

[Published in Apostolos L. Pierris, *Mystery and Philosophy*, (Vol. II of *The Emergence of Reason from the Spirit of Mystery*) pp. 575-94]

NOTE ON COLOUR SYMBOLISM

Purple, the colour of the cover of the first volume of this work, is the hue of Mystery. The Eleusinian mystic chests (repositories symbolizing the bed of the Holy Child) were entwined by purple bands. These fillets were dyed specifically on the occasion of the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries (in mid Boedromion). The colour of the mystic bands (in contradistinction to the ordinary ones) turned ominously into a sickly, into a sallow tint, yellow instead of purple when the Macedonian occupation of Athens was about to start (302 B.C.). Plutarch, Phocion, XXVIII: τότε δὲ περὶ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας αἵ ταινίαι μὲν, αἷς περιελίττουσι τὰς μυστικὰς κοίτας, βαπτόμεναι θάψινον ἀντὶ φοινικοῦ χρῶμα καὶ νεκρῶδες ἀνήνεγκαν· ὃ δὲ μεῖζον ἦν, τὰ παραβαπτόμενα τῶν ἰδιωτικῶν πάντα τὸ προσῆκον ἄνθος ἔσχε.

The Eleusinian Great Goddesses wore from times immemorial a chaplet of narcissus and crocus. Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, 683-5:

νάρκισσος, μέγαλιν θεᾶν
ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμ', ὃ τε
χρυσαιγῆς κρόκος.

(Some ancient grammarians in the Scholia are unduly perplexed by this substitution for the more usual wreath of corn-ears, and so hesitantly propose to construe the passage as referring to the Eumenides, invoking Euphorio Fr. 94 Powell (Εὐμένιδες ναρκίσσου ἐπιστεφές πλοκαμίδας) and reading τᾶν μεγαλᾶν θεᾶν. Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* III, 647B, understands the Great as the Chthonic – the mss. here have μεγάλων θεῶν in the plural. And exactly so Clemens, *Paedagogus*, II, 8, 72, 3. Perhaps they share the philological qualms expressed in the Scholia. But there cannot be any doubt that Demeter and Kore are meant in the Sophoclean passage, especially after the mention of Dionysus a couple of lines before).

Earth brought forth a wondrous hundred-headed narcissus, a cunning bait to entice Persephone into Hades' embrace. Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 5 sqq.; cf. 1428. Narcissus played the same role in the legendary poet Pampho's version of the rape; Pausanias, IX 31.9: Κόρην τὴν

Δήμητρος φησὶν ἀρπασθῆναι παίζουσιν καὶ ἄνθη συλλέγουσαν, ἀρπασθῆναι δὲ οὐκ ἴοις ἀπατηθεῖσαν ἀλλὰ ναρκίσσοις. Pausanias alludes to the common Sicilian tradition, according to which ἰά (chiefly the dark violets, including also occasionally the white variety, the λευκόϊον or ἰόν λευκόν, Theophrastus, Hist. Plant. 6.6.3; 6.8.1) provided the main allurements; Diodorus V, 3 (about the fragrant violet meadows at Enna; cf. Plutarch, Aetia Physica, XXIII, 917F); and the Aristotelian De Ausc. Mirab. 82, 836b14-27. Cf. Nicander Georg. Fr. 74.60: ὑάκινθον ἰωνιάδας τε χαμηλὰς / ὀρφνοτέρας; and Ovid Metamorph. V 392 aut violas aut candida lilia carpsit (sc. Persephone, at the Hennaean place. Cf. Fasti IV 437-42; Claudianus, de raptu Proserpinae, II 92 sqq. – However the Orphic account had the incident happening in Sicily (Κάθοδος Κόρης OF 49 III 47) yet with narcissus playing the role of the wondrous object of attraction, ibid. III 33). Blue-violet and purple are the dominant colours in the description of the rape-meadow. The hyacinth flower is (reddish) purple, Euphorio 40 Powell: Πορφυρὴ ὑάκινθος. The darker violets (ἰωνιάδας ὀρφνοτέρας) should exhibit the bluish tinge. Narcissus is a kind of liliaceae, κρίνον (Plinius Nat. Hist. XXI §12: sunt et purpurea lilia etc.; the same with λείριον Theophrastus Hist. Plant. VI 6.9: ὁ δὲ νάρκισσος ἢ τὸ λείριον – οἱ μὲν γὰρ τοῦτο, οἱ δὲ ἐκεῖνο καλοῦσι. Narcissus' mother was Liriope according to Ovid, Metam. III 342. Some ancient scholars considered this to be an Attic usage as distinguished from the common general sense of λείριον as ἄνθος; Photius, Lexicon s.v. λῆριον. The precise description of the lily's flower in Plinius loc. cit. §23 leaves no doubt about its κρίνον-like form: candor eius eximius foris striati et ab angustis in latitudinem paulatim sese laxantis effigie calathi, resupinis per ambitum labris tenuique pilo et staminis stantibus in medio crocis. A difference is that while the proper liliaceae (esp. the main white variety; cf. candida lilia Virgil, Aeneis, VI 709; lucida Propertius III P1 (IV 12) 30; argentea id. IV 4 23) emits from one root many (often up to 50) bulbs, narcissus has one bigger bulb to one meatier radix (Plinius loc. cit.; cf. §24). The name κρίνον was reserved for Theophrastus for this chiefly monocaulic lily; Hist. Plant. VI 6.8: τὰ δὲ κρίνα... μονόκαυλα δὲ ἐστὶν ὡς ἐπίπαν, δικαυλεῖ δὲ σπανίως... καθ' ἕκαστον δὲ καυλὸν ὅτε μὲν ἐν κρίνον, ὅτε δὲ πλείω γίνεται – βλαστάνει γὰρ τὸ ἄκρον – σπανιώτερα δὲ ταῦτα. This type is very akin to, or the same with, narcissus. Theophrastus in fact describes (ibid.) its root as σαρκώδη, the same expression as used by Pliny, carnosiore (§25). Whatever the ordinary or technical width in the respective acceptation of meaning for the terms liliaceae, κρίνον, λείριον, there is no doubt that they formed a kind of garland plant distinguished generically from roses on the one hand and violets on the other. Narcissus belonged to that kind as a characteristic variety as described above. In fact Theophrastus' description of the narcissus coincides with Pliny's for the liliaceae and leaves no doubt about its crinoid shape and solitary nature; Hist. Plant. VI.6.9: ...τὸν δὲ καυλὸν ἀφυλλον μὲν, ποώδη δὲ καὶ ἐξ ἄκρου τὸ ἄνθος, καὶ ἐν ὑμένι τινη καθάπερ ἐν ἀγγεῖω <κωδωνιαίῳ vel καλαθοειδεῖ [e.g. supplevi] καρπὸν [add. Delecampius ex Dioscoride]> μέγαν εὖ μάλα καὶ μέλανα τῇ χροίᾳ, σχήματι δὲ προμήκη. Theophrast provides further characteristic details about narcissus when he comes back to it in Hist. Plant. VII 13. The description is of a monostematic πῶα, with the stem of the single flower coinciding with the stem of the plant; its leaves emerge as the flower and the stem wither, not before the blossoming as usual. 25: τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἄλλων καὶ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς φυτευομένων καὶ τῶν βλαστανόντων καθ' ὥραν τὸ φύλλον ἀνατέλλει πρῶτον, εἴθ' ὕστερον ὁ καυλός· ἐπὶ δὲ τούτων (sc. Of narcissus and crocus) ὁ καλὸς πρότερον. τοῦ ναρκίσσου δὲ ὁ τοῦ ἄνθους μόνον εὐθύς... ὅταν δὲ οὗτος (sc. The stem) ἀπογηράσῃ, τότε ἡ τῶν φύλλων βλάστησις πολλαῖς ἡμέραις ὕστερον. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ναρκίσσου· πλὴν οὔτε καυλὸν ἕτερον ἔχει παρὰ τὸν τοῦ ἄνθους, ὥσπερ εἴπομεν, οὔτε καρπὸν φανερόν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἄνθος ἅμα τῷ καυλῷ καταφθίνει· καὶ

