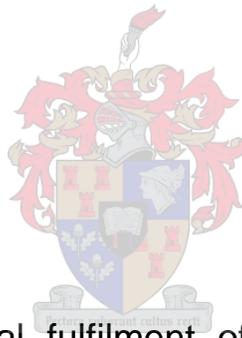


Aspects of the Demeter/Persephone myth in modern fiction

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Supervisor: Dr Sjarlene Thom

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.



Signature:

Date:

THE DEMETER/PERSEPHONE MYTH IN MODERN FICTION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The question that this thesis aims to examine is how the motifs of the myth of Demeter and Persephone have been perpetuated in three modern works of fiction, which are *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* by Meredith Ann Pierce, *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris and *House of Women* by Lynn Freed. It is the aim of this work to substantiate that the issues that the ancient myth of Demeter and Persephone highlights, are still of value in this modern world and that the same human issues that women had to come to terms with then, continue to be relevant today.

Briefly, the myth of Demeter and Persephone is about Demeter, the Olympian goddess of agricultural fertility, whose daughter Persephone is abducted by Hades, the god of the Underworld. The myth tells of Demeter's grief at the loss of Persephone, and her desperate search for her daughter. Due to her grief, she stops all plants from growing which could be fatal to the mortals, and would have repercussions for the immortals that they serve. Demeter and Persephone are eventually reunited and the earth flourishes with growth once more. However for one-third of the year Persephone must descend to the Underworld to be at the side of Hades, at which time it is winter and plants do not grow. Then for two-thirds of the year she ascends to be with her mother, Demeter, and plants blossom and ripen, and it is the time of spring and summer.

The impact of myth is not dead. Myths are very much alive today, which is an indication that they have endured throughout the ages. In fact because myths are told in stories representing significant characteristics of human experience, this has contributed to their survival for more than two thousand five hundred years, after their first documentations by Homer and Hesiod in approximately 750 – 650 B.C. As time has gone by, newer versions and reinterpretations of myths have continued to reflect the concerns that men and women had, and continue to have. Basic concerns that humans had in ancient times are still relevant and need to be expressed today.

The continued existence of myth can be witnessed in modern times. It plays a role in such fields as psychology, sociology, art, literature, music and even advertising. The familiarity of a myth lends itself to “sell” or explain an idea to the listener/viewer/reader. This is the case with the Demeter/Persephone myth, which has been used by women to recognize and come to terms with the stages that they go through in life, as maiden, mother and crone. Especially in the 20th Century, we have seen a reawakening of goddess worship, which can probably be attributed to the groundwork of the Women’s Liberation Movement, and before that, other women’s organisations, such as the Suffragettes.¹ As Gallagher (2002: 6) elucidates “present-day Goddess spirituality grew up out of two very different movements. These are the pagan movement, spearheaded in the first instance by Wicca, a mystery religion, and the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It was to a certain extent, the crossing over of these movements that produced, or fed into, Goddess spirituality as we now know it.”

This thesis will focus on an examination of how the motifs of the classical myth of Demeter and Persephone have been perpetuated in three very different modern works of fiction. The aim is to identify important human issues in the myth, and to establish whether these modern novels encompass similar issues that are still important to human life today. However, in order to identify the various motifs of the myth and to link them to similar themes in modern works of fiction, it is important to look at the various theories and interpretations of the Demeter/Persephone myth.

According to Harris and Platzner (2001:1043), myth from the Greek word *mythos* can be interpreted as a story typically involving gods and/or heroes whose adventures represent significant aspects of human experience. Indeed, the Demeter/Persephone myth is no different. As a symbolic narrative, the Demeter/Persephone myth can be interpreted in a number of ways. Whether it is the reason for the seasons of the year, the story of a mother’s loss of her daughter, the psychological road that all women must follow to reach their chosen path in life, or a power struggle between males and females – or the institutions that they may represent, this myth has significance in the human experience – especially that of women.

¹ Refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_feminism, and see also De Beauvoir (1949:128-169).

Harris and Platzner (2001:37-52) indicate that modern interpretations of myths fall into two broad categories: externalist theories (those that assume an external basis where myth is a product of the environment) and internalist theories (where myth is seen as an expression of the human mind). However it is important when interpreting the myth not to force it into a specific mould or theory. At times a number of different approaches could be significant. Some myths can also be free of being associated with a specific theory and the emphasis is placed on historical circumstances. As Campbell mentions in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949:381) "There is no final system for the interpretation of myths, and never will there be such a thing."

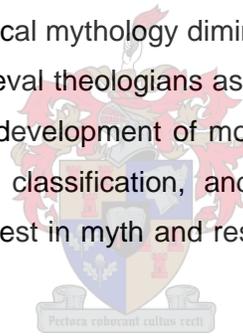
As Laura Sims explains "A myth is like an ecosystem. It is more than the sum of its parts, and no single event stands without the relatedness of all other parts of the story. It exists on all levels at once, material, spiritual, ecological, personal and physical. The myth, when spoken or enacted, has meaning and potency only in the present. It takes shape according to who is telling it, when it is being told, who is hearing it, and the environment or season in which the performance takes place. No matter how carefully it is studied, analyzed and understood, the very nature of myth undoes any fixed meaning or analysis. The myth is alive – more close to the truth than fact – and must be approached like wilderness, on its own terms, to be experienced fully" (Downing 1994: 275).

In fact, males and females will interpret and understand the Demeter/Persephone myth differently, since the interpretation is also dependant on the readers' current life experience, age and worldview. For example, as Downing (1994:3) mentions, eco-feminists would move beyond the psychological interpretations of the myth and "emphasize its relevance to their concerns about the earth's renewal." Downing (1994:3) also mentions that the Demeter/Persephone myth has enthralled women, such as feminists who look for ways of establishing its relevance to the lives of women. However, this myth is not just about women, it is about gender issues, about the relationship not only of mothers and daughters, but it is also about the relationship between men and women.

THEORIES FOR INTERPRETING THE MYTH

In archaic times the ancient Greeks appeared to accept their myths as credible explanations of their distant past. However with the rise of philosophy some ancient scholars were more critical, such as the poet Theagenes (c. 525 B.C.) who viewed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as allegories that could not be interpreted literally.² Homer was criticised for his portrayal of the gods as lacking ethical standards – for example their vindictiveness, adultery and theft. Philosophers such as Socrates (c. 469-399 B.C.) and his student Plato (427-347 B.C.) were also offended by the lack of morals of the Olympian gods. Then there was the Hellenistic theory known as *Euhemerism*, whereby otherwise forgotten but important mortals were deified after death.³

Harris and Platzner (2001:37) point out that with the advent of Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century A.D., classical mythology was denounced and the value of classical mythology diminished during the Middle Ages, with the gods being regarded by medieval theologians as demons. The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century A.D. saw the development of modern scientific methodology, which emphasized “reason, objectivity, classification, and analysis,” and which eventually inspired a renewed scholarly interest in myth and resurgence in the study of myths and the interpretations thereof.



EXTERNALIST THEORIES

These theories view myth as pre-scientific attempts to explain natural phenomena, or to justify social, religious and political customs or institutions.

- ❖ Nature myths are representations of natural phenomena. This theory holds that myth is a response to the power of nature, especially phenomena that affect human life. Many myths embody natural and meteorological processes, such as

² Metcalfe (1998:34) defines an allegory as a poem, picture, play or story in which the characters and events are represented symbolically.

³ Harris and Platzner (2001:36) tell of Euhemerus of Messene who proposed a radical theory that the Homeric gods were originally mortals who were great leaders who were posthumously elevated to divine status.

Zeus being the gatherer of storms and hurling lightning bolts, or Helios being the sun, or Poseidon the lord of the sea and earthquakes and Persephone's ascent from the Underworld resulting in the return of Spring to the earth. However, to attempt to interpret myths solely on the basis of natural phenomena will result in most of them not being clearly understood.

- ❖ Another externalist theory associates myth with ritual, where it has been argued that myths are the by-product of a ritual ceremony, or that rituals are a consequence of myth. Ritualists believe that myths are accounts that have been made-up to explain ritual enactments whose origins are long forgotten. Examples of myths supposedly based on rituals are the annual Dionysian celebrations, the annual Lemnian rituals and the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter. Csapo (2005:260) indicates that "the links between agriculture and marriage are frequently stressed in myth and ritual: in the Thesmophoria, for example, the principal festival of Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, only married women were allowed to participate, and the main sacrifice was to promote the fertility of the crops."
- ❖ The Charter theory is based on stories that serve to justify or validate rites, customs and practices and their regular recurrence, making it possible to maintain order and stability, for instance when Prometheus tricked Zeus into partaking of the least appetising part of a sacrifice, whereas the mortals receive the choicest portions. As Csapo (2005: 143) mentions "the most obvious charter myth is a myth of origin." The Demeter/Persephone myth can also be regarded as a myth of origin as it is about the emergence of a new order on Olympus – that of Demeter's (goddess) victory over the patriarch Zeus (supreme god), which she achieved by standing firm until she managed to have her daughter Persephone back with her, for two-thirds of every year, and which is celebrated with the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries.
- ❖ Then there is the etiological methodology of myth interpretation, whereby scholars explain that myths represent attempts to explain the origins of natural,

psychological and social phenomena.⁴ In terms of the Demeter/Persephone myth, one could ask: “why do we have different seasons in the year?”

INTERNALIST THEORIES

Internalist theories see myths as expressions of the human mind, and psychology puts forward a link between myth and the mental processes of the mind.

- ❖ Freudian theory and myth: Psychoanalysis originated with Sigmund Freud, the basis of which was that analysis was founded on the theory that abnormal mental states were the result of the repression of emotions that the conscious mind rejects but that continue to persist in the unconscious. He contended that dreams resemble myths and offer important clues to the human psyche. When dreaming, the dreamers disguise unacceptable behaviour or longings through images – such as in myth, for example antagonistic feelings towards a mother can be dealt with in a dream as the Gorgon Medusa whose gaze renders men powerless and turns them into stone.
- ❖ Jung's archetypal myths: After studying thousands of myths, Jung was astounded by the similarity of myths to dreams in which the major characters kept appearing, and similar situations and actions would occur. He identified these characters, actions and events as archetypes. Harris and Platzner (2001:43) define an archetype as the original pattern of which all other things of the same kind are copies. The Greek gods represent archetypal characteristics, for example Zeus, the powerful father, Hera the strong wife and Demeter, the sorrowing mother. Even life events are archetypal, such as birth, mating, the power of competition, sickness and death. According to Jung, the similarity of myths from different cultures springs from the collective unconsciousness.⁵

⁴ Metcalfe (1998:26) defines aetiology or Etiology as “the study of causation.” Aetiology is derived from the Greek word *aition*, which means the study of first causes.

⁵ Harris and Platzner (2001:44) defines the collective unconsciousness – a term Jung “used to denote the mental images, cognitive patterns, symbols, innate memories and intrinsic assumptions that all members of a given culture – or the entire human race - hold in common.”

