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The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition

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The Symbolon: Unity, Separation, Unity

The present paper is excerpted from a much longer paper published in *Epoché*, the UCLA graduate journal of history of religions.¹ The paper began in a seminar examining Greek recognition drama, a type of play in which a child is separated from its (aristocratic) parents at birth (often it is stolen, or saved by strangers after a shipwreck), and so grows up as a slave or prostitute; but later, when it becomes an adult, it finds or is found by its parents (the recognition scene) through the help of tokens left with the child, often insignia or jewelry on a necklace, sometimes a ring; sometimes a peculiar scar. Often the tokens are kept in boxes and are dramatically extracted from the boxes, one by one, in the recognition scene. Critics, I found, have usually looked at recognition drama with contempt; however, all Greek drama is bathed in religion, sometimes very alien, and I wondered if the structure of recognition was not linked with religion in some way; and if the critics were not doing these plays an injustice because of their modern, secular bias and insensitivity to the nuances of ancient Greek religion and ritual. The climaxes of these recognition dramas seemed to have great meaning for the Greek playwrights and audiences; surely the recognition drama with tokens was not just a rickety, mechanistic plot device used as a crutch by playwrights of the stature of Aeschylus and

Euripides. As my research progressed, I found that the Greek/Hellenistic mystery cults involved tokens revealed at the high point of the secret rituals. These tokens were always kept in a box/basket called the *cista mystica*; and as they were brought out, the initiate had to speak certain passwords (also called tokens). After the experience, the initiate enjoyed a new intimacy with the central god or gods of the mystery and was prepared for a better state in the next life. Not much more was known about this token experience in the mysteries, but I thought the parallel was close enough to warrant a comparison of the climax of the recognition scene, with its crucial tokens, and the climax of the mystery ritual, with its tokens. As there are many continuities between the mystery religions and early Christianity, and since I was writing the paper for a history of religions seminar, I allowed myself to examine evidence in late antiquity, especially in Gnostic Christianity. I used three recognition plays in particular: Euripides' *Ion*, Menander's *Epitrepontes* (*Arbitrants*), and Plautus's *Rudens*.

There are a number of words in Greek and Latin that mean "token" in recognition drama—e.g., *anagnōrismata* ("things for making known again"), *spargana* (the swaddling wrappings of the lost child, often figured), *sēmeia* ("signs, marks, signals"). But one of the most interesting token-words is the basis for our word "symbol": *symbolon* (singular; plural: *symbola*), found as a name for tokens both in recognition and mystery.² This word means "things thrown together" (i.e., something thrown together after it has been once broken apart, from *ballo*, "thrown," and *sun-*, "with or together"). Liddell, Scott, and Jones, in their *Greek-English Lexicon*, define it thus: "tally, i.e., each of two halves or corresponding pieces of an *astragalos* [knucklebone] or other object, which two *xenoi* [guest-friends], or any two contracting parties, broke between them, each party keeping one piece, in order to have proof of the identity of the presenter of the other."³ Both halves rep-

resent their two owners, and each is a symbol of identity, the individual, parted; the halves “thrown together,” unified, are the symbol of two separate identities merging into one. So the *symbolon* is a precise image both for absolutely unique individuality and perfectly joined unity. No other parts would fit the two *symbolon* halves; paradoxically, their unique identity is what creates their complete unity as represented by the unified token. It is also significant that the perfect fitting together is dependent on a previous breaking.⁴

Later in the semantic development of the word, it came to be applied to “any token serving as proof of identity” – in which category we find the dramatic recognition token – and then developed on to other abstract and technical ideas: treaty, symbol, allegory, warrant, ticket. In the recognition *symbolon*, there is no longer the actual two-part, physically broken token,⁵ but the token remains a symbol of dual identity, “thrown together” after a parting. Palaestra, the foundling of *Rudens*, owns her tokens; they define the most important part of her identity; but they were given to her by her father and mother and are inscribed with their names. When Palaestra and her father, Daemones, are “thrown together” again, her knowledge, through the tokens, unites with his knowledge through the tokens – the two realizations create a united, new (or rather, renewed) knowledge, and they are united. This is a recognition: a “knowing again,” as the English word means exactly, just as does the Greek *anagnōrismos* (*ana-*, “again”; *gnōrizō*, “to make known”).

Thus the contract *symbolon* (unity, separation into two, renewed unity of two) serves as a model for the whole recognition drama: as in *Rudens*, there is, at first, a unity of parent and child; there is a separation, by kidnapping; finally there is a reunion (through the knowledge-combining tokens). The recognition *symbolon* brings about the human *symbolon*.

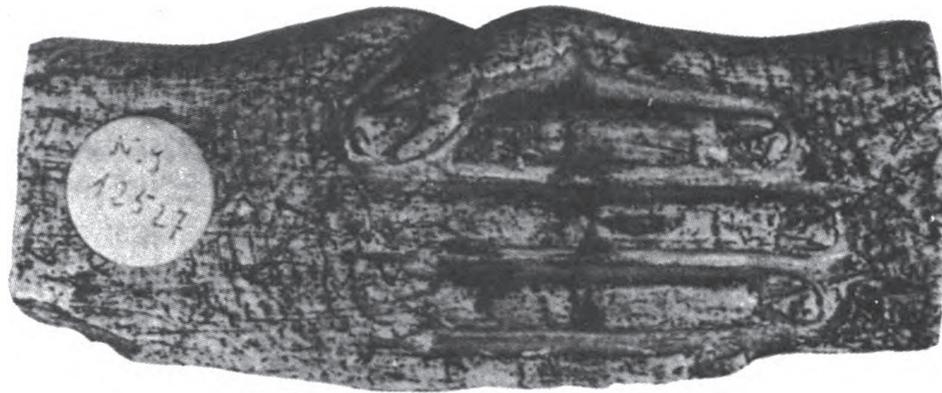


Fig. 1. A Greek *symbolon* (guest-token) in the form of two clasped hands. Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 64

The handclasp and the embrace perfectly express this concept of two separate halves coming together to create a unity; and one of the tokens in the *Rudens* is a handclasp. Herman shows us an ivory *symbolon* carved in the likeness of two clasped hands (fig. 1).⁶ Even more evocative is the embrace, for when the parent and child embrace, in a moment of high emotion after the recognition scene with token telling (identifying tokens one by one), they are renewing an embrace they had shared years earlier. The parent-child *symbolon*, broken by fate, violent nature, or human greed and malevolence, has been renewed.

The Handclasp

Among the *Rudens* tokens are “a tiny pair of clasped hands” (“*duae conexae manicae*,” 1169). I was originally interested in this token because it is such a perfect *symbolon* image on a human, physical level: two separate hands, symbols of the separate identities of their possessors, are joined, and fingers intertwine to make a new unity, complex yet simple. Though its “secular” use—as a widespread token of recognition, friendship, and agreement—is obvious,⁷ it was also co-opted by the mystery religions for use as an emblem for many things: Love, initiation, arrival, salvation, union with the god, apotheosis.