ὅταν ἀναρθῇ, τότε τὰ φύλλα ἀνατέλλει.

This classificatory pattern does not of course conflict with ordinary usage and its dispersed and distinct signification of all such and other names of floral variety, as e.g. expressed in the famous Cratinean passage PCGr. Fr. 105 Vol. IV p. 174. Cf. Pollux VI 106. Appellational variation by reason of different groupings of often slight character differentials can be noticed in many instances; e.g. Phrynichus, *Praeparatio Sophistica*, s.v. – λείριον ἔστιν ἕτερον παρὰ τὸ κρίνον, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὅμοιον, πλατύτερα δὲ τὰ φύλλα ἔχον· διὸ καὶ ταῦτόν ἐδοξέ τισιν (p. 86.16 Borries). We have to do clearly with a grammarian's sensitivities. Dioscorides acknowledges technical terminological variation; *Mat. Med.* IV, 161, p. 304 (Sarac.): νάρκισσος· ἐνίοι καὶ τοῦτο ὥσπερ τὸ κρίνον λείριον ἐκάλεσαν.

There was a red lily which the Greeks called more strictly κρίνον; Plinius loc. cit. §24: est et rubens lilium, quod Graeci crinon vocant; it was to be found in Syria, southern Asia Minor and Italy. This variety may be identical or very similar to the purple narcissus.

There are three kinds of narcissus according to Pliny, the chief having a purple flower; loc. cit. §25: sunt et pupurea lilia, aliquando gemino caule, carnosiore tantum radice maiorisque bulbi, sed unius; narcissum vocant. Concerning the apparent reservation as to the existence of a purple lily expressed by Theophrast, *Hist. Plant.* VI.6.3, cf. n. 10 pp. 187-8 in S. Amigues (ed.) Théophrast, *Recherches sur les Plantes* vol. III, Livres V-VI, 993. In any case, his cautiousness relates to the instance of a purple κρίνον, not a purple narcissus. For he keeps distinct the two kinds. His purple κρίνον must be Pliny's rubens lilium. And this was not, as reported above teste Plinio, epichoric in Greece, the Aegean and Ionia. There was also, as has been observed, some flexibility or fluidity in the respective appellations; Athenaeus XV 681b: Φιλῖνος δὲ τὸ κρίνον ὑφ' ὧν μὲν λείριον, ὑφ' ὧν δὲ ἰὸν καλεῖσθαι. Cf. Scholia, Apollonius Rhodius *Argonaut.* A 879-83a Wendel: καὶ φησιν ὁ Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ Περὶ Φυτῶν τὸν νάρκισσον οὕτω λέγεσθαι, οἱ δὲ τὸ κρίνον.

