⁰⁰ Johnston (2002) 112-113

further proving to both himself, Apollo, and indirectly the other Olympian gods, that he is worthy of inclusion in the Olympic pantheon, by demonstrating his resourcefulness and strength, in spite of the fact that he is only a day-old infant.²⁰¹ Johnston further illuminates our examination by noting that “the possession of cattle, and therefore the ability to raid and to protect or recover them, determined the amount of honour that a man held within his group.”²⁰² Walcot adds to our understanding of this strange tradition by noting that:

“women and animals are the twin types of ‘possession’ whose protection is of paramount importance to the man of honour, the twin forms of *geras* whose loss, threatened or actual, most undermines any claim to distinction and prestige.”²⁰³

This further increases Apollo’s need for action and also illuminates Hermes’ motives to commit the theft, which are most certainly be two-fold. Walcot again illuminates our discussion by observing that “successful raiding constitutes a proof of manhood and is part of a ritual process.”²⁰⁴ Hermes’ dual motivations are thus to both prove himself a ‘man’ (or at the very least worthy of inclusion in Olympian society), as well as to attract Apollo’s attention and thus further his plan to claim his share of *timai*.

This tradition of cattle-raiding has been observed in ancient Sparta, where the activity was part of a young man’s military training.²⁰⁵ Cattle theft in the ancient world can be seen to have two functions: it is part of an educational system which mirrors military training, thus

²⁰¹ We must always bear in mind, when considering the infancies or childhoods of the gods, that their narratives tend to be telescoped and fit in a large amount of activity into a small amount of narrative space and time.

²⁰² Johnston (2002), 112. Walcot (1979), 328, also notes the need to avenge the theft/destruction of cattle by using the example of Helios’ cattle in the *Odyssey*.

²⁰³ Walcot (1979), 328. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 1.131-139 (Agamemnon threatens to take Achilles’ *geras* – Briseis); 1.150-168 (Achilles threatens to leave Troy when Agamemnon threatens his *geras* and by implication, his honour).

²⁰⁴ Walcot (1979), 349

²⁰⁵ For references to Spartan cattle theft as a form of military exercise see: Xen. *Lac.* 2.6-8; Isoc. *Panath.* 211-214; Plut. *Mor.* 234 a35, 237 e11-13.

acting as a rite of passage of sorts, and it allows a young man to prove his worth, or the victim of the theft to reclaim his worth.²⁰⁶ Proving his worth seems to be one of the motives behind Hermes' cattle raid. And while we come to this conclusion through analysis (which follows shortly), we can easily identify the other motive behind Hermes' actions - forcing Apollo's hand. Johnston, in summarising much of the scholarship on cattle raids and their significance concludes that:

“myths of cattle raiding sent a message to young men who were on the brink of adulthood: namely, that to win honour and acceptance among other men, one must develop and display certain qualities that society expects from men.”²⁰⁷

Hermes is thus acting entirely appropriately for a 'young man' in his situation, or at this stage of his life, and we should thus see this episode as an acknowledgment of the traditions found in ancient society and a tool to emphasise their relevance and importance.

At this point in the discussion it is relevant to bring up the subject of military training as it was such an important part of a young Greek man's life. Whilst Hermes does not undergo or even undertake any such training, the cattle-raiding motif does permit its introduction, and a brief discussion of its ultimate importance. The Athenian *ephēbeia* was what we would consider a military academy where young men or *ephēboi* (aged about 18) underwent compulsory military training.²⁰⁸ It would seem that this was the final step of a young man's inclusion into the adult community. Upon completion of his service he was considered a fully

²⁰⁶ Many examples of cattle raiding exist in the heroic tradition, and highlight the importance of cattle and the need to protect the herds, for examples see: Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.6.1, 1.9.12, 2.1.2, 2.5.10, 2.6.2, 3.10.2 (Hermes and Apollo), 3.11.2; Hom. *Il.* 11.672-765; Hes. *SH* 479-480

²⁰⁷ Johnston (2002), 115

²⁰⁸ I mention the *ephēbeia* as it seems to be the most natural comparison for our purposes, also as much of the evidence used throughout this dissertation in Athenian in origin.

fledged member of the adult community.²⁰⁹ Garland observed that “the *ephēbeia* is much more than a period of military service. It is a period of transition between childhood and complete participation in the life of the society.”²¹⁰ We could argue that the inclusion of Hermes’ cattle raid was important to remind young men of their need to develop their physical prowess, and thus remind them of the importance of military training.²¹¹

The cattle raid is used by Hermes to gain Apollo’s attention; it is an action which cannot be ignored. We are thus inching ever closer to Hermes’ acquisition of honour and the assumption of his role within Olympian society. In connection with this, Johnston observes that “Hermes’ raid . . . allows him to provide for his family, in this case his mother.”²¹² This episode in the hymn acts as a good indication not only of the motives of Hermes, but also of his assumption of a more adult role within Maia’s *oikos* and his probable attempt to assume the role of *kyrios* within Maia’s home. It is in certain speeches of Demosthenes and Lysias that we find most evidence for a son’s desire to provide for his mother, and how he felt about doing so.

Golden comes to the conclusion that sons are more fond of their mothers than their fathers.²¹³ He also points out that in the absence of a father, the son seems to be responsible financially (and one might conjecture emotionally) for his mother. It is also part of his duty as a son to ensure that she is treated appropriately, especially when she dies.²¹⁴ Lysias states in *On the Olive Stump* that:

²⁰⁹ See Garland (1990) 183-187 for a more detailed discussion.

²¹⁰ Garland (1990), 185, quoting Roussel (1921), 459

²¹¹ I am by no means assuming that this was the only reason for the inclusion of the cattle raid. It was part of the myth of Hermes and his ascendancy to Olympus, it could never be substituted for an alternative event, but it does add an extra level of enlightenment to the narrative by considering its military implications.

²¹² Johnston (2002), 113

²¹³ I would argue that this is particularly the case with Hermes, as he has an absent father, and is ‘raised’ by a single mother.

²¹⁴ Golden (1990), 100

“I shall be the most miserable of creatures if I am to be unjustly declared an exile: I am childless and alone, my house would be abandoned, my mother would be in utter penury, and I should be deprived of my native land.”²¹⁵

Whether or not this is emotional blackmail on the part of Lysias’ client, I cannot say, but it does show concern for the well-being of his mother.²¹⁶ It was clearly a well-used and effective strategy, which must have been felt to have some effect on a jury. Other examples can be found in Demosthenes, who in *Against Nicostratus* shows that the plight of mothers can be used to sway people’s emotions, and in *Against Eubulides* that the rights of a mother, especially to a decent burial, were real emotional concerns:

“. . . they will talk about old age and embarrassments and a mother’s maintenance, and by dwelling tearfully upon these matters by which they think they can most easily deceive you, they will try to rob the state of what is due to her. . .”²¹⁷

“. . . when you question the nine archons, you ask whether they act dutifully towards their parents. I for my part am left without a father, but for my mother’s sake I beg and beseech you so to settle this trial as to restore to me the right to bury her in our ancestral tomb.”²¹⁸

While none of the three preceding situations are directly comparable to the situations presented above²¹⁹ most notably as the sons who are speaking in these instances are adult members of the community, they do provide us with an interesting glimpse into Athenian

²¹⁵ Lys. VII.41

²¹⁶ We are not afforded the opportunity to know what the reaction of the mother to this situation was, but we are allowed to see how sons were supposed to care for their mothers.

²¹⁷ Dem. LIII.29

²¹⁸ Dem. LVII.70

²¹⁹ Although it is relevant to point out that these women are clearly widows, and thus similar to Maia in that she does not enjoy the protection of a husband.

society and the relationships that mothers had with their sons. This is further confirmed by Hunter, who states that:

“where family life is concerned the relationship of mother and son is a very close one and the ties of affection between them often touching . . . For mother and son assume mutual responsibilities to one another throughout their lives, with the obligations of the son increasing as the mother enters widowhood or old age.”²²⁰

So we see that sons are inclined to feel obligated to ensure that their mothers are at the very least looked after in their old age.²²¹ Golden leans towards the fact that it is the mother’s actions – carrying the child, feeding it and giving birth to it and by so doing putting her own life in danger as well as guessing what was good for it – which foster the sense of obligation in the son.²²² I am inclined to agree, although not wholeheartedly, as this discounts the inexplicable natural bond between parents and children, which has existed for millennia. The example of sons caring for their mothers also allows us to note that a son could act as the voice for his mother, in spheres where women were not allowed to participate such as, in this case, the law courts.

We should also briefly consider, at this point in the discussion, the role of speech in the hymn. As we saw with music or singing, we will come to see how training in oratory was considered an important part of a young man’s education, and allowed him to be accepted into the adult community. It is clear from the hymn that Hermes’ encounter with the old man at Onechestos leaves the old man with better oratorical abilities than he had before he

²²⁰ Hunter, V. (1989), 39. Hunter, V. (1994), 17 observes that two years after a son reaches the age of majority he becomes his mother’s *kyrios* – or “responsible for her maintenance.” Hunter does admit that the evidence for this is tenuous and that a woman could have more than one *kyrios* (Hunter, V. (1994), 17; also see n. 18, p. 196)

²²¹ I am by no means assuming that this was always the case.

²²² Golden (1990), 104

encountered Hermes (lines 87-93 cf. 190-211), thus highlighting Hermes' role as god of speech. Clay notes that "speech insofar as it involves communication or mediation between individuals, belongs to Hermes' domain."²²³ With the intervention of Hermes we see yet another of the skills required to be accepted into the adult community coming to the fore, the episode also highlights "another *timē* or expertise of the new god."²²⁴ When Apollo encounters the man, he has acquired the ability to speak cunningly to Apollo, and thus has acquired the skill which Hermes embodies and possesses. Clay confirms this by stating that the old man has suddenly become garrulous because "Hermes' passage seems to have endowed him with speech."²²⁵

We thus need to consider the role of oratory in the education of young men and how it indicates their maturity, thus allowing them to be accepted into a community of adults. Beck observes of Isocrates' stance on the importance of rhetoric: "without the power to speak well, and to persuade others, there could be no civic or political efficiency,"²²⁶ thus highlighting its perceived importance in ancient society, and its necessity as a skill. The ability to speak well held a place of great importance in Greek society, although it is not until the fifth century BC that we see it realising its full potential under the sophists. This is particularly relevant in light of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, but before we discuss this I feel we should consider some of our earliest evidence for the importance of the skill. Odysseus is the first character who comes to mind who possesses great speaking abilities; he is characterised throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as being greatly skilled and cunning in speech. Homer also informs us, through Phoenix's speech to Achilles (*Iliad* 9.437-444), that emphasis was indeed placed on a

²²³ Clay (1989), 106

²²⁴ Tzifopoulos (2000), 149

²²⁵ Clay (1989), 131

²²⁶ Beck (1964), 257

man's ability to speak well and to be able to debate effectively. Phoenix, in the embassy to Achilles reminds Achilles that:

“you were merely a boy then with no experience of war, that great leveller, or of debate where men make their mark. It was to teach you all these things, to make a speaker of you and a man of action that he [Peleus] sent me with you.”²²⁷

Phoenix has made his necessary presence clear; it was to teach Achilles of war (to make him a ‘man of action’) and to teach him how to speak effectively that he was sent along with Achilles. Homer thus highlights the importance of rhetoric in a young man's arsenal. By the time of Aristophanes the philosophers, are making a profession of teaching men how to win debates (even when there is no reason for them to win the debate).²²⁸ Dover informs us that debate (i.e. oratory) forms part of a tertiary curriculum and would only have been undertaken by young men who had already received a basic education (reading and writing) followed by musical and physical instruction. Here one of the implications is that predominantly the wealthy would have been able to undergo this form of instruction as Dover describes the young men who receive this form of education as ‘leisurely.’²²⁹ Starting from the most basic forms, physical and musical education, we can see that the systems of education developed over time. The arts of oratory and rhetoric, identified by Homer, developed to a further extent under the philosophers who took over the educational responsibilities, which were quintessentially embodied in the type of education imparted by Isocrates.²³⁰ Isocrates, one of the more influential educators in Athens of the fourth century BC believed that “the aim of education lay in the production of civic efficiency and political leadership, qualities which

²²⁷ Hom. *Il.* 9.437-444

²²⁸ Ar. *Cl.* 1055-1062. The argument put forward here by ‘Wrong’ is to convince the character Strepsiades that an oratorical education is better for his son, Pheidippides, than the traditional musical and physical education promoted by ‘Right’.

²²⁹ See Dover (1989), 21

²³⁰ For a thorough discussion of the role of philosophers in Greek education see Beck (1964).

demanded the power to judge wisely and to make right decisions.”²³¹ By emphasising the role of oratory and the power to ‘judge wisely’ as important factors in the running of a city state we can conclude that education in these fields was of paramount importance to a young man. This explains the inclusion of oratory in the *Hymn to Hermes* (particularly as Hermes was the god of persuasive speech and embodied this quality, as shown by his encounter with the old man at Onechestos). Regardless, we see that both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ types of education form vital elements in the development of young men. Hermes, who seems to intrinsically possess the ability to speak well, does develop along similar lines to young men in ancient Greece. He undergoes a musical ‘education’ when he first makes the lyre and sings along to it; in a sense we may view his cattle-raiding as comprising the physical side of his education and he already possesses the ability to speak well, all elements required to be successfully integrated into the adult community.

In his third act, Hermes, using firesticks, makes a fire by which he will cook two cows and sacrifice to the twelve Olympians, in a foreshadowing of the Olympian cult. What is more interesting here is that the poet claims the following: “Hermes it was who first delivered up the firesticks and fire.”²³² Clay notes that “Hermes is expressly credited with being the first to discover this technique of making fire . . . he does not, however, in any sense invent fire.”²³³ So the young god, who is in the process of rebelling to draw his brother’s attention, creates a nifty fire-making technique that will see “an improvement in the human condition.”²³⁴ The improvement on the human condition to which Clay refers takes us back to Prometheus’ deception of Zeus in the *Theogony* 535 – 570. After Prometheus’ theft of fire, Zeus retaliates by sending Pandora to earth as a punishment for mankind; this certainly does not improve the

²³¹ Beck (1964), 255

²³² *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 110-111

²³³ Clay (1989), 116

²³⁴ Clay (1989), 116

human condition as Prometheus had hoped when he initially stole the fire. Rather this episode leaves gods and men distinctly separate. Hermes' introduction of this manner of making fire, as well as his role as a divine go-between, results in renewed relations between gods and men and a revitalisation in mankind's use, and 'control' of fire.²³⁵

After his novel creation of fire with the firesticks, and in his fourth act worthy of poetry, Hermes goes about performing feats of great strength, in order to kill the cows which he wants to sacrifice or prepare as a feast.²³⁶ As an infant – and Hermes is clearly still an infant from the point of view of age – who was born only that morning, it is hard to believe that he could do such great things, but the poet is very careful to outline Hermes' actions:

“While the force of famed Hephaestus was keeping the fire burning up, he dragged two of the curly-horned cows that were under shelter out towards the fire – his strength was great – and threw them both to the ground on their backs, snorting; and leaning against them, he rolled them over after piercing their spinal cords.”²³⁷

This is a feat of immense strength, which would be difficult for a grown man to perform, let alone a day-old infant – but Hermes is a god. The act which follows on from the fire-making and cow-slaying, is the sacrifice that he performs (or depending on where you stand, the feast that he prepares), which according to West “foreshadows the Olympic cult of the Twelve gods,”²³⁸ a cult which most certainly would have included Hermes himself.

²³⁵ This view does not seem to be made explicit by the author or narrator of the *Homeric Hymn*, but is a sensible hypothesis upon consideration of Hermes' role in antiquity. For further discussion see Clay (1989), 116.

²³⁶ There is disagreement amongst scholars as to whether Hermes' actions constitute a sacrifice or a feast (*dais*), for a good summary on some of the theories see Clay (1989), 116-120, who very convincingly takes the *dais* line of interpretation.

²³⁷ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 115-119; it is somewhat perplexing that, according to the *Hom Hymn Herm.* the young god 'only just invented fire', but there is already a god – Hephaestus – assigned to oversee the sphere.

²³⁸ West (2003), 123

“ . . . he cut up the meat, rich with fat, and roasted it, fixed on wooden spits, the flesh pieces together with the honorific chins and the dark blood sausages of tripe; the remaining parts lay there on the ground. . . Then Hermes happily drew off the rich cooking from the spits onto a smooth slab, and split it into twelve portions determined by lot, and assigned a fixed rank to each one.”²³⁹

While West and others see this as a sacrifice, I lean more to Clay’s persuasive argument, and see this as a feast, although we cannot discount the possibility that the scene contains elements of both a feast and sacrifice. Clay notes that “at a *dais*, all the edible meat is divided into equal portions,”²⁴⁰ which certainly makes sense in the context of the poem, and thus allows for the easy inclusion of Hermes within the cult. The poet is very careful to show the audience that the meat is divided equally, and apportioned by lot, and as Clay puts it this is an act not aimed “at establishing vertical hierarchy based on distinctions of rank and status, but a horizontal distribution affirming equality.”²⁴¹ This would allow Hermes himself to claim a share of the *timai*, based on the principles of equality. Clay notes “it expresses a desire to enter the company of the gods on an equal footing,”²⁴² something which would clearly benefit Hermes, who at this point in the poem is still lacking in a portion of the honours. The feast is also the point in the poem where Hermes realises his divinity due to his inability to consume the meat, and he leaves the pasture aware of his divine status.²⁴³ Clay notes that it is this new understanding of his status which “informs his conversation with Maia, for the first time, he clearly states his intention of acquiring the privileges that by rights accompany it.”²⁴⁴

²³⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 120-129

²⁴⁰ Clay (1989), 120

²⁴¹ Clay (1989), 121

²⁴² Clay (1989), 122

²⁴³ See Clay (1989), 127

²⁴⁴ Clay (1989), 127

Hermes then confronts his mother with his innate rhetorical abilities and his new understanding of his own identity. His confrontation with Maia, much like Telemachus' confrontation with Penelope in the *Odyssey*,²⁴⁵ allows him to gain power in the *oikos*, in the absence of his father or any other male authority figure. It thus takes him one step closer to the realisation of his *timai*, by a plan which he has already set in motion.

