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CHAPTER TWO
THE HOMERIC HYMNS

I.J.F. de Jong

Introduction. Space as Theme

There is hardly a genre in Greek literature in which space is more important than that of the Homeric hymns. Hymns—and I concentrate here largely on the four larger ones with their long narrative sections—recount the *timai*, i.e. prerogatives and powers, of the gods they praise, and in such a context cult places and cult objects are naturally of prime importance. Gods also travel a great deal in the hymns. Whereas in the Homeric epics their movements are always closely related to the action of the mortal characters, in the hymns they voyage for their own sake and with their own goals in mind. Then, there is the much-debated question whether the cult places mentioned in the text can tell us something about the place of the performance of the hymns themselves. Finally, hymnic space may have a symbolic function or acquire anthropomorphic traits (personification).

Cult Sites, Favourite Haunts, and Cult Objects

By and large the location of the gods in the hymns is the same as in the Homeric epics. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* they live as an extended family on Olympus, where they gather in the palace of Zeus but also have their own palaces (e.g. *Il.* 1.533–536, 606–608). At the same time, they have their individual places of worship throughout the Greek world, which mortals refer to (e.g. Zeus of Dodona, *Il.* 16.233; or Apollo of Delos, *Od.* 6.162) or which the gods visit in the course of the story (e.g. Athena goes to Marathon at *Od.* 7.80; Aphrodite to Paphos at *Od.* 8.362–366).¹

¹ See Kearns 2004: 62–63.

Likewise, the gods of the hymns gather in Zeus' palace on Olympus, which may function alternately as a dining-room (*h.Ap.* 2–13), a 'ball-room', when the god of music Apollo leads the dance (*h.Ap.* 186–206), or a court of justice, when Apollo brings his charge against the cattle-thief Hermes (*h.Herm.* 322–396, cf. esp. 329: 'there [sc. on Olympus] the scales of justice were set in place for them both'). As in Homer, Olympus is conceptualised both as a mountain (e.g. *h.Ap.* 98) and heaven (e.g. *h.Ap.* 325). As a consequence of the 'theogonic' nature of most hymns, Olympus has a special (symbolic) meaning: arriving there, usually straight after being born, means becoming part of the divine family and being acknowledged as a god, and this festive moment is often commemorated. We have Demeter, who returns to Olympus after the quest for her daughter and is given (new) *timai* as compensation for her suffering (*h.Dem.* 460–462, 484–485); Persephone, who joins the gods, presumably for the first time, after Zeus has allowed her to live with her mother for two thirds of the year (*h.Dem.* 463–465, 484–485); and Hermes, who first enters Olympus as an accused (*h.Herm.* 322–328), but who, after his reconciliation with his brother, is officially welcomed by Zeus (505–507).² In the case of Apollo there are two passages that have been taken as evocations of his first introduction to Olympus (*h.Ap.* 1–13 and 186–206), but they may equally well represent a recurrent scene.³

Gods who, for whatever reason, are angry at their fellow gods may ostentatiously distance themselves from Olympus (Hera at *h.Ap.* 329–348; Demeter at *h.Dem.* 91–94, 302–304, 331–333), a phenomenon not yet found in Homer, where gods separate themselves only to party with the Ethiopians. In the case of Demeter, her angry absence from Olympus is in effect a kind of strike, since she keeps the seed sown by men hidden under the soil and thereby causes a famine that deprives the gods of their sacrifices (*h.Dem.* 305–313). Conversely, a god may find him- or herself on Olympus while elsewhere an important action is going on, as happens to the goddess of birth Eileithyia: she is seated 'atop Olympus under golden clouds' by the designs of Hera (which in epic terms means that

² Cf. further baby Pan, who is brought to the Olympus by his father Hermes (*Hymn* 19.42–47), and Aphrodite, who is led by the Horae (*Hymn* 6.14–18). We may also compare the arrival of the Muses on Olympus in the hymnic proem of Hesiod's *Theogony* (68–71).

³ See e.g. Förstel 1979: 223; Miller 1986: 12–13, 67 (both passages describe recurrent scenes); Baltés 1981: 31 (second passage is first introduction); Clay [1989] 2006: 22–29 (first passage conveys both at the same time); N.J. Richardson 2010: 5 (first passage is new introduction), but contrast 82 (the 'god's characteristic activity').

she cannot see what happens around her), while on the island of Delos Leto is in labour surrounded by all other goddesses (*h.Ap.* 91–101).