Pliny distinguishes three varieties of narcissus. a) One having purple flowers. Cf. Virgil, *Ecloga* V 38: pro molli viola, pro pupureo narcisso. This should refer to the first Plinian variety, not the second one despite the facile vulgate acceptation. Similarly Ciris 96: suave rubens narcissus, perhaps of still another more reddish hue. b) Another flore candido, calice pupureo (ibid. §25) Flos and calyx are not being used here in their technical signification. For in that sense they mean strictly the generative organs (male semen - stamen and female capillus - pistil) and the cup or bud of the flower respectively. (V. Plinius *Hist. Nat.* XXI §121 for an exact conceptual delimitation of all relevant terms: ...dividitur in (1) folia et (2) flores, (3) capita. foliorum partes... in flore aliud est semen, aliud capillus, in capite aliud cortex, aliud calyx). But in crinoid types, the petals of the corolla are the same (or a continuation) of the sepals of the calyx. (This is why we should perhaps better write calix here, construing it in the general sense of κύλιξ, cup-shaped, goblet-like, cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* V, 21; rather than calyx emphasizing the definite and technical botanical connotation. Which however is not unsuitable here if properly understood as above). And so here Pliny is describing a lily white with a purple base. c) The third variety of narcissus has again a white flower with a greenish base: tertio generi cetera eadem, calyx herbaceus (ibid.). Salmasius, in his learned disquisition on narcissus in *Exercitationes Plinianae* in Solini *Polyhistora*, 1689, Vol. I, pp. 71b-72a, argues among other things for emending herbaceus to helvaceus (and similarly in §128 below). Helvaceum colour is pale yellow (cf. Paulus ex Festum p. 98 Müller) and so corresponds to Dioscorides' description of the two letter varieties of narcissus mentioned by Pliny; *Materia Medica* IV 161: ...ἐφ' οὗ (sc. τοῦ καυλοῦ) ἄνθος λευκόν, ἔσωθεν (v.e. ἐν μέσῳ) δὲ κροκῶδες, ἐπὶ ἐνίων δὲ πορφυροειδές.

In the interior or middle means “near the stem”, congruently to what has been analysed above. And Ovidius concurs; *Metamorph.* III 509-10:

nusquam corpus erat (sc. of the beautiful youth); croceum
pro corpore florem
inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis.

(The yellowish variety is meant). J. Billerbeck, *Flora Classica*, 1824 p. 87 attempts to harmonise the divergent accounts: Das nectarium (calyx) sieht nämlich anfangs grasfarbig, naccher safrangelb aus. Maybe the continuous transformation of the stem to calyx and (identical corolla) can account for the impression of a grassy tint changing to yellow and then to white as the stem ends up as flower.

The purple narcissus variety was (really or symbolically) probably used in dyeing wool, which was then employed in sacred rites in Athens. Theodorus (nicknamed ο' παναγής, the all-holy; could he be the famous ἄθεος? Tresp thinks of the Θεόδωρος Φηγαϊεύς implicated in the 415 B.C. profanation of the mysteries case precisely as accused of acting, or rather parodying, the role of the Eleusinian Keryx, cf. Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 19; 22), belonging to the priest-clan of Κήρυκες, wrote (Περὶ τοῦ Κηρύκων γένους Fr. I, A. Tresp, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Kultschritsteller*, p. 57) apud Photius s.v. ἡμεροκαλλές: ἄνθος σπειρόμενον ο' Δίδυμος· οὐκ ἔστι δὲ ἄνθος ἀλλὰ φοινικοῦν ἔριον διαπεποικιλμένον, ὃ χρῶνται οἱ τὰς ἱερουργίας Ἀθηναῖοι, ὡς Θεόδωρος ο' παναγής προσαγορευόμενος ἐν τῷ α' Περὶ τοῦ Κηρύκων γένους, καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ ὀνόματος ἀποδιδούς· γράφει δὲ «καλεῖται ἡμεροκαλλές διὰ τὸ πεπλῦσθαι καὶ βεβάφθαι καὶ ἐργάσθαι ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ· κάλλη δὲ προσαγορεύεται τὰ ἄνθη». Possibly then, a flower tint could have been used for the dyeing. Now Hesychius has this lemma on ἡμεροκαλλές: οἱ δὲ ἔριου βάμμα φοινικοῦν... οἱ δὲ τὴν νάρκισσον βοτάνην. The purple narcissus may have been used to prepare the sacred purple wool. Wool was an Orphic symbol, utilized in Bacchic contexts. The case reminds us of the on-purpose dyeing of the Eleusinian mystic fillets, as noticed above. [Athenaeus supports the alternative explanation of the ἡμεροκαλλές flower, that it is so called because it blossoms during day and withers in night; IE' 681e. Taking proper notice of the Hesychian lemma (ἡμεροκαλλές) s.v. ἡμεροκαλλές... οἱ δὲ ἔριου βάμμα φοινικοῦν (Theodorus). οἱ δὲ ἄνθος πρὸς μίαν ἡμέραν ἀκμάζον (Athenaeus), οἱ δὲ τὴν νάρκισσον βοτάνην – we may harmonize the apparently conflicting testimonies by the hypothesis that it was a variety of purple narcissus (lilly, leirion) that was used for dyeing the ritual wool on the particular day that it was needed. It may be significant that Athenaeus discusses ἡμεροκαλλές immediately after he treated narcissus, and in particular after he mentioned Eumachus' the Corcyraean specialist treatise on roots (Πιζοτομικόν), where narcissus is reported to have been called also κρόταλον and ἀκακαλλιδα – presumably in different places or with reference to different varieties of it. Cf. Hesychius s.v. Ἀκακαλλίς· ἄνθος νάρκισσον, Κρήτες. S.v. κακαλλίς· νάρκισσος. Ἀκακαλλίς or Ἀκάλλη (Apollodorus *Bibl.* III.1.2) is the name of a Cretan Nymph or daughter of Minos. All these local variations may point to varieties of a narcissus.]