Let us briefly consider the lineage of Hermes as it is of relevance to our discussion and helps to build up our picture of the god. He is born to the nymph Maia and the king of the Olympians, Zeus. The poet of the *Homeric Hymn* describes Maia as “that nymph of lovely tresses . . . who shunned the company of the blessed gods, dwelling within a cave’s shadow.”²⁴⁶ As an aside it is interesting to note that Leto, another of Zeus’ amours, who was not an Olympian goddess but a Titan, did not ‘shun the company of the blessed gods.’ She is clearly seen spending time with the Olympians in the opening *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.²⁴⁷ This is interesting as Apollo in the hymn dedicated to him also has to achieve his *timai* (as we will soon see is the case with Hermes), but Apollo’s acquisition of *timai* results in a harmonious life on Olympus *with* his mother Leto, whilst Hermes’ acquisition of *timai* does not result in Maia moving to Olympus. It is also interesting to point out that Apollo plays a vital role in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in the young god’s acquisition of his *timai* and his resultant place on Olympus. As for Hermes’ father, the hymn clearly details this part of his lineage; however, it is important to note that Hermes’ legitimacy is not confirmed by his father until later in the poem. Right from the start the audience is made aware that Hermes’ father is Zeus.²⁴⁸ But we must wait until much later in the poem to have his paternity – along

²⁴⁵ Hom. *Od.* 1.319-386

²⁴⁶ Hom. *Hymn Herm.* 4-5

²⁴⁷ Hom. *Hymn Ap.* 1-13

²⁴⁸ Hom. *Hymn Herm.* 1; 4

with his legitimacy – confirmed.²⁴⁹ So we see that Hermes – like Apollo – is the son of the most important god in the pantheon. Lastly, it must be noted that Hermes, like Apollo, is ‘raised’ by a single mother. Zeus does eventually interact with Hermes, as a mediator between Hermes and Apollo, in the hymn, but that is much later in the narrative, moments before his legitimacy is confirmed;²⁵⁰ he never fulfils the role of ‘father’ in the hymn.

Presently, I must point out that there are other children to be found in Greek literature who are informative to our discussion, one mortal and one a god to act as control sample, against the destined greatness of Hermes. A quick introduction regarding their bad behaviour, much like the petulant behaviour that Hermes displays towards Maia, and survey of their lineage and social situations, followed by the reason for their inclusion will follow.

Eros is introduced into Apollonius’ *Argonautica* long before we get a chance to see him in action. Hera and Athena arrive at the home of Hephaestus and Aphrodite to ask the love-goddess for a favour.²⁵¹ Their request is not met with much hope for success. The exasperated goddess complains to the two in the following manner:

“He is far more likely to obey you than me. There is no reverence in him, but faced by you he might display some spark of decent feeling. He certainly

²⁴⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 397. “So the two handsome children of Zeus. . .” referring to both Apollo and Hermes, after Zeus has stood in judgment of the theft of Apollo’s cattle.

²⁵⁰ See Greene (2005), 343-349, for full discussion on the use of epithets in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* and how this relates to the paternal legitimacy of Hermes.

²⁵¹ When Hera initially suggests to Athena that they enlist Aphrodite’s help, her words are not those of a goddess confident that their request will be met with acceptance or success. She says to Athena: “Let us go together and ask her to *persuade* her boy, *if that is possible*. . .” (*Ap. Rhod. Argon.* 3.25-26). These are not the words of a goddess who is confident that Aphrodite can *persuade* her son to do as she wishes, thus we do not expect Eros to be the epitome of a well-behaved child. It is appropriate that the two goddesses do not go directly to Eros as he is but a child, and dealings with children should be done through the parents, hence their involvement of Aphrodite. *However* in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* Apollo, upon realising who stole his cattle does not approach Maia first, but goes directly to Hermes, indicating that he believes the young god is able to take responsibility for his own actions, regardless of his age. Perhaps it is the level of psychological maturity that is important here, thus Apollo is able to hold Hermes accountable for his actions.

pays no attention to me: he defies me and always does the opposite of what I say.”²⁵²

Our first picture of Eros is not a favourable one, and when we finally encounter him in the narrative he does conform to his mother’s earlier description. But Aphrodite has arrived with some tricks up her sleeve, and will eventually get what she wants from her petulant child.

“After searching up and down Olympus for her boy, [she] found him far away in the fruit-laden orchard of Zeus. With him was Ganymede . . . The two lads, who had much in common, were playing with golden knucklebones. Eros, the greedy boy, was standing there with a whole handful of them clutched to his breast . . . Nearby sat Ganymede, hunched up, silent and disconsolate . . . Aphrodite came up to her boy, took his chin in her hand and said: ‘Why this triumphant smile, you rascal? I do believe you won the game unfairly by cheating a beginner.’”²⁵³

Eros of the *Argonautica* is the childish Cupid that modern-day audiences have come to know, the little boy, with his bow and arrows, who takes pleasure in wreaking havoc on human emotions. This is not the all powerful Eros of Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Our Eros is Aphrodite’s mischievous son, who cheats Ganymede of his knucklebones, and causes chaos in the hearts of mortals. He is clearly the son of Aphrodite, as both she and Hera point out. Hera acknowledges Eros’ maternity when she suggests to Athena that they go and talk to Aphrodite; “we must have a word with Aphrodite. Let us go together and ask her to persuade

²⁵² Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.91-94. It would seem that Aphrodite is referring to her son’s lack of a ‘sense of shame’, or a sense of understanding of his place within the hierarchy of the family and an understanding of the sense of honour or duty associated with said shame. For full discussion of *aidos* or the sense of shame see Cairns (1993), particularly 103-105 where the discussion regarding Telemachus’ *aidos* creates a suitable foil for Eros’ lack of *aidos*, but also 415-16 for a consideration of *aidos* as applied to youths by Aristotle.

²⁵³ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.112-130

her boy.”²⁵⁴ Both Aphrodite and Apollonius confirm this by frequently referring to Eros as “my boy” or “her boy.”²⁵⁵ Whilst it is made plain who the mother of Eros is, the poet leaves his paternity thoroughly ambiguous. It is clear from the text that Aphrodite is married to Hephaestus: he is referred to as her consort, she lives in a palace built by him, sleeps in a bed built by him, and sits in a grand ‘inlaid chair’, most probably constructed by her craftsman god husband.²⁵⁶ But nowhere in the text is he referred to as the father of Eros, nor is there any indication that Ares may be Eros’ father. Commentators are quick to point out the allusions to the ‘Song of Demodocus’ in the opening of *Argonautica* 3,²⁵⁷ thus implying that it is possible that Ares was the father of Eros, but this does not leave the audience feeling any more certain as to his paternity. I think perhaps, the best way forward is not to question *who* the father of Eros is but rather to simply accept that he is almost certainly the son of a god, and acknowledge the flexibility of his paternity. So it would seem that Eros, too, is ‘raised’ by a single mother, as Aphrodite does *not* indicate if there is anyone else present to discipline him.²⁵⁸

Next is the school-boy, Cottalus, in Herodas’ third *Mime*. He seems to be misbehaving, for reasons unknown to the audience, and exhausting his mother, even more so than Eros is exasperating Aphrodite. In the *Didaskalos*, the mother, Metrotime, complains to the school-master, Lampricusus, and requests that he aid her in disciplining her wayward son, whom she has dragged along.²⁵⁹ The school-master agrees. When Herodas introduces the character of Cottalus into the narrative, we are given the following dismal picture: he has damaged the roof of his family’s home; he has graduated from playing with knuckle-bones to more

²⁵⁴ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.25-28

²⁵⁵ My boy: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.110; her boy: Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.113

²⁵⁶ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.36-44

²⁵⁷ See for example: Hunter, R. (1989), 101-102 ; Campbell (1994), 49-52

²⁵⁸ Campbell (1994), 50-52, suggests that Hephaestus is too preoccupied with his work to worry about things at home.

²⁵⁹ Herod. *Mim.* 3.1-4

worrying kinds of gambling; he does not know where his writing-master is situated, even though his parents are still paying the man, but is able to direct someone to the ‘gambling den’; he no longer practises his writing skills; he cannot recognise syllables and cannot recite the tragic speeches he has been taught; when he is reprimanded, he either moves in with his grandmother and eats her out of house-and-home, or he stays up on their roof all day, looking like a monkey and he is dirty.²⁶⁰ From the introduction of the boy and the description of him, he is most certainly the worst example of the three selected.²⁶¹ His mother’s description of him, however, goes unconfirmed. It is difficult to say then how the boy fares in relation to his mother’s description; he does seem cunning in his request for Lampriscus to use another beating implement, although these could be the actions of a desperate child, who wants to feel as little pain as possible.²⁶² He could also, possibly with sarcastic undertones, simply be avoiding more lashings when he says “I shall not do any [wicked deeds] again, I swear to you, Lampriscus, by the dear Muses”²⁶³ as opposed to having learned his lesson, but Headlam informs us that “his spirit does not appear to be subdued.”²⁶⁴ Headlam further notes that we should see Cottalus as a character rather than a person by noting that “beating-scenes . . . were proper to the mime; and the boy is a character of mime . . .”²⁶⁵ Thus for the purposes of this study, we must view Cottalus as the ‘naughty school-boy’ stock character, just as his mother should be seen as a “fussy old woman”²⁶⁶ stock character.

Cottalus, the exasperating child in Herodas’ third *Mime*, is, in some ways, similar to both Hermes and Eros. The poet, who starts his narrative in what seems to be mid-discussion,

²⁶⁰ Herod. *Mim.* 3.5-58

²⁶¹ Cottalus is the opposite of Hermes with regard to the pursuit of education. Hermes purposefully or not embarks on his quest and partakes in activities which will allow him to be accepted into the ‘adult’ community. Cottalus seems to be fighting against his socialisation and rejecting the social structures (reading, writing, oratory) which would allow him to be accepted into the adult community.

²⁶² Herod. *Mim.* 3.71-73

²⁶³ Herod. *Mim.* 3.82-83

²⁶⁴ Headlam (1979), xli

²⁶⁵ Headlam (1979), xli

²⁶⁶ Headlam (1979), xlii

leaves us wondering, for a short while, who this very annoyed woman is, and who she is complaining about, but by line 31, we are made painfully aware of who it is. The woman, Metrotime, acknowledges in a very brief aside that she is complaining about her son, the aforementioned Cottalus, and at the same time informs the audience that he does indeed have a father – “and whenever he is asked . . . to recite a tragic speech, by me or his father, an old man hard of sight and hearing”²⁶⁷ – although he seems not to play a great part in the child’s life. So we have ascertained that Cottalus has a mother and a father, both present in his life, but not both active participants. Technically his mother is not raising him by herself, but she does not seem to get any help from the father. But what is the social status of this family? The text indicates, through Metrotime’s complaints, that they have very little money.²⁶⁸ Headlam has concluded that this family was (a) very poor, as there are clear references to the poverty of the family and, (b) *could* come from the same class as fishermen as they are so poor, with fishermen “being proverbially poor.”²⁶⁹ Metrotime is the “fussy ill-tempered housewife, in supreme control of her arrangements,²⁷⁰ as we learn from the artful parenthesis . . . her husband is old, blind and deaf,”²⁷¹ and circumstantially is, on many levels, a good contrast for the goddesses, discussed previously. The father, while present, due to his ailments, is clearly not in control of the day-to-day affairs of the house, including the education and discipline of the child. This is clear from the fact that he is not involved in the discussions with the schoolmaster, and the later comment, made by his wife,

²⁶⁷ Herod. *Mim.* 3.30-32

²⁶⁸ Herod. *Mim.* 3.9-10; 3.14-16; 3.49

²⁶⁹ Headlam (1979), 131-132

²⁷⁰ Which in itself is interesting, especially when considering social norms of the time. The discussion regarding a son’s responsibility towards his mother provides an interesting contrast to Metrotime.

²⁷¹ Headlam (1979), xlii

“On second thoughts, Lampriscus, I shall go home and tell the old man this; and I shall come back with the fetters, so that the Ladies he has hated may see him jumping here with feet tied together.”²⁷²

Their status is low, but they are both present in their child’s life, although the father seems not to be involved.

We have thus met all of our child protagonists. Two of the protagonists are gods, Hermes and Eros, but the two of them differ slightly; Hermes will grow up and in the process claim his *timai*, and join the pantheon, while Eros is destined to remain a mischievous puerile god for all eternity. Whilst one cannot doubt the importance of Eros’ role in ancient society, he was never one of the gods of the pantheon, and this is most certainly *not* the all-powerful Eros of Hesiod’s *Theogony*, although his powers are not to be doubted. Our other protagonist is a human, Cottalus. Cottalus as a character in Herodas’ *Mimes* does not have the narrative space for growth or development; he is fighting against the social structures which would allow him to be accepted as an adult. Cottalus, like Eros, is destined to forever remain a child, and by the looks of things he will remain an annoying brat, who exasperates his mother day-in and day-out for the rest of their mortal lives. Cottalus and Eros, rather than being characters who will grow out of their juvenile ways and become productive members of society (like Hermes will), become a drain on society. Golden has pointed out that in general “the gods mature and only rarely (Orphic Dionysus, Cretan Zeus) receive worship as children; those who remain children forever – Eros, Adonis – were dangerous, subversive.”²⁷³

²⁷² Herod. *Mim.* 3.94-97

²⁷³ Golden (2003), 14 uses Segal (1991), to reach this conclusion. Segal arrives at his conclusion on the basis that Adonis provides a negative exemplar for young men. Adonis as someone who is both physically and psychologically impeded cannot become a productive member of society and is thus socially and politically hindered too. For further, detailed discussion see Segal (1991), 64 – 85, particularly 77ff.

Having met all of the children of consequence to this study, we may now move on to the real reason behind the comparison of the children: the misbehaviour and the effect it has on their mothers. Why does the child rebel? Is there a specific purpose behind his behaviour towards his mother (and others in a superior position) or is he simply a little monster? How does his mother deal with it? Are the disciplinary techniques successful? This section of the chapter is most important as it will – more than likely – enlighten us as to the child’s true purpose for rebelling and how it relates to the acquisition of *timai*; more specifically it will lay a path which we may trace in trying to understand Hermes’ rebellion.

Hermes, a newly born divinity, son of the king of the gods and a nymph, wants to claim what he feels to be his rightful place on Olympus, with all the honours and worship associated with the position. He clearly outlines his purpose, when his mother feebly attempts to discipline him – or at the very least – warn him. He tells her:

“I am going to embark on the finest of arts, keeping the two of us in clover forever. We won’t put up with staying here and being without offerings or prayers alone of all the immortals, as you would have us do . . . As for privilege, I’m going to enter to my rights, the same as Apollo . . .”²⁷⁴

It is simple, Hermes has laid it out for us, he misbehaves, as he wants to be worshipped and honoured along with the other Olympian gods particularly Apollo, and supposedly he wants the same for his mother, aspirations which are more appropriate to an adult male than they are to a day-old infant. When his mother “chastises him (lines 155 – 161) for stealing the cattle, Hermes replies that she ought not to treat him like a child, and then tells her that he

²⁷⁴ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 164-173. Interestingly Hermes notes that Maia is happy to stay in her cave without honour or worship.

will become master of whatever art will best provide sustenance for her and himself.”²⁷⁵ His behaviour towards his mother suggests that he feels it is his duty to ensure that they are taken care of and receive the honour that is due to them. In the absence of a *kyrios*, in the strictest sense of the word, it seems that Hermes tries to usurp this role in his mother’s *oikos* for himself.²⁷⁶ Maia does not react to his wish to claim them their due honours. In fact Maia is not heard from again in the poem, she is only mentioned in maternal epithets ascribed to Hermes.²⁷⁷ In her attempts to discipline Hermes, she wisely, and almost prophetically, points out, in what can only be seen as a verbal warning, and nothing else, that “very soon you’ll be going out through that porch with your body bound helplessly at Apollo’s hands.”²⁷⁸ In response to this verbal warning from Maia, Hermes announces his true purpose. Evidently her words have had no impact on the child; it will take more than this to put him in his place. Shortly thereafter Hermes’ older brother, Apollo re-enters the narrative. When Apollo forcefully enters Maia’s home, with no *kyrios* present to prevent his entry, he rather disrespectfully ruffles through Maia’s cave in search of his cattle. He tears the place apart looking for the cattle – although I cannot believe that Apollo thought that they may be in Maia’s cupboards – with no success. Apollo then accuses an unlikely, but guilty, suspect of the theft – Hermes, who had curled up in his crib, and was for a change acting appropriately for his age, and who was now feigning ignorance and faking innocence. This is the moment Maia had warned her son about, and this was the moment Hermes had hoped for when he set out to steal his brother’s cattle. Hermes cleverly counters Apollo’s accusation with an *eikos* or likelihood argument: he points out that no-one would believe he stole the cattle, as he is

²⁷⁵ Johnston (2002), 113

²⁷⁶ This is an entirely legitimate role for Hermes to fulfil in the absence of any real *kyrios* in Maia’s *oikos*. Interestingly Hermes acts as an adult would or should but is still, in poetic terms, a child, and makes full use of his status as a child when dealing with Apollo; he even tries this manipulative tactic with Zeus.