I have found no solid evidence for the ritual handclasp – the *dexiōsis*, *dextrarum iunctio* – at Eleusis. However, in the culminating initiation scene in the Eleusis-influenced Lovatelli urn,⁸ there is perhaps a hint of the *dexiōsis*. As the initiate approaches Demeter sitting on the *cista*, the goddess's snake rises from her lap to greet the initiate; he extends his right hand for the snake to touch. If, as I have argued, this scene reflects a high point of the mysteries, and if the touching of the snake and the right hand of the initiate is related to the *dextrarum iunctio*, we may conjecture that a handclasp as token (the snake represents the contents of the *cista*, the *symbola*, as well as the presence of the god) took place as part of the initiate's union with the god at Eleusis.

This, however, must remain conjectural. A remarkable piece of iconography from the Sabazian mysteries, on the other hand, supplies valuable evidence for the ritual handclasp in a mystery environment. A series of paintings in the tomb of Vincentius, a priest of Sabazius, near Rome and dating from the second century A.D.,⁹ show the other-world experiences of Vincentius' wife, Vibia. After death and judgment in the underworld, the final scene in the series, showing the heavenly banquet of the blessed, shows Vibia, standing on the threshold of a doorway, being led through it by a "good messenger" (so labeled by the artist), already inside the "heaven." The messenger brings her inside by means of a *dextrarum iunctio*. The whole act is labeled an "*inductio*," a leading in. The *bonus angelus* has been variously interpreted, some authors ascribing him to Jewish or Christian influence (the Sabazian cult had earlier syncretized with Jewish inhabitants of Asia Minor); however, Leclercq regards him as Sabazius himself (cf. fig. 2).¹⁰

Though this representation is comparatively late, funeral iconography of the Attic Greeks¹¹ shows that the concept of the handclasp representing eschatological union was extremely common in classical Greece; there are eleven



Fig. 2. Painting from a Sabazian tomb near Rome; a good messenger brings the deceased, Vibia, to the banquet of the blessed. Johannes Leipoldt, *Die Religionen der Umwelt des Urchristentums* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1926), no. 166

examples of the motif in the Getty funerary collection alone. This handclasp's meaning is somewhat ambiguous; Brilliant, after summarizing some interpretations (an excerpt from life [which would seem unlikely, on a funerary monument], a farewell, a desired reunion), concludes thus: "Most probably the handshake expresses that continued community of the dead and the living within the bounds of the familiar society which in itself constitutes immortality."¹² There are representations of Hermes the psychopomp leading the soul of the dead by the hand,¹³ which parallels the psychopomp in the Sabazian painting.

Another fairly late piece of evidence shows that in Plutarch's day the *dexiōsis* was used among the Pythagoreans as a symbol of love, brotherhood, and reconciliation. "We should pattern ourselves after the Pythagoreans, who, though related not at all by birth, yet sharing a common discipline, if ever they were led by anger into recrimination, never let the sun go down before they joined right hands, embraced each other, and were reconciled," wrote Plutarch in his essay on brotherly love.¹⁴ We have already seen that Orphism and Pythagoreanism were a nearly inseparable phenomenon.¹⁵

In classical Greek iconography, there are also representations of Heracles clasping hands with various mythical figures.¹⁶ One sixth-century vase shows him sharing the *dexiōsis* with Pholos, the centaur; another with Hermes; another with Athena; and yet another with a mythical king, possibly Zeus himself.¹⁷

In the Hellenistic period, Heracles became allegorized as the soul; his myth served to illustrate the trials and victories of the soul.¹⁸ In the Igel monument, a remarkable piece of funerary art with Mithraic motifs,¹⁹ Heracles as soul is combined with the *dexiōsis* motif; the handclasp is used to draw Heracles into heaven. The hero is in the *quadriga* (chariot), ascending into heaven; Athena emerges from a cloud and extends to him "a hand of succor,"²⁰ which Heracles grasps. This apotheosis scene "portrays the Heroisation of the personage laid in the tomb, or, in a more general fashion, the destiny of the soul, which, with the help of heavenly powers, reaches the abode of the blessed,"²¹ according to Cumont. While the handclasp often expresses complete equality (as in the marriage handclasp, one of the most unvarying of Roman marriage rituals, and as in the handclasp used for treaty),²² here it expresses salvation, the saving and the saved. It is diagonal, not level; Heracles reaches up, Athena reaches down. The goddess will draw the mortal up into heaven (cf. figs. 3 and 4). However, the sense of equality is not entirely gone: Heracles enters heaven by having a goddess descend to his level; he has come up to her level, almost. The clasp here symbolizes entrance, liminality, as it did in the *inductio* of Vibia, but it also emphasizes apotheosis, the entrance into the divine type of life, as it simultaneously suggests the condescension of the god that makes the apotheosis possible. This *dexiōsis* of salvation is suggested in a prayer to Isis: "Thou stretchest forth thy right hand of salvation," speaks the worshipper to the goddess.²³ The human must return the right hand to complete the manual *symbolon*.

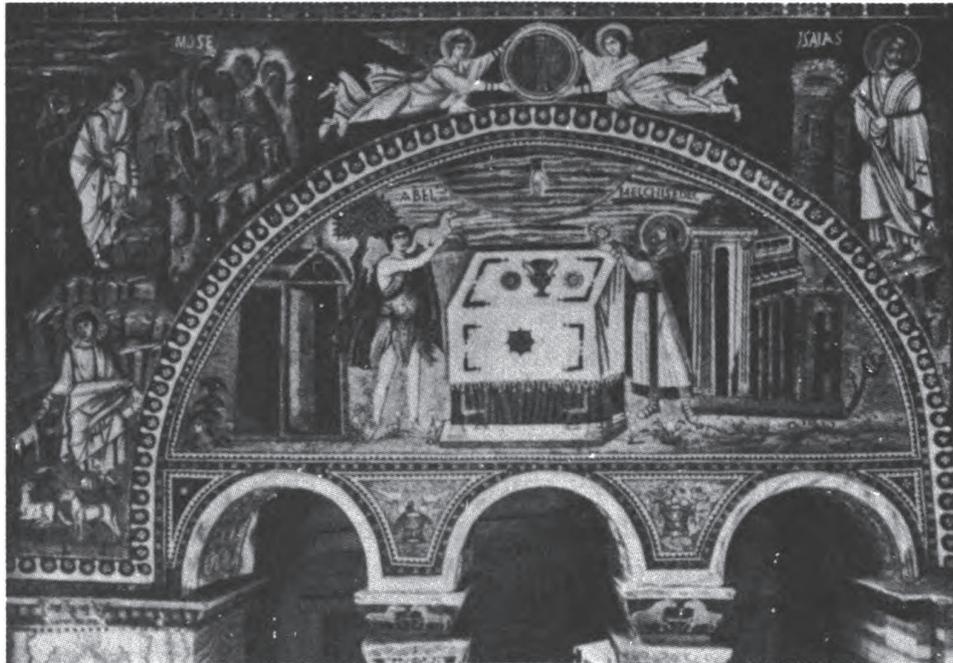


Fig. 3. Abel and Melchizedek (mosaic) in St. Vital, Ravenna, Italy (sixth century A.D.). Courtesy of John W. Welch