In view of this religious application of the purple colour and esp. of its symbolism in the Eleusinian Mysteries (purple bands decorating and enshrouding the mystic cistas), it must be the purple narcissus that appeared in the August Goddesses' floral wreaths of which Sophocles speaks (*Oed. Col.* 681 sqq.). However, a problem has been felt to lie in Sophocles' description of narcissus as καλλιβοτρυς. Taking the adjective to refer to some “thickly-flowering variety” (one “blooming with fair clusters”) as Jebb took it (*ad loc.*), or “floribus spissus” (Hermann *ad loc.*), one comes against the ancient testimonies that speak of a mainly monocaulic plant with a

solitary flower. (Cf. Virgil, *Georgica*, IV 122: *sera comantem prarcissum*). But βότρυς could be used to signify the individual raisin, σταφυλή, already in the 5th century B.C. So in the Hippocratic *Vict.* II.55.4. (Cf. the proverbial βότρυς πρὸς βότρυν πεπαινεται e.g. in Julian *Orat.* VII 225 B). The force of καλλιβοτρυς would then be “with a fair blossom”, βότρυς being used in allusion and mental attraction to Dionysus mentioned just before. That Bacchic Dionysus (ὁ βακχιώτας Διόνυσος, 678) is the mysteric one, as he seems to be associated with the Great Goddesses in their capacity as his mother (Persephone of Zagreus) and his protectresses (of Iacchus). For Dionysus could not be said to be a companion (ἀμφιπολῶν) of his divine nutrices (θεαῖς or θείαις τιθήναις) in v. 680, unless they are the August Goddesses and he the Divine Child. (The action of ἀμφιπολῶ implying a subordinate position of its subject to the object. Campbell is the one scholar sensitive enough to sense the difficulty, although his way of solving it is forced and unconvincing. ad. loc.: “ἀμφιπολῶν] ‘careering round’. A picturesque inversion, representing the confusion of the Bacchanalian rout, in which it is uncertain who leads and who follows. The word is used with a feeling of the etymology”. Brave indeed attempt!). Thus aptly Jebb (ad loc.) refers (a) to *Antigone*, 1119 sqq. where Dionysus reigns (μέδεις) παγκοίνοις Ἐλευσινίας / Δημοῦς ἐν κόλποις (cf., with Blaydes, *Pindar Isthmion*. VI, 3 where Dionysus is πάρεδρος Δαμάτερος), and (b) to the famous Eleusinian relief showing Persephone blessing the boy-hero, arch-initiate in his puberty, as he is facing Demeter to receive the (revelation of the) ears of corn (e.g. E. Simon, *Die Götter der Griechen*, 1983, Fig. 111 p. 116). Another difficulty in the Sophoclean locus classicus presents the intimation that the narcissus is ever blooming, θάλλει ...κατ’ ἡμαρ’ αἰ (”morn by morn” Jebb), and indeed that it flourishes nourished by the dew (θάλλει δ’ οὐρανιας ὑπὶ ἄχνας), that is not only during the raining seasons, but also presumably in late spring and summer. Which apparently is contradicted by Theophrast, *Hist. Plant.* VI, 6, 9: narcissus is a late blossoming plant; μετὰ γὰρ Ἀρκτοῦρον ἢ ἄνθησις καὶ περὶ ἰσημερίαν, after the heliacal rising of Arcturus (between the 10th and the 20th day of the Sun’s course in the Virgin, September 5th to 15th; Geminus, *Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὰ Φαινόμενα*, Παράπηγμα, p. 100.8-18 Aujac; the rising is fixed on September 20th for Athens in 430 B.C.; v. Aujac p. 100, n. 1). But Theophrast just afterwards (in his recession of the sequence in which the various flowers appear through the year) recognises two different times of blossoming for two varieties of narcissus. One is blooming in spring (VI.8.1); the other in autumn (VI.8.3: μετοπώρου δὲ τὸ λείριον τὸ ἕτερον). It follows that the early narcissus must belong to the κρίνα mentioned immediately before νάρκισσος ἢ λείριον, in VI.6.8. (I have commented above on how the description of the κρίνα there coincides with that of the narcissus). Cf. VI.6.3 ad fin. - although the κρίνον is mentioned as blossoming in the summer (VI.8.3). It is thus very likely that the ancients called narcissus a kind of λείριον, of monocaulic lily whose varieties were blossoming at different seasons. This fact would most naturally account for the Sophoclean ever-blooming narcissus.

Pliny’s account of the garland plants follows the same pattern as Theophrastus’. So narcissus’ varieties omnes serotini, post arcturum enim florent ac per aequinoctium autumnuum. (The addition of autumnuum (XXI, §12) specifies Theophrastus’ simple περὶ ἰσημερίαν in an otherwise exact parallelism). And similarly narcissus is described as a spring blossoming plant (§38). We duly have in summer (§39) alterum genus lilii (presumably including another variety of narcissus as well). Also in autumn still another tertium genus lilii (ibid.) – and of narcissus surely, the one mentioned first in §12.

Literary testimonies confirm my conclusion that varieties of narcissus were blossoming all round the year. In the *Cypria* we meet a spring narcissus, Fr. 4 Bernabé:

εἶματα μὲν χροὶ ἔστο, τὰ οἱ Χάριτες τε καὶ Ὠραι
ποίησαν καὶ ἔβαψαν ἐν ἄνθεσιν ἐιαιρινοῖσιν,
οἷ᾽ αὖ φέρουσ' ὦραι,
..... ἐν τ' ἄμβροσι καλύκεσσιν
αἰθέσι ναρκίσσου καλλιπνόου.