²⁷⁷ Notice the similarity with *Hom. Hymn Ap.* where the focus of the poem is shifted from Leto to Apollo once her son is born.

²⁷⁸ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 156-157

still an infant who prefers “sleeping, and my mother’s milk.”²⁷⁹ Apollo sees through the innocence that Hermes is faking and removes him from his crib, but promptly drops Hermes when he farts. We are told by Clay that “the confrontation between Apollo and Hermes centres on the contrast between the bullying, self-confident, older brother and the supposedly innocent, helpless babe.”²⁸⁰ Apollo’s brutish, forceful demands of Hermes are met with a crafty answer, which in turn is met by another display of confident force by Apollo, and Hermes’ removal to Mount Olympus for arbitration.²⁸¹ Concealed behind this whole episode is Hermes’ motive to gain access to Olympus. His goal is achieved when he tricks Apollo into taking him to Olympus, once again claiming innocence. In this episode, far from being a disciplinarian, Apollo is tricked by Hermes, who achieves his goal of being taken to Olympus. Apart from the motivations of Hermes, throughout the episode the audience have one thing in mind: the threat that Hermes poses to the stability of the power structures of Mount Olympus. As with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, when Apollo’s arrival on Mount Olympus is met with trembling from the gods in Zeus’ house,²⁸² so too now, the audience get the feeling that Hermes’ removal to Mount Olympus could represent a threat to the established order – especially bearing mind the earlier threat made by Hermes to interfere

²⁷⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 266-267

²⁸⁰ Clay (1989), 133

²⁸¹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 254-278; 282-303. Hunter, V. (1994), 59 notes that “in the resolution of disputes among kin, arbitrators were relatives and friends mutually agreed by the parties.” Thus Apollo’s actions are in line with Athenian legal practice in the fifth century BC – in all likelihood Hermes would have not have objected to the selection of Zeus as an arbitrator, as his primary purpose was to confront Zeus. Hunter also acknowledges that “private arbitration [like the kind Apollo seeks] had a long history extending back to Homer and Hesiod,” thus making it possible for us to find accepted ‘legal’ practice in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.*. See Hunter, V. (1994), 43-69 for disputes among kin and their private resolution. It would seem that it is fully within Apollo’s right as the victim of theft to seek legal action for his stolen cattle. Christ (1998), 521, notes that a *kyrios* is in charge when exercising legal action “in defence of his *oikos*,” further he adds that private citizens bore a great level of responsibility “for initiating, conducting and executing the judgments of legal actions.” Thus we may view Apollo’s actions (finding the thief, confronting him, taking him for arbitration and finally extracting an oath from him towards the end of the hymn) as complying with the accepted Athenian legal practice. See Christ (1998), 521ff. for a fuller discussion. With regard to Apollo’s forced entry into Maia’s *oikos*, which would have been viewed as illegal, it is done with the aim of seeking justice to a crime which has been perpetrated against him, and as such he is committing no crime.

²⁸² *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 2

with the prevailing order.²⁸³ Harrell reminds us of this when she observes that the “hymn not only tells the story of the birth of Hermes, but also represents a crisis for the Olympian order: a new god’s entrance into the pantheon.”²⁸⁴

Apollo’s attempt at discipline – if it can be called that – is unsuccessful. In fact I find it quite comical that as the god of prophecy he is unable to see what his younger brother is up to, so he falls for Hermes’ tricks and takes the youngster up to Olympus. As Clay notes “Hermes briskly leads the way to what has been his goal all along, but now for the first time the erstwhile opponents are enjoined in expression . . . foreshadowing their ultimate reconciliation.”²⁸⁵ But before they can reach a stage where reconciliation is possible, Hermes has a few more tricks up his sleeve. It is only with the intervention of the highest Olympian authority that the situation can be resolved. The cunning use of the same *eikos* argument initially employed by Hermes in the scene where, in front of the gods, he proclaims his innocence is convincing – although the robustness of Apollo’s argument does leave much to be desired; it does seem highly unlikely that this infant god could have performed such feats.²⁸⁶ Zeus, not being deceived by Hermes, in a tone of amusement, orders the two to reconcile, and instructs him to lead Apollo to the stolen cattle.²⁸⁷ We are then told that “Hermes acceded, readily persuaded by the purpose of Zeus the goat-rider”²⁸⁸ and we as the

²⁸³ Hermes (*Hom. Hymn Herm.* 174-175) explicitly states that “I’m going to enter on my rights, the same as Apollo. And if my father doesn’t let me, then I shall set out – and I have the means – to be the prince of thieves”, thieves, who are the enemies of order.

²⁸⁴ Harrell (1991), 307. Interestingly sociologists have also pointed out that “the current lives, needs and desires of children are often seen as causes for alarm by adults, as social problems that are threatening, that need to be resolved.” (Corsaro (1997), 7) A strange sense of continuity thus exists between the time of the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* and our current age. Hermes was most certainly seen as a cause for concern, as someone who was a social problem and caused alarm, much like the observations of modern sociologists.

²⁸⁵ Clay (1989), 135

²⁸⁶ Hermes, by emphasising the unlikelihood that he was responsible for the theft of the cattle uses the *metis* (cunning intelligence) with which he was born to his advantage. Hermes is often referred to as *polymetis* (see Detienne and Vernant (1978), 281-283) thus emphasising not only his cleverness but also the trickster side of his personality.

²⁸⁷ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 389-394. Note how Zeus seems to know what is going on and as the omniscient ‘father of gods and men’ is not led astray by the rather convincing *eikos* argument presented by his youngest son.

²⁸⁸ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 395

audience get the feeling that it was never the young god's intention to disobey the will of his father or to remain in possession of the cattle. Rather his motive was, as Clay observes, to "gain access to Olympus and thereby to win official recognition of his divine status and the paternity of Zeus."²⁸⁹ So ultimately we must judge the disciplinary techniques of the three. Maia's verbal warning is unsuccessful. Apollo, as an older male authority should fare better but does not, his threats go unfulfilled, and he is used by Hermes as a tool to achieve his ultimate goal. It is only with the intervention of Zeus, Hermes' father as well as the ultimate Olympian authority, that the situation is shifted toward resolution. His disciplinary techniques, not a verbal warning, but a verbal instruction, are the most successful of our three cases. But we could say that his success is due to the notion that Hermes' intention was simply to gain access to Olympus and to have an audience with his father. The young god's purpose has been fulfilled, and he now has no reason to disobey his father. What remains for the brothers is to sort out the issue of the cattle, which as Zeus has informed them (and us), is to be done "without deceit."²⁹⁰ Maia's disciplinary tactics leave much to be desired, and it is only with male intervention, namely that of Apollo, but more prominently, Zeus, that the situation is resolved, although it must once again be emphasised that it was not in Hermes' plans to disobey his father.

Eros, the son of Aphrodite and an unknown father (most certainly an Olympian god) whilst a perpetual child, is a well established divinity, with a purpose and a sphere of influence of his own. He is not an Olympian, but he is most certainly an important god. Eros, unlike Hermes, does not need to lay claim to anything, as he has already been designated an area of influence, so it would seem that his 'rebellious nature' comes from the fact that he is allowed to remain a child, or perhaps is required to remain a child. As previously noted, the gods who

²⁸⁹ Clay (1989), 135

²⁹⁰ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 393

forever remain children are subversive in nature.²⁹¹ If Eros has already been designated a sphere of influence, why does he cause Aphrodite stress? What does he rebel against, and why? The subversive nature of Eros as a divinity, and a character in the *Argonautica*, make these questions difficult to answer. Eros seems to be a brat, *because* he can be one, and because he embodies the sphere of influence that he does, as the god of love and the irrational emotions associated with love, he needs to be a brat. Perhaps the only underlying cause for this particular episode of misbehaviour is that in a fit of anger Aphrodite once threatened to destroy his bow and arrows.

“ . . . there is no reverence in him, but faced by you he might display some spark of decent feeling. He certainly pays no attention to me: he defies me and always does the opposite of what I say. In fact I am so worn out by his naughtiness that I have half a mind to break his bow and wicked arrows in his very sight, remembering how he threatened me with them in one of his moods. He said ‘If you don’t keep your hands off me while I can still control my temper, you can blame yourself for the consequences.’”²⁹²

I find it difficult to believe that a juvenile Eros would respond to his mother with such pointed viciousness and calculated thought,²⁹³ but he does, indicating that this is most certainly not the first time that these two have come to verbal blows.²⁹⁴ I think that in Eros’ case the question of why he rebels is not as important as the fact that he does; he defies his mother, and threatens to use his powers against her. He is not trying to win any *timai*, he doesn’t need to, he already has a sphere of influence. Having considered how he rebels we

²⁹¹ Golden (2003), 14

²⁹² Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.93-99

²⁹³ Lennox (1980), 59 notes that “she has no respect from her son who treats her vexed threats with studied insolence.”

²⁹⁴ Campbell (1994), 90, notes that “in truth we are dealing with the jerky thought-processes of a mother harried by a child devoted to her mental annihilation.” It would seem that the same principle could be applied to the relationship between Metrotime and Cottalus.

should consider Aphrodite's reaction to the rebellion as this makes the story much more interesting. Doing so elucidates our attempts to understand his juvenile rebellion and juvenile rebellion in general. Commentators have noted that he "is presumably threatening her with a disgraceful passion,"²⁹⁵ comparable to her affair with Anchises.²⁹⁶ We do not know what Aphrodite's response was to that particular threat, but upon finishing her meeting with Hera and Athena, we are afforded the opportunity to see how Aphrodite intends to deal with her wayward child. She leaves the two goddesses, and the audience, with a tantalising clue: "I will try and coax my boy."²⁹⁷

As a minor digression it is *very* interesting to find out what Eros is up to when he is found by his mother in Zeus' orchard. He is in the process of a game of knucklebones with Ganymede, a game, which unsurprisingly, he is winning. The game serves as one of many points of contact between the *Argonautica* and the *Mimes*.²⁹⁸ This is the game that Cottalus has graduated from, although now he is involved in more worrying forms of entertainment – such as gambling.²⁹⁹ It also gives us insight into the personality of Eros. Eros, referred to as "the greedy boy,"³⁰⁰ rather unsportingly is enjoying his winning streak, whilst poor Ganymede is left "hunched up, silent and disconsolate."³⁰¹ Before Aphrodite arrives, Ganymede goes off "in despair."³⁰² Upon her arrival Aphrodite addresses her son: "Why this triumphant smile

²⁹⁵ Hunter, R. (1989), 107

²⁹⁶ See: Hunter, R. (1989), 107; Campbell (1994), 89. We cannot fail to notice that his threat is tantamount to physical violence, especially when we consider the way in which he arouses passion in people.

²⁹⁷ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.104

²⁹⁸ Lennox (1980), 60 notes that "one is tempted to make a comparison with other Hellenistic literature and compare the wayward Eros and his perplexed and frustrated mother with the naughty schoolboy and his more forceful, but equally ineffective, mother of Herodas' Third Mimiambus." I think that condemning Aphrodite to ineffectiveness is somewhat unfair since her methods, as we shall soon see, while not technically discipline are effective.

²⁹⁹ Hunter, R. (1989), 109

³⁰⁰ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.120

³⁰¹ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.122

³⁰² Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.124

you rascal? I do believe that you won the game unfairly by cheating a beginner.”³⁰³ Her first assumption is not a good one, she knows her son, and she knows that he would most certainly have taken advantage of Ganymede, had the opportunity presented itself. Unfortunately, Eros is not afforded the opportunity to respond to the scathing remark made by his mother, as she distracts him from the game with her request – and her bribe.³⁰⁴

Aphrodite’s technique can certainly not be regarded as disciplining her son, but her methods for getting what she wants out of him are the most successful; certainly more successful than both Maia and Metrotime’s attempts at getting their sons to behave. By taking his chin in her hand, one sees not only the close, and loving relationship between mother and son, but also Aphrodite’s tactics for acquiring her will. Not only will she bribe him, but she will do so in the position of a suppliant.³⁰⁵ She quickly moves on from what could turn into an argument over whether or not he was cheating Ganymede, to her request.

“But listen now. Will you be good and do me a favour I am going to ask of you? Then I will give you one of Zeus’ lovely toys, the one that his fond nurse Adresteia made for him in the Idean cave when he was still a child and liked to play. It is a perfect ball; Hephaestus himself could not make you a better toy . . . But you must act at once, or I may not be so generous.”³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.129-130

³⁰⁴ Aphrodite needs to get to her point, she has come there with a specific purpose in mind, and annoying the boy may not be the way to get what she wants out of him, so she moves swiftly along to her point. It is along a similar theme that the three goddesses part only moments earlier, with a warning from Hera – don’t lose your patience. “Hera should caution Aphrodite against losing patience with her boy: it will hardly suit the purpose of the two goddesses if Aphrodite should again lose her temper and carry out that threat” (Lennox (1980), 61)!

³⁰⁵ Hunter, R. (1989), 111. Campbell (1983), 18, has also, with regard to Aphrodite’s supplicatory position, noted that it is “a posture well suited to the rapid swing from scolding to appeal.” Campbell also observed that Eros is a “thuggish individual who will not take kindly to instructions,” (p. 15) hence Aphrodite’s decision to bribe her child.

³⁰⁶ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 3.131-134. Hephaestus and Aphrodite are most certainly married, but once more we are left wondering who the father of Eros is (Hunter, R. (1989), 113). If Eros was the child of Hephaestus, Aphrodite could possibly have said something like “your father” instead of “Hephaestus himself. . .”

Eros then begs for the ball, but Aphrodite, in her wisdom, knows that the ball is her only leverage, and rejects his pleas.³⁰⁷ It is interesting to see that of all the children Eros responds the best to maternal bribery. At the same time, as noted previously, he is the only one of the children, thus far considered, who is a brat simply because he can and is expected to be, although Cottalus' motivation is hardly more acceptable.

Cottalus, born to poor parents will, like Eros, remain a child forever.³⁰⁸ In the short-lived moment that we are allowed to witness, Cottalus' wayward nature seems to be due to his inherent lack of interest in 'school'; he would rather be gambling than learning the great tragic speeches which his pitiable parents are paying for.³⁰⁹ Cottalus' purpose for rebelling is simple – a youthful 'devil-may-care' attitude, and a complete lack of any self-control. There seems to be no specific purpose behind his behaviour other than simple uninterest in learning and lack of a sense of duty towards his parents, particularly his mother;³¹⁰ this child is simply a little monster. He rebels in a way that many modern parents can identify with and rejects participating in the social structures which would put him on a path to adulthood. He does not go to school when he should, and when his parents try to intervene, he runs away from home.³¹¹ He partakes in troublesome activities, like underage gambling,³¹² and property

³⁰⁷ Hunter, R (1989), 114, points out that "Apollonius does not describe the fulfilment of Aphrodite's promise, and she is notoriously *δολοπλόκος* and dangerous when she is smiling we may suspect that the mother has for once tricked that naughty son."

³⁰⁸ In the brief, but powerful, picture we get of the young boy, we see him as he is in *that* moment, that is the moment that we will remember him for, and while we – as an audience – are perfectly aware of the fact that he will one day physically mature, our picture of him is as a disinterested young brat – and indeed this is the view that has survived from antiquity. It would seem that the characteristics ascribed to gods who remain forever children – like Eros – can be applied to Cottalus; he is very subversive in nature, and does not seem to have a future as a productive member of society.

³⁰⁹ Headlam (1979), xliii, notices that "the family are poor fishermen . . . it is surprising in such a class to find parents teaching their boy and making him repeat a long speech from tragedy."

³¹⁰ This is important to note, and an in-depth discussion will follow later in the chapter. We saw in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* that Hermes felt a great sense of duty towards Maia as well as the need to ensure that she was taken care of, and honoured, as was her due.

³¹¹ His poor mother shows clear distress when he runs away from home at attempts to discipline him, as he "does not know the threshold of the house, but fleeces his grandmother, an old lady destitute of the means of life . . ." Herod. *Mim.* 3.36-40. Also important to note is that Cottalus chooses to remove himself from the *oikos* and

destruction.³¹³ So how does his exasperated mother respond? She takes him to his *didaskalos*, for a good beating. When she arrives at the schoolmaster's she pleads with him, asking for help in disciplining her atrocious son. She is at her wits end and the audience gets the impression that this is her last hope for getting her son to shape up. Her first words to the schoolmaster show her exasperation:

“Lampriscus, as the dear Muses may give you something pleasant, and enjoyment in life, flay this boy on his shoulder, until his wretched soul is just left on his lips.”³¹⁴

Does the physical violence work? Is it successful in sorting out her troublesome son? The audience gets the impression that it probably does not succeed; Cottalus claims that “I shall not do any [wicked deeds] again, I swear to you Lampriscus, by the dear Muses,”³¹⁵ although it does not seem to be a sincere claim. His mother certainly feels that “his spirit does not appear to be subdued,”³¹⁶ and she says the following:

“You ought not to have stopped, Lampriscus; flay him until the sun sets . . . and he ought, even over his book, to get another twenty at least . . .”³¹⁷

He appears to be reading his book now and thus has changed his ways, but there is no indication that this is a permanent shift in his behaviour. I think that we should follow Headlam in thinking that the boy's spirit has not been broken,³¹⁸ and he will more than likely,

by so doing removes himself from one of the spheres where he needs to claim *timai* before branching out into the larger community of the *polis*.

