THE MEADOW OF LOVE AND TWO PASSAGES IN EURIPIDES' HIPPOLYTUS*)

BY

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The purpose of this paper is twofold: first to show that in the tradition of Greek poetry a description of a flowery meadow occurs frequently in a context of female beauty to be enjoyed (if virginity, then virginity not as 'inviolabilis' but as 'violanda')—briefly, that the description of a meadow may have definite erotic implications; secondly to search for the particular meaning of the two descriptions of a meadow, occurring in Eur. Hipp. 73-78 and 208-211.

I

The monumental work of Ernst Robert Curtius 1) contains a chapter in which the poetic tradition of the 'Ideallandschaft', more especially of the 'Lustort', is sketched. More details are found in Schönbeck's dissertation 2) on the subject. Recently A. Motte 3) has published a comprehensive monograph about the function of 'prairies et jardins' in Greek religion and philosophy. According to him the Greeks inherited from Aegean, pre-Greek mythology the tradition that the meadow is the sacred

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1) E. R. Curtius, Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter (Bern-München 19481, 19738), 191-206.


3) A. Motte, Prairies et Jardins de la Grèce Antique, Ac. Roy. de Belg. Mém. Classe des Lettres, 2ème série, tome 61, fasc. 5, 1973 (517 pp.). Prof. J. Mansfeld of Utrecht University directed my attention to this work.
place where the Πότνωξ reigns, in which she manifests herself—as the goddess of fecundity and fertility 4). The ἱερός γάμος between Earth and Heaven is consummated in a meadow, or, to put it more precisely, creates the meadow. Compare the splendid scene in the Iliad (XIV 346-351), when Zeus is seduced by Hera:

Note the elements of the description: the freshness of the grass, the drops of dew, the variety of flowers. The event is, in fact, an iteration of the very first time Zeus made love to Hera (as Zeus himself seems to remember, XIV 294-296). That took place in the open, too: it was in the garden of the Hesperids where splendid apples hang on the tree; Eur. Hipp. 748-751 (as printed by Barrett in his edition 5) :

There is another epic scene which has—perhaps even more than the preceding one—established the tradition of the flowery meadow as a place of love, more specifically as a place where virginity finds its end and fulfilment in sexuality: the opening passage of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. While Persephone is

4) In the first part of Motte's book this thesis is presented with much material and much speculative argument. Cp. pp. 1-147, summarized in 147-153.

5) Barrett ad loc. refers to the mythological tradition about this ἱερός γάμος consummated in the θεων κῆπως or "Ἡρας λεμών. The point can be made with more effect on the basis of the evidence offered by Motte, esp. 104-114, 216-226. Compare, too, E. Simon, Die Götter der Griechen (München 1969), 43-54.