The frescoes of the underground basilica on the Via Praenestina show "Apollo, the God of Light . . . holding out his hand graciously to receive the soul after passing through the last ordeal, and Victory is proffering the crown."²⁴

The marriage handclasp—which represents uniting, love, equality, sexuality, and treaty between husband and wife as marriage begins²⁵—is seen on a mythological and allegorical level in a Roman funerary urn portraying the marriage of Dionysos and Ariadne. The god and his wife clasp hands, standing side by side, while, above them, two overshadowing grapevines intertwine their leaves, a charming parallel expression of the *symbolon* theme. Beside them, Hypnos ("Sleep") approaches "to permit them to attain Olympus."²⁶ In Hellenistic times, Ariadne came to symbolize the soul who is united to deity; the central scene of the Villa of the Mysteries is a portrayal of Ariadne with Dionysos.²⁷



Fig. 4. Melchizedek (mosaic) in St. Apollinaire, in Classe, Ravenna, Italy (sixth century A.D.). Courtesy of John W. Welch

The handclasp was an important initiatory gesture in the Mithraic mysteries. Iconography shows Mithras (himself often equated with the sun) clasping hands with Sol, the Sun, in a gesture of agreement, friendship, and reconciliation (at one time there was an antagonism between the two).²⁸ In one relief,²⁹ Mithra and Sol clasp hands over an altar, while a spit of meat pecked at by a raven is directly above the union of the hands. Vermaseren interprets this as a treaty before “the divine meal which itself took place before their ascent to heaven in the chariot of the sun.”³⁰ This is the paradigm for the initiate so he “himself can devoutly hope for his own return to the eternal sunlight.”³¹ Here the *dextrarum iunctio* represents precisely reunion and reconciliation, as well as unity, equality, friendship between gods. However, now there is no environment of threshold or entrance; it rather precedes the road to the desired entrance as a preliminary rite.³² Still, in actual Mith-

raic rite, there is some evidence that the handclasp came at the end of the initiation. According to Vermaseren,

At a given moment, after the novice had been submitted to certain purification rites and had gone through a time of fasting and abstinence, he reached the end of his ordeals. He had sworn the oath, been branded on hands or forehead and had pressed the Father's right hand. . . . The joining of the right hands (*dexiōsis*) promoted the initiates to *sundexioi* with the Father.³³

A builder of a Mithraeum writes that he made the temple so that "the *syndexi* might celebrate their vows with joy for eternity (*ut possint syndexi hilares celebrare vota per aevum*)."³⁴ A verbal *symbolon* of Firmicus uses the word: "Novice of the bull-theft, initiate (*sundexie*) of the proud Father."³⁵ *Sundexios* is a common word on the walls of the Dura Mithraeum.³⁶ In a Mithraeum at Capus, Eros (love) holds Psyche (soul) by the left hand.³⁷

The handclasp continued in early Christian ritual, both gnostic and "orthodox." According to Galatians 2:9, "the right hand of fellowship" (*dexias koinōnias didonai tini*) is given "as a sign of friendship and trust,"³⁸ though this does not necessarily suggest ritual practice, such as we found in the Sabazian and Mithraic mysteries. The handclasp as marriage rite, however, continued in Christian surroundings.³⁹ The salvific handclasp is nearly the trademark of the iconography of Christ's postcrucifixion descent into Hades.⁴⁰ One of the most frequent scenes in this tradition is that of Christ grasping the hands of Adam and Eve to lift them up out of hell and to resurrect them. While sometimes he grasps their wrists, which emphasizes even more than the diagonal *dexiōsis* their helplessness and lack of equality,⁴¹ in other depictions he lifts them with a true *dextrarum iunctio*.⁴² The fifth-century *Gospel of Nicodemus*⁴³ describes a true handclasp: "And the Lord . . . took the

right hand of Adam and went up out of hell (*tenens dexteram Adae ascendit ab inferis*), and all the saints followed him. . . . He went therefore into paradise holding our forefather by the hand, and delivered him, and all the righteous, unto Michael the archangel."⁴⁴ Here the *dexiōsis* starts the ascent, continues it, and ends it on the threshold of paradise. A similar handclasp is used in the apocalyptic *1 Enoch*: "And the angel Michael, . . . seizing me by my right hand and lifting me up, led me out into all the secrets of mercy; and he showed me all the secrets of righteousness."⁴⁵

In some early Christian depictions of the Ascension of Christ, Christ himself, approaching heaven, clasps the hand of God, which descends from a stylized upper corner of the composition.⁴⁶ This symbolism is arresting: Christ, the Savior, reaches up to be saved, and must be drawn, or at least helped, up into heaven. Perhaps there is a residual emphasis on the unity and equality of the saving handclasp here, but it is nevertheless a saving, diagonal clasp.

All these examples come from "orthodox" Christianity;⁴⁷ on an iconographic level at least they are clear continuations of motifs such as we have seen in mystery religions. We may assume that there were some ritual continuities too; we know there were in the use of the *dexiōsis* in marriage rite.⁴⁸ The handclasp was also used in Gnostic ritual, and is especially prominent in Manichaean myth and rite. In the myth of the fall and return of the Primeval Man, he is sent forth from the Father of Greatness and the Mother of Life to do battle with the Prince of Darkness (matter); temporarily overcome by darkness, he sends up a prayer to his former home. The Father creates and sends forth the Living Spirit to rescue him:

The Living Spirit, who was accompanied by the Mother of Life, extended his right hand to Primeval Man. The latter seized it and thus was drawn up out of the depths of the world of darkness. Together with the

Mother of Life and the Living Spirit he rose up and up, soared like victorious light out of darkness, till he was returned to the paradise of light, his celestial home, where his kin awaited him.⁴⁹

As in the Mithraic scenario and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the handclasp is the beginning of salvation and ascent. However, Manichaeism adds a new touch to the picture, a protological *dexiōsis*: "The first 'right hand' is that which the Mother of Life gave to Primal Man when he was about to go forth to the war. . . . The second 'right hand' is that which the Living Spirit gave to Primal Man when he led him up out of the war," according to the *Kephalaia*. This second 'right hand' is the *aition* for the Manichaean ritual handclasp: "In the image of the mystery of that right hand originated the right hand that is in use among men in giving it to one another."⁵⁰ "On that account the Manichaeans when meeting one another grasp right hands in sign that they themselves are of those saved from the Darkness," says the *Acta Archelai*.⁵¹ According to Jonas, the handclasp as a form of salutation spread through Europe as a result of Christian or Manichaean influences; previously it had been used only for conclusion of contracts.⁵²

Other Gnostics also used the handclasp ritually. According to Lidzbarski, the central concept of Mandaean religion is "truth," *kusta*; this word is also used to refer to the bond which unites the faithful, and the handshake of brotherhood. In Mandaean baptism, the priest gives the *kusta* to the initiate standing in water, then crowns him with a wreath of myrtle. Afterwards, the *kusta* is repeated twice. This is similar in function to the Mithraic handclasp that made one an initiate.⁵³

Thus the ritual handclasp in the mysteries and early Christianity⁵⁴ was linked with concepts of equality, friendship, agreement, liminality, entrance, marriage, sexuality, salvation, starting the path of initiation, ending the path

of initiation, resurrection, forgiveness, reconciliation, communion of man with man, of human with god, of god with god,⁵⁵ and apotheosis.