(αἰθέσι – Ludwich's emendation supported by lexicographical evidence – καλύκεσσιν implies a bright crocus variety of narcissus, the 3rd Plinius kind). In Moschos II 65-7 narcissus is mentioned among the flowers of λειμώνων ἑαροτρεφένων. Cf. Callistratus, Ἐκφράσεις, V 896 (p. 29.1 Kayser): καὶ νῦν ἐν λειμῶσι φαντάζεσθαι ἐν ἡριναῖς ὦραις ἀνθοῦντα (sc. τὸν νάρκισσον). Cf. Claudianus, de raptu Proserpinae II 132: narcissus belongs to the inclita germina veris.

On the other hand, narcissus is mentioned among the floral flourish of nature to be offered to beautiful Alexis if he comes to infatuated, loving Corydon in Virgil's *Bucolica* (II 48). But the season is high summer, harvest time (8 sqq.). And Claudianus speaks of the Rape of Persephone taking place medio aestu (de raptu Persephone Proserpinae II 106).

For the autumnal varieties of narcissus (emphasized by Theophrast and Pliny), a significant correlation is to the (Orphic) tradition that Kore's rape occurred in autumn. So the Orphic Hymn to Persephone XXIX 14:

ἀρπαγίμαῖα λέχη μετοπωρινὰ νυμφευθεῖσα.

So Sallust, de diis et mundo, IV, 8, 11: περὶ γοῦν τὴν ἐναντίαν ἰσημερίαν (sc. the opposite to the vernal one, i.e. in the autumnal) ἡ τῆς Κόρης ἀρπαγή μυθολογεῖ γενέσθαι. Of course Persephone represents earth's blooming in spring. In the above quoted Orphic Hymn she is invoked (vv. 12-3) as:

ἐιαιρινή, λειμωνιάσιν χαίρουσα πνοῇσιν,
ιέρὸν ἐκφαίνουσα δέμας βλαστοῖς χλοοκάρποις (i.e. by the flower).

(And this just before the poet speaks of her autumnal violent conjugation).

The ancient wreath (ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμα) for the Eleusinian August Goddesses was made of narcissus and crocus, according to the Sophoclean grave testimony. The purple narcissus is most appropriate for the awesome mystic and chthonic divinities. Some external support to this intrinsic propriety is provided by the fact that the purple narcissus (as well as the white-purple and white-crocus varieties) is an autumnal blossoming plant (Pliny, XXI §12). And that was the time of the Great Eleusinian Mysteries, from the 15th of Boedromion to the 22nd. The synchronization is revealing. Furthermore, in Crete (a land where most mysteries – and especially the Bacchic ones – were enacted in open teste Diodoro) a variety of narcissus was called δαμάτριον: Hesychius s.v. δαμάτριον· ἄνθος ὁμοιον ναρκίσσω. And notice that the dead were of old called δημήτριοι in Athens, Plutarch, de facie in orbe Lunae 943B. According to the testimony of Natalis Comes (*Mythologiae*, 1584, p. 1014) Phanodemus reported that wreaths of narcissus were consecrated to Persephone in Attica, because the Goddess was collecting that wonderful flower when raped by Pluto: scriptum relinquit Phanodemus lib. 5 rerum Atticarum, coronas e narcisso consecrates fuisse Proserpinae, quoniam florem illum colligeret cum rapta fuit a Plutone. The quotation does not appear in Jacobi (neither among the fragments of Book 5, nor among the Zweifelhafter, Unectites). Phanodemus significantly held that the Rape of Κόρη took place in Attica. As to the crocus, in the Scholia to v. 683 on the suitability of narcissus as a garland flower for Demeter's and Persephone's sacral wreath, the argument to a positive answer, against those who would claim narcissus as only appropriate to the Erinyes, is strengthened by the observation that crocus (the other component of the alleged

ἄρχαϊον στεφάνωμα) is most certainly a Demetrian flower: τοῖς τὸν νάρκισσον τῇ Δήμητρι ἀπονέμουσι τοῦτο συμπράττει, ὅτι κἀν τῇ Νιόβῃ (Fr. 413 Nauck²) ὁ Σοφοκλῆς τὸν κρόκον ἄντικρυς τῇ Δήμητρι ἀνατίθεται, ὥστε καὶ νῦν τὸν λόγον εἶναι περὶ τῶν Δήμητρος στεφανωμάτων. Saffron robes were apparently worn by the female participants in the Thesmophoria; Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae*, 138; 253; 945. The crocus was planted on graves and crocus flowers were sepulchral offerings pleasant to the dead; Juvenal, VII 207-8: *Di, maiorum umbris tenuem et sine pondere terram spirantesque crocos et in urna perpetuum ver.*

The purple colour and narcissus were chthonic and funereal more generally, and this coheres with, and does not contradict, their specific Eleusinian appropriation on the part of the Great Goddesses.