Jung further proposed that the human sub-conscious houses archetypes of both male and female principles. The animus embodies the necessary masculine qualities present in males and females, and the anima refers to the feminine archetype of wisdom and creativity. All men and women have aspects of the anima and animus within them. In a healthy psyche there is a healthy balance of both the anima and the animus, for example as in the reunion between Odysseus and Penelope.⁶ A distorted anima can produce an impression of a woman as dangerous as in the case of the Gorgon Medusa or the Furies.

Harris and Platzner (2001:46) discuss another aspect that Jung instituted which was the shadow self – “a composite of unacknowledged negative elements within the human personality.” In interpreting a myth, the hero’s obstacles and rites of passage (the shadow self) must be faced and dealt with so that he achieves his goals (develops psychologically in order to reach his full potential) and is victorious and wins (attains selfhood).⁷ The Demeter/Persephone myth can be analysed as a myth about the rites of passage of women.

- ❖ Structuralism sees myth as a reflection of the mind’s binary organization and thus refers to highlighting the opposites in the story (i.e. light/dark, good/evil, pleasure/pain). Myth deals with the perception and reconciliation of these opposites. For example in the Demeter/Persephone myth, one can identify male/female, disingenuous/innocent, god/goddess, Underworld/Upper-world (Olympus), maiden/mother, famine/feast, drought/abundance, infertility/fecundity. Furthermore, Segal (2004:118) discusses structuralist theorist, Lévi-Strauss who “locates the meaning of a myth in the structure or ‘synchronic dimension.’” Where the plot of the myth is that event A leads to event B, which leads to event C, which leads to event D, the structure, which is identical with the

⁶ As much as Odysseus has courage, leadership abilities and fighting skills, he also has the inventiveness and intelligence to find his way back to his home to be reunited with his wife, Penelope. Penelope, on the other hand, is as resourceful and intelligent as her husband. They both clearly demonstrate their masculine and feminine qualities in the way they deal with their long separation, and in the process go through various stages of psychological maturation and development. As Harris and Platzner (2001:1046) cite, “The couple’s long-delayed reunion signifies a rejoining of the heroic animus and anima, a commingling that marks the completion of their respective natures and the fulfilment of their mutual quest.”

⁷ A process called individuation by Jung which Louw & Edwards (1993:585) indicates means the “process of continuing development.”

expression and resolution of contradictions, is either that events A and B constitute an opposition mediated by event C, or that events A and B, which constitute the same opposition, are to each other as event C and D, an analogous opposition to each other.

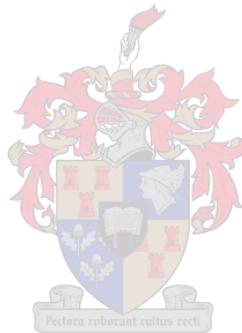
- ❖ Narratology which is also based on structuralist theory, is the study of narrative structure and proposes that most myths or folk tales follow universal patterns that control the order of events, which means that there is a predictable order to the narrative of myths.
- ❖ Feminist approaches to myth have influenced how women perceive myth. Harris and Platzner (2001:49) point out that feminist scholars have re-emphasised previously neglected components of myths – especially the significance of the female goddess, which has contributed to our understanding of goddesses and their rituals, as well as their relationship with the gods. A better understanding of psychological aspects of modern women is also discernible in the interpretations of myths.

An important aspect of the myth from a spiritual feminist viewpoint is that of the Great Goddess. Demeter and Persephone are both representations of different aspects of her. In fact all women have aspects of the Great Goddess who represents the maiden, mother (matron) and crone. Conway (1994:80) mentions that the various aspects of the Goddess are so merged and intertwined that they cannot be separated, one aspect leads automatically into another. The Great Goddess (or Triple Goddess) is each of these and all of them. Similarly, all women in the various stages of their lives can simultaneously be maiden, mother or crone.

Through myth, which reflects on the realities of life, men and women can learn more about their inner selves. They are neither good nor evil, they are just human beings – men and women, the god or goddess incarnate in all his/her guises – the virgin, the hunter/huntress, the lover, the father/mother, son/daughter, the brother/sister, the youth/maiden and the hero/heroine. Men and women are surrounded by the lessons that

these myths teach us throughout our lives, whether it be the original myths, reinterpretations or re-representations of them.

This thesis aims to show the reader the role that the Demeter/Persephone myth plays, in providing the themes for modern fiction and how the motifs of the myth have been perpetuated in three modern novels, which are *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* by Meredith Ann Pierce, *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris and *House of Women* by Lynn Freed (See Appendix 1, pages 142 –144) for a thematic table linking the motifs in the myth with the novels).



CHAPTER 2

THE DEMETER/PERSEPHONE MYTH

This chapter will first provide a brief account of the Demeter/Persephone myth. As the intention is to establish what important issues are addressed in the myth, the myth will be discussed in greater detail in the commentary, in order to provide clarification of the motifs that can be identified. Thereafter a discussion will follow to establish the different interpretations of the myth in terms of the theories that were highlighted in Chapter 1. This will provide the necessary perspective to identify whether there are similar issues in the three modern works of fiction.

SYNOPSIS OF THE DEMETER/PERSEPHONE MYTH

According to Hesiod,⁸ Cronus and Rhea are the parents of the older Olympians, Hestia (virginal goddess of the hearth and home), Demeter (goddess of agricultural fertility), Hera (goddess of marriage and domesticity), Hades (lord of the Underworld), Poseidon (god of the sea and earthquakes) and Zeus (king of the Olympian gods).

Zeus and Demeter are the parents of Persephone (who becomes the Queen of the Underworld and is the personification of the grain harvest).⁹ The version of the myth of Demeter and Persephone as told here is as it appears in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.¹⁰

Zeus, Persephone's father and her uncle Hades, plotted her abduction. Demeter knew nothing about their plans for her daughter. The young Persephone was playing in a

⁸ See Hesiod's *Theogony* - translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis.

⁹ In the glossary of Harris and Platzner (2001:1046), Persephone is referred to as "Daughter of Zeus and his sister Demeter, she personified the grain harvest."

¹⁰ The textual analysis of the novels is done in terms of this version of the myth.

flower-filled meadow with the daughters of Oceanus. A magnificent bloom suddenly appeared out of the earth, and the young maiden stretched out to pick the beautiful flower – which was the trigger for a trap. Suddenly the earth opened and Hades snatched up the screaming Persephone into his golden chariot and carried her off to the Underworld. No one heard her screams except for Hecate who saw nothing and Helios who ignored her plight while receiving offerings from the humans in his temple.

When Demeter discovered that Persephone was gone, she denied herself food and drink for nine days as she searched, torches blazing, over land and sea for her beloved daughter. On the tenth day of her search, Hecate told Demeter that she had heard Persephone's screams but had not seen who it was that had caused her such anguish. They went to Helios, the sun god, who through his rays could see the actions of both gods and men. Helios told them that Zeus had given Persephone to Hades, to be his wife. Helios tried to restrain Demeter's anger by telling her that Hades was not an unsuitable choice for a bridegroom as he owned a third of the world and, was of the same family as Zeus, and Demeter.

This advice further enraged Demeter and filled with anger toward Zeus, she withdrew from Olympus and roamed the earth, obsessed by the loss of her daughter. Disguised as an old woman and weighed down by her sorrow, Demeter was discovered close to a well by the daughters of Keleos in the town of Eleusis.¹¹ They inquired about her welfare, and Demeter explained that she needed to find work as a nursemaid or housekeeper. The young women asked Demeter to wait while they asked their mother Metaneira, whether she could assist the old woman. Metaneira had recently given birth to a son who needed nursing. Metaneira agreed and asked Demeter to raise her late-born child, Demophon.

Demophon grew quickly, anointed with ambrosia and placed in a fire at night in Demeter's endeavour to make him immortal. However, one night Metaneira discovered Demeter holding Demophon in the fire and was extremely frightened for her child and stopped the ceremony. Angry that Metaneira had stopped the process, Demeter flung the child away and told her that she would have made Demophon immortal, as she herself was the immortal goddess Demeter.

¹¹ Keleos is also referred to as Celeus

Demeter discarded her disguise as an old woman, and revealed her divine self. She demanded that a temple be built in her honour. Metaneira was so shocked that she forgot about Demophon. His sisters heard his cries and tried to comfort him, but he would not be comforted as he missed his godlike nursemaid.

The next day, Keleos, Metaneira's husband called a meeting of the townspeople and they agreed to build the temple to honour Demeter on the hill of the town, Eleusis. Once the temple was built, Demeter withdrew into the temple and continued to brood over her lost daughter. Her brooding caused great suffering for the mortals, as the following year nothing would grow in the fields or anywhere on the land, for that matter.

Zeus realised the predicament that faced the whole human race and the earth, which would ultimately be destroyed by famine and similarly the gods of Olympus would also be deprived of the offerings and sacrifices of the mortals. He sent Iris to try to stop Demeter on her path of revenge. But Demeter was not concerned about such matters, as all she wanted, was to see her daughter with her own eyes. Then Zeus sent the other gods, who one by one begged Demeter to change her mind. Still she remained unmoved by their pleading.

Eventually Zeus sent Hermes to the Underworld to speak to Hades about returning Persephone to her mother so that her anger could be dispelled. Hermes explained the situation to Hades who urged Persephone to return to her mother. Even though Hades appeared compassionate toward the plight of the mortals and Demeter's distress, he also wanted to ensure that Persephone would remain his bride. As Persephone was about to leave, he gave her a pomegranate seed to eat, which forever bound her to him and the Underworld.

Hermes took Persephone to her mother Demeter at the temple, and they were overjoyed to be reunited. However Demeter was angry when she discovered that Hades had tricked her daughter into eating the pomegranate seed, which meant that Persephone would have to return to Hades. Persephone told her mother of how she was abducted and had come to eat the pomegranate seed. Hecate drew nearer and from that time onward became Persephone's attendant.

Zeus then sent Rheia, Demeter's mother, to intercede, so that Demeter would release her anger and save the earth. Rheia told Demeter that Zeus offered her honours of her choice if only she would return to Olympus and promised that for two thirds of the year, Persephone could stay with her and the other gods, but for one third of the year, she would have to return to Hades. Rheia and Demeter were happy to see one another again, and Demeter was moved by her mother's plea and accepted Zeus' offer. Once again the earth regained its vitality and fertility, and burgeoned with growth.

Demeter taught the leaders of Eleusis the holy rites and revealed the Mysteries of her temple to them. Then the goddesses ascended to Olympus where they continued to live with other immortals, except for Persephone, who returned to the Underworld for a third of the year.

COMMENTARY ON THE DEMETER/PERSEPHONE MYTH

The version of the myth of Demeter and Persephone, under discussion, is told according to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which in this case has been translated by Helene P. Foley. The Homeric Hymns, written by various anonymous authors in imitation of Homer, are a series of hymns praising the twelve Olympians, and in this case is the myth of the mother goddess (Demeter) and the maiden goddess (Persephone).