³¹² “Children were forbidden to gamble. . .” Headlam (1979), 121. Cottalus has progressed from playing dice to partaking of gambling; in this instance he seems somewhat more subversive than Eros, who is merely playing knucklebones.

³¹³ “All the tiling is broken like wafers, and when winter is near, I pay in tears three half-pennies for each tile.” Herod. *Mim.* 3.44-47 (trans. Headlam)

³¹⁴ Herod. *Mim.* 3.1-4

³¹⁵ Herod. *Mim.* 3.82-83

³¹⁶ Headlam (1979), xli

³¹⁷ Herod. *Mim.* 3.87-90

³¹⁸ Headlam (1979), xli

resort to his old ways. So, her disciplinary methods are probably unsuccessful. But what of his father, the old blind and deaf man? The only time that Metrotime considers involving him is after Cottalus has been given the initial beating, and she has instructed Lampriscus to continue. She finishes off the *Mime* saying: “On second thoughts, Lampriscus, I shall go home and tell the old man this . . .”³¹⁹ This is a clear indication of the fact that the *geron* is not involved in the disciplining of his son.³²⁰ The *Mime* ends with an unsuccessful attempt at disciplining Cottalus, and the situation remains unresolved. This episode provides an effective contrast for the successful intervention carried out by Apollo on mount Olympus.

We must however return to the primary focus of this chapter, and the text which it is based on, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. We return to the narrative after the successful arbitration accomplished by Zeus; the brothers have now returned to earth to carry out Zeus’ command, which centres on the successful resolution of the cattle issue. Clay observed, as previously noted, that “the *timai* of the others have all been divided and distributed. Nothing remains for Hermes, who is thus obliged to acquire his honours by theft or exchange.”³²¹ The exchange of *timai* is what follows the episode on Olympus, once Zeus had authoritatively pronounced that the two brothers should be reconciled.³²² Their father instructs them to sort things out, and also told Hermes to lead Apollo to his cattle. Hermes, who could very easily have returned to his trickster ways, accedes to his father’s wishes, and the two happily go about their business. After leading Apollo to his cattle and after Hermes reveals his wonderful invention, the two go about exchanging gifts and redistributing their *timai*, until they are satisfied. I do not think it necessary to go into detail about the gifts exchanged; it is the outcome of the exchange that

³¹⁹ Herod. *Mim.* 3.94-95

³²⁰ This finds confirmation in the introduction to the 2002 Loeb translation of the text, where the translators state that “despite the title Metrotime is the dominant character, as she obviously is in her household” (Rusten and Cunningham (2002), 188).

³²¹ Clay (1989), 96

³²² *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 391

is important, and the significance of that outcome which warrants discussion.³²³ A short synopsis will suffice: having led Apollo to the site of the stolen cattle, Hermes and Apollo exchange their first set of gifts. Hermes gives Apollo the lyre, whilst he keeps the cattle, “which henceforth domesticated, will reproduce under his tutelage.”³²⁴ Clay sees the lyre as an emblem of the brothers’ “newly established and eternal friendship.”³²⁵ They thus return to Olympus having resolved the issue of the cattle, but Hermes is clearly still not satisfied with his share of *timai*, and Apollo rightly indicates his concern that Hermes will steal some more of his own *timai*, especially since, as Apollo admits, he has been given the privilege of “property-switchings” by Zeus.³²⁶ The implication here is that Hermes has not yet realised his full potential on Olympus, and as such is still lacking in some *timai*; his goal to achieve “the same [rights] as Apollo”³²⁷ has not been met. The remainder of the poem thus allows Hermes to realise his full potential, and achieve his *timai*.³²⁸

In a “compact of friendship”³²⁹ the two exchange the remainder of the gifts also included in the pact: Apollo promises that he will use his position as one of the senior members of the pantheon to ensure that their gift exchanges are confirmed.³³⁰ Apollo bestows the *caduceus* as well as the prophetic bee-maidens on Hermes. It is “with the acquisition of the *caduceus*, Hermes becomes the divine messenger, the go-between *par excellence* between gods and

³²³ It is interesting to note that in Hermes’ quest to claim *timai* and become an Olympian, Apollo’s *timai* are also furthered as he gains control over the lyre, which if we follow the *hymn to Hermes* was a new invention and thus a new portfolio for Apollo (cf. *Hom. Hymn. Ap.* 131-2 where Apollo lays claim to his *timai*, one of which is the lyre).

³²⁴ Clay (1989), 143

³²⁵ Clay (1989), 143

³²⁶ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 503-517; Apollo does ask Hermes (*Hom. Hymn Herm.* 514-520) to swear by the ‘dread Water of Shuddering’ not to steal his lyre and bow, which he happily does.

³²⁷ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 173

³²⁸ Clay and others have noted that there are some inconsistencies with the ending of the poem. Clay freely admits that “no passage in this most difficult of the hymns offers so many perplexities.” Others agree; for a fuller discussion see Clay (1989), 144ff.

³²⁹ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 524-525

³³⁰ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 526-528

mortals.”³³¹ And he is one step closer to realising his full *timai*; Apollo has one more thing to bestow, the prophetic bee-maidens. Both Apollo and Hermes act as messengers between the divine and mortal realms, Apollo in his role at Delphi, and Hermes as the divine go-between. Hermes thus – obviously – feels that prophecy should be in his domain, but it is not to be; only Apollo will know the will of Zeus, and communicate it to mortals. Hermes must be satisfied with the bee-maidens which, as Clay observes, are more suited to Hermes as the bees convey “both truth and falsehood.”³³² Zeus ultimately confirms all the gifts that Apollo has bestowed on his brother, and gives him more, presumably those granted by other gods, including his role as *psychopompos*, and an unnamed gift from Hades.³³³ The poem concludes with Hermes’ realisation of his full *timē*; although it is not as great as he had initially hoped, he is now considered one of the Olympian gods. The *timai* he enjoys cannot be as great as Apollo’s for one simple reason, Apollo is more senior than him, and in the strongly hierarchical Olympian society it would be inappropriate for Hermes to enjoy as great a position of honour as his older brother. This also hints at the familial status of *timai*. Clay observes that the “hymn concludes with a list of Hermes’ *timai*, each defined as a *geras* contributed by the other gods to the youngest member of the Olympian pantheon.”³³⁴ Hermes’ position of honour would not have been possible without the donation of prizes by his other Olympians; his position was thus dependant on them. Apollo’s promise of great honour for Hermes is thus fulfilled and the pantheon is now complete.

³³¹ Clay (1989), 146

³³² Clay (1989), 147. Evidence for the dual nature of this type of prophecy can be found in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 558-563, where Apollo informs Hermes that: “When they speed on after consuming the yellow honey, they are favourable and will tell the truth, but if they are turned away from the sweet food of the gods, then they mislead, agitated among themselves.” Here the Maidens themselves consume the honey and enter into a prophetic frenzy; the prophetess is thus portrayed as a bee. For further discussion see Scheinberg (1979) particularly 26-28.

³³³ Clay (1989), 148. This affirms Zeus’ position as the ultimate Olympian authority.

³³⁴ Clay (1989), 149

We should also consider the purposes of the authors in writing these texts. This will allow us to further understand the role that these episodes play with regard to the future destiny of these characters, and thus to their acquisition of *timai*.

What is the purpose of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*; and moreover what is the purpose of the curious relationship that Hermes has with his mother? Clay puts it best:

“[the poem] attempts to define the essential nature and character of the god to be celebrated through a narrative sequence of his words and deeds.”³³⁵

She further adds that “each one recounts a critical chapter in the mythological history of the Olympians.”³³⁶ So the purpose of the hymn is to fill in the blank space between Hermes’ birth and his acquisition of *timai*, to account for those critical activities, which allowed him to stake his claim as an Olympian.³³⁷ The purpose of the strange relationship with his mother is to allow Hermes the narrative space to explain why he wants to claim his due *timai*. He says the following to his mother:

“we won’t put up with staying here and being without offerings alone of all the immortals, as you would have us do . . . As for privilege, I’m going to enter on my rights, the same as Apollo. And if my father doesn’t let me, then I shall set out – and I have the means – to be the prince of thieves.”³³⁸

This tells us two things: firstly, Hermes believes that, as the son of Zeus, he is entitled to receive certain honours. But we cannot fail to notice that Zeus fathered many children with

³³⁵ Clay (1989), 6

³³⁶ Clay (1989), 11

³³⁷ Interestingly Clay notes that “Apollo is born at an early stage of Zeus’ regime, before the supreme god has completely consolidated his power.” This means that in the context of the *Homeric Hymns* it is relatively easy for Apollo to lay claim to his *timai* as there are still *timai* left to claim, whereas Hermes must use other methods to claim his. What follows Apollo’s request for intervention by Zeus illustrates how the young god goes about acquiring his portion of *timai* (Clay (1989), 96).

³³⁸ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 167-175

many women, both mortal and immortal, and not *all* of them became Olympian gods.³³⁹ Clay explains Hermes' aims and discoveries by way of the *dais* that he prepares in the dead of night, saying that:

“. . . the banquet is ready, but the guests do not arrive. For all his elaborate preparations, Hermes has ignored a fact of fundamental importance: the gods do not eat meat. In fact, as Hermes soon discovers, the inability to consume meat is a hallmark of divinity . . . It is not as Hermes intended, the communal consumption of the *dais* that establishes Hermes' membership in the company of the Olympians, but, on the contrary, his *inability* to partake of it that confirms his divinity.”³⁴⁰

Secondly it tells us that Hermes, supposedly, wants to claim honours for his mother too, an aim which, by the end of the poem he has not achieved.³⁴¹ It would seem then from his interaction with his mother that the young Hermes seeks to assert his authority in his mother's *oikos*, which is devoid of a male authority figure, a *kyrios*. What is the poet's purpose in doing this? Possibly to illustrate the void left in the house by the absence of an older male and possibly to show that sons could exercise authority over their mothers. It also alludes to the notion that it was a son's responsibility to see that his mother – in the absence of a father or male authority figure – was not only taken care of, but received the honours due to her. This has already been considered with reference to certain episodes which are to be found in Demosthenes and Lysias.

³³⁹ Admittedly, most of his children were well known or at the very least heroes.

³⁴⁰ Clay (1989), 122

³⁴¹ I get the feeling that when Hermes says “**We** won't put up with staying here. . .” he really means “**I** won't put up with staying here. . .” It would certainly fit considering the persistent use of the first person and possessive pronouns – in 19 lines of poetry, ἐγὼ is used twice, once as an emphatic ἐγὼ γε; ἐμός, ἐμέ and εἶμι all once – in his conversation with her. The honours he claims to want to achieve for his mother are not achieved in the sense that he seems to want her to live, like Leto, on Olympus, with the other gods, which by the conclusion of the poem, she does not seem to be doing.

The purpose of introducing Aphrodite and Eros into Apollonius' narrative is done with one specific objective— to get Medea to fall in love with Jason. But why does Apollonius do it in this manner? Why does Eros exasperate his mother, and why does Apollonius feel it necessary to include it in his epic poem? Why the inclusion of Eros – surely Aphrodite is not powerless without him? It would seem that the introduction of Eros into the narrative is due to the different role that the gods play in the *Argonautica* (as opposed to the *Iliad*) and the different manner in which they are presented.³⁴² Hunter notes the two primary differences: firstly “the element of the miraculous and the magical is far more important than in Homer generally.”³⁴³ And secondly, and more importantly for our understanding of the necessary inclusion of Eros,

“Apollonius greatly reduces the prominence of the divine. Gone are the easy appearances of gods to mortals and the conversations between them. Gone too are divine assemblies . . . the Argonauts' only direct contact is with minor divinities”³⁴⁴

This allows a “greater prominence [to be given] to human decision making,”³⁴⁵ and thus allows Eros to act more as a force which is suddenly kindled in the breasts of mortals than the naughty cherub with which we are presented. It also adds the element of unpredictability to the narrative. The element allows the poet to explain *why* Medea fell in love with Jason, a key element to the successful completion of the story. The poet also introduces Eros into his narrative so that a god (in this case Aphrodite) does not have to descend to earth to fulfil this purpose. The last time she did this, it resulted in an epic war – best not let her do it again. Eros thus acts as a go-between for the goddesses, and without being seen, ignites Medea's

³⁴² For a full discussion of this see Hunter, R. (1993), 77-90

³⁴³ Hunter, R. (1993), 77

³⁴⁴ Hunter, R. (1993), 78

³⁴⁵ Hunter, R. (1993), 79

passion for Jason. The simple allegory of Eros as Love suits the psychological purposes of the poet well and emphasises the unpredictability and irrationality of love. It reduces Eros' role to an irresistible force, and allows the goddesses to remain on Olympus. But this still does not explain why Apollonius elected to portray the relationship between mother and son in such a manner. I cannot with full certainty answer this question; there are however a few possibilities: firstly, the episode could act as a comic interlude to the perilous situation that the Argonauts find themselves in, with hope for success following soon after. Secondly, if we can take the *Argonautica* as a didactic text – that tries to educate young men as to the trials and tribulations, but also the necessity of growing up, it could act as a warning to young men. Thirdly, it could be due to the nature of the relationship between Aphrodite and Eros, which never seems to be an amicable one. And finally, a possibility linked to the previous option; due to the subversive nature of Eros, as a child-god, it could just very simply be his role in the cosmos to exasperate his poor mother. None of these options are entirely satisfactory, but they will have to do.

Finally, regarding our last author, Herodas, his purposes are less grand than those of the poet of the *Homeric Hymn*, but they are just as interesting. In his *Mimes* he illustrates “dramatic scenes in popular life.”³⁴⁶ Herodas' third *Mime*, with a situation and stock characters (and caricatures) fit for Comedy “within the limit of a hundred lines or less . . . presents us with a highly entertaining scene.”³⁴⁷ Herodas' purpose is thus to provide his audience with a brief, but extremely entertaining scene, to which many of his audience members (both ancient and modern) can relate. Headlam has observed, about Herodas' *Mimes* in general, that “the work

³⁴⁶ Headlam (1979), ix
³⁴⁷ Headlam (1979), lvi

is on a small canvas, with nothing superfluous or redundant, but with firm clear outlines, and highly finished execution.”³⁴⁸ Further he adds the following:

“The only thing we need regret is the unpleasant nature of some of his subjects – they are not pretty, and there is further occasional grossness of expression. That is unfortunate: but it belonged to the tradition of *Mime*, and is all in character.”³⁴⁹

I think that the entertainment value lies in the grotesque nature of subject and expression, with characters that the audience could identify with (perhaps they were the exasperated mother; or perhaps they knew a child like Cottalus). Thus Herodas easily composed entertaining episodes and we need not, as Headlam suggests, regret the unpleasant nature of the text. His purpose in constructing this episode as such, with the exasperated mother and misbehaved child is two-fold. Firstly, *because* he had a pool of characters from which he could choose,³⁵⁰ he is afforded the opportunity to embellish and provide details as to the child’s misdeeds. This also allows him to cast Metrotime in two lights, firstly, as already noted by Headlam, “she is the fussy ill-tempered housewife, in supreme control of her arrangements” as well as being the mother who does not know how to get her child to behave. The pool of characters from which Herodas had to select, allows for stock characters to be utilised, and to be made more interesting at the same time with added details. Secondly, and perhaps less grand, because of the nature of the genre of *Mime* and the comment it provides on everyday life, Herodas writes about this episode in particular, because it was more than likely a common occurrence. The *Mime* leaves us with a distinctive ‘kids these days’ attitude, one which we can all identify with. So, although Herodas’ purpose in

³⁴⁸ Headlam (1979), xxvii

³⁴⁹ Headlam (1979), xxvii

³⁵⁰ See Headlam (1979), xxiv, for discussion of stock characters.

composing the episode as such can easily be explained by genre and situation, he does it with great attention to detail, with the intention of representing an element of everyday life.

Finally, we may end off with some insightful observations by Garland, which bring together all the themes, events and occurrences discussed in this chapter. Garland's brief case study of the maturation and social development of Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, serves to both elucidate the preceding discussion and to cement some of its outcomes.³⁵¹ He observes, first and foremost, that the "process of maturation is greatly facilitated by assistance from a father or father-image;"³⁵² in Telemachus' case this was Athena disguised as Mentos in the first book of the *Odyssey*.³⁵³ Bearing this in mind, if we then consider Hermes, we know he lacks a father and a father-image, but he actively, throughout the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* seeks out male influence (Apollo) and acts so as to have a male influence in his life, although he does go about his development process without their direct intervention and to a certain extent succeeds. Our other two boys, both of them being subversive boys who have no hope of ever reaching a level of maturity, are both devoid of any male influence. Eros, in the fact that no male role model is mentioned, and the fact that even his paternity is left thoroughly ambiguous by Apollonius, and Cottalus in that the father (deaf, blind and old) who is present in his life is completely dormant in his development and maturation process. It is little wonder then that these two turn out as they do.

Garland then goes on to point out that to actively move from adolescence to adulthood there is a series of steps that a boy must take to become a young man. Firstly he needs to master speech, a step which would see him gain power in his *oikos*. Secondly, he must win fame,

³⁵¹ Garland (1990), 170-174

³⁵² Garland (1990), 171

³⁵³ It is also interesting to note that it becomes Telemachus' duty to ensure that his inheritance is not squandered by the suitors in the absence of his father. We may thus say that it is the eldest son's responsibility to replace the father in his absence.

which allows his self-confidence to grow.³⁵⁴ And, finally, he needs to develop his physical strength, and to master it in order to finally attain his manhood.³⁵⁵ If we briefly compare the boys considered in this chapter to these criteria we again find an interesting pattern emerging. Hermes takes all of these steps, although they are not undertaken in the same order. He first performs feats of physical strength, then he gains power in the *oikos*,³⁵⁶ and only later, with his interactions with Apollo does he win fame, although initially it should rather be viewed as notoriety. But regardless of the order, Hermes most certainly does take these steps. Our other two cases, Eros and Cottalus, neither seek to gain power in the *oikos* nor achieve it; they also fail to win fame or to prove themselves physically. These two most certainly will never move on to adulthood, but as we know, Hermes will.