Thus purple garments are mentioned in connection with the honour instituted in Athens to Eumenides on Athena's instructions – they were to be worn in the sacred processions; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 1028: φοινικοβάπτειζενδυτοὺς ἐσθήμασι. [Purple dress was significantly festal more generally. Metoics in Athens wore them in the Panathenaic procession; Photius s.v. σκάφας; Bekker *Anecdota Graeca* I 214.3 (cf. *Suda*, Et. Mag. S.v. ἄσκοφορεῖν)]. Persephone wore purple robes at Syracuse, which were put on by persons about to take the dreadful Greath Oath; Plutarch, *Dion*, LVI: ...τὸν μέγαν ὄρκον. ἦν δὲ τοιοῦτος· καταβὰς εἰς τὸ τῶν Θεσμοφόρων τέμενος ὁ διδοὺς τὴν πίστιν ἱερῶν τινων γινομένων περιβάλλεται τὴν πορφυρίδα τῆς θεοῦ καὶ λαβὼν δᾶδα καιομένην ἀπόμνυσι. An awesome and ancient ritual of execration in Athens was performed by priests and priestesses waving purple flags of some sort; Lysias VI, 51 (in connection with the Profanation of the Mysteries and the Hermocopidae affair): καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις ἱέρειαι καὶ ἱερεῖς στάντες κατηράσαντο πρὸς ἐσπέραν καὶ φοινικάδας ἀνέσεισαν, κατὰ τὸ νόμιμον τὸ παλαιὸν καὶ ἄρχαϊον. Medea imprecates alarining a purple robe; Apollonius Rhodius, IV 1661-2: ...ἡ δὲ πτύχα πορφυρέοιο / προσχομένη πέπλοιο etc. The foundation story of Amphipolis involves the transference of Rhesus' bones from Troja to the place of the new city. The bones were put in a purple military cloak; Polyaeus, *Strateg.* VI 53: καὶ καταθέντες τὰ ὅσῃ εἰ χλαμύδα πορφυρᾶν κομίζουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Στρυμόνα. In the Corybantic Mysteries the two brothers killed the third one, enveloped his dead (? *membrum virile*?) with a purple cloth and buried it at the feet of Olympus; Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus* II 19.1: τὸν τρίτον ἀδελφὸν ἀποκτείνοντες οὗτοι τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ νεκροῦ φοινικίδι ἐπεκαλυψάτων etc. These Corybantes are in the sequel claimed to be identical with the Cabeiri who held the κιστή containing Dionysus' virilia (§4). The murdered Corybas = Cabeirus was the object of bloody veneration in Thessalonica; Firmicus Maternus, *De errore prof. relig.* XI: hic est Cabirus cui Thessalonicenses quondam cruento cruentis minibus supplicabant. Cf. Orphic Hymn to Corybas XXXIX where it is testified (v. 6): αἱμαχθέντα κασιγνήτων ὑπὸ δισσῶν. By behest of Demeter he was transformed into a serpent (v. 8), a phallic symbol. The Eleusinian Zeus, a fresco picture of Zeus found in Eleusis (D. Philios, *Ἐφημερίς Ἀρχαιολογική*, 1895, Πίναξ II), wears majestically a purple mantle. V. the picture in W. Schultz, *Das Farbenempfindungssystem der Hellenen*, 1904, Tafel II (but ignore the fantastically absurd interpretative hallucinations of the author).

The purple colour was especially connected to death; Artemidorus *Oneirocriticon* I, 77: ἔχει γὰρ τινα τὸ πορφυροῦν χρῶμα συμπάθειαν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θάνατον. Death is purple for Homer. Cf. *Ilias* E 82-3

τὸν δὲ κατ' ὅσσε
ἔλλαβε πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή.

A potent formulaic expression repeated in Π 333-4 and Y 476-7. (Cf. the succinct note De Sainte-Croix, *Recherchos sur les Mysteres du Paganisme*, IV, 4 p. 175).

The purple colour was of grave significance, more generally. The Agonautic χρυσόμαλλον δέρας was according to Simonides purple. Fr. 71 (576) Page = Scholia to Euripides *Medea* 5; cf. Tzetzes *Chiliades* I 430 sq. p. 19 Kiessling; Scholia Apollonius Rhodius IV 176-7, p. 271 Wendel. Simonides claimed it to be dyed by the sea-purple. One should better assume a wondrous instance of the rare tint in a sheep's wool that has been immortalized in modern Greek demotic poetry:

νάχαμε τὸ λάγιο ἄρνι
πούχει τὸ χρυσὸ μαλλὶ
τ' ἀσημένιο χαῖμαλι.

This refers to a dark purple colour of the wool with fair, golden shine.