Apart from their abodes on Olympus, the gods have cult sites throughout Greece, which are often evoked by the hymnic speaker at the opening or end of his hymn, in language which mirrors the prayers of characters in epic: compare, e.g., ‘So come, you who presides over the people of fragrant Eleusis, and sea girt Paros, and rocky Antron, mistress Leto ... and Persephone’ (*h.Dem.* 490–493)⁴ to ‘Hear me, god of the silver bow, you who protects Chryse and holy Killa and rules over Tenedos, Smintheus’ (*Il.* 1.37–39). We also hear about their favourite haunts (Apollo: peaks, upper ridges of mountains, rivers running seawards, headlands, and harbours, *h.Ap.* 22–24 and 143–145; Hermes: mountainous pastures and horse-nurturing plains with cattle that dwells in the fields, *h.Herm.* 491–492), see them visiting cult sites or haunts in the course of the narrative (Aphrodite: Paphos, *h.Aphr.* 58–63) or establishing them (the palm tree on Delos, *h.Ap.* 117; the Telphusian and Delphinian altars, *h.Ap.* 382–387, 490–510; the cult of the Twelve Gods in Olympia, *h.Herm.* 105–137; the cult and cave of the Bee Maidens on Mt Parnassus, *h.Herm.* 552–566).⁵

Two hymns are even devoted *entirely* to aetiological stories of how a god founds one of his sanctuaries: Delos and Delphi in the *Hymn to Apollo* and Eleusis in the *Hymn to Demeter*. As often in early archaic narrative, the presentation of space is dynamic: we hear a great deal about the voyage which leads the god to his new sanctuary (in the first part of the *Hymn to Apollo* we follow Leto in her long search for a birthplace for her son Apollo, which finally brings her to Delos; in the second part, it is Apollo who searches long for the right place to build his oracle; the *Hymn to Demeter* recounts Demeter’s search for her daughter, who is kidnapped by Hades, which eventually brings her to Eleusis), a little about the building of the temple (*h.Ap.* 294–299; *h.Dem.* 270–272, 293–302), almost nothing about its outward appearance or rituals, but relatively much about the sacrifices brought by visitors that serve to

⁴ Cf. *h.Ap.* 30–44, *h.Herm.* 2; *h.Aphr.* 2, 292. I quote the translations of West 2003, with occasional minor changes. The Homeric translations are my own.

⁵ For a discussion of the possible actual cult sites corresponding to these references, see N.J. Richardson 2010: ad *h.Aphr.* 68–69 (Paphos); ad *h.Ap.* 493–496 (Delphinian altar), 300 (Telphusian altar); ad *h.Herm.* 128–129 (cult of the twelve Gods in Olympia); ad *h.Herm.* 552–566 (Bee Maidens, who most probably are to be connected with the Corycian nymphs).

sustain the priests (*h.Ap.* 56–60, 526–539). The silence on the rituals is self-evident in the case of the Eleusinian mysteries with their in-built secrecy (cf. *h.Dem.* 478–479: ‘the solemn mysteries which one cannot ... enquire about or broadcast, for great awe of the gods restrains the voice’). In the case of the Delphic oracle, where scholars have been puzzled by the absence of any reference to the consultation of the Pythia, it may be that the hymn describes a time *before* the establishment of this custom.⁶ Only in the case of the Delian festival for Apollo a detailed view is given (*h.Ap.* 146–178), which will be discussed below in the section on the space of the narrator.

In the *Hymn to Hermes*, the hymnic motif of a god establishing a cult site takes a special form. The central theme of this hymn is Hermes thieving and lying his way into Olympus. In other words, we see him practising his *timai*, just as the power of Aphrodite is illustrated by Aphrodite herself falling in love, of Apollo by the god playing on his lyre (*h.Ap.* 201–203) or shooting a deadly arrow (*h.Ap.* 357–358), and of Demeter by the goddess withholding or giving vegetation (*h.Dem.* 305–333, 450–456, 471–473). As the son of a nymph who lives in a cave and had intercourse there with Zeus in secret (*h.Herm.* 3–9), Hermes has to work harder to get his divine credentials accepted than Apollo, son of Leto and Zeus, Demeter, sister of Zeus, or Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus. The progression he makes in establishing himself as a god is mirrored by the gradual upgrading of his birthplace.⁷ He is born on the wooded mountain Cyllene (228–230), in a ‘shady’, ‘high-roofed’, and ‘deep-shadowed’ cave (6, 23, 229), the typical abode of nymphs (cf. e.g. *Od.* 13.103–112), which has, however, a court-yard (26), like Polyphemus’ cave (*Od.* 9.462). Trying out his self-made lyre he sings a hymn about his ‘own renowned lineage’ and the encomiastic nature of the genre allows him to endow his mother in this song with ‘servants, a splendid home, tripods and unending cauldrons’ (59–61), i.e. the kind of objects one finds in temples (cf. the tripods and cauldrons in Apollo’s temple in Delphi, 179). Hermes’ song thus has a hidden agenda, in that it lays ‘claim to a divine status he has yet to acquire.’⁸ Having performed another of the great deeds that prove his divinity, viz. stealing Apollo’s

⁶ See Chappell 2006. In the hymn it is the Cretan priests who announce Apollo’s oracles (*h.Ap.* 393–396), with the present tense suggesting that they are (still) doing so in the narrator’s time.