Finally, there is but one thing left to say – regarding the achievement of *timai*. Garland’s brief consideration of Telemachus leaves me with the distinct feeling that he had to work to achieve his *timai*, they were not simply awarded to him when he came of age. His journey to achieve all of these qualities is a journey to adulthood. The mastery of speech, the achievement of fame and the honing of physical abilities, allow him to be accepted into a community of adults. The honours were not simply awarded to him when he was the right age. Eros and Cottalus never set out to achieve, nor do they intrinsically possess, the traits needed to become an adult. Hermes, on the other hand, like Telemachus, on earth, has to actively work to achieve his place on Mount Olympus. He embarks on a journey to adulthood, and ultimately is accepted by his father, and becomes a god – his goal is fulfilled.

³⁵⁴ Garland (1990), 172, interestingly points out that there is a progressive nature to Telemachus’ encounters, along his way to manhood. Firstly, he exists in his *oikos*, and the encounter with Penelope serves to cement his mastery in that realm. Next, he acts within his community, amongst the *gerontes*, and then he moves out of his community and interacts with the famous *basilêes* from the Trojan War. By acting in all of these spheres, Telemachus develops his identity in different situations, which is crucial to develop into an adult.

³⁵⁵ Garland (1990), 170-172

³⁵⁶ Garland (1990), 173, notes that “the most crucial encounter, the one which constitutes the first step towards an assertion of selfhood, is the one which he [the son] has with his mother.” We can certainly identify this in the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* when Hermes clearly sets out his goals to Maia, and by so doing wins himself power and control in the *oikos*. It is also his first encounter along his journey to acceptance on Mount Olympus.

CHAPTER THREE

The goddesses: *parthenos*, *nymphē* or *gynē*?

In rounding off an inquiry into the *childhood of the gods*, it is only appropriate to consider the female divinities as it is they who present us with some of the more interesting and curious phenomena to discuss. This final chapter will first set the scene for the arrival of the goddesses by considering the life of an ‘average’ ancient Greek woman. An inquiry of this kind must proceed with the utmost caution. There is no ‘average’ Greek woman to consider; our evidence (most of which is imparted by men and intended for their consumption) is scant and for the most part largely Athenian in origin and limited to the fourth and fifth centuries BC and is usually focused on the life of the elite. Thus, due to the nature of the evidence, perhaps the initial consideration which follows should more appropriately be entitled a consideration of elite Athenian women from the Classical period. Many scholars (see for example: Demand, 1994; Garland, 1990 or Golden 1990) have also noted that the Athenian way of life may very easily be contrasted to the Spartan but that is not our purpose here.³⁵⁷

By using a variety of ancient sources we can reconstruct the life of the average Athenian woman; Demand (1994) has very convincingly done this. I have compiled a general outline based on modern scholarship³⁵⁸ and supplemented by ancient sources. By piecing together modern interpretations of the life of the average woman in antiquity and supplementing or confirming some of those interpretations with observations from the primary sources, we come up with the following description of the life of the typical Athenian woman.

³⁵⁷ In Dillon’s *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* (2001) in a chapter entitled “From Adolescent to Woman, Wife and Mother,” he focuses particularly on Spartan women; this chapter does provide a good contrast to Athenian women, but as I have already stated, this is not within the scope of my study.

³⁵⁸ Blundell (1998); Demand (1994); Garland (1990) and Golden (1990). Blundell’s book entitled *Women in Classical Athens*, divides the chapters up into Unmarried Women, Married Women, Goddesses and Characters from Myth and Other Women. This simple (and obvious) division of the chapters serves to enhance my argument that women (a) had limited roles which they could fulfil in society and (b) that they were defined in terms of their sexual maturity; these arguments will become more apparent as the chapter progresses.

From the very beginning of her life a female infant is set apart from a male infant. When announcing the birth of a child to the outside world, Garland observes that an olive crown is set up on the door of the house, announcing that a boy has been born whereas a clump of woollen material is set up denoting the birth of a girl.³⁵⁹ The birth of a girl was not always met with immense happiness as fathers preferred male children. This, as Demand has noted, meant that girls were more likely to be exposed than boys.³⁶⁰ Further, Foley has proposed that the birth of a girl could “pose serious economic problems for a Greek family . . . the necessity to give a daughter away to another family conditioned their relationship to her from birth.”³⁶¹ As the young girl grew up much of her life would have been spent within the *oikos*, and it is here that she learned the skills necessary to become a good wife later on in life. Demand notes that:

“In antiquity, the lives of free citizen girls as they grew up were centred in the *oikos* where they could be protected. . . . The girl was carefully watched and guarded to protect her honour – and that of the *oikos* – until she could be safely married off.”³⁶²

This underlies much of what the lives of women entailed. A woman’s ‘honour’ was protected in her natal home until she was old enough to be married off, and move into her husband’s *oikos* where she would be protected by him, and produce children. Garland puts it simply: “from being some man’s daughter she became some man’s wife.”³⁶³

³⁵⁹ Garland (1990), 75, the significance of the wool will be discussed later in this chapter. Garland cites Hesychios (*s.v. stephanon ekpherein*) as his source.

³⁶⁰ Demand (1994), 6, see also Garland (1990), 84-93 and Golden (1990), 87

³⁶¹ Foley (2003), 114. The economic problems being not only the price of raising the child from birth but also the provision of a dowry, all of which strained the economic position of the family, and thus affected the relationship between the female child and her natal *oikos*.

³⁶² Demand (1994), 9

³⁶³ Garland (1990), 198

While boys participated, to a certain degree, in city life, girls were not allowed outside the *oikos*.³⁶⁴ At Athens boys, from a very young age, took part in religious festivals, like the *choes* for example, and when it was appropriate they were introduced into their father's *phratry*.³⁶⁵ Girls on the other hand experience no such religious involvement until much later in their lives. Demand observes that

“the fact that girls do not seem to have participated in the *choes*, the festival in which children marked the end of infancy and nursing, suggests that girls were weaned with less ceremony, and possibly, earlier than boys.”³⁶⁶

Whilst passing their early years in the natal *oikos*, girls participated in household duties which included wool-working, weaving, and an element of child-care. For the elite, a degree of basic literacy may have been gained in these early years, and there was an opportunity to participate in cult services (although it must be observed that participation in cult services at an early age was restricted to only a few girls per year and thus is rather the exception than the norm).³⁶⁷ Demand notes that “it is unlikely that most girls took part in public religious ceremonies before their coming-of-age service to Artemis.”³⁶⁸

The coming-of-age service to Artemis constituted an event in which girls were allowed to partake in activities outside of their natal home as unmarried *parthenoi*. Aristophanes offers some evidence for the religious participation of girls. It must however be noted that the

³⁶⁴ Blundell (1998), 10, “from about the age of six many Athenian boys attended small private schools and also visited the civic gymnasium. Girls stayed at home with their mothers, and would have had far fewer opportunities for socialising with members of their own sex.”

³⁶⁵ For full discussion on the lives of growing boys see Garland (1990), 122; 133-136; 163-164 and 174-187

³⁶⁶ Demand (1994), 7. This suggests that there was less importance placed on the growth and development of girls whilst there was great emphasis placed on the growth, development and maturation of boys.

³⁶⁷ Demand (1994) 10; Golden (1990), 33, also adds that girls learned to cook in their natal homes; confirms helping with regard to child care; Golden also notes that it is unlikely that girls received an education outside the home but at the same time observes an element of ‘functional literacy’ within girls (p. 73). See also Blundell (1998), 10-11. For the cults in which a few select girls may have participated see the chorus of the *Lysistrata* (quoted below) in conjunction with Pausanias (also quoted below) and the discussion which follows.

³⁶⁸ Demand (1994), 10

following extract has brought much disagreement amongst scholars and thus we are not able to deduce much more than cult titles.³⁶⁹ The female chorus in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* says the following:

“As soon as I turned seven I was an Arrephoros;
then when I was ten I was a Grinder for the
Foundress;
and shedding my saffron robe I was a Bear at the
Brauronia; and once, when I was a fair girl, I carried the Basket,
wearing a necklace of dried figs.”³⁷⁰

This rather puzzling extract from Aristophanes, taken in conjunction with Pausanias, supposedly gives us a glimpse into the pre-marital religious life of selected elite girls. In his description of the Acropolis, Pausanias writes the following:

“Two virgin girls live not far from the temple of Athene of the City; the Athenians call them the Bearers . . . They carry on their heads what Athene's priestess gives them to carry . . . In the city not far from Aphrodite-in-the-Gardens is an enclosed place with a natural entrance to an underground descent; this is where the virgin girls go down. They leave down there what they were carrying, and take another thing and bring it back covered up.”³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Walbank (1981), 277, remarks that the passage “is uncertain, and arguments about it tend to be circular and to stem from the passage in the *Lysistrata*.” One must also consider Aristophanes' purpose here in outlining the cult titles available to women. Here his female chorus are trying to justify their preparedness for service to the *polis*. Demand notes “he seems to be saying that the best that they can offer to parallel the education and training in warfare and citizenship given to young males is a series of aristocratic cult roles focused on female domestic duties . . . Nonetheless we can assume that he did not have any reason deliberately to misrepresent the offices . . .” (Demand (1994), 108).

³⁷⁰ Ar. *Lys.* 641-647. For the great commotion caused amongst scholars see: Dover and Tremewan (1989); Walbank (1981); Elderkin (1940) and Hopper (1963) to mention but a few. For the most convincing and thorough interpretation of the perplexities of the *Arkteia* see Demand (1994), 107-114, she summarises much of the fundamental scholarship and considers it in light of the primary sources.

³⁷¹ Pausanias. 1.27.4. This extract too has caused much disagreement amongst scholars; see for example Hopper (1963), Herington (1963), Hooker (1963) and Kadletz (1982). The Pausanias extract clearly shows limited

The above two extracts offer very little in the way of insight and have led to more scholarly disagreement than agreement. Nonetheless we are able to observe that there were certain cult roles available to young, unmarried girls, the most famous of which seems to be Artemis' *Arkteia*, or 'acting the bear'. Little can be deduced about the cult observances alluded to in Pausanias and this has – obviously – led to much debate. The one cult practice which we do seem to have some evidence for, the *Arkteia* is the one which we will be considering, though again this evidence is limited.

As with many cult practices in the ancient world, the *Arkteia* too, is shrouded in mystery.³⁷² Golden has observed that “we know so little of the activities of the ‘bears’.”³⁷³ Burkert has noted that: “In Brauron girls had to spend some time as she-bears, *arktoi*, cut off from the world in the lonely sanctuary of Artemis, performing dances, running races, and making sacrifice.”³⁷⁴ Regardless of the highly sensitive topic of ‘initiation rites’ for girls at Brauron and similar centres around the Greek world,³⁷⁵ it seems that young pubescent Athenian girls did undergo some sort of preparatory rite for marriage and childbirth, and it seems that their service to Artemis was the time when this occurred.³⁷⁶ The age of service, in light of

membership in the service of Athena and thus we must assume that participation in this service was restricted to elite girls.

³⁷² The *Panathenaia* and the *Thesmophoria* were two other religious festivals in which women were allowed to participate. For the *Panathenaia* and other religious festivals in which young, unmarried women were allowed to participate see Blundell (1998), 11-12; Blundell (1998), 47-70; for the *Thesmophoria* and religious festivals for married women see Blundell (1998), 78-80; Demand (1994), 24, 114-121 and Lowe (1998), 149-173. See in particular Burkert (1985), 227-234 (*Panathenaia* and *Arrephoria*) and 242-246 (*Thesmophoria*).

³⁷³ Golden (1990), 78

³⁷⁴ Burkert (1985), 263. Much of the evidence for the supposed happenings at Brauron is epigraphical (found on *krateriskoi*, small krater vases used in dedications to Artemis) and highly problematic; for discussion of this evidence see Demand (1994), 107-114.

³⁷⁵ Regardless of the fact that many cult practices are shrouded in mystery I cannot help but wonder if the service to Artemis is so badly recorded due to the fact that it was a *female* initiatory ritual, and thus neglected by the male writers of the time or possibly even because *female* initiatory rituals were screened from the male observer. This could be negated by the evidence we have for marriage and the acknowledgement of the Eleusinian rites which are alluded to in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, but nonetheless, these are marriage rites, and one half of the marriage party was male, and the marriage ultimately affected not only the *oikos* but also the *polis*.

³⁷⁶ It has been observed that ‘acting the bear’ was not the only animal involved and that Brauron was not the only site used. Cole discusses the other possibilities (both the animal and the location) and concludes that “these roles were considered to be a preparation for the experience of pregnancy and childbirth” (Cole (1998), 33).

epigraphic evidence and the extract from Aristophanes has – as with all elements of the *Arkteia* – been much debated. If we follow Aristophanes, we would like to assume that it was after the age of ten that girls participated. Burkert does not consider an age; he merely observes that those who participated were virgins.³⁷⁷ Upon scrutinising the evidence Garland mentions between four and nine; between seven and eight (based on the *krateriskoi*); ten or early teens.³⁷⁸ Golden settles on the age of ten but allows for the possibility of concurrent service in some of the positions mentioned in Aristophanes.³⁷⁹ Demand draws no conclusions but seems to lean towards girls aged at least ten possibly up to about fourteen, “the age at which the Greeks believed menarche occurred.”³⁸⁰ Age notwithstanding, the removal of the young girl who is on the verge of attaining marriageable age to a liminal cult site to worship Artemis seems to have been quite widespread in the Greek world. At its centre it aimed to prepare young girls for their future role as wives and mothers, and the widespread participation in this is probable evidence for the fact.³⁸¹ It would also seem that, in some instances, service to Artemis as a young girl was a prerequisite for legitimate citizen marriage.³⁸² At the heart of the service to Artemis there seems to lie a transition from the wild nature of the untamed girl about to realise her sexuality (much like Artemis herself) to the controlled nature of the *parthenos* who is ready for marriage (again, like Artemis). It would seem that the multifaceted goddess is needed at many stages in the life of a young girl or young woman, but this is a topic best dealt with later – in our consideration of Artemis herself. As Cole has noted “success at one stage of the maturation process had to be recognised in order to maintain the proper relationship with the goddess for the next

³⁷⁷ Burkert (1985), 263

³⁷⁸ Garland (1990), 189

³⁷⁹ Golden (1990), 47

³⁸⁰ Demand (1994), 113. For her discussion of the age of girls see pages 109-112

³⁸¹ Demand (1994), 112

³⁸² Cole (1998), 33. Perhaps this legitimate citizen marriage stipulation is aimed more at the elite than the majority of ancient Greeks. Garland believes that, based on the size of the shrines to Artemis “it is probable . . . that the girls were either chosen randomly from the population at large or belonged to an exclusive social elite” (Garland (1990), 190).

stage.”³⁸³ Thus we may see participation in the *Arkteia* as one step in the life of a young girl who was being prepared for marriage.

Having grown up in what may be described as near-total seclusion and then being thrust into the somewhat mystifying service of Artemis, the girl was closer to fulfilling her purpose in life. Demand observes that “the main event in the life of a growing girl was menarche, for this signalled the time for marriage and her departure from the *oikos*.”³⁸⁴ Blundell argues that “marriage and childbirth [are] the only significant roles available to a respectable [Athenian] woman.”³⁸⁵ This further enhances that notion that there was a limited role a woman in ancient Greece could fulfil. This step in a young girl’s development resulted in her being transferred from her natal *oikos* by her natal *kyrios* to her marital *oikos* and coming under the ‘protection’ and control of her marital *kyrios*, her husband. Clark has observed that marriage

“marked the principal point of transition from childhood to adulthood, and a fundamental change in status from *parthenos* to *gynē*, the two most important categories of the female.”³⁸⁶

Clark discusses the ‘categories of the female’, having already mentioned the two most important categories, *parthenos* (a physically and sexually mature young woman who is a virgin and is unmarried) and *gynē* (a wife and mother);³⁸⁷ she goes on to mention one more, intervening, category, the *nymphē*.³⁸⁸ The *nymphē* is defined as a woman who has not yet had a child but who is married. Clark observes that this period is “as short as possible, since it is

³⁸³ Cole (1998), 33

³⁸⁴ Demand (1994), 10; see also Blundell (1998), 30

³⁸⁵ Blundell (1998), 1

³⁸⁶ Clark (1998), 14

³⁸⁷ Clark (1998), 14

³⁸⁸ Burkert (1985), 151, notes that “the very word *nymphē* itself refers equally to the divinities present in brooks and flowers, to human brides, and to young women in their first encounter with love.”

the birth of a child which makes a woman a true *gynē*.³⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that it is not until a woman is able to produce children or become a wife that there are any sort of definitive categories. This confirms Clark's initial observation that "the Greek word for 'woman', *gynē*, is the same as that for 'wife', reflecting the fact that the roles available to women in the Greek world were almost exclusively that of wife and mother."³⁹⁰

Regardless, our young girl has now reached the age of sexual maturity and is considered a *parthenos*.³⁹¹ The next step in a young woman's life was marriage, which was frequently equated with death.³⁹² Marriage was undertaken for one specific purpose, the production of legitimate citizen children; it was "viewed as a practical business arrangement, not a love match."³⁹³ My purpose here is not to go into the details of the betrothal or actual marriage process, it is simply enough to note that this was another, probably one of the most, significant stages in a woman's life. It has been pointed out by Demand that "only the birth of a child gave her full status as a woman-wife."³⁹⁴ In the *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus tells Socrates what he expected of his new wife. The picture it paints is one of almost sheer ignorance on the part of the young wife in many matters of domestic duties. He says to Socrates:

"Why, what knowledge could she have had Socrates, when I took her for my wife? She was not yet fifteen years old when she came to me . . . If when she

³⁸⁹ Clark (1998), 14, see also King (1983), 112

³⁹⁰ Clark (1998), 13. Although it should also be pointed out that *anēr* defines both man and husband.

