her mother', edited to placate Demeter. While the Olympian frame is clearly 'in the male voice', affirming patriarchal control of events,

> the core story just as clearly is in the female voice: women are the active subjects as well as objects; women control events; relationships are adjusted on the basis of understanding, accommodation, sharing, rather than hierarchization; the predominant motivation for action is love, not power; the matrilineal line is emphasized.

Suter argues that the *Hymn* was composed as an *aition* (account of origin) not only of the Eleusinian Mysteries but of the women's festival called the Thesmophoria, where it may have been performed 'by a woman, for women'.

Suter's balanced discussion acknowledges that women can speak in 'the male voice', adopting, or at least mouthing, patriarchal values; and she makes the important point that 'male' or 'female', as descriptions of the 'voice' of a poem, should not be equated with the biological sex of the author. We know that Greek women composed lyric poetry of the highest quality and that some composed in hexameters, the metre of epic; is it impossible that some of them should have mastered the compositional technique of 'Homeric' verse, in which the *Hymn to Demeter* was cast? We tend to assume that women were barred from the traditional apprenticeship by which male bards learned their art, but a remarkable instance of women performing oral epic has recently been reported from nineteenth and twentieth century Dalmatia.[13] Very little of their material has yet been published. Given the short time that scholarship has concerned itself with women's traditions, it is too early to foreclose the possibilities of women's participation in art forms we tend to think of as masculine.

Gender systems

I chose to begin with the myth of Demeter because the variety of existing versions makes especially clear the complex relationships