The Ritual Embrace

In *Rudens* and *Ion*, the correct telling of the tokens, bringing about the recognition, is followed by the physical reunion of the two long-separated parties. There is a loving paternal or maternal embrace. This embrace is not left to the discretion of the actors, for the dramatist is careful to insert clear markers of the act in his dialogue. This is the final *symbolon* of the drama, the complete human token; like the handclasp—which is, as it were, a preparatory embrace, a symbol of this reunion⁵⁶—it is the final fusion of identity in the drama, two long separate beings forming a renewed unity, re-creating an identity that had been fragmented and lost. It would seem to be overtly sexual but for the powerful filial maternal/paternal feelings it expresses. The lost child, who until this moment had been a cast-off foundling of low social status, discovers that he (in the case of *Ion*) is the son of a queen and the god of light; that she (in the case of Palaestra) is an authentic Athenian citizen and need no longer be a slave-prostitute.⁵⁷ The parents, on the other hand, are no longer childless, without heir. There is an emotional exaltation resulting from these factors that is found even in the fragmented ending of the *Epitrepontes*. The embrace is the primary emblem of this exaltation, and the sign of the child's new status, his re-adoption by his parent.

The first embrace in *Ion* takes place when Creusa recognizes Ion's ark. She rushes from the altar to embrace Ion and the tokens; as Ion does not trust her, this embrace is entirely maternal, and is not reciprocated. *Creusa*: "Slay me, slay me. But I will cling [*anthexomai*] to this ark and to you and to those things of yours that are hidden in it"

(1404). The reciprocal embrace takes place after the telling of the tokens:

Ion: My own dear mother! O the joy of seeing you, the joy of kissing your joyous face! [lit., "gladly I have fallen toward your glad cheeks": *asmenos . . . pros asmenas peptōka sas parēidas*.]

Creusa: O my child, O light brighter than the sun to your mother (the god will understand), I hold you in my arms. My treasure, I never hoped for this. I thought you had gone to your long home with Persephone and the shades below.

Ion: Ah, dearest mother, your arms are around me (*en kheroin sethen . . . phantazomai*)! You see me alive that was dead.

Creusa: Ah, ye expanses of brilliant ether! What words, what cry shall I utter? Whence came this joy, this unexpected joy? How did I attain this rapture? . . . My child, not without tears was your birth; with lamentations were you separated from your mother's arms. Now, cheek to cheek [*geneiasin para sethen*, lit., by your cheeks], I breathe again; happiness, blissful happiness has come to me (1437-60).

In the *Rudens*, there are separate embraces with both the father and mother (though she is offstage). After *Palaestra* correctly identifies the last token, her father embraces her:

Daemones: She is, she certainly is! I can't keep from hugging her any longer! (*contineri quin complectar non queo!*) Ah, my own daughter! I am the father that reared you! I am *Daemones* myself, and look, inside here is your mother, *Daedalis*!

Palaestra: Ah, dear father, father unhoped for!

Daemones: Ah, the joy of having you in my arms [*ut te amplector libens* – lit., "how gladly I embrace you"]. . . . Come, let's go to your mother, my child. She can make further inquiries and test you better, having had more to do with you and knowing more about those tokens

of yours (1172-80). [Later:] What's this I see? My wife, arms around her daughter's neck, clinging to her! (*uxor complexa collo retinet filiam!*) Comes precious near being a silly nuisance, all her fondling! Wife! Better call a halt on that kissing (*osculando*—the kiss is naturally closely associated with the embrace)⁵⁸ some time (1202-5).

There is some evidence for the presence of a ritual embrace in mystery cult. The return of Persephone from the underworld and her reunion with her mother is obviously the emotional climax of the *Hymn to Demeter*. Unfortunately, the reunion scene is fragmentary, but enough survives to be suggestive: "And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side . . . of her mother, . . . and leaped down to run . . ." (damaged from 387-400). However, that an embrace took place is made certain by a following passage: "So did they then, with hearts at one [*homophrona thumon ekhousai*—lit., "having a one-minded soul"; the embrace is merely the outward token of the inward meshing of souls] greatly cheer each the other's soul and spirit with many an embrace [*amphagapazomenai*]: their hearts had relief from the griefs while each took and gave back joyousness [*gēthosunas d' edekhonto par' allēlōn edidon te*]" (434-37). Now Demeter causes crops to grow, teaches her mysteries to the Eleusinians, and she and her daughter ascend to heaven. "But when the bright goddess had taught them all, they went to Olympus to the gathering of the other gods. And there they dwell beside Zeus who delights in thunder, awful and reverend goddesses" (483-85).

How much of this was reflected in Eleusinian ritual is uncertain and debated. However, there seems to be good evidence that the drama of Demeter and Persephone was performed in the mysteries. Mylonas writes,

There can be little doubt that at least part of the *drōmena* [the "things done," the ritual performance] was

a sacred pageant, the presentation of the story of Demeter and Persephone. Such a pageant, accompanied with music, singing, and measured steps . . . could have been very impressive and conducive of those feelings of awe, sorrow, despair, and joy which could, as in tragedy, bring about a katharsis.⁵⁹

"The initiates probably took a certain part in the *drōmena* . . . unlike the people in the theater . . . and thus could share more fully the experiences of the Goddess."⁶⁰ The best evidence for this, which also isolates the reunion of Persephone and Demeter as the high point of the mysteries, is from Lactantius: "In the Mysteries of Demeter all night long with torches kindled they seek for Persephone and when she is found, the whole ritual closes with thanksgiving and the tossing of torches."⁶¹ According to Clement, "Demeter and Kore have come to be the subject of a mystic drama (*drama*), and Eleusis celebrates with torches the abduction of the daughter and the sorrowful wanderings of the mother."⁶² Nilsson writes:

The reuniting of the Mother and the Maid was the kernel of the myth. Judging from the nature of the festival, it must likewise have been the kernel of the Eleusinian Mysteries. . . . Demeter is rightly called the *mater dolorosa* of Greek religion. To this heartbreaking sorrow, the reunion of mother and daughter provided a joyful contrast, rousing the *mystae* to exultation and moving their minds with the deepest emotions.⁶³