Narcissus is also a chthonic and funereal plant. It also belonged to the Erinnys, as their proper wreath. So Euphorio Fr. 94.3 Powell: Εὐμενίδες νάρκισσου ἐπιστεφές πλοκαμίδας. There is a curious mention in Probus about this connection. In Verg. *Buc.* II 48: A picture Narcissi floribus Erinyas, idest Furias, primas esse coronatas aiunt. (Primas implies anyway that other divinities were also so decorated). However, it should be probably corrected to primum. Unless the sense is that they were the first to be crowned to by garlands of flowers generally, which is unlikely. If a picture is correct, this would lessen the significance of the correlation. But the reading is probably corrupt. Alii alia proposuerunt. Since according to Probus' account Narcissus was killed by someone whose name is also corrupt in the transmission of the text. I think a peremptore should be restituted. The murder of the beautiful youth crowned the Erinnys with a garland composed of the flowers grown from the blood of the murdered, to atone for his crime and placate the goddesses of revenge and retribution. This is the text then: Interemptus enim ab +Euppo+; ex cruore flores, qui nomen eius acceperunt, procreati. A peremptore Narcissi floribus Erinyas, idest Furias, primum esse coronatas aiunt. Wreaths of narcissi seen in dreams portent evil; Artemidorus op. cit. I, 77: στέφανοι νάρκισσων πεποιημένοι πᾶσι κακοί, κὰν κατὰ τὴν ὥραν βλέπωνται (even if they are seen seasonally). Wreaths of lilies seen in time were considered of good import, out of season adverse: οἱ δὲ ἐκ τῶν πορφυρῶν (sc. ἰών) καὶ θάνατον σημαίνουσιν. (The purple colour aggravated the omen). The name "narcissus" was felt to be connected with the verb νάρκᾱν, with the sense of numbness and deadness. Plutarch, *Quaest. Sump.* III, 1, 647B: καὶ τὸν νάρκισσον (sc. ὠνόμασαν οἱ παλαιοὶ) ὡς ἀμβλύνοντα τὰ νεῦρα καὶ βαρύτητας ἐμποιοῦντα σαρκώδεις. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Paedag.* II 8 71.3 p. Cornutus, *de nat. deor.* 35 p. 75. 14-7 Lang: οἰκείων δὲ τοῖς κατοικομένοις καὶ ὁ νάρκισσος ἔχειν ἔδοξε καὶ τῶν Εριννύων ἔφασαν αὐτὸν στεφάνωμα εἶναι (he seems to understand Sophocles as referring to the Erinnys in the *Oed. Col.* Passage above discussed), προσεδρεύσαντες τῇ παραθέσει τῆς νάρκης καὶ τῷ οἷον διασαρκᾶν τοὺς ἀποθνήσκοντας. Eustathius, *Conn. in Homerum* 87.25 sqq. Explicitly correlates the Sophoclean ἀρχαῖον στεφάνωμα to the Erinnys and adds: νάρκισσός τε γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ νάρκᾱν παρωχεῖται, καὶ τοῦ νάρκᾱν Ερινύες τοῖς κακούργοις παραίτιον. In 1173.49 narcissus is a symbol of dumbness. More generally, κρίνα were associated with death. The proverbial expression ἡ κολοκύντην ἢ κρίνον meant living or dead. Diphilus Fr 98 PCGr. Vol. V p. 109

ἐν ἡμέραις αὐτὸν εἶπτά σοι, γέρον,
θέλω παρασχεῖν ἢ κολοκύντην ἢ κρίνον.

Cf. Hesychius s.v. κρίνον... τάσσεται καὶ ἐπὶ... νεκροῦ. Alciphron III 38, 2. Notice the proverb ὑγιώτερον κολοκύντας, Epicharmus Fr. 152 PCGr Vol. I p. 108; Sophron Fr. 37 PCGr Vol. I p.

209; Aelianus Epist. 10.

Narcissus (purple, white-purple and crocus-purple) and crocus: purple and bright yellow ~ gold; these are the symbolic colours of the Eleusinian Mystic Goddesses. I have explored the significance of the purple above. It is the hue of death, but of the death-into-life, the death that is beyond and above life, the darkness that holds the mystery of light, life and existence. The aboriginal darkness of the absolute first principle is not nothingness, not mere non-being. It teams with the forces of creation, it wields the power of being, it is the supra-existential source of existence. Mystery therefore is not black. It is purple, blackness-in-possession of the light, darkness pregnant with light, black with white and red as Plato analyzed it; Timaeus 68c: ἔρυθρόν δὲ δὴ μέλανι λευκῷ τε κραθὲν αἰουργόν (purple). White is what (mildly) divides vision (διακριτικὸν ὄψεως, 67e) causing distinguishing and distinction. Black on the contrary is what closes up vision by keeping together the visual stream (συγκριτικὸν ὄψεως) so that distinction is rendered impossible. Bright and shining (λαμπρόν καὶ στίλβον) is the colour impression caused by a violently fiery source as it sharply divides the visual stream up to its base in eye, reaching forcefully the optic liquidity in it and entering into battle with its innate fire (68a). A flogistic intensity between that producing white and the extreme one which results in dazzling blightness accounts for the sensation of red (68b). We see thus that purple (black and white and red) is darkness visible without light effulgent.

The crocus colour on the other hand alludes to the revelatory illumination of the mystic initiation. This shiny yellow hue represents the brilliance of light. And so it is analyzed in Plato's ideal physics of vision: λαμπρόν τε ἔρυθρῷ λευκῷ τε μειγνύμενον ξανθὸν γέγονεν (68b). This is the bright yellow, the golden tint, the hue of the Sophoclean χρυσαυγῆς κρόκος (Oed. Col. 685).

The resplendent golden hue that Plato means is best materialized in pure gold itself. And so it was only natural that the revelatory colour came to be used as vehicle, proof and token of salvation-through-truth in the Orphic gold leaves. The Light of the World saves. For an image of one of the Orphic tablets v. G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *The Western Greeks, Classical Civilization in the Western Mediterranean*, 1996, p. 503. The golden leaf imaged there is in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Inv. 111625. It comes from Thurii, and belongs to the 4th century B.C. G. Pugliese Carratelli (ed.), *Les Lamelles d' Or Orphiques, Instructions pour le voyage d' outre-tombe des initiés grecs*, 2003, II B1 pp. 105 sqq. = G. Zuntz, *Persephone, Three Essays on Religion and Thought in Magna Graecia*, 1971, A1 pp. 300-1. More colour photographs of these gold leaves are to be found in Pugliese Carratelli's last mentioned book. The golden crocus yellow symbolizes the light of the revelation in the mystery of existence. Things are revealed (that is created) by the power of the First-Born of Darkness, by Phanes who appears and makes appear. The final epoptic stage in the Eleusinian Mysteries was enacted under a blaze of light. The Hierophant performs the great and unspeakable mysteries νυκτὸς ἐν Ἐλευσίνι ὑπὸ πολλῷ πυρὶ τελῶν τὰ μεγάλα καὶ ἄρρητα μυστήρια βοᾷ καὶ κέντραγε λέγων «ἱερὸν ἔτεκε πότνια κοῦρον Βριμὼ Βριμόν» (Hippolytus, *Elenchus*, V 8 39-40). This was the μυστηριακὸν πῦρ (Scholia in Aristophanes, *Ranae* 343). Plutarch (*Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus* 10, 81d-e) composes the demeanour of those undergoing initiation with the ones who learn true philosophy: ὥσπερ γὰρ οἱ τελοῦμενοι κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν ἐν θορύβῳ καὶ βοῇ συνίασι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὠθούμενοι, δρωμένων δὲ καὶ δεικνυμένων τῶν ἱερῶν προσέχουσι ἤδη μετὰ φόβον καὶ σιωπῆς... ὁ δ' ἐντὸς γενόμενος καὶ μέγα φῶς ἰδὼν, οἷόν ἄνακτόρων ἀνοιγομένων, ἕτερον λαβὼν σχῆμα καὶ σιωπὴν καὶ θάμβος etc.