⁷ See discussion in Rougier-Blanc 2005: 37–39.

⁸ Clay [1989] 2006: 110.

cattle, he returns to the cave, which now turns out to have a *megaron*, doors, and a 'rich inner sanctum' (146–149; cf. *h.Ap.* 523), just as Hermes himself is now called a 'god' (138, 154). To his mother Hermes reveals his ambitions openly: 'It is better to spend every day in pleasant chat among the gods, with wealth and riches and substance, than to sit at home in a gloomy cave' (170–172). When, finally, Apollo comes to the cave in order to look for his stolen cattle, it has expanded into 'a great house', which contains 'closets with nectar, ambrosia, gold, silver, purple and white garments, such things as the blessed gods' holy houses contain' (246–251). Hermes' birth-place has now turned into a temple and he is ready to go to Olympus.⁹

Hymnic gods not only have cult sites but also cult objects. Whereas in (→) Homer objects are commonly described briefly as regards their outward appearance while the main focus falls on their history (how they were made, how their present owners got them, etc.), in the aetiological hymns we typically see a god inventing or acquiring one of his attributes. Thus Apollo presents Hermes with his famous wand (*kērukeion* or *caduceus*) 'very beautiful, made of gold, trefoil' (*h.Herm.* 528–532), and from now on he is called *khrusorrapis*, 'with golden wand' (539, cf. *Od.* 5.87; 10.277, 331). That same hymn contains a very detailed description of Hermes constructing the first lyre from a tortoise (41–51), an instrument that he will later present to Apollo in order to reconcile him (475–496), thus providing that god with his stock attribute, which elsewhere he is seen to have right from his birth (*h.Ap.* 131, 182, 201–202).¹⁰

Divine Journeys

An important element in all of the four larger Homeric hymns is the divine journey. To analyse them properly, it will be helpful to start with a brief discussion of divine travel in the Homeric epics.¹¹ Gods travel walking on foot, riding in a chariot, and flying through the air, or they simply reach their destination, without an indication of how exactly they

⁹ The difference with Apollo's Delos and Delphi and Demeter's Eleusis is, of course, that the cave of Maia in Cyllene has, as far as we know, never become a *real* cult place.

¹⁰ Another cult object is the 'jointed stool' covered by a fleece on which Demeter is made to sit by Iambe (*h.Dem.* 192–205); see N.J. Richardson 1974: ad 192–211.

¹¹ For discussions of divine travel, see Kullmann 1956: 89–93 and Sowa 1984: 212–235. They focus on the combination of typical elements rather than the methods of transportation.

transport themselves. It has been suggested that ‘it is hard to see why one method of transport is chosen over another’,¹² but it would seem that there are good narrative reasons after all. Poseidon at *Il.* 13.17–22 displays the typically divine cross between *walking* and *flying*, i.e. stepping from one mountain peak to the other: he comes down from the island Samothrace’s peak, takes three strides which make forests and mountains tremble under his feet and with the fourth reaches Aegae, where his underwater palace is (*Il.* 13.17–22). Both ease and speed mark his voyage as divine, while the ‘mountain-stepping’ no doubt is connected to Greek gods being associated with and worshipped on mountain peaks. In Aegae the god then turns to another form of transport: he mounts his *chariot* to move over the waters to a cave deep in the water between Tenedus and Imbrus near the Trojan coast, while the ‘sea-beasts gather from their lairs and gambol at his coming, recognising their lord’ (23–30).¹³ Art regularly depicts Poseidon riding the waves in a chariot and the second leg of his voyage thus shows him in his natural habitat and exercising his power as a sea-god. The elaborate account of his divine journey amply puts the spotlight on this god and prepares for his intervention into the battle, which will defy Zeus’ will.