A late piece of evidence, questionable by itself, adds probability to the idea of ritual embrace at Eleusis. Lucian writes that when the charlatan Alexander carried out rites somewhat modeled on the Eleusinian mysteries, a culminating act was an embrace and a kiss. Lucian satirizes Alexander's weakness for young, beautiful initiates; still, this may have been a plausible reflection of Eleusinian practices.⁶⁴

There is some evidence for a mystic embrace in the

Orphic and Dionysiac mysteries. Guthrie thinks it probable that a dramatic presentation of Demeter and Persephone took place in Orphic rite, as at Eleusis.⁶⁵ As "Orphism" is closely connected to the Pythagoreans, we may also recall the Pythagorean custom of combining the handclasp and embrace to accompany reconciliation, brotherly love.⁶⁶ In the fourth "Orphic" gold plate, the soul, listing his qualifications, says, "I have sunk beneath the bosom of the Mistress, the Queen of the Underworld"⁶⁷ (*despoinas d' hupo kolpon edun*). This phrase has been variously interpreted; according to one of the more likely interpretations it refers to an adoption by the god. "It finds a close parallel in a certain form of adoption-ritual, practised both on secular occasions and in mystery-religions," writes Guthrie.⁶⁸ Rohde writes that the phrase means, "I seek (as *hiketēs* [suppliant]) the protection of her maternal bosom (or lap)."

It would certainly be attractive to take this . . . as referring to a symbolical act, corresponding to the ceremony in which . . . the adoption of a boy, his reception into a new *genos* [clan] was symbolically represented. . . . But such a symbolical proceeding, if it was to bring about the association of the *mystēs* [initiate] with the goddess, must have taken place already in the *orgia* [rites] once held on earth. . . . Thus the fully initiated is *gennētēs* [kinsman] of the divine family, *kata tēn poiēsīn* [according to adoption].⁶⁹

The goddess embracing an infant, holding him to her bosom, plays an important part in the *Hymn to Demeter*, as Demeter becomes the nurse of Demophoon and tries to make him immortal. "Gladly will I take the boy to my breast (*hupodexomai*),⁷⁰ as you bid me, and will nurse him," says Demeter to Metaneira, the mother (226). "She took the child in her fragrant bosom (*thuōdei dexato kolpōi*) with her divine hands. . . . So the goddess nursed in the palace Demophoon" (231-35). Richardson, at line 232, concludes that the whole sequence with Demophoon is "an adoption

ritual." "These similarities may be explained by the character of the mystic initiation as a rite of adoption, with which the idea of purification is also associated."⁷¹ The initiate stands in the same relationship to the Eleusinian goddesses as Demophoon to Demeter, as is suggested by Sophocles: "The torch-lit shores, where the Potniai are nurses (*tithēnountai*) of the dread rites for mortals."⁷² Richardson judges this rite to be connected with the "central significance of the Mysteries" and not merely part of a preliminary purification rite.⁷³ Thus in the "Orphic" gold plates, and in the Eleusinian cult, being drawn to the breast of the goddess, being adopted by her, is probably a rite of great importance. The relevance of this sort of adoptive ritual—defined by the specific act of embracing—to recognition drama should be clear. In recognition drama, the embrace is the immediate seal of recognition and love when the identity of the tested party has been proved. This is not exactly the same as adoption; it is more a re-adoption.

Just as we have seen Dionysos and Ariadne united by the *dextrarum iunctio*, there is also a pictorial tradition that portrays them embracing. A famous depiction of this embrace in the Villa of the Mysteries seems to be the focal point of whatever ritual acts are portrayed on those walls: "Occupying the center of the rear wall and directly opposite the main entrance, is the scene that is the culminating point of the whole series, the union of Dionysos and Ariadne."⁷⁴ "The central figure on this wall, and therewith of the whole fresco, was Ariadne. She is seated, erect and high, in its very center, the loving god in her lap. Dionysus, the woman's god, in the arms of the mortal woman whom his love made into a goddess."⁷⁵ A vase-painting of Ariadne and Dionysos also shows the embrace.⁷⁶ Again the embrace may seem overtly sexual, but Hellenistic allegory made the sexuality merely an image for divine-human union: "The myth of the god rescuing Ariadne, who had been cruelly abandoned on the island

of Naxos, was understood to mean that the human soul, like the Cretan princess, could find immortal life and happiness in loving arms of the divine."⁷⁷ (And as we saw Eros and Psyche ["love" and "soul"] bound by the *dextrarum iunctio*, so we often see them bound by the embrace and kiss.⁷⁸ Thus the marriage of Dionysos and Ariadne, represented by the embrace, expressed many nuances of emotion and meaning: the *unio mystica*, human with god, which was the goal of initiation; the joy of the divine life; love; love creating apotheosis.

The kiss of peace of the New Testament apparently always included the embrace.⁷⁹ Sometimes the kiss and the embrace were both specified: Cyprian writes, "Holding to this faith, and meditating thereon day and night, let us too aspire to God with all our heart, disdaining the present and thinking only on the things that are to be, the fruition of the eternal kingdom, the embrace and the kiss of the Lord [*complexum et osculum Domini*], the vision of God."⁸⁰ A specific example appears in Luke 15:20: "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Sometimes the kiss disappeared, leaving only the embrace: "The kiss or *pax* was eventually reduced to a mild embrace occasionally accompanied by a touching of the cheeks."⁸¹ John Chrysostom writes of the holy kiss (1 Corinthians 16:20) exchanged by Christians that it "unites and makes one body."⁸² He tells us that when we exchange the kiss as a symbol of love with our neighbors the Lord wants our souls to kiss and our hearts to embrace.⁸³ The kiss was used in baptismal initiation and in the mass (cf. fig. 5).⁸⁴

As we move from mystery religion to Christianity to Gnostic Christianity, we again find strong parallels to the sacral paternal/maternal embrace in Manichaeism. When the Primeval Man returns to the heavenly world after his sojourn and combat in darkness, "The mother caught and



Fig. 5. Peter and Paul embrace and exchange the kiss of peace; mosaic in Palatin Chapel, Palermo, Italy. Nicholas J. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), fig. 10

kissed him: 'Thou art come again, exiled son. Hurry and pass into the light, for thy kind for thee greatly are longing.' " Widengren remarks on the vividness of this scene, "when the mother embraces and kisses him, the only son, whom she thought lost forever."⁸⁵ Since before his descent to darkness, matter, and the world, the Primeval Man (lit., the First Man) lived in the presence of the divine father and mother, this event is a true *recognition* — an only son thought lost forever (cf. *Ion*) has unexpectedly returned from seeming death. And to make the embrace exactly symmetrical (as was the Manichaean handclasp, though in that case different parties, the Mother and the Spirit, deliver it), another Manichaean text portrays the mother embracing the son as he departs from the heavenly home: "The first embrace (*aspasmos*: greeting, embrace;

Böhlig translates "Kuß") is that which the Mother of Life gave to the First Man as he separated himself from her in order to come down to earth to the testing (*agōn*). Also, all the gods and angels . . . embraced him on that occasion. . . . Also, all who were to be of the Church . . . embraced (*aspazein*) him with love."⁸⁶ Thus the eschatological embrace is the reuniting of the protological embrace, after the painful parting, which is, from the point of view of the mother, a death. But the divine-human *symbolon* regains its original identity; there is an *anagnōrisis*, a recognition, a knowing again. The embrace is the renewed outward token reflecting the renewed inward token of knowledge and love.⁸⁷

Notes

1. Todd M. Compton, "The Whole Token: Mystery Symbolism in Classical Recognition Drama," *Epoche* 13 (1985): 1-81.

2. For *symbola* in recognition, see *Ion* 1386; for *symbola* in mystery cult, see Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* II, 15, 19, in *PG* 8:80, 88; cf. Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *symbolon*, III, 5.