Initiation in the Great Mysteries is like Death. The dead, experiencing death, declare things mortuary and mysteric as alike; Lucian, *Cataplus*, 22: ΜΙΚΥΛΛΟΣ. ...εἰπέ μοι - ἑτελέσθης γάρ, ὦ Κυνίσκε, τὰ Ελευσίνια δῆλον ὅτι – οὐχ ὅμοια τοῖς ἐκεῖ τὰ ἐνθάδε; ΚΥΝΙΣΚΟΣ. Εὖ λέγεις· ἰδοὺ γοῦν προσέρχεται δαδουχοῦσά τις etc. Plutarch (Fr. 178 Sandbach) gives a wonderful description in his *Περὶ Ψυχῆς*; he starts with emphasizing the experiential identity of the two events, observing the equivalence in actu of the two senses of the same and τέλος as fulfillment and finish, perfection and end, (τελεῖσθαι and τελευτᾶν); then he goes on to specify the common experience of τέλος: “toilsome wanderings and dangerous passages through the gloom, but the end is not yet, and then before the end all kinds of terror, shivering and quaking, sweating and amazement, when suddenly a wondrous light flashes forth to the worshipper, and pure regions and meadows receive him; there are charts, voices, and dances, solemn words and holy images; and amongst these the votary now perfected is freed at last and is released, he wanders to and fro with a crown on his head, joining in the worship and in the company of pure and holy men; and he sees the uninitiated and unpurified crowd of the living in the thick mire and mist, trampling one another down, and beaddled together, abiding ever in evils through fear of death and disbelief in the good things yonbee. Τότε (sc. In the panic of death) δὲ πάσχει (sc. the soul) πάθος οἷον οἱ τελεταῖς μεγάλαις κατοργιαζόμενοι. διὸ καὶ τὸ ρῆμα τῷ ρήματι καὶ τὸ ἔργον τῷ ἔργῳ τοῦ τελευτᾶν καὶ τελεῖσθαι προσέοικε. πλάναι τὰ πρῶτα καὶ περδδρομαὶ κοπῳδεις καὶ διὰ σκότους τινες ὑποπτοι πορεῖται καὶ ἀτέλεστοι, εἴτα πρὸ τοῦ τέλους αὐτοῦ τὰ δεινὰ πάντα, φρίκη καὶ τρόμος καὶ ἰδρῶς καὶ θάμβος· ἐκ δὲ τούτου φῶς τι θαυμάσιον ἀπήντησεν καὶ τόποι καθαροὶ καὶ λειμῶνες ἐδέξαντο, φωνὰς καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότηας ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἀγίων ἔχοντες· ἐν αἷς οἱ παντελῆς ἤδη καὶ μεμυημένος ἐλεύθερος γεγρονὼς καὶ ἄφετος περιτῶν ἐστεφανωμένος ὀργιάζει καὶ σύνεστιν οἷοις καὶ καθαροῖς ἀνδράσι, τὸν ἀμύητον ἐνταῦθα τῶν ζώντων καὶ ἀκάθαρτον ἐφορῶν ὄχλον ἐν βορβόρῳ πολλῷ καὶ ὁμίχλῃ πατούμενον ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ συνελαυνόμενον, φόβῳ δὲ θανάτου τοῖς κακοῖς ἀπιστία τῶν ἐκεῖ ἀγαθῶν ἐμμένοντα.

In IG II2 3709, 10-1 the talk is of the respendent Eleusinian anactoron – the Τελεστήριον of initiation: τῷ μὲν ἀπὶ αἰγλήεντος ἀνακτόρου ἱερο[φάντη] / Γλαύκῳ... (For the hierophant Glaucus cf. IG II2 3661; Philostratus *Vitae Sophistarum* II 20. The name of the Hierophant was not to be mentioned during his lifetime; v. IG II2 3811).

The interchange between effulgent light and pregnant darkness played an important role in the mysteric Eleusinian ritual; Dion Chrysostomus, XII 33: ...εἰ τις ἄνδρα... μυσίη παραδοὺς εἰς μυστικόν τινα οἶκον ὑπερφυῇ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει, πολλὰ μὲν ὁρῶντα μυστικὰ θεάματα, πολλῶν δὲ ἀκούοντα τοιούτων φωνῶν, σκότους τε καὶ φωτὸς ἐναλλάξ αὐτῷ φαινομένων etc. (Cf. 34 where the Eleusinian Telesterion is explicitly mentioned in reference to the οἶκον ὑπερφυῇ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει).

On the use and significance of light in the mysteries cf. further Vol. I pp. 457-61.