³⁹¹ Interestingly, there does not seem to be any kind of 'category' before *parthenos*. Admittedly *pais* can function as either a masculine or feminine noun but that does not indicate a separate 'category'. The term *korē* is an interesting one and seems to cross the boundaries of *parthenos* and *nymphē* and encompasses characteristics from each 'category.' LSJ (s.v.) defines *korē* as a "maiden;" "girl;" and sometimes as a "newly married woman" or "young wife."

³⁹² See for example: *Hom. Hymn Dem.*, Demand (1994), 14; Golden (1990) 48-49 and Garland (1990) 222-224. The comparison of marriage and death is particularly obvious in the *Hom. Hymn Dem.* as the young maiden or *korē*, Persephone is taken by Hades, the god of the underworld (the place where souls go after death), to be his wife – a fairly blatant identification of death and marriage and a very clear analogy.

³⁹³ Demand (1994), 11

³⁹⁴ Demand (1994), 17. Interestingly, Ar. *Lys.* 596-597 notes the importance of marriage. Dillon (2003), 212 comments that "a woman who did not marry had no role in society."

came she knew no more than how, when given wool, to turn out a cloak, and had seen only how the spinning is given out to the maids, is that not as much as could be expected?”³⁹⁵

The picture that Ischomachus paints of the knowledge that his new wife possessed, and indeed the amount of knowledge he expected her to possess, with regard to domestic duties was very scant. He felt it was enough, considering her young age, that all she be able to do was make a cloak from scratch and order the slaves around. Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, Blundell notes that “the manufacture of textiles was seen by Greek men as the archetypal feminine accomplishment.”³⁹⁶ We legitimately expect then, since Socrates (and Ischomachus) was a man of the upper class that the skills he required of a wife were less, as long as she knew how to control the slaves, to give them orders and to judge the quality of their work that was sufficient for a wife of her social class.

Having been married off and having given birth to her first child,³⁹⁷ our young girl has now passed from childhood (through an almost non-existent adolescence) to adulthood; she has gone from being a *parthenos* to being a *gynē*. It is also not until now (that she has given birth to her first child) that she is fully accepted into her marital *oikos*.³⁹⁸ Evidence from Lysias not only supports the notion that a woman was not fully a part of her marital *oikos* until she had given birth to her first child, but it also gives us a very basic glimpse of what husbands (may have) expected of their wives initially. A defendant in one of Lysias’ speeches says of his unnamed wife “she was the most excellent of wives; she was a clever, frugal housekeeper,

³⁹⁵ Xen. *Oec.* 7.5-6

³⁹⁶ Blundell (1998), 65

³⁹⁷ I do not intend to deal with marriage and birth has been considered in detail in the first chapter of this dissertation.

³⁹⁸ Evidence for this is provided by Lysias, who in I.6 states: “When I, Athenians, decided to marry, and brought a wife into my house, for some time I was disposed neither to vex her nor to leave her too free to do just as she pleased; I kept watch on her as far as possible, with such observation of her as was reasonable. But when a child was born to me, thenceforward I began to trust her, and placed all my affairs in her hands, presuming that we were now in perfect intimacy.”

and kept everything in the nicest order.”³⁹⁹ If we turn back to the *Oeconomicus* and Ischomachus’ young and inexperienced wife, we may gather more information of what was expected of a wife. It would seem that he did expect that, eventually, with careful guidance and training she would assume the following duties: supervision of the servants (both those who were to remain indoors and those who were sent outside of the household); maintenance of the household finances, to “take care that the sum laid by for a year be not spent in a month;” to ensure that cloaks are made from wool for those who need them; to ensure that food is prepared and that the “dry corn is in good condition for making food;” and finally caring for the sick members of the *oikos*.⁴⁰⁰ Demand further observes that

“the woman in the *oikos* managed the household, cleaned and maintained the house and courtyard, kept a kitchen garden, prepared meals, wove clothing for the family . . . or oversaw the activities of household slaves working at these tasks.”⁴⁰¹

It stands to reason that the higher up in the social order (and the wealthier) a family was the more supervisory a role the woman would have had as she would have had more slaves than those who were of a lower social class and thus not wealthy enough to have many slaves to supervise.

Thus, in sum, a woman’s life, from the moment she was born was characterised by the role she would ultimately (or was expected to) fulfil when she became a *gynē*. Throughout her youth she learned, by helping her mother in the *oikos*, the skills required to be a good housewife, wool-working, weaving, cooking, and child-care, amongst others. Then she was

³⁹⁹ Lys. I.7. Note how he only believes this of her after she has fully been accepted into the *oikos*.

⁴⁰⁰ Xen. *Oec.* 7.35-37

⁴⁰¹ Demand (1994), 22-23. Here we must also observe that wool-working (in preparation for weaving) was also part of a wife’s duties. This explains the tuft of wool displayed outside the house to announce the birth of a girl: the tuft is symbolic for the duties she would have to fulfil not only as a child in her natal *oikos* but as a woman in her marital *oikos*.

thrust into a strange world of worship at Artemis' sanctuary, and upon her completion of 'acting the bear', she was deemed ready for marriage. The nuptials tore her from her natal *oikos* and plunged her into her new marital *oikos*, where she was not a full member until she had successfully given birth to her first child. During her time in her marital *oikos* she put to use the skills she had learned as a young girl in her natal *oikos*. The life of the average Athenian woman can be summed up in a few short words: birth, *parthenos*, *nymphē* and *gynē*; these terms reflect not only the limited place in society that a woman held but also the society which formed them. The reason for this has been observed by Foley:

“Greek art and literature by men had relatively little interest in the birth and parenting of young girls, in part because these events were of greater concern to the private than the public world, and perhaps also because when they came of age girls left their natal households to marry into another family.”⁴⁰²

Foley further adds that “the details of family relationships during the childhood and early adolescence of these girls are . . . shrouded in silence.”⁴⁰³

As a very brief digression, it is interesting to observe that the women of Homer's epics,⁴⁰⁴ very broadly speaking, fall into the above-mentioned categories.⁴⁰⁵ Nausicaa, Andromache, Helen and Penelope all of whom are at different stages of their lives, fit fairly easily into the *parthenos*, *nymphē*, and *gynē* system of classification. They all serve as examples and positive exemplars for women in different stages of their life. Clytemnestra, on the other

⁴⁰² Foley (2003), 113

⁴⁰³ Foley (2003), 113

⁴⁰⁴ Lefkowitz (1983), 49 observed that “myths illustrate common attitudes more simply and clearly than history; but history too can be shown to follow the patterns of myth, in part because those were the only terms in which most writers could interpret human experience.”

⁴⁰⁵ Lefkowitz (1986), 25, notes that “any discussion of the status of women in the world of ancient Greece must begin with Homer, even though we do not know when he lived or exactly how his poems were recorded or anything about his background or life of the poet (or poets!).” Lefkowitz' *Heroic Women of Greek Epic* (in *Women in Greek Myth* (1986), 25-41) is particularly enlightening. I must point out that although these women are not divine they are still mythological (i.e. they are not, nor were they ever *real*) and any inclusion of them as 'archetypal' women or use of them to represent 'typical' women is tricky and must proceed with great caution.

hand, acts as a foil, a negative exemplar for Greek women.⁴⁰⁶ Of all the Homeric women, Penelope best represents what was expected of an idealised ‘typical’ woman, even if the women of antiquity had a hard time living up to her excellent example. MacKay argues that

“she is not a mere stereotype of the faithful wife; she is an embodiment of what the poet expected his audience to recognise as the ideal, the perfect wife, beautiful, desirable, affectionate, constant, intelligent in a womanly way and knowing her place.”⁴⁰⁷

It is with this in mind that we must proceed. Mythological women do not represent real women, what they represent is an *ideal*. They represent examples which women in antiquity could or should (and in Clytemnestra’s case – should *not*) follow. However, I have no doubt that women of antiquity found the positive examples of mythological women hard to follow – particularly Penelope’s example.

We can, with the evidence we have gathered, understand why the three goddesses, who are ultimately the subject of this chapter, have no birth or childhood narratives, in the common sense of those concepts. The obvious exception to this category is the Hellenistic Artemis whom Callimachus does portray as a child. The role and conception of women in ancient society strongly points to a conclusion which may be cautiously drawn. It is important for the arguments which will follow to point out that

⁴⁰⁶ Lefkowitz (1986), 40, astutely observed that Clytemnestra is not only a negative exemplar but also that her behaviour is the negative foil for Penelope’s, in the *Odyssey*.

⁴⁰⁷ MacKay (1958), 127

“the characterisation of the goddesses as virgin, sex symbol, wife or mother, in each case necessitates a state of sexual maturity; for, in order to assume these roles, the female must have passed beyond the childhood stage.”⁴⁰⁸

*Artemis*⁴⁰⁹

Artemis, being the multifaceted goddess that she is, is difficult to place within any single category. As the older twin sister of Apollo, we have two possible versions of her birth and involvement in his delivery, neither of which is recorded in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Somewhat surprisingly the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* is also silent on the matter of her birth and involvement in Apollo’s birth. The hymn merely mentions that she was born some time (although how much time is not made clear) earlier than her brother, on a different island.⁴¹⁰ Our next source for the birth of Artemis, Callimachus’ *Hymn to Artemis*, appears much later than the *Theogony*. It seems to provide additional elements to the mythology of Artemis (to be discussed shortly), and clearly assigns childbirth as one of her *timai*.⁴¹¹ It is not until the first (or second) century AD that a definite birth narrative is recorded for this multifunctional goddess, to complement the well developed birth narrative of her brother.⁴¹² Nonetheless, throughout these narratives, one of Artemis’ *timai* is apparent; she is a goddess of childbirth (there were many different goddesses involved in childbirth, Eileithyia being one of the more important ones). Beside her involvement in childbirth, Artemis was the virgin goddess of

⁴⁰⁸ Beaumont (1998), 83

⁴⁰⁹ Homer’s comparison of Nausicaa to Artemis at *Od.* 6.101-106, is intended to highlight Nausicaa’s position as a pre-eminent *parthenos*, a young, desirable, unmarried maiden, of marriageable age and full of reproductive potential. Odysseus too, at *Od.* 6.149-152 compares Nausicaa to Artemis. Homer’s characterisation of Nausicaa clearly helps to reinforce our view of *parthenoi* and of women in antiquity in general.

⁴¹⁰ *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 15-16. At the very least she is born nine days before Apollo, as Leto is in labour for nine days and nights (*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 91).

⁴¹¹ Callim. *Hymn* 3.22-25. Artemis recounts in the hymn that “even in the hour when I was born, the Fates ordained that I should be their helper” (lines 22-23).

⁴¹² Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.4.1, “Leto had intercourse with Zeus, and was chased all over the earth by Hera until she arrived at Delos, where she gave birth first to Artemis, and then, with Artemis as a midwife, to Apollo.” This tradition is hinted at by Callimachus, but never explicitly stated. This development is an interesting move from not noting her presence in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, to having her mentioned in Callimachus and finally to having her most certainly helping Leto in Apollodorus.

transitions, female death, hunting, wildlife and the wilderness, although in some instances she is also associated with cities.⁴¹³ Burkert observes that she is the “mistress of the whole of wild nature . . . [and] she is also the huntress who triumphantly slays her prey with bow and arrow,”⁴¹⁴ further emphasising her role as a goddess of hunting and the wilderness. One of the fullest descriptions of the goddess comes, surprisingly, from the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, where the goddess is described as follows:

“Nor is Artemis of the gold shafts . . . ever overcome in love by smiling Aphrodite, for she too likes other things, archery and hunting animals in the mountains, lyres, dances, and piercing yells, shady groves and a community of righteous men.”⁴¹⁵

All of Artemis’ *timai* are laid out for us in the hymn, but what of her birth? Apollodorus’ account, late though it is, is the only narrative of her ‘birth’ *per se*. But even Apollodorus is sketchy on the details. It is unclear whether she is born as an infant and then, like Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, rapidly matures, or whether she is born as an adult, and so able to aid Leto in the birth of Apollo. Her near total absence from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* can only lead us to speculate. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* whilst neatly outlining her *timai* offers us no information about her birth. Callimachus’ Hellenistic view of her childhood leads us to believe that she actually was born as an infant and while this is an interesting and informative hymn, for our purposes it is too late, and is thus problematic. The same could be said for Apollodorus’ account, which arrives even later than Callimachus’ hymn.⁴¹⁶ So we

⁴¹³ *BNP* ii.62 (*s.v.* Artemis) Hünemörder, C.

⁴¹⁴ Burkert (1985), 149

⁴¹⁵ *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 5.16-20

⁴¹⁶ It has been shown that Artemis in both the archaic and classical periods was clearly not viewed as an infant. The development of her birth and childhood mythology was a later invention, most prominently noted by Callimachus and then later summarised by Apollodorus. Beaumont has argued that this development came about due to “gradual liberalisation taking place in Greek social attitudes towards children and women” (p. 90) She notes developmental stages of this ‘liberalisation’ as taking place in the late fifth century, where “infant and child figures . . . convincingly naturalistic in attitude and physical form” appear (p. 68). For more on this topic

must, for all intents and purposes, believe that Artemis, the archaic and classical goddess, due to her early lack of birth and childhood mythology, was in fact ‘born’ mature, unlike her twin brother Apollo.⁴¹⁷ Beaumont observes the following:

“Though Artemis does very occasionally in the fourth century appear as an infant, her experience of childhood has . . . little or no innate significance and, according to one version of the myth, she matures with sufficient rapidity to assist Leto at the birth of her twin brother Apollo.”⁴¹⁸

Following the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the *Theogony*, we must assume then that like Aphrodite and Athena, Artemis is born as an adult. But why represent this goddess as mature at her birth, when it was clearly acceptable, in later times, for her to have a birth and childhood mythology, albeit poorly developed? Perhaps we may find an answer in the role she plays within ancient society and the role that females of her ‘age’ assume. As a virgin goddess she fulfils the role of *parthenos*. In order for this description to be valid one must be aware of the fact that physical and sexual maturity must be attained, which, for young girls means the onset of menarche. Physical maturity means that although still a virgin, a young girl represents all the potential of a fully mature *gynē*, but still has to attain a certain level of social maturity to be considered a *gynē*. In other words she must be married and have borne at least one child. The characterisation of any woman as a virgin rests on one main assumption, that she has reached physical maturity, it is only with the attainment of physical maturity that any such characterisation can be validly argued. Artemis, in her role as a virgin goddess, has done what only two other goddesses have dared. She has rejected the realm of Aphrodite and

see Beaumont (1998), 71-95, particularly pages 89-92. For the purposes of my current line of inquiry it is sufficient to note the information contained within these two later authors (Callimachus and Apollodorus) and to accept Beaumont’s view. However interesting the discussion of the changing views of children and women and by association the changing views of the goddesses, now is not the time for its examination.

⁴¹⁷ Beaumont (1998), 78, concludes the following: “the ancient literary sources indeed tell us little about the birth of Artemis . . . [they] reveal little more than that her mother was Leto, her brother Apollo, and that she was born on Ortygia or Delos.”

⁴¹⁸ Beaumont (1998), 71

as such has rejected her sexuality.⁴¹⁹ But, as Burkert has noted, “the virginity of Artemis is not asexuality as is Athena’s practical and organisational intelligence, but a peculiarly erotic and challenging ideal.”⁴²⁰ Thus she, like her human counterparts the *parthenoi*, represents all the inherent reproductive potential that females possess, but unlike her human counterparts, she is able to remain in this state of erotic potential indefinitely, whereas they must, for the good of the community, give in to the realm of Aphrodite. Ultimately it is her virginity, as we shall soon see in the case of Athena, which allows her to function in male dominated realms, such as hunting, and further allows her, as an unprotected female to venture outside the *oikos* into the wilds, thus making her a goddess of the wilderness – something which her mortal counterparts were not able to do.⁴²¹

As a goddess of transitions she is able to function in more ways. It is she who oversees the development of young ‘asexual’ girls into young *parthenoi*, filled with sexual promise. The *Arkteia* (discussed above) is one of the most prominent examples of this, allowing young girls to be recognised as marriageable *parthenoi*. It is also as a goddess of transitions that she is able to function in the more perplexing realm of childbirth. It is somewhat contradictory to the modern mind that a virgin goddess should also be one of the primary goddesses of childbirth. But like her brother Apollo who is recognised as the god of healing and of plagues, she too functions in this seemingly uncharacteristic role.⁴²² One may also view childbirth as the ancient woman’s ultimate relinquishment of her virginity, finally realising her potential as a mother and a *gynē*. Thus if we were to cast Artemis into one of the

⁴¹⁹ See Beaumont (1998), 84 for further discussion

⁴²⁰ Burkert (1985), 150

⁴²¹ She is often represented outdoors with her ‘band of nymphs’. This band of nymphs, best described by Callimachus in his *Hymn to Artemis*, are like Artemis, all *parthenoi*, they are all virgins (and are expected to remain virgins) and like their leader represent all of the sexual promise of their human counterparts, the *parthenoi* and the *nymphai*. For an interesting discussion on Artemis and her band of nymphs see Larson (1997), 249-257, who observes that their association outside of Homer “is surprisingly limited in Greek literature before the Hellenistic period” (p. 249).