Hermes, armed with his winged sandals, *flies* over the sea to the distant island of Calypso (*Od.* 5.49–55). Hera’s voyage at *Il.* 14.225–230 and 281–293 displays the divine cross between flying and mountain-stepping, but in its second leg follows a so-called *hodological* route, which is typical of human travellers and which consists in moving from one landmark to another:¹⁴ from Mt Athos she crosses the sea to the island Lemnos; thence she moves northeastwards to the island Imbrus, then southwards down the coast of the Troad to Lekton, its southwest tip, and from there walks up to Zeus, who is sitting on Mt Ida. The combination of the miraculous divine (way of travelling) and the anthropomorphic (route) is typical for the conception of the gods in Greek literature.¹⁵

¹² Kearns 2004: 63.

¹³ For other instances of gods using a chariot, see *Il.* 5.364–369, 720–777; 8.41–50, 382–396, 438–439; *Od.* 5.380–381.

¹⁴ The principle is best known from the *periplous*-format of the seafarer’s geography. See Gehrke 2007. The term ‘hodological’ is introduced (though not coined) by Janni 1984: 79–90, esp. 82. In a way, Odysseus’ adventurous voyage of *Od.* 9–12 has a hodological structure, witness the formulaic ‘from there we sailed on’ and the indication of the number of days travelled, though the stations are, of course, no known landmarks but rather unknown and dangerous new territories.

¹⁵ See Kearns 2004 (esp. 63).

Finally, there is the procedure whereby a god is simply said to *reach* his or her destination, as when Athena moves from the peaks of Olympus to Ithaca in two lines (*Od.* 1.102–103).¹⁶ This brevity may be due to narrative economy, the narrator wanting to rush on with his story, but often it suggests that gods move at a supernatural speed. The narrator may make the numinous speed of divine travel explicit by inserting a comparison: Athena comes shooting down ‘like a star’ (*Il.* 4.74–79) and Hera moves as quickly ‘as the thoughts dart in the mind of a man who has travelled over many lands, and in his subtle imagination he calls up many memories, thinking to himself, “Let me be there or there”’ (*Il.* 15.79–83).¹⁷

Let us now, armed with this overview of epic divine travel turn to the movements of the gods in the hymns. Aphrodite *walks* across the Ida towards Anchises’ farmstead, which allows the narrator to give us a taste of her power, since wild animals leave their lairs and start coupling (*h.Aphr.* 69–74). The musical god Apollo may lead a dancing procession (*h.Ap.* 501–502, 514–519; *h.Herm.* 505–506).¹⁸ In their restless moving about in the *Hymn to Hermes* both Hermes and Apollo never turn to flying or the use of a chariot but walk and run. The reason is not difficult to think of. The whole point of the story consists in Hermes stealing Apollo’s cattle and then cleverly disguising his tracks by using specially invented shoes and driving the animals backwards (69–104) and Apollo as a kind of sleuth looking for trails and interviewing a witness along the road (186–234).

Hades uses a *chariot* when carrying off Persephone (cf. *h.Dem.* 18, 19), probably because, like Poseidon and his chariot, this is his typical attribute in visual art.¹⁹ When Hermes later brings back Persephone from the Underworld to her mother in Eleusis, he borrows Hades’ chariot

¹⁶ Cf. *Od.* 6.2–20; 13.160; 15.1–4. Such brief formulations are found regularly when a god returns to Olympus after an intervention on earth, e.g. *Il.* 1.221–222; *Od.* 7.78–80.

¹⁷ When a travelling god is compared to a bird (e.g. *Od.* 1.319–320; 3.371–372; 5.51–54), there is the much debated problem whether this is a mere comparison or whether it implies a metamorphosis; for discussion and literature, see de Jong 2001a: ad 1.319–324. For explicit indications of the gods’ speed, see 13.18, 24, 30; 5.770–772.

¹⁸ In the case of Demeter’s frantic search for her kidnapped daughter Demeter her way of moving is not entirely clear: she is running with burning torches in her hand (cf. 47–48, 61), but also speeds ‘like a bird over land and water’ (43), which suggests flying.

¹⁹ N.J. Richardson 1974: ad 19 suggests that the chariot typically belongs to epic rape scenes, but not all of them involve a chariot.

(375–389).²⁰ In both cases we hear of the chariot moving not only over land and sea but also over mountains, which suggests a cross between riding and flying.²¹ When ‘the Phrygian girl’/Aphrodite in her lying tale tells how she was snatched away from the dance by Hermes and brought to Mt Ida, she explicitly says that she was *flying* with Hermes through the air (cf. ‘I felt that my feet were not touching the grain-growing earth’, *h.Aphr.* 125); this time Hermes has no chariot but, simply relying on his winged sandals, flies while holding his ‘fare’ in his arms, as he seems to do with Helen in E. *Helen* (cf. 1671 ‘on your journey through the sky’). This may be a mirroring of the fact that in actual truth Aphrodite herself flew from Paphos to Ida (66–67).