3. *Ibid.* Cf. also Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 62-67; Philippe Gauthier, *Symbola, Le étrangers et la justice dans les cités grecques* (Nancy: Université de Nancy, 1972), 62-66.

4. Yeats writes, in "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," "Nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent." Ann Bergren writes, "What the *symbolon* symbolizes is a liason between two parts, a 'wholeness' or 'identity' constituted by the 'fault' of difference, like James' 'golden bowl'," "Allegorizing Winged Words: Simile and Symbolization in *Odyssey* V," *Classical World* 74 (1980): 109-23 (112).

5. Cf., however, Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, in which Electra sees a cut-off piece of hair on Agamemnon's tomb (167), then later compares it with the shorn spot on Orestes' head (205-10).

6. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship*, 64.

7. An early example is Homer, *Odyssey* 3.36; cf. Livy, I, 58, 7; I, 21, 4; I, 41, 2. For the handclasp generally: Gerhard Neumann, *Gesten und Gebärden in der griechischen Kunst* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), 49-58, cf. 59-65; Karl Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890), 27-32, 290, 335-36, cf. 329; Louis Reekmans,

"La 'dextrarum iunctio' dans l'iconographie," *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 31 (1958): 23-95; B. Kötting, "Dextrarum iunctio," in Theodor Klauser et al., eds., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950-88), 3:881-88; Richard Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art* (New Haven, CT: The Academy, 1963), 18-21; Franz Cumont, "The Dura Mithraeum," in John R. Hinnells, ed., *Mithraic Studies*, 2 vols. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 1:196-98; Herman, *Ritualised Friendship*, 50-54, 64.

8. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 269, figs. 8-9; George Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 205-7, 243-44, fig. 83 (cf. fig. 84, the Torre Nova Sarcophagus); Carl Kerényi, *Eleusis, Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (New York: Bollingen/Pantheon, 1967), 54-59.

9. See Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols. (New York: Bollingen/Pantheon, 1953-58), vol. 3, figs. 839, 842; 2:45-50; Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur la symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Paris: Geuthner, 1942), 418, n. 1.

10. Henri Leclercq, "Sabazios," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 15 vols. (Paris: Librairie Letouzey, 1924-53), 15:213. As to whether this can be used as evidence for earlier mystery, cf. Richard Seaford, "Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysiac Mysteries," *Classical Quarterly* 31 (1981): 252, on the essential conservatism of the mysteries.

11. For one example among, I believe, thousands, see Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank*, 19, figs. 1.16, 1.19.

12. *Ibid.*, 20-21.

13. Donna Kurtz and John Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 129.

14. Plutarch, *De Fraternali Amore* XVII, 488b-c, tr. Helmbold: "prin ē ton hēlion dunai tas dexias embalontes allēlois kai aspasamenoī dieluonto." Cf. Nicholas J. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 16, who draws a parallel with Paul's, "Let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26), because we are members of one body.

15. See Compton, "The Whole Token," 7, n. 25, for the close relationship of Orphics and Pythagoreans.

16. Neumann, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 54, fig. 25; 55, fig. 26 a-b.

17. *Ibid.*, 50-51.

18. Eugénie Strong, *Apotheosis and After Life* (London: Constable, 1915), 201.

19. Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, fig. 1.
20. *Ibid.*, 174. Cf. Strong, *Apotheosis and After Life*, 222-32.
21. Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, 174.
22. See, e.g., Kötting, "Dextrarum iunctio," *passim*, and Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio' dans l'iconographie romaine et paleochrétienne," *passim*.
23. Samuel Angus, *The Mystery Religions and Christianity* (New York: University Books, 1966), 119. Cf. Hans P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas, 1982), 139-41, on the "saving right hand." Julian the Apostate, *Contra Galilaeos* I, 200B, says that Aesculapius "extended his right hand of salvation [*sōtērion heautou dexian*] to all the earth." Procopius, *De Bello Persico* II, 13, 8-9, calls the right hand the "token of salvation," *sōtērias symbolon*. See n. 46 below.
24. Angus, *Mystery Religions*, 141-42.
25. Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio' dans l'iconographie romaine et paleochrétienne," figs. 34-37, 32-33, 4-10. Cf. Ernest Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, revised and enlarged by Theodore Besterman, 2 vols. in one (London: Methuen, 1927), 2:118-19.
26. Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, 412, fig. 84.
27. Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age* (New York: Arno, 1975), 71, fig. 10d; John Ferguson, "The Mystery Religions," in Richard Cavendish, ed., *Myth: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1980), 144-59 (149). K. Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of an Indestructible Life*, tr. R. Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 124-25. Cf. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 233, n. 12, for Dionysos and Ariadne; 271, n. 22. Cf. n. 74 below.
28. M. J. Vermaseren, *Mithras: The Secret God*, tr. Therese and Vincent Megaw (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), 98; figs. 32-33.
29. *Ibid.*, 97, fig. 33.
30. *Ibid.*; cf. Leroy A. Campbell, *Mithraic Iconography and Ideology* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 389. In the Mithraic mysteries, "pieces of the bull's flesh are pierced by spits and held above an altar to suggest the piercing of the bodies of the contracting parties likewise if they break the pledge."
31. Vermaseren, *Mithras: The Secret God*, 98.
32. *Ibid.*
33. This is, however, problematical. To become a *sundexios* was both a final step of initiation, and the beginning of it. Cf. Vermaseren, *Mithras: The Secret God*, 136-37, and E. D. Francis, "Mithraic Graffiti from Dura-Europos," in Hinnells, *Mithraic Studies*, 2:438-39:

count of the ultimate reunion of God and man, Ayar (Ether, equated with the Father in the Mandaean Father/Mother dyad – “The Mother is ‘the Left,’ the Father ‘the Right’: the Mother, Earth, the Father, Sky,” Ethel S. Drower, *The Secret Adam* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1960], 13, 14) greets the approaching spirits. “And when he said ‘The Place of Safe-keeping which is set apart for the company of the Great [Life],’ they all rose to their feet. And as they grasped Ayar’s hand in covenant [*kusta*] he said, ‘The Great Life hath stretched forth His right hand to thee! Put away passion from thy thought! Thy thought shall be filled with Ours and thy garment and our Garment shall be One.’” Ibid., 55; cf. 24, n. 2. Here the *dexiōsis* is used in the context of arrival, covenant, and the final mystic communion. The handclasp is also found in the round dance of apostles in the Gnostic *Acts of John* 94: “He bade us therefore make as it were a ring, holding one another’s hands, and himself standing in the midst.” James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 253. See also Ethel S. Drower, *Water into Wine* (London: Murray, 1956), 102-11, the most extensive analysis of the *kusta*. Cf. the *Second Apocalypse of James* 57:10-11, in James Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 253, with Christ speaking at a gate: “But now, stretch out your [hand]. Now, take hold of me.”