⁴²² Accordingly, Cole (1998), 32, notes that Artemis “had to be a permanent *parthenos* because she could protect girls . . . and adult women from the dangers of reproduction only if she herself was immune to its disabilities.”

‘categories’ of women in antiquity, it would have to be that of *parthenos*. We could not class her as a *nymphē* as, in the mythological record, she is never married. Her ‘birth’ and ‘childhood’ may then be viewed in relation to her function in ancient society and in more general terms the function of women in ancient society.

Aphrodite

Of the three goddesses that this final chapter concerns itself with, Aphrodite (and her adult birth) is probably the easiest to understand. Burkert puts it best: “Aphrodite’s sphere of activity is immediately and sensibly apparent: the joyous consummation of sexuality.”⁴²³ Following *Brill’s New Pauly* we are alerted to the fact that “Aphrodite represents all of the ambiguity of femininity: the seductive charm as well as the necessity to reproduce and a potential to deceive.”⁴²⁴ If we turn to Hesiod, our greatest source for the Ouranian version of the adult birth and function of Aphrodite, we are told the following and are able to confirm much of what Burkert and the *New Pauly* say:

“about [the castrated genitals of Ouranos] a white foam grew from the immortal flesh, and in it a girl formed . . . And out stepped a modest and beautiful goddess, and the grass began to grow all round beneath her slender feet. Gods and men call her Aphrodite . . . Eros and fair Desire attended her birth and accompanied her as she went to join the family of gods. And this has been her allotted province from the beginning among men and immortal gods: the whisperings of girls; smiles; deceptions; sweet pleasure, intimacy and tenderness.”⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Burkert (1985), 152, Blundell (1998), 85 has observed that as a role model “to her female worshippers [she] was clearly somewhat dubious” due to her many extramarital dalliances.

⁴²⁴ *BNP* i.831 (s.v. Aphrodite) Ley, A.

⁴²⁵ Hes. *Theog.* 190-206. Sale (1961), 512, observes that Eros and Desire are qualities “that are a constant feature of her activity as a goddess.”

Thus we have identified most of Aphrodite's *timai*, she is the desirable love goddess who oversees feminine sensuality and sexuality, both of which may be characterised by deception, and she is also responsible for fertility and reproduction.⁴²⁶ Hesiod, by making the grass suddenly spring to life beneath her feet, when she first steps ashore, is highlighting her role as a fertility goddess, one whose sphere naturally includes reproduction. Hesiod's observation that her *timai* function both in the divine and mortal realm alerts us to the universality of Aphrodite's powers. The other roles he assigns her are essentially complementary, all in some way related to sexual pleasure and the realisation of sexual reproduction or at least the potential for sexual reproduction. Of all the 'categories' of a typical Athenian woman discussed above Aphrodite seems to best fit into the *nymphē* category; a young (married) woman full of sexual promise and the promise of fertility and reproduction. That is not to say that Aphrodite has no children, she does, but the category of *nymphē* seems to fit best.

It is important to note however that we are presented with an alternative version of events for the birth of Aphrodite, although this version of events was by far the less popular of the two.⁴²⁷ According to Homer (*Iliad* 5.370-417) Aphrodite was the daughter of Zeus and Dione.⁴²⁸ In spite of her alternative descent Aphrodite is still represented as the powerful love goddess at *Iliad* 3.414-446, when she forcefully orders Helen back to Paris' quarters to make love to the recently rescued Trojan.⁴²⁹ Homer's characterisation of the goddess as the daughter of Zeus seems to be an attempt to subordinate this powerful goddess to the almighty rule of the king of the gods. Perhaps the attempt to make this powerful goddess less powerful than the omnipotent Zeus was simply a result of the male dominated and controlled society in

⁴²⁶ The *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 5.1-6 alerts us to the fact that her realm encompasses both human and animal fertility and reproduction. Sale (1961), 513, emphasises her role as a fertility goddess.

⁴²⁷ Hadzsits (1909), 43, observes that "Aphrodite's birth from the sea becomes the leading and commonly accepted version of her origin." He collects and cites the numerous examples in his 1909 article, p. 43; n. 2.

⁴²⁸ Apollodorus too records this alternative version of Aphrodite's birth: Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.3.1

⁴²⁹ One must never forget that it was ultimately due to Aphrodite's powers that the Trojan War started!

which Homer lived, and the great threat which a powerful female represented.⁴³⁰ Burkert has observed the following of Aphrodite's lineage:

“whereas in epic the formula “daughter of Zeus” is attached to Aphrodite and a Dione is mentioned as her mother, in this account [Hesiod's] she is older than all the Olympian gods; at the very first cosmic differentiation, the separation of heaven and earth, the power of union also emerged.”⁴³¹

Homer, of the sources considered, seems to be the only source who tries to diminish the powers of Aphrodite. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5), there are only three entities over whom she does not hold sway, Hestia, Artemis and Athena.⁴³² Other than those three goddesses, everything else capable of sexual reproduction falls into Aphrodite's realm, including: the gods, people, birds, and all manner of land and sea creatures.⁴³³ This clearly illustrates the powerful nature of the love goddess, who “sends sweet longing upon”⁴³⁴ all of the previously mentioned creatures. Her birth is confirmed by the poet of the sixth *Homeric Hymn*, who also seems to be following the ‘Ouranos’ genitals’ tradition. The poet notes the following: “that is where the wet-blowing westerly's forces brought her across the swell of the noisy main, in soft foam,”⁴³⁵ the soft foam clearly alluding to the castration myth. Once again this representation of Aphrodite as a primal goddess illustrates the necessity of her *timai*. And the fact that, as Burkert has noted, she came into being as a result of a violent *separation* but, at the same time made available the possibility of sexual *unions*, does tend to

⁴³⁰ It should also be noted that Zeus' primary purpose, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, is to assert his dominance over the mischievous love goddess, when he causes her to fall in love with Anchises.

⁴³¹ Burkert (1985), 154. Eros, one of the primordial deities, is also fundamental in this regard, and it is his ‘coming to life’ – in Hes. *Theog.* 125 – that makes available the possibility of sexual reproduction. How curious then that two fundamental separations in Hesiod's *Theogony* result in the possibility of two different kinds of unions, sexual and marital; both ways in which the population can grow.

⁴³² *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 5.8-32

⁴³³ *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 5.2-4. This powerful characterisation of Aphrodite, as a goddess whose powers are noticeable basically everywhere illustrates the all encompassing and necessary nature of her *timai*. It is through her powers alone that the human race (or any other species) will continue to grow and flourish.

⁴³⁴ *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 5.2

⁴³⁵ *Hom. Hymn Aph.* 6.3-5

confirm the importance of this goddess in the pantheon. In addition to all of the above, and partly in confirmation of Burkert's 'union' observation, *Brill's New Pauly* notes that Aphrodite "was primarily worshipped as the deity of sexuality and procreation, who ensures the continuity of human communities."⁴³⁶ This is why I have tried to place Aphrodite into the *nymphē* category: she is a deity characterised by the potential for sexual procreation, much like the *nymphē* of antiquity.

With this in mind we need to explore the question of why Aphrodite is born as an adult. It is out of place for a goddess whose concerns are all sexual (and sensual) in nature to have a childhood. It is wholly inappropriate for Aphrodite, whose primary concern is to increase the population through sexual reproduction, to be viewed as a child. It is also incongruous to view Aphrodite as an immature young virginal devotee to a goddess who demands virginity, such as Athena or Artemis.⁴³⁷ It is this simple argument that I would like to put forward as the primary reason for Aphrodite's lack of childhood and thus her birth as a mature woman. Beaumont phrases it as a question: "What . . . could the representation of Aphrodite as an infant add to her well-defined mythological identity as the goddess embodying the power of sexual love and beauty?"⁴³⁸ Aphrodite, being the highly charged sexual goddess that she is, needs no childhood to enhance her powers,⁴³⁹ in fact a childhood would diminish her powers somewhat as she would have had to pass through various non-sexual stages in order for her to

⁴³⁶ *BNP* i.831 (s.v. Aphrodite) Ley, A.

⁴³⁷ It is not surprising then that Pausanias (if we were to take the reading of the text that the *kanephoroi* did not merely pass through or next to the sanctuary of Aphrodite-in-the-Garden, but that the said sanctuary was their destination) at 1.27.4 includes Aphrodite in the mysterious goings on atop the Acropolis. If the destination of the *kanephoroi* is indeed the sanctuary of Aphrodite, and if these young girls after their cult services are [immediately] married, then the journey to the sanctuary of Aphrodite-in-the-Garden could be seen as a journey from virginity (in the service of Athena) to the potential to realise one's sexuality (and associated fertility) in marriage, in the service of Aphrodite. But that is a lot of 'ifs' and will have to wait until more evidence comes to light. For now I believe that this is a strong possibility.

⁴³⁸ Beaumont (1998), 84

⁴³⁹ Ultimately this is what the *Hom. Hymn Ap.* and the *Hom. Hymn Herm.* do; they tell of the childhood exploits of those specific gods in order to enhance their power and honour. See also Clay (1989), 154-155; 267-270.

achieve her current sexual identity.⁴⁴⁰ Far from detracting from her sexual identity it is in fact her irregular birth which enhances her *timai*.

Athena

First and foremost, Athena, like Artemis, is a virgin goddess.⁴⁴¹ Athena, like Aphrodite is born as an adult, but unlike Aphrodite, she does have parents, in spite of the fact that it is her father who ‘gives birth’ to her. According to Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Metis was Zeus’ first wife but was tricked and swallowed by Zeus when she was about to give birth to their first child, Athena.⁴⁴² Hesiod records the following:

“by himself, out of his head, he [Zeus] fathered the pale-eyed Tritogeneia, the fearsome rouser of the fray, leader of armies, the lady Atrytone, whose pleasure is in war and the clamour of battle.”⁴⁴³

Any gaps left by Hesiod can easily be filled in by the twenty-eighth *Homeric Hymn*, a hymn to Athena. The poet of the *Homeric Hymn to Athena*⁴⁴⁴ records the following:

“Tritogeneia, to whom wise Zeus himself gave birth out of his august head, in battle armour of shining gold: all the immortals watched in awe, as before Zeus the goat-rider she sprang quickly down from his immortal head with a brandish of her sharp javelin.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁰ For further discussion see: Beaumont (1998), 84.

⁴⁴¹ For the classification of virgin goddesses and the necessary denial of sexual potential see above.

⁴⁴² Hes. *Theog.* 886-900

⁴⁴³ Hes. *Theog.* 924-926

⁴⁴⁴ Shelmerdine (1995), 160, notes that the appearance of Athena in her armour is not recorded in the *Theogony* but that it was “contained in a lost work by the lyric poet Stesichoros,” (according to the scholiast on Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1310) she also observes that it was “a common theme in vase painting from the 6th-century BC on.”

⁴⁴⁵ *Hom. Hymn Ath.* 4-9. It is striking how public the birth of Athena is, the whole divine family is present to witness it, which is contrary to the very private nature of mortal births which are exclusively attended by select female connections.

Hence we see that not only did Athena have both parents, unlike Aphrodite, but she was actually born, in a much altered sense of the word. Whereas there is not a birth *per se* for Aphrodite, she merely steps ashore from the genital sack of Ouranos, there is a birth – of sorts – for Athena. Athena’s birth, if we follow the *Homeric Hymn*, is met with fear and terror from her fellow Olympians⁴⁴⁶ (much like the terror which characterised Apollo’s first appearance in his own hymn). This terror seems to stem from the idea that she is born ready for battle; it was not until she removed her armour that we see Zeus rejoicing.⁴⁴⁷ However, it is important to note, following evidence from both the *Homeric Hymn* and the *Theogony* that she, like Aphrodite, is born fully prepared to assume her ‘predetermined’ role on Olympus as the goddess of war. Hesiod further adds to his description of the birth of Athena that she was born with “courage and sound counsel equal to her father’s,”⁴⁴⁸ thus acknowledging her role as a goddess not only of wisdom but also of strategy and knowledge in warfare.⁴⁴⁹ Her *aegis*, as Burkert notes, when raised up causes her enemies in war to panic,⁴⁵⁰ which beside the wisdom inherent in her person also seems to confirm that the army with whom she sides in battle will benefit from a strategically competent ally.

There is however a softer side to this *aegis* and spear-wielding goddess. It is she who bestows fine skills upon women,⁴⁵¹ skills which greatly benefit them not only in their natal *oikos* when, as children or *parthenoi*, they are still learning, but also in their marital *oikos* where, as

⁴⁴⁶ *Hom. Hymn Ath.* 10

⁴⁴⁷ *Hom. Hymn Ath.* 16

⁴⁴⁸ Hes. *Theog* 896. Brown (1952), 133, observes that “she is a threat to Zeus and at the same time an indispensable aid to Zeus.” The potential threat that she poses to Zeus is negated by the position of power she assumes upon her birth – or rather her appearance – into this world. As her father’s equal in courage and council, she provides a valuable source of support for Zeus, who has avoided fates similar to those of Ouranos and Kronos by awarding his offspring positions of power, rather than suppressing them. For more on this discussion, see Brown (1952), 130-143.

⁴⁴⁹ *Brill’s New Pauly* also notes that “war was her means of protecting the city” (*BNP* ii.235 (s.v. Athena) Ley, A.). In protecting the city we may add another *timē* to the list of Athena’s spheres of influence.

⁴⁵⁰ Burkert (1985), 140, Burkert also notes that she specialises in “the war-dance; tactics and discipline.”

⁴⁵¹ Perhaps the best example of the skill of weaving Athena imparts on women is embodied in Penelope. Her weaving not only illustrates her amazing skills in that sphere but shows the intensity with which she protects her *oikos*. See *Hom. Od.* 2.103-110. Both protection of the *oikos* and weaving fall into Athena’s *timai*. See also *Hom. Od.* 2,116-121 for Antinous’ description of Penelope, whom he claims has been given gifts from Athena.

gynaikes, they are teaching their own daughters and making items necessary for the functioning of the *oikos*. In the *Odyssey* she teaches the daughters of Pandareus “the skills to make beautiful things.”⁴⁵² To the Phaeacian women in the *Odyssey* she is said to have “given . . . outstanding skill in beautiful crafts and such fine intelligence.”⁴⁵³ In the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* it is Athena who gives Pandora her lovely garments, described by Hesiod as “gleaming white.”⁴⁵⁴ Also discussed by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* is the fact that in the ‘construction’ of Pandora, it was Athena who taught Pandora womanly crafts, and to “weave the embroidered web.”⁴⁵⁵ Burkert observes that she is “the patroness of wool-working, of the glorious handicrafts which constitute such an important part of domestic property and pride.”⁴⁵⁶ All of this is evidence for the importance of Athena in the life of a ‘typical’ woman in antiquity; she protects the woman’s husband in battle and endows her with the skills to provide garments for her marital *oikos*.

As much as Athena was clearly a vital part of daily life in antiquity we still need to consider her birth and why her birth comes about as it does. Burkert notes that “the absence of a mother is the virgin’s denial of her womanhood as such: she [Athena] has not even had contact with a woman’s womb.”⁴⁵⁷ It is her virginity, which could also be described as her denial of the realm of Aphrodite,⁴⁵⁸ which allows her to function in the male sphere of war. It is also her close relationship to, and her birth from the head of, Zeus that allows her to remain a virgin. And in remaining a virgin, in spite of the fact that her womanly crafts are practised by almost all ages of women, she most closely resembles women who have passed beyond

⁴⁵² Hom. *Od.* 20.72

⁴⁵³ Hom. *Od.* 7.110-111, see also 6.52-54

⁴⁵⁴ Hes. *Theog.* 573-74; *Op.* 78-79

⁴⁵⁵ Hes. *Op.* 64

⁴⁵⁶ Burkert (1985), 141

⁴⁵⁷ Burkert (1985), 143

⁴⁵⁸ See Hom. *Hymn Aph.* 5.8-15

their capacity to bear children – thus women whose predominant role would be to care for the *oikos* and not the offspring.

Beaumont observes that “Athene derives glory and divine status and position from her birth and her newborn character as a dynamic figure, ready to challenge anyone who might stand in her way or call her power into question.”⁴⁵⁹ As a further point of importance we must note with Beaumont that, of the three goddesses considered here, two are born of males, without a mother, while Artemis is in fact born of a mother. Beaumont convincingly argues that it is possible that “a divine father, having usurped the female capacity for childbirth is able *alone* to produce superior offspring.”⁴⁶⁰ Athena’s role in society could in fact help us to understand why she is born as an adult from the head of her father Zeus. As an adult woman who helps to create items of value for the *oikos* (by wool-working and weaving) she is still of value and of use, but not of the same kind of value as one who still has the potential to reproduce – one who would be under the ‘care’ of Aphrodite or even Artemis. If we were to class Athena as a ‘typical’ woman, she would not be a *nymphē*, like Aphrodite, but rather a *gynē*, who has passed her childbearing years.⁴⁶¹ That is not to say that all *gynaikes* are characterised by their age and thus their incapacity to bear children, just simply *gynaikes* of a certain age. Athena seems not to be a goddess of young women, unlike her virgin counterpart Artemis, but of mature women, hence her adult birth.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Beaumont (1998), 85

⁴⁶⁰ Beaumont (1998), 85. Beaumont does acknowledge the birth of Dionysus from the thigh of Zeus – as an infant, but settles, quite convincingly on the conclusion that giving birth to a female *infant* would compromise a father’s divinity due to the close association with such a powerless individual (p. 89). One might also argue here that Dionysus was in fact born from the womb of his mother – the first time and would ultimately have, were it not for the interference of Hera, probably been born of Semele – but this is mere conjecture.