Zeus, the father of Persephone, and her uncle Hades, plot her abduction. Hades is the lord of the Underworld and the brother of Zeus and Demeter. Demeter is not present or consulted when the abduction of Persephone is deliberated upon, and thus she does not give her consent to the act. The act of not discussing the matter with Demeter and Persephone can be considered as a typical patriarchal attitude on the part of the father, Zeus, as if Persephone is his possession, to do with as he sees fit.

In the beginning of the *Hymn to Demeter*, the author does not use Persephone's name and she is referred to only as the goddess Demeter's daughter. Young Persephone picks flowers in a meadow with the "deep-breasted daughters of Ocean" (Foley 1994:5).

The reference here to the daughters of Oceanus can point to the fact that if deep-breasted, they are older than the young Persephone.

As Foley (1994:33) indicates, the “daughters of Okeanos, are water deities, who like all nymphs, protect and nourish the young.” Later in the myth Persephone tells her mother that the goddesses Athene and Artemis were also present in the meadow. The question then is why did neither of the goddesses nor the water deities try to protect Persephone from being abducted? The myth indicates that there were no witnesses to the abduction of Persephone, however if the daughters of Oceanus were present while she was picking flowers, then they must have witnessed the scene, as would have Athene and Artemis.

This could indicate that amongst more mature females, that there is an understanding that the time has come for Persephone to live her own life and to move into the next stage, as a woman, and no longer as a maiden. Foley (1994:33) mentions “meadows in Greek myth are liminal sites, associated not only with a transition to sexuality and fertility but with the Underworld.” This in itself suggests the other females present may have accepted that what was to take place is inevitable and part of the maiden’s journey to find her true role as the Queen of the Underworld.

Homer describes Persephone as the “flower-faced maiden” (Foley 1994:2) and as Foley (1994:34) indicates this “links her with the plants that she picks.” The flowers that the maidens are picking vary, there are roses, and crocuses, violets, irises, hyacinths and narcissus, but these are no ordinary flowers. Foley (1994:34) suggests that because of Persephone’s identification with the flowers and plants of the seasons,¹² “mythically speaking” makes her an appropriate wife “for an underworld god, for the seed with which she is identified in later myth and cult disappears and reappears from beneath the ground.” This is a further indication that the older females do not interfere with the abduction of Persephone – as she must take the journey to the next stage in her life.

¹² In the translation by Foley (1994:2) reference is made to “the flower-faced maiden” Persephone’s flower-like face, which can be a way of describing her youthful beauty or a link to her as a young maiden gathering flowers, and also the author connecting her to her future as the catalyst that causes the flowers and plants to return to the earth.

The bulbous flowers that Persephone picks can also be linked to the Underworld, as some of these plants are associated with the premature death of classical heroes. They are amongst others, the narcissus (Narkissos or Narcissus who fell in love with himself, whilst looking into a pool of water, and where he lay day after day until he wasted away and died), and the hyacinth (Hyakinthos or Hyacinthus who was killed by Zephyrus in a fit of jealousy while he and Apollo were throwing the discus). The hyacinth and the narcissus are part of the liliaceous family, which is any bulbous plant of the genus *Lilium*. The roses are associated with Eros who is the god of love and sexual desire, which is relevant to the myth as Persephone is about to leave maidenhood behind, and become a woman.

A magnificent narcissus unexpectedly appears out of the earth, and the young maiden stretches out to pick the beautiful flower – which is the trigger to a trap created by Gaia.¹³ Gaia's facilitation to entrap Persephone in order to make her Hades' wife can be seen as an act to ensure "the succession of her male descendants in Hesiod's cosmology, the *Theogony*" (Foley: 1994: 35). In the myth this secretive act, which can be regarded as deception, or as a means to an end, is one of three acts of deception in the myth.

Suddenly the earth opens and Hades seizes the screaming Persephone into his golden chariot drawn by immortal horses, and carries her off to the Underworld. This act by Hades could have been regarded as acceptable in society at the time – and in many cultures, even now. In Ancient Greece arranged marriages took place without the consent of either the bride or her mother. Nevertheless, the description in the myth that Hades snatches Persephone can also be interpreted as a violent act and not just a bridegroom carrying off his promised bride.

In the *Hymn to Demeter*, the location of Persephone's abduction is the Nysian plain. The remote setting of the abduction indicates that the author wants to present the story in a manner that indicates that there are no witnesses to the act. Hecate who is in a cave, which blocks her vision, only hears Persephone's screams but sees nothing. Originally regarded as one of the most powerful and benevolent of the goddesses, according to

¹³ The original Earth Mother, and the mother of Rhea who in turn is Zeus, Hades and Demeter's mother.

Hesiod, Hecate was a Titan and honoured by Zeus. However as an earth goddess, she became associated with the world of the dead, and eventually was regarded as a dark goddess and the patron of sorcery. Helios, the son of Theia and Hyperion, is god of the sun, who through his rays sees the actions of gods and men. However, he sits apart from the gods and remains aloof, whilst receiving offerings from the mortals. Although Helios can see what is happening, he ignores Persephone's calls for help.

In the Hymn, Hades is referred to as "Commander- and Host-to-Many, the many-named son of Kronos."¹⁴ According to Foley (1994: 35) "commander" means "giver of signs to many" whilst "many-named" can also mean "much praised." "Hades is probably said to have had many names in part because Greeks, especially in cult, often feared to name him or wished to propitiate him." The Hymn speaks of Hades as "the celebrated son of Kronos" and also of Zeus as "the son of Kronos highest and best" which emphasises that they are close relations – in this case, brothers. Foley (1994:36) indicates, "Marriage to a paternal uncle was not uncommon in Greek culture."

Persephone believes that as long as she can see the sun shining by day and the stars in the heavens at night, she has hope that she will see her mother and the gods on Olympus again. As the mountain peaks and the depths of the sea echo her cries for help, Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, hears her daughter's screams. In her grief, Demeter tears her veil from her head, puts on dark clothing and begins to search for Persephone. In the translation of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* Foley (1994:4) tells that "she cast a dark cloak on her shoulders and sped like a bird over dry land and sea, searching." It is obvious now that Persephone has descended in to the Underworld, as Demeter roams the earth and searches for nine days, without finding her daughter.

The Underworld is a remote and desolate place – separated from Olympus and the Earth by a watery waste known as Oceanus. Between Olympus and the Underworld is the Vault of Heaven where Helios (sun), Eos (dawn) and Selene (moon) reside. All three are the offspring of the Titan goddess Theia and her brother, the Titan god, Hyperion. Beyond the Vault of Heaven is Earth, and below the Earth lies the eternally dark

¹⁴ See *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, line 32 (Foley 1994:4).

Underworld. Beneath the Underworld is Tartarus, a prison for fallen Titans and other sinners.

According to Foley (1994:37), the significance of the initial nine-day search for Persephone by Demeter is unknown. However, there are various symbolic meanings for the number nine that can be associated with this myth. For example, the Underworld lies beneath the earth and is surrounded by a sea (Oceanus), which has nine rings, and symbolically as Demeter had descended into her own dark underworld because of the loss of Persephone, this may be the significance of her initial nine-day search. Fontana (1993:65) mentions, "The divine number three multiplied by itself gives nine, the incorruptible number of completion and eternity."

As the whole point of this myth indicates that the goddess/woman completes cycles in her life for all eternity, the symbol of the number nine, is of relevance here. Furthermore, nine months can also reflect the period that Persephone stays with her mother on Olympus, whilst the last period is spent with Hades. Moreover, if a year is divided into four seasons, then what becomes relevant is that one quarter of the year would be winter – when Persephone descends into the Underworld, and the other nine months would be spring, summer and autumn, the period that she would spend with Demeter. Finally, as a part of the stages in a woman's life, motherhood indicates that a woman is pregnant for nine months before giving birth to her child.

During her nine days of roaming Demeter does not partake of food and drink, and neither does she bathe. This is typical of the way humans would mourn – and in this process of mourning, Demeter cuts herself off from both the gods and mortals. Her dark clothing is another typical gesture of a mortal in mourning. For nine days she searches over land and sea for her beloved daughter. On the tenth day of her search, Hecate goes to meet with Demeter and she tells her that she heard Persephone's screams but could not see who it was that has caused her such distress. Foley (1994:37) mentions "Nine days is also one-third of a lunar cycle. As a moon goddess Hecate would have been absent during the day when the rape occurred. There is a wordplay on *dekaté* (tenth) and Hecate at 51-52." In this part of the Hymn, it is significant that both goddesses have been cut off from the other gods and mortal men, as neither had seen what happened to Persephone, and Hecate had only heard Persephone's screams.

Demeter and Hecate visit the sun god, Helios, who through his rays sees the actions of both the immortals and the humans. Demeter asks him who has taken her beloved daughter, whom she calls a *thalos* or shoot.¹⁵ Helios tells them that Zeus has given Persephone to Hades, to be his wife. He tries to assuage Demeter's anger by telling her that Hades is not an unsuitable bridegroom as he owns a third of the world and is of the same stock as Zeus and Demeter. Demeter does not take to this advice kindly, and chooses a long and ominous path to find her daughter. This course is menacing both for gods and men, who will suffer at the hands of Demeter as she searches for her daughter – it will mean drought and famine for the mortals and no sacrifices for the gods.

Filled with anger toward Zeus, Demeter withdraws from Olympus, the mythical home of the Olympian gods, and roams the cities and fields of the mortals, consumed with anguish and despair at the loss of her daughter. Disguised as an old woman – who is beyond child bearing and weighed down by her sorrow, no mortal recognises her as the goddess Demeter. The daughters of Keleos eventually discover her close to a well near a road to their home. In Greek myth, a meeting between mortals and disguised immortals beside water is common. Keleos is also known as Celeus, and is the ruler of the town of Eleusis. He is the father of Demophon, and the husband of Metaneira.

After the daughters of Keleos have inquired after her welfare, Demeter explains to them that she is Doso, a name given to her by her mother. She has come from Crete on a ship, and that pirates had abducted her against her will. The ship had anchored in Thorikos and she had managed to escape. She asks them to advise her on where she can obtain work suitable for an elderly woman such as that of a nursemaid or housekeeper. The young women ask Demeter to wait while they enquire of their mother Metaneira, whether she can provide her with work as they have a newborn brother, Demophon who needs nursing.