In the last two cases the hymnic narrator attempts something new in comparison to the Homeric epics, viz. to convey the sensation of flying: ‘neither sea nor flowing rivers nor glassy gleans nor mountain peaks stayed the immortal steeds’ impetus, but they passed over them cleaving the deep air’ (*h.Dem.* 380–383).²² A rudimentary form of this device is found in Hermes’ description of his (air-)voyage to the remote island of Calypso (‘Who would choose to go all the way across that endless tract of salt water? There is no city of mortals anywhere near, where they make sacrifices and offer gods choice hecatombs’, *Od.* 5.100–103), while a more advanced example will be found in (→) Apollonius Rhodius’ description of Eros’ flight from Olympus to Aia (‘In his passage through the vast sky, the fertile earth, the cities of men, and the sacred streams of rivers opened up beneath him’, *Arg.* 3.160–167).

Apollo at *h.Herm.* 227–230 simply arrives at his destination, since there is no narrative need to elaborate on his travelling.²³ And brevity of narration suggests divine speed, when Iris, sent to fetch Eileithyia, ‘quickly crossed the intervening space’ between Delos and Olympus (*h.Ap.* 108).²⁴ As in (→) Homer, but less frequently, comparisons may

²⁰ For another chariot-voyage, see *h.Dem.* 88–89, which perhaps involves flying (N.J. Richardson 1974: ad 89).

²¹ See N.J. Richardson 1974: ad 380–383. The flying may be due to the horses being winged (see previous note).

²² Cf. *h.Dem.* 33–34 and *h.Aphr.* 122–125.

²³ Having described the journeys of Hermes and Apollo from Mt Cyllene to Pieria, where Apollo’s cattle is grazing, and then back via Onchestus to the river Alpheus/Pylos, where Hermes leaves the cattle he has stolen at a farmstead/in a cave (and making a third time Apollo reconstruct Hermes’ journey, in front of Zeus: 336–360), the narrator at 397–398 recounts their joint return to the place of crime only briefly.

²⁴ Cf. *h.Dem.* 317–318, 340–342.

underscore the numinous nature of divine travelling, as when Apollo returns from his temple at Delphi to the ship with Cretan sailors who are to become his priests ‘quick as a thought’ (*h.Ap.* 448).²⁵

It is fitting to conclude this section with a discussion of the *Hymn to Apollo*, in which divine travel is something of a leitmotif. In the attributive sections we hear that Apollo has ‘many temples and wooded groves’, and that ‘all the peaks, upper ridges of mountains, headlands, rivers running towards the sea, and harbours’ find favour with him (22–24, 144–145). This already suggests a god who ‘roams the islands and the world of men’ (142) a great deal, in order to visit all his cult sites. The narrative parts then recount three journeys, which mention many of these sites: the journey of his mother Leto around the Aegean looking for a place to give birth to Apollo, which at the same time is an evocation of Apollo’s Aegean dominion (30–50); his own journey through northern Greece in search for a place to found his oracle (216–293), which may reflect ‘the religious association of various northern Greek communities with Delphi’;²⁶ and his sea journey round the Peloponnese to Delphi/Crisa together with the Cretan sailors (409–439), which mirrors other mythological voyages rather than that it evokes a string of cult sites or a cultic unity.

All three journeys take the form of a catalogue, but they are differently organized.²⁷ The first catalogue is a list of Aegean cult places of Apollo that is presented from a panoramic narratorial standpoint:²⁸

All whom Crete has within it, and Athens,
the island of Aegina, Euboea famed for ships,
Aegae, Eiresiae, and maritime Peparethus,
Thracian Athos and the summits of Pelion,
Samothrace and Ida’s shaded mountains ...
All that way Leto travelled when pregnant with the Far-shooter.

The catalogue is static (it contains only one verb: ‘has within it’) and only at the very end does it turn out to convey also the journey of Leto, who ‘fly-steps’ from peak to peak and from island to island. There are no indications of time, but presumably Leto is wandering for nine

²⁵ Cf. *h.Ap.* 186–187, 440–443; *h.Dem.* 43–44, and N.J. Richardson 2010: ad *h.Ap.* 186–188.

²⁶ N.J. Richardson 2010: ad *h.Ap.* 216–286.

²⁷ See Baltes 1981; and discussion in N.J. Richardson 2010: ad locc. He also has helpful maps.