54. Following is a brief overview of extraclassical examples: for the handclasp in an Indian marriage rite, see *Ramayana of Valmiki*, tr. Robert Goldman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. I, Sarga 72, lines 17-22, p. 262; J. A. B. Van Buitenen, ed. and tr., *The Mahabharata I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 106, 444, n. 43.1. Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 105, describes a Brahmanic initiation culminating in a ritual death, which involves a bath, a change of clothing, a change of name, and the handclasp. Van Gennep defines the handclasp as one of the rites of incorporation (“a formal entrance, a meal in common, an exchange of handclasps” [28] – almost a point-by-point description of the portrayal of Vibia’s entrance into paradise. Cf. marriage rites of incorporation, 132: “tying parts of each other’s clothing together; touching each other reciprocally some way, . . . joining hands, intertwining the fingers, kissing, embracing”); he further cites examples of its use in Africa (28) and in Slavic brotherhoods (29). The rite of incorporation is the uniting of the token, of course. One of the more curious examples of the handclasp I have found was used in a Finnish folk song; cf. *The Kalevala*, tr. Francis P. Magoun, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 380-81, 374-75: this was always performed

in pairs, and the two singers (one of whom starts a verse, while the other completes it) sit, facing each other, and hold the other's hands. This is called "hand in hand" (*kasi kateen*), a *deux*, or "singing in turn" (380). So the verbal token and the manual token are used simultaneously. For more on the handclasp as a marriage rite, see Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, 118-19. For the handclasp in ancient Mesopotamia, see S. Mayassis, *Mystères et initiations dans la préhistoire et protohistoire* (Athens: Bibliotheque d'archéologie orientale d'Athènes, 1961), 49-51. It is "the expression of familiarity, of equality, of sympathy, of love, of protection. 'You are compassionate (oh! Marduk). . . . I am weak. . . . You grasp the hand.' 'Oh, you who save he who is captive, who take by the hand he who has fallen.' " The dead man prays to be resurrected, to grasp the hand of god in the presence of the great gods (50). This is the same salvific resurrecting handclasp we have noted earlier. Mayassis should be balanced by Svend A. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival* (Copenhagen: A. F. Host, 1926), 174-83. See also Angel Gonzales, "El Rito de la Alianza," *Estudios Biblicos* 24 (1965): 217-38 (222); Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. W. Trask (New York: Bollingen/Pantheon, 1954), 23; Geo Widengren, "Reflections on the Origin of the Mithraic Mysteries," 645-68 of *Perennitas: Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome: Edizioni dell' Ateneo, 1980), 662; E. O. James, *Christian Myth and Ritual* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1973), 162-63. I am indebted to Esther Gilman for the following two references. Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 252, writes that Hopi tradition records the original meeting of Hopis and Spaniards, saying "that Tovar and his men were conducted to Oraibi. They were met by all the clan chiefs at Tawtoma, as prescribed by prophecy, where four lines of sacred meal were drawn. The Bear Clan leader stepped up to the barrier and extended his hand, palm up, to the leader of the white men. If he was indeed the true Pahana, the Hopis knew he would extend his own hand, palm down, and clasp the Bear Clan leader's hand to form the *nakwach*, the ancient symbol of brotherhood. Tovar instead curtly commanded one of his men to drop a gift into the Bear chief's hand, believing that the Indian wanted a present of some kind. Instantly all the Hopi chiefs knew that Pahana had forgotten the ancient agreement made between their peoples at the time of their separation. Nevertheless, the Spaniards were escorted up to Oraibi, fed and quartered, and the agreement explained to them. It was understood that when the two were finally reconciled, each would correct the other's laws and faults; they would live side by side and share in common all the

riches of the land and join their faiths in one religion that would establish the truth of life in a spirit of universal brotherhood. The Spaniards did not understand, and having found no gold, they soon departed." [Cf. 151, 344: *nakwa* is a mark of identification; *nakwach* is a symbol of brotherhood.]

This story is particularly interesting to me because it illustrates vividly the theme, so important in both *Epitrepontes* and *Rudens*, of the token as a sacred sign of recognition versus the token merely as something to be sold for money. I also find evocative the idea of white and red man forming a primeval token that was to be reunited in an exchange of culture and peace.

For the handclasp in Masonry and in Masonry-influenced Mormon iconography, see Richard Poulsen, *The Pure Experience of Order* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 45-55; and Allen D. Roberts, "Where Are the All-Seeing Eyes?" *Sunstone* (May-June 1979): 22-37.

55. See Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank*, 20, n. 68; Neumann, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 52.

56. Cf. Cumont, *Symbolisme funéraire des Romains*, 412, fig. 84; Cumont, "The Dura Mithraeum," 197, calls the *dexiōsis* a "mutual embrace." The handclasp often shaded into an embrace (as in Mithraic iconography, Vermaseren, *Mithras: The Secret God*, fig. 32), or was combined with an embrace—numerous references in Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer*, 32-33. E.g., Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* III, 258: "They clasped the hand [*dexiōnto-dexiōmai*, "greet with the right hand, welcome," cf. Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v.] and embraced (*amphagapason*) their mother when they saw her."

57. She is also enabled to marry her lover, Plesidippus, an Athenian, who had tried to save her from Labrax, a "procurer."

58. Numerous references in Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer*, 37. There was often a combination of the *dexiōsis*, embrace, and kiss. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* (1130-31), "And stretch to me your right hand, lord, so that I may touch and kiss, if it is lawful, your head."

59. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 261-62.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones, Epitome*, 23 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 19:689).

62. Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptica* II, 12. Cf. Psellus of late antiquity, *De Operatione Daemonum*, 3, according to whom the Eleusinian mysteries enacted the story of Demeter and Persephone;

Aphrodite rising from the sea; the ritual marriage of Persephone; Demeter's birth-pangs; a "goat-legged mime" of Zeus raping Demeter; then rites of Dionysos; the cista with cakes; a "sounding cauldron" and a gong; something done by Baubo" – text and translation in Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 568-69; cf. Psellos, *De Operatione Daemonum*, ed. J. Boissonade (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1964), 39. This seems garbled and overly inclusive, but at the least it suggests a ritual drama; that general idea must have been plausible to the writer's audience. Despite these references, there is a school of Eleusinian interpretation that denies a drama there (e.g., Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of an Indestructible Life*, 26, 116-17). One of the complications of the Eleusinian mysteries is that there was a version of them that took place at Alexandria; a technique used to disallow evidence for Eleusis is to ascribe a text to Alexandria, as Kerényi does here. N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 25, is not convinced that initiates participated in the drama, though he believes one took place. Cf. Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 275, 286.

63. Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion* (New York: Harper, 1961), 54. Cf. Ugo Bianchi, *The Greek Mysteries* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), pls. 20-22; Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, pl. 88.

64. Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 39. Cf. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 22.

65. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1952), 204.

66. See n. 14 above.

67. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, 172-74.

68. *Ibid.*, 182.

69. Edwin Rohde, *Psyche*, tr. W. B. Hillis (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925), 601-3; cf. also Hugo Hepding, *Attis* (Giessen: Ricker, 1903), 178-89; George Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens*, 2nd ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1946), 438, n. 35; Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1966), 134-35. Contra, for Eleusis, cf. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 296.

70. Notice the force of *hupo* ("beneath," cf. the fourth Orphic plate) and *dekhomai*, "receive"; cf. Seaford, "Dionysiac Drama and the Dionysiac Mysteries," 247, n. 146, on *dekhomai* as a ritual term.

71. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 232.

72. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1050-51. Cf. Pausanias, *Graeciae Descriptio* IX, 35, 5, where Demeter is the nurse (*trophon*) of Trophonius.

73. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 236; cf. 231-36.
74. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries* 75 and fig. 10d.
75. Gunther Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 178. See 178, n. 3, for other versions of this scene. Cf. G. Van Hoorn, "Dionysus et Ariadne," *Mnemosyne*, series 4, 12 (1959): 193-97; Strong, *Apotheosis and After Life*, 200, for Dionysos as parabolic; cf. n. 27 above.
76. Ferguson, "The Mystery Religions," 149.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, figs. 7, 62.
79. *Ibid.*, fig. 10.
80. *Epistula* VI, 4 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 3:484); cf. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 31. Cyprian also wrote, "Fully blessed are they, who among you, having walked by this path of glory, have departed from the world and . . . have already attained the embrace and the kiss of the Lord," *Epistula* XXXVII, 3 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 3:578); cf. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 34.
81. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 278.
82. John Chrysostom, *Homily on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, XLIV, 2, in PG 61:376.
83. John Chrysostom, *De Compunctione* I, 3, in PG 47:398: *ton apo tēs kardias aspasmon*.
84. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 18, 278.
85. Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism*, 53.
86. Böhlig and Polotsky, *Kephalaia* I, 38, lines 22-30. Cf. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 20-21.
87. As with the handclasp, the ritual embrace has an important parallel in the ancient Near East, this time in Egypt. Since there was a direct close dependence of the Isaic mysteries on Egyptian ritual, we may even make the hypothesis that such an embrace may have been as important to the Isaic mysteries as it was to Egyptian ritual. See Franz Cumont, *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (New York: Dover, 1956), 94: "Even under the Caesars the ancient ceremonies dating back to the first ages of Egypt were scrupulously performed. . . . This ritual and the attitude toward it found their way for the most part into the Latin temples of Isis and Serapis. This fact has long been ignored, but there can be no doubt about it." Cf. *ibid.*, 74, "One fact remains, namely, that Serapis and Osiris were either immediately identified or else were identical from the beginning." See *ibid.*, 79, for the diffusion of this mystery in Greece. It was, of course, very prevalent in Rome.

In Egypt the embrace was closely tied to kingship succession: it was a paternal, father/son interchange, and also a means of transferring divine power. King and son were assimilated to the theological paradigm of Horus and Osiris, whose embrace of reunion after the death of Osiris they copied. However, in Egypt, the kingship aspect of the rite always seems dominant. In the Memphis Theology, whose original text dates from before 2,700 B.C., near the beginning of Egyptian history (cf. James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955], 4), the text ends in an embrace. Osiris "entered the mysterious portals in the glory of the lords of eternity" following the sun. "He joined with the court and associated with the gods. . . . His son Horus appeared as King of Upper Egypt and appeared as King of Lower Egypt, in the embrace of [cf. Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 32: "in the arms of"] his father Osiris, together with [ibid., "in the presence of"] the gods." Frankfort, *ibid.*, 35, calls this a "'mystic communion' between father and son at the moment of succession, a unity and continuity of divine power." In a *Pyramid Text*, an embrace with Atum is mentioned: "Thou art cool in the embrace of thy father, in the embrace of Atum. Atum, let this Unas ascend to thee; embrace him. He is thy son, of thy body, throughout eternity" (*ibid.*, 122). Earlier in the same text, there is the maternal embrace: "The embrace of thy mother Nut receives thee" (*ibid.*, 121, cf. 135). This text is also full of purification, apotheosis, and perfect tense of accomplishments, but, unlike the Orphic plates, it is expressed in the second person. "Thou hast 'become,' thou art high, thou hast been transfigured."

These texts, according to Frankfort, are mythological, with occasional references to ritual (*ibid.*, 123). But in what he calls "the Mystery Play of the Succession," the whole drama (dating from 2,000 B.C., the "actual script of a play") is overtly ritualistic. An important element of the "mystery" is the embrace between the new king (assimilated to Horus) and Osiris (represented by a bronze 'stomacher' fitting over the chest and back). "The immortal parts of Osiris seem immanent in it, and the mutual embrace of Horus and Osiris is effected." This act is reciprocal: divine power flows from the old king to his successor and son; but the son strengthens the father as he prepares for the arduous journey in the after life. "The 'embrace' is no mere sign of affection, but a true fusion, a communion between two living spirits, *unio mystica*" (*ibid.*, 134). When Ramses I is embraced by Ptah, the god endows him with the

splendor of divine life, symbolized by gold, "the flesh of the gods." Ptah spoke: "When I see thee my heart rejoices and I receive thee in an embrace of gold, I enfold thee with permanence, stability, and satisfaction; I endow thee with health and joy of heart; I immerse thee in rejoicing, joy, gladness of heart, and delights—forever" (*ibid.*, 135). For two more examples of the Egyptian embrace, see *ibid.*, 135.

There are hints of the ritual embrace in Mesopotamia, see Mayassis, *Mystères et initiations dans la préhistoire et protohistoire*, 447-48. Gilgamesh says, "I have embraced [Enkidu] as one embraces a wife, I have raised him and I have placed him on his feet." Mayassis notes the presence of the embrace in the ritual nursing the king receives from the representative of a goddess.

The embrace is one of the most common of Van Gennep's "rites of incorporation," *Rites of Passage*, 29, 132, 133. For the embrace in the Hellenistic novel, with its possible relevance to mystery there, see Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich: Beck, 1962), 85-86, and 345, s.v. *Umarmung*. Philo interestingly gives the kiss/embrace a cosmological significance. In *Questions on Exodus* II, 78, and II, 169, he writes that the things of creation meet in "an embrace and kiss of concord." The divine Logos is "the mediator and bond of all things, weaving together the parts of the universe, including contrarities." His force (love) causes inimical, irreconcilable things to unite in an embrace and kiss of love (Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane*, 15).