Metaneira agrees to take in the old woman and to give her work as Demophon's nurse. The daughters of Keleos and Metaneira return to the well to fetch Demeter/Doso to meet their mother. When Demeter enters the house, Metaneira is overcome by fear, awe and reverence. It is as if some part of her recognises that this visitor is no mere mortal, and

¹⁵ See *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, line 66 (Foley 1994:4).

she offers Demeter/Doso her personal chair or throne. Demeter in turn refuses it, and only sits down when Iambe presents her with a stool of lesser importance. Demeter/Doso sits on the stool neither partaking of food or drink, thinking of Persephone. It is only when Iambe jests with Demeter/Doso that she is moved to smile and eventually laugh. When she is offered wine Demeter declines and requests that she would rather have a drink mixed with barley and mint. A possible reason for Demeter declining the wine could also be that in the Ancient Greek tradition, after fasting, the fast is broken by drinking the *kykeôn* (a mixed drink).¹⁶

Metaneira prepares the drink for Demeter, indicating that she is aware that she is of noble parentage and requests Demeter to raise her late-born child, Demophon, promising her rewards for rearing him well. After accepting Metaneira's hospitality, Demeter seems temporarily resigned to the loss of her daughter, as the reader does not hear any more about her grief for Persephone, until after the incident where Demeter abandons her attempts at immortalising Demophon. When Demeter takes on the job of raising Demophon, it seems that in her grief, she has substituted him to replace the pain she feels for her missing daughter.

Demophon grows quickly – like a young god, anointed with ambrosia and breathed upon by Demeter. At night, Demeter secretly buries Demophon in the fire, in her endeavour to immortalise him. Here is the second act of deception in the myth as Demeter wishes to immortalise Demophon, by covertly placing him in the fire and anointing him with ambrosia – possibly as a way of assuaging her sorrow for the loss of her own immortal goddess-child. However, Metaneira secretly spies on Demeter and discovers Demeter holding her son in the fire. She fears for her son and stops the ceremony. Angry that Metaneira has stopped the process, Demeter flings the child away and tells Metaneira that she would have made her son immortal because she is the goddess Demeter. She

¹⁶ According to Kerényi (1967:178), there is “testimony to the fact that the *kykeon* was – illicitly – drunk in Athens on the day before the procession to Eleusis,” which is an example of the Charter theory which is based on stories that serve to justify or validate rites, customs and practices and their regular recurrence, making it possible to maintain order and stability. According to Hawley & Levick (1995:85) the *kykeon* was a mixed drink of barley, water, meal and pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium* L), and not mint.

does however promise that Demophon will receive honours even in death, for he has slept in her arms and been cared for by her – Demeter, the Olympian goddess.

Demeter demands that a temple be built in her honour, and indicates that she herself will lay down the rites that will take place to appease her spirit. Then she discards her disguise as an old woman revealing her true divine self. Metaneira reels in shock and her distress is so great that she forgets to tend to the needs of young Demophon. His sisters hear his cries and try to comfort him. Yet, Demophon will not be comforted as he misses his divine nursemaid. All night the women try to appease Demeter, and in the morning they go to Keleos to inform him of the goddess' demands.

Keleos calls a meeting of the townspeople and they agree to build the temple to honour Demeter on the hill of the town, Eleusis. Once the temple is built, Demeter withdraws into the temple and continues grieving for Persephone. Her withdrawal into the temple is a parallel to Persephone's removal into the Underworld. Demeter is now angry with both the gods and humans. Her anger and grief causes suffering for the mortals, as in the following year no seeds sprout and no barley will grow in the ploughed fields. Foley (1994:53) alludes to the fact "that whereas Gaia earlier grew the narcissus as a trap for Persephone at Zeus' behest, Demeter now prevents the earth (*gaia*) from sending up seed." Demeter's anger is immense, so brutal that she will starve the innocent. Carlson (1997:73) points out "She is willing to kill, even the innocent, if necessary. All her tender, nurturant, mothering powers are withdrawn. She will feed no one, will turn the cold eye of death on everyone, rather than go on nurturing and giving when there has been such profound violation."

Zeus sees the plight of the humans, as the whole mortal race is about to be destroyed through famine, on the other hand the gods of Olympus are also suffering, as the gifts and sacrifices that are made to them in their honour by the mortals, have ceased. Zeus sends Iris to deter Demeter on her chosen path of revenge, but she remains unyielding.¹⁷ Then Zeus sends the other gods – one by one to beg Demeter to change

¹⁷ Iris was Hera's special messenger and was the personification of the rainbow.

her mind. Still she remains unmoved. She tells them that she will not go near Olympus again or stop the famine until she sees Persephone with her own eyes.¹⁸

Finally Zeus sends Hermes to the Underworld to negotiate with Hades to return Persephone to her mother so that her anger can be allayed, so that she will desist from destroying the mortals who honour the gods. Hermes is the son and messenger of Zeus and the personification of extreme mobility. He is the guide of dead souls and the patron of travellers, merchants, highwaymen, gamblers and thieves. Hermes is the only god – up until now who is allowed to traverse between the Underworld and the Upper-World. Even Hades ascended to Olympus only because Zeus gave him permission to take Persephone.

Hermes descends to the Underworld and finds Hades reclining on a bed (indicative that he is at ease), with his reluctant bride beside him, pining for her mother. He explains the situation to Hades that Demeter's anger is dreadful, and that she will not communicate with the gods, but continues to sit in her temple at Eleusis, aloof and alone – intent on destroying both the mortals and the gods. Hades then urges Persephone to return to her mother. "Go Persephone, to the side of your dark-robed mother, keeping the spirit and temper in your breast benign. Do not be so sad and angry beyond the rest; in no way among immortals will I be an unsuitable spouse, myself a brother of father Zeus. And when you are there, you will have power over all that lives and moves, and you will possess the greatest honours among the gods" (Foley 1994:20). Hades' remarks indicate that he foresees and accepts Persephone's later powers, proving that he is indeed a suitable mate for her!

Although Hades appears compassionate toward the plight of the mortals and Demeter's distress, he also wants to keep Persephone as his bride. As Persephone is about to leave he gives her a pomegranate seed to eat, which forever binds her to him and the Underworld. According to Foley (1994:56) "when a bride eats food in her husband's house, she accepts her transition to a new life under her husband's authority." This is the third and final act of deception in the Hymn. It is a means to an end – Hades' way of ensuring that Persephone will always come back to him. According to Foley (1994:56)

¹⁸ "Never, she said, would she mount up to fragrant Olympus nor release the seed from the earth, until she saw with her eyes her own fair-faced child" (Foley 1994:18).

“pomegranates were associated with blood, death, fertility and marriage and may have been served, at least symbolically, as an aphrodisiac”. In the myth the pomegranate can be associated with fertility and death – the red colour being symbolic of blood (death) and menstruation (a woman ready for her child-bearing years), as well as the seeds representing fertility. The red of the fruit is also symbolic of a maiden losing her virginity, as she will bleed when the hymen is torn, becoming a woman in the process of the sexual act.

Hades, himself, harnesses his immortal horses to his golden chariot and allows Hermes to take Persephone to her mother Demeter at the temple. As the Hymn mentions, Demeter “darted like a maenad down a mountain” (Foley 1994:22). The reference to a maenad shows how strong the goddess’ emotions were at the sight of Persephone. A maenad is a female worshipper of the god Dionysus who carries out ecstatic dances in worship to him. Mother and daughter are overjoyed at their reunion.

However, Demeter senses that there has been trickery and asks Persephone whether she ate anything in the Underworld. Demeter is angry when she discovers that Hades has tricked her daughter into eating the pomegranate seed, which means that Persephone will have to return to her husband, Hades, for one-third of the year. Demeter tells Persephone “when the earth blooms in spring with all kinds of sweet flowers, then from the misty dark you will rise again” (Foley 1994:22). This indicates that every spring Persephone will ascend to live with her mother, and in autumn, she will leave again to spend a third of the year with her husband. During that time it will be winter and the earth will be barren and infertile.

Persephone tells her mother that she was forced to eat the pomegranate seed – this description of force can also indicate rape. She goes on to tell her mother that she, the daughters of Oceanus, and the goddesses Athene and Artemis were picking flowers (crocuses, irises, hyacinths, roses and lilies) in a beautiful meadow. She tells how the hyacinth was a trap and that as she picked it Hades carried her off in his golden chariot, against her will. She tells her mother how she cried out for her at the top of her voice for help, and that Hades forced her to eat the pomegranate seed. Finally she concludes informing her mother that she is telling the whole truth. However, the tale that she tells her mother is not exactly the same as in the beginning of the myth, and the reader is

inclined to wonder if Persephone protests a little too much about what has happened to her. This could be her way to appease her mother for having become a woman in her own right. Furthermore, the fact that Persephone names her companions at the time of the abduction adds to the fact that her view appears to be subjective. As Foley (1994:60) mentions, “the Hymn thus seems to emphasize the disparity in the point of view between the goddesses and others in the poem, without explicitly questioning the “truth” of either view.”

Mother and daughter spend the day being reacquainted. Hecate, who had helped Demeter in her search for Persephone, draws closer and caresses Persephone and from that time onward she promises to be Persephone’s attendant. As a goddess who later had underworld associations, it is obvious that she will help and attend to Persephone when she returns every year to the Underworld.

Zeus then sends Rheia – Demeter’s mother as mediator to appease his sister’s anger in order to save the earth. Rheia is the mother of Zeus, Hestia, Hera, Demeter, Poseidon and Hades. Rheia tells Demeter that Zeus has summonsed her to return to Olympus. Furthermore, that he offers her honours of her choice if she will only return to Olympus and promises that for two thirds of the year, Persephone may stay with her and the other gods, but for one third of the year, she will have to return to Hades. Rheia as mother asks Demeter to make the earth fertile once more. Rheia and Demeter are happy to see one another again, and Demeter is so moved by her mother’s plea that she accepts Zeus’ offer. Once again the earth regains its vitality and fertility and burgeons with growth.

Demeter goes to the leaders of Eleusis and teaches them the holy rites, and reveals the Mysteries of her temple to them. The Eleusinian Mysteries is a cult in the town of Eleusis, and involves the worship of Demeter and Persephone. The initiates are sworn to secrecy and receive special honours in the afterlife, which the uninitiated never do. After Demeter has taught her rites to the initiates, she and Persephone ascend to Olympus and the assembly of the gods. They continue to live with other immortals, on Olympus, except for Persephone, who must return to the Underworld for a third of the year.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE DEMETER/PERSEPHONE MYTH, BASED ON VARIOUS THEORIES OF MYTH

As a nature myth, Harris and Platzner (2001:115) refer to Persephone as the seed that is planted in the ground (Underworld) dampened by the rain (Zeus' intervention) and then germinating in the spring into fully-grown grain (Demeter).

Other theories can also be used to understand the Demeter/Persephone myth. One externalist theory associates myth with ritual, where myths are the by-product of a ritual ceremony. The story of Demeter and Persephone is both ritual and myth. As Foley (1994:89) indicates, the Eleusinian Mysteries were an enactment of the story/ritual of Demeter's loss and eventual joyous reunion with Persephone. After Demeter had revealed herself as a goddess to the townsfolk of Eleusis, she demanded that a temple be built in her honour. Once the temple was built, and Persephone had been reunited with her, the earth once more became fertile. Then Demeter went to the leaders of Eleusis and taught them the rituals that reflected her path from suffering to joy at the reunion with her daughter. Csapo (2005:260) shows that as a ritual myth, the Demeter/Persephone myth indicates the connections between agriculture and marriage, for example in the Thesmophoria, which is the principal festival of Demeter where "only married women were allowed to participate, and the main sacrifice was to promote the fertility of the crops."