²⁸ Cf. Miller 1986: 33: a ‘stately survey of Apollo’s dominion, conducted from some distant vantage-point high over the Aegean’.

months, rather than voyaging at divine speed. The double function of the catalogue is highly effective: the same places who first fear to receive Apollo will later all become part of his dominion. His later magnificence contrasts with the straitened circumstances of his first appearance in the world.

The second catalogue, Apollo's itinerary in search of the right location of his oracle, is dynamic and presented from an actorial standpoint, the narrator as it were following in the footsteps of Apollo:

To Pieria first you came down from Olympus;
 you passed by sandy Lectus ...
 Soon you reached Iolcus, ...
 From there you crossed the Euripus, ...
 From there you went on, far-shooting Apollo,
 and reached Onchestus ...

This journey is, once more, a mix of the mortal (the god's route is *hodological*) and the divine (both the quick succession of names and the repeated 'quickly' at 218, 222, 281 refer to the typically divine speed, which only slows down near the end, when Apollo reaches his goal).

Apollo's third journey, on board the Cretan ship, naturally takes the form of a *periplous*, the narrator adopting an actorial standpoint that at times even includes embedded focalization:

Journeying on, the ship reached Arene and lovely Argyrhea,
 Thyron where the Alpheus is forded and well-cultivated Aipy ...
 As it headed for Pheia, exulting in the divine tailwind,
 from under the clouds there appeared to them Ithaca's steep mountain,
 Doulichion and Same and wooded Zacynthus.
 But when it had rounded the whole of the Peloponnese ...

Taken together, the three catalogues show the extent of Apollo's power and thereby confirm the panhellenic aspirations of his Delphic oracle: 'here I am minded to make my beautiful temple as an oracle for humankind, who will ever come in crowds bringing me perfect hecatombs, both those who live in the fertile Peloponnese and those who live in Europe (the northern mainland) and the sea girl islands' (247–251). In fact, according to Clay, the Homeric hymns themselves would have a decided panhellenic orientation and be composed for presentation in the Greek world at large.²⁹ This brings up the question of the space of the hymnic narrator.

²⁹ Clay [1989] 2006: 10, 52.

Space of the Hymnic Narrator

Hymnic narrators resemble the epic narrator in that they do not mention their name or provide biographical details. Unlike him, however, they occasionally refer to their own space, in the introductory or closing parts of the hymns. Thus we hear about ‘this contest’ (6.19–20), ‘this city’ (13.3), ‘this house’ (24.4), and ‘these (rituals)’ (*h.Dem.* 480), all with the proximal deictic pronoun *hode*. The extratextual referent of ‘this’ is not specified, because it is clear for the hymnic narratees, who find themselves at the same place as the narrator.

There is one hymn which contains an exceptionally long reference to the narrator’s space, which turns out to be the same as the setting of its (first) narrative: the island of Delos in the *Hymn to Apollo*. The first view of ‘rocky, sea-girt Delos’ (26–27) is given by Leto, and it is not a very attractive one: as she points out to Delos herself, it is ‘not rich in cattle or sheep’, does ‘not bring forth a harvest or grow abundant fruit trees’, in short it has ‘no richness under its soil’. But if Delos will receive her son Apollo, he will build a temple and ‘all men will bring you hecatombs as they congregate here’ (51–60). Delos is willing, but fears that Apollo may be so disappointed with her as to kick her over into the sea, so that octopuses and seals will make a home in her (70–78). Leto then swears that Apollo will honour her above all others (87–88).

Then the narrator plays a spectacular trick. Instead of narrating how the god builds his temple and establishes his cult (as he does e.g. at *h.Dem.* 293–302, 473–477), he follows in the footsteps of Apollo visiting Delos *while his cult is already in full swing* (*h.Ap.* 146–150):

But it is in Delos, Phoebus, that your heart most delights,
where the Ionians with trailing robes assemble
with their children and wives on your avenue,
and when they have seated the gathering
they think of you and entertain you with
boxing, dancing, and singing.

It is the god himself who focalizes the festival of the Ionians. Then the narrator introduces an anonymous witness, who takes over the focalization (151–155):

A man might think they were the unaging immortals
if he came along then when the Ionians are all together:
he would take in the beauty of the whole scene and be delighted
at the spectacle of the men and the fair-girt women,
the swift ships and the people’s piles of belongings.