⁴⁶¹ Naturally Athena, as a virgin goddess, may also be viewed as a *parthenos*. *Brill’s New Pauly* observes that “just as significant as her connection with young male citizens . . . was her relationship with young women. She taught them ‘magnificent works’” (*BNP* ii.235 (s.v. Athena) Ley, A.). I support my earlier argument, as it is in service of the *oikos* (in a home-making capacity) that she is best viewed in relation to women, and that view would best be served by the *gynē* ‘category’ of women.

⁴⁶² Also observe Athena’s involvement in the manufacturing of the first woman – Pandora – and how, from the beginning of her ‘life’, Pandora is an adult.

Thus far I have shown that women fall into a number of predetermined categories. I have also shown that it is due to the societal categorisation of females, and roles which they are allowed to assume in their lives, that the ‘birth’ mythology of the goddesses developed as it did. In order to enhance my argument further, it will be fruitful to consider one particular *human* woman who appears in myth; for it is she who provides mortal women with an appropriate comparison, not the goddesses, for the goddesses “represented a state of existence to which no mortal woman could aspire, namely independence and non-reliance on males.”⁴⁶³ Accordingly, Beaumont has noted that in order for the goddesses to achieve this independence they “needed either to deny or exploit their femininity and sexuality,”⁴⁶⁴ which I have amply shown. Hesiod’s Pandora affords us the opportunity to explore one of the many roles assumed by mythical women.

Pandora being the first woman, provides us with a feminine ‘prototype’ while also transmitting the masculine (and somewhat misogynistic) view of women in archaic Greece. Hesiod tells us that after Prometheus’ theft of fire from Mount Olympus, Zeus ordered the creation of Pandora, the first woman and sent her to Epimetheus as a ‘gift’.⁴⁶⁵ Hesiod fiercely characterises her as a bane for mankind and the cause of all their troubles, when she opens the (in)famous jar of troubles, letting all but *elpis* – hope – escape. He does however, throughout his discussion of Pandora and the woes she brings to mankind, bring to the fore the necessary nature of marriage (and women) for mankind and the continuation of the race. Blundell comments that “woman . . . is a double-edged gift, and it seems that men have little alternative but to accept her.”⁴⁶⁶ Accordingly, Hesiod presents us with a curious, but

⁴⁶³ Beaumont (1998), 87

⁴⁶⁴ Beaumont (1998), 87

⁴⁶⁵ Hes. *Theog.* 565-610; *Op.* 54-88

⁴⁶⁶ Blundell (1998), 28

presumably reliable view of women in archaic Greece. They are a necessary evil.⁴⁶⁷ But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Many gods and goddesses participated in the creation, dressing and adornment of Pandora. According to the *Theogony*, it is Hephaestus who creates “the likeness of a modest maiden”⁴⁶⁸ from clay and Athena who adorns her in her “gleaming white garment,” “embroidered veil” and “golden diadem, which the renowned Ambidexter made with his own hands to please Zeus the father.”⁴⁶⁹ According to the *Works and Days*, Zeus ordered that Hephaestus create her out of clay and give her a “human voice and strength,” that Athena teach her crafts and “to weave the embroidered web,” that Aphrodite deck her out with charm, “painful yearning and consuming obsession” and that Hermes “put in a bitch’s mind and a knavish nature.”⁴⁷⁰ The actual creation of her in the *Works and Days*, while basically following Zeus’ instructions, differs slightly. Accordingly, Hephaestus made her out of clay and Athena “dressed and adorned her,” but it is the Graces and lady Temptation who “put necklaces of gold about her body” and the Seasons who “garlanded her about with spring flowers,” while Hermes put in her breast “lies and wily pretences and a knavish nature . . . and he put in a voice.”⁴⁷¹ Regardless of how it was done, the will of Zeus was accomplished and a “precipitous [and] unmanageable trap”⁴⁷² was set for mankind. Throughout Hesiod’s creation and description of Pandora – the first woman, who was in fact identified as the

⁴⁶⁷ King (1983), 110, notes that “for Greeks woman is a necessary evil, a *kalon kakon* . . . an evil because she is undisciplined and licentious, lacking the self-control of which men are capable, yet necessary to society as constructed by men in order to reproduce it.”

⁴⁶⁸ Hes. *Theog.* 572

⁴⁶⁹ Hes. *Theog.* 571-580. West’s decision to use ‘Ambidexter’ (meaning ‘both handed’) in his translation is interesting. In the poem the term *amphigyvêeis* is used, meaning possibly ‘he that halts in both limbs’ or ‘the lame one’ (LSJ *s. v.*) this is the same term applied to him at Hom. *Il.* 1.607, where his productive skills are emphasised in his building of gods’ homes. It is possible that West sought to emphasise Hephaestus’ creative and productive nature, particularly in the manufacturing of Pandora scene, rather than focusing on his lame legs.

⁴⁷⁰ Hes. *Op.* 60-68

⁴⁷¹ Hes. *Op.* 69-82. Marquardt (1982), 285, observes that “Pandora’s alluring charms are viewed as an actual evil.” She also notes that this reflects an anxiety “about the world in which Hesiod finds himself” thus confirming the dangerous but necessary nature of marriage and the evilness which women represent and the threat that they present to mankind.

⁴⁷² Hes. *Op.* 83

progenitor of the female race – we find negative characteristics and the poet conveys a strongly biased and obviously misogynistic attitude towards Pandora and as such, towards all womankind.

However, this misogynistic attitude, whilst never balanced or cancelled out, does convey an element of the necessity of woman as a partner for man. Hesiod's somewhat ambivalent attitude is conveyed in the *Theogony*⁴⁷³ when he considers the necessity of the convention of marriage from which heirs follow, to inherit man's property. The necessity of marriage is best captured when Hesiod considers those who choose not to marry and says of these unfortunate individuals the following: "[he] arrives at grim old age lacking anyone to look after him . . . [and] when he dies, distant relatives share out his living."⁴⁷⁴ Hesiod's account of Pandora and the evils which she embodies (and the evils which she releases into the world) all point to the male concerns of the nature of women. They are dangerous, and so in order to diminish the danger they present they must be kept in the *oikos*, but even then, with a good wife, man "spends his life with bad constantly competing against good."⁴⁷⁵ As a mythological exemplum Pandora provides women with an example of how not to be, but at the same time it shows them (from a male point of view) that mischief and bad qualities are entrenched in their character, which further reinforces the need for men to control them, to be their *kyrioi*. Hurwit observes that "there was undoubtedly the grudging admission that women are necessary for the continuation of the human species and the reproduction of its social

⁴⁷³ This attitude of the necessary partnership between men and women is not conveyed in the *Works and Days*; his description of the construction of Pandora is followed by the opening of the jar and the release of all evils. See Hes. *Op.* 90-99.

⁴⁷⁴ Hes. *Theog.* 606-607

⁴⁷⁵ Hes. *Theog.* 602-603

realities.”⁴⁷⁶ He further notes that woman is something for which “men can find no device or remedy”⁴⁷⁷ and that

“this mother of all mortal women, is in fact created to beguile men with her beauty and uncontrollable sexuality, to introduce falsehood and treachery and disobedience to their lives, to let loose all evils upon the world from her famous jar.”⁴⁷⁸

All of this confirms the view of women that I have argued Hesiod presented in his female prototype, Pandora. This sort of masculine view of women clearly entrenched in the females of archaic Greece an understanding of their role in society. This view would also have given the Archaic males an excuse to conform to societal norms by keeping strict control over their women – the myth acts to reinforce the roles into which women were placed and by so doing maintains the status quo. While the Pandora myth accounts for the evil nature of women and the control which men exert over them it also brings to the fore the two types of women found in antiquity – humans and goddesses. The Pandora myth accounts for the place of *human* women in ancient society, and at the same time recognises the powerful (but for human women unattainable) role that the goddesses played in antiquity. Pandora as the progenitor represents the multifaceted nature of women and as such she also represents “a contrast between the undisciplined threat to social order and the controlled, reproductive *gynē*.”⁴⁷⁹

Throughout this chapter I have argued for a certain, fairly limited, representation of women in antiquity. The initial evidence upon which I built my argument was based on various sources

⁴⁷⁶ Hurwit, (1995), 184

⁴⁷⁷ Hurwit (1995), 184

⁴⁷⁸ Hurwit (1995), 184

⁴⁷⁹ King (1983), 124

and led us to a certain view point; that ancient (Greek) women fit into three categories: *parthenos*, *nymphē* and *gynē*. This was further supported by the mythological evidence found in the archaic poets Homer and Hesiod. They helped to support the identification that women were limited in their role in society. All of this evidence pointed to the main purpose of this chapter, to explore the reasons why the goddesses (three in particular) were born as adults.

In sum, it can be argued that they are born as mature women as the three categories of women in antiquity were all defined by their *womanly* (adult) stature (that is, they were not defined as children). These definitions are based on one sole premise: that the age of sexual maturity had been reached, otherwise their validity would be called into question. Hence we only have ‘categories’ for female adults, not female children. Thus, the virginal Artemis, in remaining a *parthenos* for all eternity, has rejected her sexual (and reproductive) potential. By rejecting her sexual potential and hence rejecting any possibility of producing offspring, she is essentially immune to its hazards and as such becomes the patroness of *parthenoi* and childbirth – seemingly contradictory spheres. Aphrodite on the other hand has embraced her sexuality and as such her realm of influence concerns (legitimate) sexual reproduction between husband and wife. Athena, also a *parthenos*, more closely resembles older women in her patronage of weaving and wool-working and in general good domestic management.

To picture any of these powerful goddesses as children would not only diminish their power but in some cases, Aphrodite’s for instance, it would be highly inappropriate – Aphrodite as a highly sexually charged goddess has no place being a child. In the case of Artemis we find that she lacks a childhood as she too has assumed a role which requires her rejection of her

sexual potential.⁴⁸⁰ Athena too, as one who has rejected her sexual potential, needs no childhood her ability to function in a male realm (warfare) necessitates not only her bizarre birth but also her status as a virgin, which too is a rejection of her sexual potential. In sum, the goddesses have no childhood mythology because of the roles into which women in antiquity were cast, *parthenos* (sexually mature but an unmarried virgin), *nymphē* (sexually mature, married but yet to produce her first child) and *gynē* (sexually mature and married with at least one child).⁴⁸¹

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⁴⁸⁰ We must not forget that Artemis and Athena have differing perceptions of being a *parthenos*. Artemis' virginity is highly sexually charged, one filled with potential, whereas Athena's is asexual (See Burkert (1985), 150). What is particularly interesting about Artemis' virginity (when compared to Athena's) is that virginal devotees (to Artemis) must inevitably give up their virginity when they assume their role as mothers. Because of the asexual nature of Athena's virginity no such relinquishment is required (which also means that this is an ideal to which few can aspire), which in part helps to explain the erotic nature of Artemis' virginity.

⁴⁸¹ It should be noted that Athena does not actually have any biological children.

Conclusion

Greek mythology and the many societies which both created and consumed the stories enjoyed a quid pro quo relationship. It is difficult if not impossible to separate the myths from the people who created and used them, and it is with this in mind that I have attempted to address the topic of *divine childhood*. I have tried my best to be sensitive to the complex relationship between society and mythology throughout this project and I hope that this vital message comes across clearly.

A re-emphasis of the pervasive gender bias of the era(s) with which this project has concerned itself is necessary. This is an important aspect of ancient society which we cannot ignore. To illustrate my point more clearly: less than one quarter of this dissertation is devoted to goddesses and females, in spite of the fact that women are more important at certain stages of a person's life, while the rest of the dissertation is devoted to the male gods. The evidence itself speaks volumes, the fact that what we are provided with leaves us with more room for discussion about males (and gods) than females (and goddesses) is telling, and in itself is an important observation. Evidence from a female perspective, for a female audience is deficient. This gender bias is one hurdle which cannot be overcome, as noted in the introduction, it is simply, a hurdle which with careful consideration must be compensated for. We need to do the best we can with the androcentric evidence we have available to us by applying critical frameworks to the material. It is our ability to recognise and analyse this androcentric material that allows this sort of inquiry to proceed.

Our other prominent obstacle is the remoteness in time and space of the material examined. The remote nature of the evidence often results in a fragmentary picture of antiquity, particularly when it comes to women and children. This problem was overcome – I think

quite successfully – by integrating and analysing the relevant material available, even when it derived from different regions and times. The different types of evidence used in this study have, I think, enhanced not only its variety but its perspective, and prompted the approaches I have had to utilise when analysing the evidence. The broadly anthropological and selectively comparative approaches I have had to rely on have been fruitful and informative.

In the first chapter, using the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the processes, rituals and norms around birth and other perinatal processes were considered. This is possibly one of the clearest examples of the difficulty experienced when trying to separate the myths from the societies and people who created the stories. The first chapter showed how the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* selectively followed ancient practices when telling of the birth of one of the many sons of Zeus. In spite of the late date of Soranus' *Gynaecology* it provided a fantastic contrast to the hymn, and it also serves to illustrate the delicate relationship between society and myth. It was also shown in the first chapter, that when the birth processes (in the hymn) differed from the mortal practices, it was done for a very specific reason – that is to enhance the divinity of Apollo, to illustrate that this was not the narrative of any normal mortal birth, but that of a god. The hymn clearly showed evidence of the early traditions of childbirth and midwifery, but to identify whether the hymn influenced tradition or societal norms influenced the hymn is impossible to say – although my inclination is to think it was the latter.

In the second chapter we explored the link between growing up or maturing and claiming one's place in society through the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. The *hymn* allowed us to explore concepts such as *timai* (and the attainment of this valuable position in relation to one's family and society), *kyrioi*, theft and its consequences, the relationship between sons and mothers and obviously, growing up. This multifaceted chapter allowed us to explore many curious

traditions in ancient society, particularly focusing on those that informed us about the maturation process of young males. This chapter proved to be the most labour intensive, but also the most rewarding on an informative level. The exploration of the relationship between members of the ancient family, particularly the relationship between mother and son, proved key to a youth's societal maturation, development and ultimately acceptance into the adult community. So many ancient societal practices are apparent in the hymn and it is the plethora of practices that we find which the chapter attempted to examine – to the greatest extent possible though inevitably this would always be selective. Again my eclectic methodology proved useful as it allowed for broad comparison of texts which illustrated important relationships and concepts to be integrated into this diverse project.

In the final chapter I explored the limited role of women in ancient society and determined that they were ultimately defined by their sexual maturity, and whether or not they realised their sexual potential. The final chapter explored the roles that the goddesses played in ancient society and determined that the roles that they were afforded were clearly influenced by the role that women were allowed to assume in antiquity. It was also determined that the 'birth' mythology of the goddesses was completely determined by the role that women were allowed to assume, and the role into which they were cast by the men of antiquity, our androcentric sources. The exploration of Pandora – as an addition to the chapter on women and the goddesses – proved valuable in reiterating and confirming the already powerful findings of the chapter.

Throughout this project I have tried to show that there is more to mythology than mere enjoyment. Mythology was a way for people to explore the societal constructs within which they operated. It was also a way for the concept-forming part of the population (that is the

men) to explore alternatives to the norm, alternatives which for the most part subverted the norm. This subversion of ‘accepted’ practices is most evident in the final chapter (illustrated particularly well by the person of Pandora). The subversion of norms in a fictional setting allows men to explore the possibilities of unacceptable practices in a ‘safe’ environment. The final chapter concerning females who subvert rather than support the norms of ancient society also serves to illustrate that myth was a means to maintain the status quo in antiquity. It is likely that myth would have illustrated to women that it is only in stories that they were afforded the opportunity to act in a way which otherwise would have been deemed unacceptable.

Limitations aside, I started out this project wanting to explore *why* gods can be and are born as infants while goddesses are born as adults. I think that the final chapter rounds off this inquiry well, especially when contrasted to the first two sections. Why some gods are born as infants is highlighted in the Apollo and Hermes chapters and the adult births of the goddesses are considered in depth in the final chapter. The findings in these chapters do seem to answer the *why* question previously posed.

However, what I did not expect to discover was the importance placed on *earning one’s adult status* (for males) versus simply being or becoming an (‘unimportant’) adult (for females). This was a terribly exciting discovery – for me – and made this project seem all the more worthwhile. Throughout this project I did get the distinct impression that males (and male deities) had to *earn* the right to be considered adults, while the opposite is true for females (and female deities) and I think that the evidence has most certainly borne this out. This curiosity is particularly noticeable when comparing the contents of chapters two (*Hermes*) and three (*The goddesses*). In chapter two the young god, Hermes, must go through certain

‘rites of passage’ in order to be accepted into the adult community of Olympian gods. In contrast to the Hermes chapter, is chapter three on the goddesses, which shows how they were ‘born’ ready to fulfil their feminine duties.

The exciting discovery of the importance placed on *earning one’s adult status* is, I think, the perfect way to conclude this immensely interesting project. It is a message which is still relevant today, there are rites of passage which every young person must traverse⁴⁸² before being considered an adult, in spite of the fact that many of us do not realise it, or perhaps are oblivious to it. This is a valuable message which Classics may emphasise in spite of its very remote and often foreign nature.

⁴⁸² For example matriculating, getting your driver’s license, reaching the legal age to consume alcohol or even graduating at university.

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