In his book, *The Golden Bough*, James G Frazer (1981:355-360) explores various harvest rituals and customs. He regards the Demeter/Persephone myth as a later product of religious growth and compares it to the Corn-Mother of Germany and the Harvest-Maiden of Balquhiddy. Frazer proposes that Demeter and Persephone (Proserpine) grew out of the same simple beliefs that prevail in peasantry in more modern times in Europe, and also the Incas of Peru, the Dyaks of Borneo and the Malays of Java. He suggests that the similarity of the ideas of the customs of these various cultures are not confined to one race but occur naturally amongst people who are engaged in agriculture.

Interestingly enough, although Frazer associated myth with ritual – an externalist theorist for interpreting myth – Jung perceived myths as expressions of the human mind, which is an internalist theory. According to Jung, the similarity of myths from different cultures, springs from the collective unconsciousness, and here we see a direct correlation between the viewpoints of Frazer and Jung in terms of similar customs and rituals carried out by different cultures over thousands of years in different parts of the world.

Finally another externalist approach, the etiological theory can also be used to understand the Demeter/Persephone myth. This myth gives answers to questions on natural phenomena. We could answer the question “*why do we have different seasons in the year?*” After Persephone’s abduction, the grief of Demeter (goddess of fertility) caused great suffering to the mortals and the earth became barren. After Persephone and Demeter were reunited, the earth once more became fertile and was filled with abundance. However, every year when Persephone returns to the Underworld, the earth becomes unfruitful and cold (autumn and winter). Then after spending a third of the year with Hades, she returns to her mother and Olympus, and again the earth becomes fertile and abundant (spring and summer). Thus one could reason that Persephone’s descent (autumn and winter) into the Underworld, and her re-emergence to daylight (spring and summer), marks the passing of the different seasons.¹⁹

An internalist theory to interpret a myth propounded by Jung was that the human subconscious houses archetypes. After he had studied thousands of myths, Jung was astounded by the similarity of them to dreams in which the major characters kept appearing, and similar characters, circumstances and events would occur. He identified these characters, actions and events as archetypes. The archetypal image of the mother figure is found in artworks that portray myths, such as the Christian Madonna and Child, the Egyptian goddess Isis nursing Horus and of course, Demeter searching for her lost daughter, Persephone.

As Jung discusses in *Four Archetypes*, (2001:19) “the mother archetype forms the foundation of the so-called mother-complex.” Jung (2001:22-23) contends that the

¹⁹ Cf. for instance Burket (1985: 159-161) for criticism of this etiological interpretation of myth.

hypertrophy of the feminine side and Demeter is an excellent example of this situation.²⁰ Her whole existence (no food, water or comfort while searching for Persephone) and that of the mortals (barren earth and famine) and gods (no mortals to make sacrificial offerings) is of secondary importance to the need to find her child. She clings to the desire to find and hold Persephone, as without her, she has no existence. Demeter compels the gods to grant her possession of her daughter and her Eros develops exclusively as a mother, to the exclusion of herself on a personal level.²¹ Women “who live for others” as in the case of Demeter, are unable to make any real sacrifice. Demeter is driven by a ruthless will to have power over gods and mortals in order to get her way.

Another example of Demeter suffering from the mother-complex is her need to “mother” another child – Demophon, the son of Celeus and Metaneira. With the attention she gave Demophon to transform him into a god, one can speculate whether she was not trying to “steal” him from his parents and make him her own – due to her loss of a daughter, by anointing him with ambrosia by and placing him in the fire by night. In any event, when Demeter removed her disguise as an old woman and revealed her true self, Metaneira was in such a state of shock that she forgot to tend to the needs of her son. Even though Demophon’s sisters heard his cries and tried to comfort him, he would not be comforted as he missed his divine nursemaid. At the very least Demeter appears to have attempted to “steal” the boy’s affection and loyalty to his parents. There appear to be similarities here between the actions of Hades “stealing” Persephone and Demeter “attempting to steal” Demophon.

Jung additionally proposed that the human sub-conscious houses archetypes of both male and female principles, the animus and anima, respectively. In a healthy psyche there is a sound balance of both the anima and the animus. The anima and animus are partly determined by an individual’s experience of other men and women and can be affected by negative perceptions of femininity or masculinity. If an individual develops a distorted anima, the woman for example could view males as dangerous. However in the myth of Demeter and Persephone, after Zeus and Hades had connived to abduct her, Persephone could have viewed males as potential rapists or tyrants. In fact, when one

²⁰ This refers to an exaggeration of the feminine aspect and means an intensification of all feminine instincts, especially maternal instincts.

²¹ Eros refers to the force and principle of love.

views Demeter in the myth about her daughter, she could also have a distorted anima, as she was deceived by her brothers' Hades and Zeus, and to crown that, Zeus sacrificed his and Demeter's daughter Persephone to his brother to live in the darkness of the Underworld.

Another aspect reflected in the work of Jung was the shadow self – a combination of unacknowledged negative fundamentals within the human personality that an individual may deny ever feeling. In interpreting the Demeter/Persephone myth, the obstacles, anger and fears experienced by both mother and daughter (the shadow self) needs to be overcome and dealt with (psychological development so that full potential is achieved) in order to be re-united (attain selfhood).

The Demeter myth must be one of the favourites of feminist scholars to study and interpret. This aspect of interpreting the myth and comparing the myth to the different life stages of women will be now discussed in detail.

The goddess aspects of the maiden, mother and crone also depict the stages in a woman's life. As Harris and Platzner (2001:119) points out, the Demeter/Persephone myth looks at the female as she passes through her lifecycle from girlhood to motherhood to old age, or from virgin/lover to mother and eventually to the wisdom of the old woman. The myth depicts how the mother is affected by the child who leaves home (empty-nest syndrome) and how the child becomes a woman no longer under the care of the parent/s but under the charge of the new male in her life. The mother/daughter relationship changes from that of parent/child to a new paradigm of two women who are both relations and friends.

The myth's aspects of the goddess as maiden, symbolizes spring and the continuation of life. Although often associated with youth and puberty, women continue to experience the maiden at any stage of their life. As a woman passes through her life stages, and each stage is defined as maiden, mother or crone, she will still experience the other aspects of herself. The stages of a woman's life are not dictated by age, but more by circumstance and awareness of that moment, and thus even as an old woman one can still experience aspects of the maiden, or vice versa, a maiden may experience moments of the wisdom of the sage old woman.

Conway (1994:34-43) mentions that the maiden is found in myths across the world. The myth of Persephone – who was also known as Kore, (Kore literally means the maiden),²² is but one of these maiden myths. Another Olympian, Hebe, also represented the maiden aspect. She was the youngest daughter of Zeus and Hera. Hebe was the personification of youth, and cupbearer to her father until replaced by the boy, Ganymede. The myth of Ganymede displacing Hebe is an example of a patriarchal attempt to usurp a goddess' position of power – just as Zeus and Hades had done in the Demeter/Persephone myth.

Conway (1994:27-42) tells of other maiden myths, such as the Celtic goddess, Anu. She was also a fertility goddess and her husband Bile was considered to be similar to Hades. Then there is Iyatiku of the Pueblo Native Americans, who was a corn goddess and ruler of the Underworld. All who died entered her realm. She ruled over compassion, agriculture and children. Another Native American goddess was Onatha of the Iroquis, goddess of wheat and harvest. Another example of a goddess symbolising the maiden aspect, is Chalchihuitlicue of the Aztecs who ruled over flowers and spring growth.

These similarities between the classical myth of Demeter and Persephone and myths from other parts of the world, is indicative of the earlier discussion that alluded to the fact that Frazer associated myth with rituals the world over, and Jung proposed that myths are expressions of the human mind and that the similarity of myths from different cultures, springs from the collective sub-conscious.

The mother aspect of the goddess is reflected in growth that manifests itself in the harvest and summer – the creation of life and the teacher of mysteries. The mother is associated with adulthood and parenthood. As Conway (1994:47) states “She is the matrix of all creation, the keeper of the cycles and seasons. As the maiden dreams of what she can become, so the mother knows exactly who she is.”

²² Persephone is also known as Kore (*kourê*) which literally means “maiden” and she is so named as she is a virgin and a daughter. There is only one time that she is called Persephone before she becomes a bride, in line 56, of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, (Foley 1994:39).

According to Conway (1994:51-74), other goddesses who symbolize the mother aspect are Hera, the sister of Demeter, Isis, the Egyptian goddess called the Great Mother, and Astarte, the Lady of Byblos – one of the oldest forms of the Great Goddess in the Middle East. In Chinese mythology, Kwan Yin was the Great Mother and goddess of mercy, motherhood and childbirth.

Jung (2001: 14) mentions that the mother archetype appears under an infinite number of variations, such as mother, grandmother, stepmother, nursemaid, and so forth. In a figurative sense, the goddess falls into this category as well, especially the Mother of God and the Virgin. Mythology presents a number of examples of the mother archetype, such as in the myth of Demeter and Persephone. It should be noted that the mother archetype could be dangerous as in the Cybele-Attis myth, which resulted in “self-castration, madness and early death” (Jung 1982:130). Jung (2001:15) further mentions that the mother archetype is associated with fertility and fecundity. Campbell (1049:113) states: “The mythological figure of the Universal Mother imputes to the cosmos the feminine attributes of the first, nourishing and protecting presence.”

The crone aspect of the goddess is least understood and was most feared in ancient Greece. An example is Hecate in the Demeter/Persephone myth –probably due to the fact that the crone deals with old age, the end of cycles and death. However with patriarchal views becoming more widespread, the crone was seen in a negative light. Jung refers to the crone as the dark side of the psyche – the shadow self. This is an important part of any human being’s life – since to know the shadow self is to know the enlightened self. The one aspect cannot exist without the other.

Campbell (1964:21) states “In the older mother myths and rites the light and darker aspects of the mixed thing that is life had been honoured equally and together, whereas in the later, male-oriented, patriarchal myths, all that is good and noble was attributed to the new, heroic master gods, leaving to the native nature powers the character only of darkness – to which, also, a negative moral judgement now was added.” Whereas before, the goddess had been honoured as an advocate of life and its equal death, and then rebirth, where the one balances the other, and without the one, there would be no other.

Apart from Hecate, the crone aspect of the Great Goddess, in other myths there is the Egyptian crone, Nekhbet (the ancient Egyptian name for Mut) who according to the Egyptian Book of the Dead, guards the first gate of the Underworld. Nephthys, the Underworld goddess in Egyptian mythology, was very similar to Hecate in Greek mythology. Persephone, known as Kore, the maiden, is also an aspect of the crone, as she was also the Queen of the Dead or the Underworld. Another example mentioned by Conway (1994:96) of a dark goddess with aspects of the maiden, or goddess of renewed growth was Skadi, the Scandinavian goddess of the dark, cruel north. The Native American crone goddesses also tended to blend with either the mother or maiden aspects of the goddess. For example, as mentioned earlier, Iyatiku of the Pueblos was a corn goddess that lived in the Underworld.