It would seem that the narrator, wishing to make the point that the assembled Ionians resemble the gods, could not use the focalization of Apollo (who presumably would never call mortals immortal), and yet wanted a more authoritative focalizer than himself. For this reason, he introduces a 'hypothetical observer from outside the pan-Ionian community ... whose testimony carries conviction because it is independent of ethnic or cultic allegiances'.³⁰

Through the combined focalizations of Apollo and the anonymous witness the narrator confirms the truth of Leto's earlier promise that Delos as the seat of Apollo's cult would attract many visitors. But he does not stop here. He takes over from the anonymous witness and himself focalizes the highpoint of the festival, the amazing chorus of the Maidens of Delos (156–164). The proximal deictic pronoun *tode* (156) suggests that the narrator is actually in the presence of the Maidens. Indeed, another deictic marker, *enthade* at 168, confirms that the narrator finds himself on Delos, since the *enthade* at 170, in a speech addressed to the Maidens of Delos, makes clear that 'here' means 'on Delos'.³¹ The narrated world has merged, metaleptically, with the world of the narrator.³² The narrator even addresses the Maidens, discussing their and his own poetic performances, and from this conversation we get an even broader picture of the world of this hymnic narrator: he was born on Chios, now performs on Delos, and professionally 'roams the well-ordered cities of men'.

Such stray deictic references to the space of the narrator are of course relevant to the vexed question of the performance of the hymns. Most scholars assume that they were performed at cult places at the occasion of festivals. Some even assume that the hymn paid honour to the god of the festival concerned: the *Hymn to Demeter* may have been performed at Eleusis in conjunction with the Eleusinian Games or the *Ballētus* festival in honour of Demophon, the *Hymn to Apollo* has been connected with the Delian festival, the *Hymn to Hermes* with Olympia and with the athletic festival of *Hermaea*, which took place at various places in

³⁰ Miller 1986: 58.

³¹ Cf. also earlier *enthade* at 80, in a speech by Delos (and *tēide*, in a speech by Leto). Note that the second, Pythian, part of the *Hymn to Apollo* also contains numerous instances of *enthade*, which all occur, however, in speeches (247, 249, 258, 287, 289, 366, 381).

³² See de Jong 2009.

Greece.³³ Other scholars, however, are less sure of a specific relationship between hymned god and festival.³⁴ Clay even cuts through the relationship between festival and hymn altogether and argues for them to have been sung at symposia.³⁵ To decide in this matter lies outside the competence of a narratological analysis of space. It may well be that originally composed for local festivals, the hymns soon were reperformed all through Greece, in much the same way as the (→) Pindaric and Bacchylidean odes. The deixis *ad oculos* that the instances of *hode* expressed at the original performance could easily become deixis *ad phantasma* at later reperformances.

The Functions of Hymnic Space

As the preceding analyses have made clear, space hardly ever is mere setting in the hymns. It is nearly always associated in one way or another, often aetiologically, with cults of the hymned god. Indeed, hymnic narrators are not very interested in setting the stage at all: thus the underworld to which Persephone is abducted, the palace of Celeus at Eleusis, which receives Demeter, or the 'high-roofed steading' near the river Alpheus, where Apollo's stolen cattle is hidden, are barely described. Conversely, sometimes places are described which have no obvious relation to the action at all but are of religious importance, the most notable example being Onchestus, a sacred grove of Poseidon already known from *Il.* 2.506, which Apollo passes during his quest for a place for his oracle (*h.Ap.* 230–238) and when searching for his stolen cattle (*h.Herm.* 186–187, cf. Hermes passing the same place at 86–87).³⁶

The aetiological spirit of the hymnic narrator also makes him include, once, a so-called 'antiquarian flashback', a device which embryonically appears at *Il.* 20.216–218 ('Dardanus founded Dardania, when sacred

³³ See N.J. Richardson 1974: 12; N.J. Richardson 2010: 15, 24–25; Johnston 2002 (connection with *Hermaea*).

³⁴ See e.g. Parker 1991 ('We should surely wonder, at the least, whether the Hymns, works designed to entertain and needing no pious devotion to render them palatable, were necessarily any more occasional or context-bound than was epic itself', 2) and Garcia 2002 ('the hymnist was charged with achieving the god's presence through narrative', 9).

³⁵ Clay [1989] 2006: 7.

³⁶ For Onchestus, see Clay [1989] 2006: 115 and N.J. Richardson 2010: ad *h.Ap.* 231–238 and ad *h.Herm.* 88.

