



INTRODUCTION TO THE KORE

Story/Persephone's dog

Craig San Roque

. . . we are dreaming creatures . . .

(Salman Rushdie, BBC radio, 17 September 2012)

On the poetics of being

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

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

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

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

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

A note on style and context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cultural mentalities

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

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

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

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

Caution and connection

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

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

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

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

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

Placing Kore

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Names and definitions

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

Kore

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

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

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

Demeter

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

Persephone and her consorts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the geography of Kore

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

(Homeric Hymn to Apollo, Line 21¹⁰)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Text, time, and precedent

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

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

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

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

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THE KORE STORY/ PERSEPHONE'S DOG

Craig San Roque

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

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

Story sequence

- 1 At Delphi Parnassos
- 2 Digging Stick
- 3 Demeter Sings the Country
- 4 Demeter Teaches Kore
- 5 Mt. Kytheron
- 6 Pan's Dog
- 7 Dog Travelling
- 8 Kore and the Pomegranate
- 9 Kore and the Dog Observe the World
- 10 Eleusis Again
- 11
 - i Kore Underground
 - ii Persephone's Table
- 12 There's Always Another Story
- 13
 - i Hekate and Demeter
 - ii Demeter Remembers
 - iii Hekate's Cave, a Long Time Ago
 - iv Back on the Hill
- 14 Passing by Eleusis

- 15 Demeter's Search
- 16 Kore's Father Makes a Deal
- 17 Demeter and Pythia
- 18 Dogs at Thiva
- 19 The Baby at Eleusis
- 20 Killer
- 21 Give Me Back my Baby
- 22 Persephone Returns

Coda

1 At Delphi Parnassos

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Demeter spoke –

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

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

This Kore heard. This Kore saw.

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

2 Digging Stick

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 Demeter Sings the Country

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

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

4 Demeter Teaches Kore

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

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

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