Finally Conway (1994:80) emphasizes that, "The crone is as important to the existence of the Great Goddess as are the maiden and the mother. Their aspects are so merged and intertwined that they cannot truly be separated, one aspect leads automatically into another. The Great Goddess is each of these and all of them."

As Harris and Platzner (2001:97) state, "Long before male gods were worshiped throughout the cultures of early Europe and the Mediterranean, worship of a creator Goddess prevailed." The concept of the Great Goddess is a primeval one. Campbell (1959:374-376) points out that the female figure was prevalent throughout ancient history. From as early as the Aurignacian in the upper Palaeolithic period (c. 30 000 – 10 000 B.C.), female figurines and figures on rock-engravings and paintings were found. Archaeologists such as James Mellaart and Marija Gimbutas propounded that these figurines indicate the existence of the Goddess; and Campbell (1959:140-144) further tells that in the High Neolithic period (c. 4 500-3 500 B.C.) a great many female figures appear in the form of pottery which were beautifully decorated and which was a totally new concept of ornamental art not present in early Palaeolithic art, and was obviously an appreciation for the female in art.

However, it should be noted that there are two diametrically opposed schools of thought about artworks being representative of the Goddess. As Goodison and Morris (1998:6) state "The idea of an original Mother Goddess in prehistory is surrounded by an intense controversy, but one in which neither side speaks to the other." On the one side are the

scholars of the 19th and earlier 20th centuries, such as Johann Jan Bachofen who introduced the concept of female power in prehistory in *Mutterrecht*, Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, and the 20th century archaeologist, Dr Marija Gimbutas, whose book, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*, stressed the importance of the Goddess.²³ The work of these scholars caught the attention of the emerging women's movement in the 1960s and the current Goddess Movement. On the other hand, just as the feminists began to take interest in the work of Bachofen, Gimbutas and Mellaart, a change occurred in archaeological attitudes to the Goddess theory. "Peter Ucko's 1968 book on anthropomorphic figurines from Egypt and Crete and a seminal article by Andrew Fleming, 'The Myth of the mother-goddess', in the following year both pointed out the flimsiness of the evidence, and what massive assumptions had been built into the existing consensus" (Goodison and Morris 1998:8)

Harris and Platzner (2001:99) mention that all over Europe and the Near East, images of the Great Goddess abound. She appeared as Gaia and Demeter in Greek myths, in Rome she was Terra Mater and Ceres, she was Nerthus in Norse myths, the Sumerians called her Inanna, the Akkadians referred to her as Ishtar, the Assyrians named her Mylitta, in Egypt she was Isis, and she was called Astarte by the Ugarits and Hittites.

In former times the Great Goddess was not associated with love or sex, but with the source of life, death and rebirth. Harris and Platzner (2001:100-105) further mention that earlier humans saw her in a magical role with the ability to create life within herself. At that time people had no understanding of the role of the male in procreation. It is my contention that the resurgence of interest in the Demeter/Persephone myth is an attempt to refocus attention on the sacred feminine, which had been supplanted by the later patriarchal myths and social order, and this is evident in works of fiction by female authors today. Let us not forget the works of such contemporary writers as Margaret Atwood who wrote a sequence of poems, with the title "*Double Persephone*,"²⁴ or the play by Marsha Norma, "*night Mother*"²⁵ and Meridel Le Sueur's "*Persephone*,"²⁶ who all wrote works based on this myth.

²³ See Goodison and Morris (1998:7-8)

²⁴ See Foley (1994:162).

²⁵ See http://www.cornellcollege.edu/classical_studies/myth/demeter/part2.html.

²⁶ See Downing ((1994:88).

As mentioned previously, the Great Goddess' triple role of life, death and renewal was repeated in such aspects of myth as heaven, earth and Underworld or maiden, mother and crone. As people began to understand the life cycle of vegetation and because the Great Goddess was responsible for the growth, death and regrowth of plants, she was regarded as the grain or earth goddess.

With time, the three aspects of the Great Goddess were divided, with each element representing an aspect of her. As Harris and Platzner (2001:101) mention, "In Greek mythology, some scholars speculate that this division may reflect, at least in part, the invasion of Europe by martial Indo-European cultures with their weapon-bearing male-gods, whose symbols are linear and phallic – spears, swords, thunderbolts, and other weapons." Further, Harris and Platzner (2001:102) state that "the Goddess is divided, absorbed, and subordinated into form not threatening to the more recently enthroned sky gods. Thus, the Goddess's triple aspects as maiden – mother – old woman are redefined from the patriarchal perspective – in relation to men – as virgin – wife mistress/whore and embodied in separate figures such as Athene, Hera, and Aphrodite."

Therefore the original aspects of the Great Goddess were reclassified into a patriarchal perspective as virgin, wife and mistress/whore. Many scholars of myth also took a chauvinistic approach to the worship of the Great Goddess. Campbell (1959:313) mentions scholars who even identified female "Venus" figures from the Palaeolithic period as "*palaeolithic erotica*" – a typical patriarchal perspective of the Great Goddess.²⁷

Classical scholars compounded the concept of the diminishment of the Great Goddess, and in turn women. Audi (1999: 297) mentions that the existentialist, Simone de Beauvoir was of the opinion that historically, women have inherently accepted the role into which they have been socialised. The diminished role of women has been in existence for thousands of years. It is only in the last one hundred years that women have started to reclaim for themselves aspects of the Great Goddess.

It is often the case that Greek myths and their very public rhetorical and masculine expression contribute to the construction of feminine and masculine gender as

²⁷ The Venus of Laussel and the Venus of Willendorf are well known examples of these figurines.

conceived by a Greek male. Women have an essential nature (apart from that identified by patriarchies) and this is contested in the three modern novels discussed in the thesis.

De Beauvoir (1949:176) explains that: “Aeschylus, Aristotle, Hippocrates proclaimed that on earth as on Olympus it is the male principle that is truly creative: from it came form, number, movement; grain grows and multiplies through Demeter’s care, but the origin of the grain and its verity lie in Zeus; woman’s fecundity was regarded as a passive quality. She is the earth, and man the seed; she is Water and he is Fire.” It is obvious that the Great Goddess was still revered to an extent, but that she had become lesser than the male god.

Thus as Campbell mentions (1964:158) “the function of the female has systematically devalued, not only in a symbolic cosmological sense, but also in personal psychological. Just as her role is cut down, or even out, in myths of the origin of the universe, so also in hero legends. It is, in fact amazing to what extent the female figures of epic, drama, and romance have been reduced to the status of mere objects: or, when functioning as subjects, initiating action of their own, have been depicted either, as incarnate demons or as mere allies of the masculine will.”

This observation of Campbell is clear in the myth of Demeter and Persephone. Demeter is portrayed as extremely vengeful, to such an extent that she will destroy the mortals and the earth through famine and desolation. Persephone is also portrayed as being so meek that she will obey her father and return to the Underworld to spend a third of each year with the god who abducted and raped her.

As Harris and Platzner (2001:106) state, Gaia eventually disappears from the scene. With the patriarchal system in place, even Hecate, the wise woman is turned into a witch or hag associated with death. The mother and maiden also become subordinate to Zeus – now the king of the Olympian gods. Whereas before, the Great Goddess was perceived as life, death and renewal, the triple goddess is split not once, but twice. Rhea – Gaia’s daughter formed one triad – with Hera representing motherhood, Demeter the goddess of fertility and Hestia as the goddess of home. The second triad was Aphrodite representing love and sexual freedom, Artemis, the hunt and Athena represented war, which places a patriarchal perspective on the triple goddess.

When attempting to establish similarities in the Demeter/Persephone myth to modern fiction, one must look for a common storyline. In the case of this particular myth, it can be the transformation of a woman – especially after descending into darkness – into her own Underworld to be reborn anew, the etiological explanation for the seasons, the separation of a mother and daughter and their reconciliation, or patriarchal systems that have ignored the importance of the roles that women can play in society.

In works of modern literature, three of which will now be discussed, there is an attempt to indicate the significance of women who have been devalued, not only in modern times, but over centuries by the patriarchal system, which is as prevalent in myth as in society both then and now. The novels will show the effect of patriarchy on women and how they overcome the stifling effects thereof. The works also indicate the stages that women journey through in their lives. The motifs of the Demeter/Persephone myth is the glue that binds these works of modern fiction together as a whole, and the ancient myth remains a lesson, that at times we all descend into our own dark Underworld, but we can ascend once more into the light of the Upper-World.

One of the most important contentions that women have to cope with today and have had to in the past – in fact throughout the ages – is that we live within a patriarchal system. Novels, such as these that will be under discussion, bring home to the reader the fact that “we can transform our current society just as our ancestors transformed theirs in the past. We can work towards building a new society, one that conforms more closely to the ideals of equality and inclusivity and one which is modelled on an egalitarian relationship between men and women” (Agha-Jaffar 2002:101).

Through myth, women can learn more about their inner selves. They are neither good nor evil, they are women, the Goddess incarnate in all her guises – the virgin, the huntress, the lover, the mother, the temptress, the witch, the sister, the maiden and the heroine. Women (and men) are surrounded by the lessons that these myths teach us throughout our lives.

CHAPTER 3

A FANTASY NOVEL FOR TEENAGERS: *TREASURE AT THE HEART OF THE TANGLEWOOD* BY MEREDITH ANN PIERCE

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* the etiological aspect of the myth can be identified, along with the naivety of people, patriarchal issues and manipulation, and the separation of a daughter from her mother.

In this fantasy, as in the other novels under discussion, one can identify the stages in a woman's existence and the transition and initiation that a woman undergoes into the next phases of her life. This book for example, very clearly indicates the four seasons of the year, which represent the stages of a woman's life. Spring is the time for a young maiden to grow and develop – puberty. Summer is the time when a woman becomes a mother, nurturing her offspring, Autumn is the period when her children grow up and she prepares for, and enters the menopause, and Winter is the time when she is the crone, post-menopausal – resting but also teaching younger females about the lessons that she has learned and experienced in her life.

Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood by Meredith Ann Pierce is a magical tale for teenagers about a young girl called Hannah who lives in a dismal place called the Tanglewood.²⁸ The Tanglewood can be likened to the Underworld, not only in terms of it being a dark and dismal place, but because Hannah like Persephone, is a captive where she lives. She is no ordinary girl – flowers and herbs grow in her hair, and once a month she wrenches these out to make a draught for a manipulative wizard who lives deep in the woods, who appears to have a hold of some sort over Hannah. She is also a healer

²⁸ The author has an interesting way of using imaginary words – the meanings of which the reader nonetheless understands, which further lends itself to making the story even more magical.

who makes potions and poultices for the cotters and their families who live beyond the fringe of the wood.²⁹

Hannah has five animal companions, a magpie, a badger and three young fox pups. She has the power to converse with her companions and the other animals in the Tanglewood. Hannah is a fascinating character – she is self-assured yet lost, brave but naïve – a mixture of wisdom and innocence. However, as the story develops, her naiveté diminishes – specifically with regard to the wizard. This correlates to the myth and Persephone's loss of innocence, as she becomes Queen of the Underworld for a part of the year.