Ilios had not yet been built as a city of mortals but they still lived on the slopes of the Ida'), and which was to have a great future in Apollonius of Rhodes and (→) Callimachus: 'Apollo arrived at the site of Thebes, which was cloaked in vegetation, for *no* mortal *yet* dwelt in holy Thebes and there were *not yet* any paths or roads crossing the wheat-bearing Theban plain, but it was occupied by wild growth' (*h.Ap.* 225–228).³⁷

If space is largely religiously coloured and motivated, the hymns also witness the birth of an important erotic topos (and symbolic use of space): the meadow of love. Young girls are typically abducted while picking flowers in a meadow, with the flowers symbolically suggesting their youth and beauty, which are soon to be deflowered (cf. e.g. E. *Ion* 887–896; *Hel.* 244–249; Moschus *Europa* 32–36, 63–69).³⁸ In the *Hymn to Demeter* first the hymnic narrator recounts how Persephone was abducted by Hades while picking 'beautiful' flowers in a 'soft meadow', then Persephone herself reports the event to her mother, and with hindsight now associates the flowers with eros (425, and cf. 417). It seems that the symbolic setting was more important than the geographical one, which the hymnic narrator places in Nysa, for reasons which so far have escaped commentators but which may have been a mere mythological reflex.³⁹

But perhaps most characteristic for the hymns are the many instances of personification: the projection of human traits into inanimate objects or nature, and animals. This phenomenon is already known from (→) Homer, where the sea 'divides a path for Poseidon in joyfulness' (*Il.* 13.27–29), and Hesiod, where the house of Zeus 'takes delight in' the lily-like voice of the Muses (*Th.* 40), but the hymns are particularly packed with it: countries 'are afraid' of Apollo (*h.Ap.* 46–48), the earth 'smiles at' the birth of Apollo (*h.Ap.* 118), the sky, earth and sea 'smile at' the beautiful narcissus, created to lure Persephone (*h.Dem.* 13–14), and olive trees 'do not hear' Persephone's cries (*h.Dem.* 23).⁴⁰

³⁷ The term derives from Hopkinson 1984: ad 24. For a comparable way of looking at a place from different temporal perspectives, see *h.Dem.* 450–456 (the Rarian plain which used to be life-giving, at present is barren, but soon will produce wheat again).

³⁸ A useful discussion in Bremer 1975: 268–274.

³⁹ See N.J. Richardson 1974: ad 17.

⁴⁰ Related are instances where nature responds physically to the numinous power or presence of gods: cf. Aphrodite being fawned upon by normally ferocious beasts (*h.Aphr.* 69–74); the miraculous gushing of wine and growing of a vine on the ship that transports Dionysus as a captive (*Hymn* 7.34–42), mountains trembling, and the earth and sea

The most radical case is the island of Delos in the *Hymn to Apollo*, the depiction of which constantly switches between the physical and the anthropomorphic:⁴¹ Leto ‘sets foot’ on Delos, and then addresses her, but talks about her very much in terms of an island, which is to become ‘the seat’ of Apollo but at present ‘does not bring forth a harvest or grow abundant fruit’. Delos answers, both referring to herself as ‘island’ and speaking about her ‘head’. Delos then ‘rejoices’ in the birth of Apollo but at the same time ‘becomes laden with golden growth’. The ambiguity inherent in this picture has been anticipated in (→) Homer, where the river Scamander in *Iliad* 21 is likewise both river (213, 218) and man (212–213): ‘all this is very strange and very hard to visualise, and it is a reminder of the gulf between Greek and modern ways of talking and thinking about the visible phenomena of nature.’⁴² The personification of the island Delos will be further radicalised and by then—most probably—turned into literary play by (→) Callimachus in his *Hymn to Delos*.

Conclusion

The Homeric hymns have recently been situated, as regards their language, between Homer and lyric.⁴³ It would seem that in their treatment of space, too, they are aligned both to epic, e.g. in the central role of Olympus or the treatment of the journeys of gods, and to lyric, e.g. as regards the incipient evocation of the space of the narrator via proximal deictic markers. But their overriding interest lies with the (often aetiologically charged) cult sites and cult objects of the gods they hymn, which are crammed in whenever possible, even when the story does not need them.

shuddering when Artemis goes out to hunt and shoot her grievous arrows (*Hymn* 27.6–9), and Olympus, the earth, sea, and sun reacting to the birth of Athena out of Zeus’ head (*Hymn* 28.9–14). The same phenomenon is found in (→) Homer, when the earth ‘put forth fresh-springing grass, and dewy clover, and saffron, and hyacinth thick and soft’ underneath Zeus and Hera making love on Mt Ida (*Il.* 14.347–349); Hesiod, when grass grows under Aphrodite’s feet as she steps ashore newly born (*Th.* 194); and Euripides, e.g. *IT* 1243–1244 and *Ion* 1078–1080.

⁴¹ See Parker 1991: 4; Fröhder 1994: 84–87; M. Clarke 1997: 67–69.

⁴² M. Clarke 1997: 68.

⁴³ N.J. Richardson 2010: 8.