Many brave young knights visit the Tanglewood to search for the treasure at its centre. They never leave the woods and there is talk that a Golden Boar has killed them. In the story, Hannah befriends a knight who has been injured in the woods. She then begins to doubt the wizard and his intentions when he turns the knight into a fox. Hannah names the knight-fox Foxkith. Hannah and her companions venture forth to find the Sorcerer Queen who had sent the knight to hunt for the treasure at the heart of the Tanglewood, with the hope that she can change Foxkith back into his former self.

Hannah bears a resemblance to Persephone, given that when the goddess walked the world, it was summer and spring; and in this tale, as Hannah searches for the Sorcerer Queen, she is known as the Spring Maid and the Summer Girl. In the novel, Hannah is named after various colours which convey the colours of the different seasons – thus at the beginning of the story, while captive in the Tanglewood, she is dressed in drab brown clothes – linked to winter and named “Brown Hannah”.

When Hannah leaves the Tanglewood and starts her search for the Sorcerer Queen, her drab clothes change to green and she is called “Green Hannah”. Her hair is filled with blossoms and shoots, which fall onto the barren ground and immediately start growing. As she draws closer to finding the queen, once more her clothes change colour – this time her dress is golden and her hair is covered with seedheads of ripe grains. The earth is filled with abundant fruit and grains ripening and ready for harvest. She is then known as “Golden Hannah”.

²⁹ Imaginary name for people – cottage-dwellers.

Finally the tale concludes when Hannah and her companions reach Foxkith's island home and meet with the so-called Sorcerer Queen, and Hannah discovers who she really is. By this time she becomes known as "Russet Hannah" as her dress has changed colour again, her hair is filled with autumn fruits such as berries and crab apples.

BROWN HANNAH – WINTER

The story begins with Brown Hannah who lives on the edge of the Tanglewood foraging for food in the forest with her companions. She never strays far from the periphery of the forest, and often wonders what lies in the distance. The Tanglewood is a deep, dark and dismal forest standing near a silvery shore. To the west swirled a grey ocean, whilst moorlands stretched to the southeast and barren scrubland lay to the north. The cotters that live beyond the Tanglewood regard the woods as an enchanted place and are fearful of it. Even so, their need for Hannah's healing potions draws them to the edge of the Wood, yet they cannot tell her what lies beyond their village and the Tanglewood.³⁰

The cotters ponder about what lies at the heart of the Tanglewood. There has been talk that at its heart is a magnificent treasure, or a magical flowering tree, others say it is an aristocratic noble person, or a powerful magic wand. Hannah laughs at their conjecture, she knows that there is no treasure in the Tanglewood, there is only the Wizard who lives in the middle of it.

After these encounters with the cotters, she speculates on why she has no family as the cotters do, or if she does, she cannot remember them. Hannah wonders why she is

³⁰ The cotters are fearful of the Tanglewood, they do not know what lies beyond it, and they only visit the edge of it to obtain Hannah's healing potions. "Those timid souls who, now and again, crept up from the village to forest's edge could not tell her. They snatched her remedies with hurried thanks and made haste away, crossing their fingers against misfortune and murmuring luck charms beneath their breath" (Pierce 2001: 1).

different from the cotters, the cotters have just hair on their heads, but she grows more than just hair.³¹

Hannah constantly questions her companions on where they lived before coming to the Wood, but Badger, Magpie and the foxlets never seem to be able to remember.³² It is as if their memory has been blocked, and yet there are moments brought on by sounds and smells that remind them of their life before the Tanglewood.

Once a month, Hannah prepares a brew for the Wizard. It is made of the buds and other verdant foliage that grow amongst her hair – the process is very painful for Hannah, as she must jerk out all the flowers and greenery until only her hair is left, leaving her feeling weakened. She then steeps the herbs and flowers in boiling water and decants the potion into a lidded goblet that has runes carved on it and takes it to the Wizard.

Brown Hannah hurries to the heart of the Tanglewood with the flagon of tea brewed from the growth in her hair. It is a dark and murky place – much like the Underworld in the Demeter/Persephone myth.³³ Pierce (2001:14) describes the heart of the Tanglewood as a “labyrinthine snarl.” The description of the focal point of the Tanglewood as a “labyrinthine snarl” is of importance here. According to Fontana (1993:62) the maze or labyrinth exercises a universal fascination for mankind.³⁴ The ancient Egyptians believed that the labyrinth or maze symbolised the path that the dead followed through the Underworld to meet with Osiris who waited at the centre in order to pass judgment. This description is indicative of the Underworld where the dead go to be judged on the Plain of Judgement.

As a symbol, Fontana (1993:62) indicates that “the maze came to represent the mysterious, feminine, creative power that served as both bringer of life and, in the role of

³¹ Unlike the cotters, Hannah grows much more than just hair on her head: “Her long hair, fine and pale as flax, was full of buds of crocuses and larkspur. They sprouted there, among the leafy shoots of other verdant things” (Pierce 2001: 12).

³² Foxlets is the imaginary name for the fox pups.

³³ The book’s description of the centre Tanglewood is similar to what the Underworld would have looked like: “Brown Hannah came to the crux of the Tanglewood, where her path and many others crossed and recrossed in a labyrinthine snarl. Not a thimbleful of light leaked through, the trees loomed and crowded so. The place was dark as dusk”(Pierce 2001: 14).

³⁴ One of the definitions for a maze Metcalfe (1998:504) is “a labyrinth” and a labyrinth is defined as “a complicated irregular network of passages” (Metcalfe, 1998:450).

the queen of darkness and of night, bringer of the sleep of death.” According to Harris and Platzner (2001:58), Homer describes the Underworld as “a dank subterranean cavern” which is home to the dead “with disembodied shades flitting aimlessly in eternal darkness.” This description of the Underworld could also be a description of the Tanglewood. The feminine power and bringer of life and death is symbolic of Persephone who caused plants to grow in the spring, but was also the Queen of the Underworld.

Hannah waits for the Wizard and eventually he arrives taking the flagon of brew from her, and drinks it. Immediately he looks better: “His eyes brimmed. Colour burned his cheeks. His golden beard seemed to glow more brightly, the radiance of his robes enrich, his blood-bright jewels glimmer more gorgeously” (Pierce 2001: 15). The red jewels remind one of the jewel-like pomegranate seeds that Persephone ate in the Underworld. In the Old Testament ornamental pomegranates decorated the high priest, Aaron’s robes (Ex. xxviii.33) – showing that images of these fruits were used for ceremonial purposes whether in myth, the Bible or a novel such as this one.

When Hannah mentions to the Wizard that the cotters visited her and spoke of their families, he admonishes her to ignore the cotters, as they are not like the Wizard and Hannah – who live safely in the Wood. The cotters simply subsist, eking out an existence, growing old and then they die.³⁵ It is obvious that the Wizard attempts to put Hannah off the idea of humans and life outside of the Tanglewood, as if he and Hannah are similar to the gods of Olympus, who are not concerned with the troubles of mere mortals. It is also reminiscent of Zeus’ hostility to humankind.

Hannah cannot understand why the cotters are different to her, and points out to the Wizard “They don’t speak the tongue of animals or ken the craft of roots and herbs” (Pierce 2001: 16). The Wizard once again admonishes Hannah, “Let those villains find their own cures. Their trials are beneath your concern, (Pierce 2001: 17). The Wizard sends Hannah on her way with a reminder to be back in a month with his draught of herbs and flowers that she must pluck from her hair.

³⁵ The Wizard rebukes Hannah: “You mustn’t pay these worldly cotters any mind! They drudge about their dreary lives, getting and bearing, aging and dying. They don’t live as we do, chit, safe in our Wood” (Pierce 2001: 16). It is reminiscent of Zeus’ antagonism to the mortals, and that the gods of Olympus are above ordinary mortal beings.

The process of yanking out the flowers and herbs leaves Hannah weak and exhausted she stumbles back to her hut. As the bleak, cold days move on, Hannah becomes stronger as the shoots and buds once again begin to grow in her hair. The Wizard's manipulation of Hannah to provide him with a monthly brew made from the verdant growth in her hair – which leaves her weakened, could be likened to an abuse such as rape – a violation of her very being – much like the myth where Persephone is raped by Hades.

As Hannah wanders about the Tanglewood, gathering herbs and charms to heal the cotters and woodland creatures, she often notices the tracks of horses. She knows that they are the tracks of the knights on horseback who enter the Wood, who never even glance at her, so intent are they on whatever mission they have to accomplish. Sometimes she will see a knight's horse limping out of the Tanglewood, but she has never seen a knight returning from the Wood.

Brown Hannah is curious about the knights, and on a day, after gathering food in the woods, she returns to her hut, to find the cotters waiting nervously for her for healing and charms. She asks about the knights but the cotters are reluctant to talk about them. "Brown Hannah sighed. 'How long have they come' she wondered aloud, 'these strange questers on white horseback?'" (Pierce 2001: 26).³⁶ Eventually one of the men responds telling her that the knights have been coming to the Tanglewood for as long as anyone can remember. On asking what the knights are searching for, Hannah is given various reasons of what the questors are seeking for in the Tanglewood: "To free the lovely hostage whose dowry's worth the world's ransom" "Tis a tree that fruits riches –..." "A 'chanter's wand!" (Pierce 2001: 26). The villagers tell her that the knights never return because a Golden Boar guards the treasure and lives at the heart of the Tanglewood.³⁷ Hannah is astounded, she has always lived in the Wood and has never seen any sign of

³⁶ Questers (also questors) searching for something – just as Demeter searched for Persephone.

³⁷ According to Metcalfe (1998:94) the boar is defined as "the tusked wild pig, *Sus scrofa*, from which domesticated pigs are descended." According to Fontana (1993:93) "pigs were routinely sacrificed to Demeter. The Celts believed that the boar "stood for magic and prophecy, because of its solitary life in the forest." It should be further noted that suckling pigs were offered as a sacrifice at the festival of the Thesmophoria, which is a subsequent link to a version of the *Myth* in the *Orphic* version, whereby when the earth opened up to receive Persephone, and Eubouleus, the swineherd's pigs were swallowed up as well.

a Golden Boar. The cotters become nervous and depart, leaving behind gifts for Hannah, who always refuses payment for her help.

A month goes by – once more the moon is waxing, and it is time to prepare the Wizard's draught. As Fontana (1993:121) indicates, "when waxing, the moon symbolises creativity, regeneration, female fertility and pregnancy." Thus the foliage and flowers picked at this time of the month for the Wizard's tea would indicate having regenerative powers, similar to those of Persephone when she ascends from the Underworld.

Hannah's curiosity about the knights causes her to procrastinate with the making of the Wizard's tea. She looks for excuses not to go – the hut needs mending, and she needs to return the gifts that the villagers have left in their haste to leave. She feels wonderful, the growth on her head has filled her with vigour and strength. Magpie warns her of the folly of ignoring the Wizard and of going to the village, and when she turns to Badger for his support he quietly tells her: "I think your Wizard's not half so tender of heart as you" (Pierce 2001: 31). This brings to mind a similar image to that of Hades, who may not be so gentle of mind.

However, Hannah seems to have found courage – probably due to the vital juices of the verdant growth in her head and decides not to make the brew just yet. The next morning she goes to the village, where some of the cotters gaze at her in consternation, calling her "the Woodland Dame" (Pierce 2001: 34). But few of the anxious villagers want to talk to her.

Finally she comes upon a man and a woman whom she has helped before, and asks them about the Golden Boar. The couple tell her "It dwells in the heart of the Tanglewood, miss. A huge, fierce thing. Yearly we pay it tribute" (Pierce 2001: 37). Hannah discovers that every year the villagers pay the Golden Boar dues in the form of coins or gems. The old couple become anxious and tell Hannah "But we paid the year's ransom! In full, miss just two moons past. I beseech you, tell your master the sum was meager only because we've no more to give" (Pierce 2001: 38). When Hannah protests that she knows of no Golden Boar, the old man becomes even more frantic and begs Hannah to leave the village. "But he wards you, miss, just as he wards the Wood. Don't

you see? If he finds you strayed, he'll come searching, and if you lead him here, we'll pay not gold, but blood" (Pierce 2001: 38).

Hannah listens with increasing shock and revulsion to what the old couple have to say, she is told how the Golden Boar has killed their family members to feed on them. "Now of course," the gray-haired woman added quietly, "since my children's time, since the young knights have begun to come, the Boar asks only tribute of us" (Pierce 2001: 39). When Hannah leaves, the old woman admonishes her husband that he should have treated the Winter Damsel more gently. The old man agrees that he should have, but he knows that it is of no use, as the girl is held captive by the boar.³⁸

On leaving the old couple, Hannah realises that she must give the Wizard his draught and runs back to the Wood. She feels strong and vibrant due to the sap of the green growth coursing through her body (Pierce 2001: 42). She dashes into the hut to collect the lidded goblet for the Wizard's brew and runs on to the heart of the Tanglewood. As she nears the centre of the wood, the landscape becomes dark and ominous.³⁹ Possibly a similar landscape confronted Persephone when she entered the Underworld.

Hannah finds the Wizard eating at his table, "'Cottars," she stammered. "Villagers – they spoke of treasure, and of knights devoured by a Golden Boar" (Pierce 2001: 44). Exasperated, the Wizard rebukes her for associating with the villagers. Calmly he agrees that of course he has seen the knights in the Wood, telling Hannah that they are just poor young fools seeking treasure. The Wizard then placates Hannah and tells her that there is no treasure and no ravenous boar in the Wood. In fact he adds "Whenever I happen upon these errant souls, wandering lost, I guide them out of the Wood – though sometimes the timber brakes press so thick their horses can't get through" (Pierce 2001: 44).

Finally the Wizard asks Hannah for his draught only to discover there is nothing inside the goblet. She realizes that in her haste from the village, she has forgotten to pluck the

³⁸ A statement such as "I know it well. But what use, when the Boar holds her powerless as he does us all?" (Pierce 2001: 41) can also refer to Hades who held Persephone powerless in the Underworld.

³⁹ The description of the Wood, reminds the reader of the Underworld, and has an ominous ring to it. "The shady air chilled. Mist crept about the forest's knotted roots. The trees themselves thronged thicker the deeper into the darkling Wood she passed" (Pierce 2001: 43).

foliage from her hair and brew his tea. “One hand darted like a hawk’s pounce to her hair. ‘Flibbertigibbet, why do you let these weeds grow? Haven’t I warned you, that left unchecked, they’ll addle your reason?’” (Pierce 2001: 45).

The Wizard grabs Hannah and starts to violently pluck and tear out the green growth in her hair, his fingers forcibly tugging out the growth. The pain shoots through Hannah, her very being violated by this sadistic act – the Wizard craving what he believes rightfully belongs to him. This attitude of the Wizard correlates to Hades who believed that Persephone belonged to him. In her fear, Hannah bears the pain in silence, until he is finished with her. The passage suggests a rape scene – a male forcing himself on a woman, and her fear of screaming lest she be violated even more. This is reminiscent of the rape of Persephone by Hades, but in this case, the Wizard violates Hannah. It must be remembered that rape has nothing to do with sex, but everything to do with having power over another. Here it is obvious that the Wizard exerts his power over Hannah in a violent way.

The Wizard nonchalantly makes his brew and drinks it, replete – his craving has been satisfied, his need for Hannah has been filled. This could be how a rapist may feel – replete in the power he has exerted on an innocent virgin. “Hannah staggered, mute, unable to catch either her balance or her breath. Fog swirled damp about her. Her skull hammered. Cool sap flowed down the back of her neck, chilling her spine” (Pierce 2001: 47). This description is indicative of the blood that would trickle down the legs of a rape victim.

The Wizard sends Hannah away with a warning to come on time in the following month. Hannah stumbles weakly away, having lost her sense of direction. Eventually she finds herself in a place littered with bones, the abandoned suits of knights’ armour and heaps of jewels, coins and other spoils. Around the area are the marks of heavy hooves as well as cloven tracks. As she sinks to the earth she finds three yellow hairs “stiff as bristles of golden wire” (Pierce 2001: 49). She clasps the hairs tightly in her hand, they have an odour that permeates the air about her. Slowly she sinks to the freezing cold ground, the world starts to retreat and she falls unconscious to the icy ground, lying among the Wizard’s treasures and the discarded bones.

The barking of the fox pups clamouring about her and licking her cheeks eventually revives her. Magpie and Badger tell Hannah that they have brought a friend to take her home. Blonde Grizzled Bear gently picks her up and shambles homewards to the hut with the weak girl in his arms. Hannah snuggles into Bear's thick fur, which radiates comfort and warmth, which her cold and brittle body so badly needs. "Hellish place," she heard Badger rumble. Badger's description brings to mind a place like Hell or Hades – it is dark and cold like a grave, a place of the dead, with bones lying around on the ground, at the very heart of the Tanglewood.

The foxlets whimpered. "She's found his trove," Magpie sighed, perching atop the Bear's head now, or so it seemed from the sound. "No good can follow. Let's be off" (Pierce 2001: 51). Hannah stirs again and in shock, feebly tells her companions that the Wizard has been lying to her. The shock and disappointment that Hannah expresses would be similar to that felt by Persephone when she discovered that her abduction to the Underworld was a conspiracy between her father Zeus and Hades.

Badger and Magpie with all their obvious physical limitations take care of Hannah. Magpie especially, fusses over and mothers her, preparing her broths and other titbits so that she can regain her strength. Magpie's ministrations can be interpreted as the mother taking care of her child or even the help that a crone (wise woman) would give a young maiden – the personification of Hecate.

As Hannah recuperates, she questions the Wizard's motives and who he really is. She tells Badger and Magpie about the Wizard's lies and confirms this by opening her hand and revealing the three coarse golden hairs. "He claimed the Tanglewood hid no trove, no Golden Boar, that all the knights passed safely through" (Pierce 2001: 56). Hannah is starting to doubt the sincerity of the Wizard.

Hannah studies the three gold bristles in her grasp. She realises that whatever she knows about the world, it is only what the Wizard has decided to tell her.⁴⁰ Magpie, Badger and the fox pups promise to help Hannah find out all she can about the world.

⁴⁰ As Hannah contemplates the limitations of her existence, it becomes clearer to her that she has misunderstood her own position: "All I know of the world is his teaching," she murmured. "But I think both the Wood and this world hold far more than he'd have me know" (Pierce 2001: 57).

Over the next month, as Hannah slowly mends, she starts to wonder about life before the Wood, not only about her life, but the lives of her companions.⁴¹ Yet neither Magpie or Badger, or the foxlets can remember anything before their time in the Tanglewood.

When the time arrives for Hannah to take the Wizard his brew, she plucks only a few sprigs from her hair – only those visible at the crown. The Wizard is disappointed with the weak brew but considers “It was only to be expected, I suppose, after last moon’s rich crop” (Pierce 2001: 62). A month later “the brew that followed was indeed darker, but once again, Hannah left some of her shoots unpulled and hidden. Nor did she include in the draught every shoot she pulled” (Pierce 2001: 63). In fact she makes herself a tea with some of the shoots, boosting her own strength even more.

One day while walking upon the dunes on the beach below the Tanglewood, a handsome black-haired knight hails Hannah. “A glossy jet plume spurted from the helm slung from his saddlebow, above two boar spears strapped to his steed’s black caparison. The cloak and tabard he wore over his armor were ebon as well. A silver cloakpin at one shoulder pictured a circle enclosing a leafy tree simultaneously in fruit and in flower. Its mate was obviously lost, for his other shoulder bore a simpler iron clasp” (Pierce 2001: 69).

The symbolism of the cloakpin is important in the novel. As Jung (2001:15) mentions the mother archetype is often associated with a tree, a symbol of fertility and life. The fact that the tree has both fruit and flowers is symbolical of the growing seasons, i.e. spring and summer, whilst the circle is a symbol of infinity. This brooch could be a family crest of the knight or an icon related to his religious beliefs. The symbolic value of the cloakpin is only divulged towards the end of the novel. In terms of the myth, the symbolism here can relate to the seasons of the year, when Persephone ascends from the Underworld and spring and summer arrive, and once more the earth is filled with richness and fecundity.

⁴¹ When Hannah asks her companions: “why is it,” she asked Magpie and Badger both, “that neither of you recall your past?” (Pierce 2001: 61), one is reminded of the River Lethe in the Underworld. When the souls of the dead drink the water of the River Lethe, they forget everything before they are reborn again.

When the knight tells Hannah that he seeks a treasure and asks if she has heard about it, she prevaricates, as she fears for his life – she is well aware of the fate of previous knights. She realizes that he is determined to find the treasure and she points him to the Wood warning him that the Golden Boar will kill him. The knight is unperturbed and asks her for a kiss to act as his shield. “No man returns from the Tanglewood,” she told him sadly. “No shield lies in a kiss” (Pierce 2001: 72).

As the knight makes off, Hannah calls him back. “Take this instead,” she said, easing a pale lily from her hair and pinning it with a thorn to the young man’s breast” (Pierce 2001: 73). White is the colour used by virgins when they marry and thus a “pale” lily can be regarded as a symbol of the virgin – just as Persephone was a virgin, before being raped by Hades. Fontana (1993:104) indicates that “the Greeks believed that paradise was carpeted with asphodels,” which is a flower and member of the lily family. According to Metcalfe (1998:56) the asphodel is “an immortal flower growing in Elysium.” In Greek mythology, Elysium was the home of the blessed that had died. Here the lily is used symbolically to protect the knight’s life.

Early the following morning, Hannah starts to wonder if there is still time to warn the knight. She runs off deep into the Wood to see if she can find him. Late in the morning she comes upon a black plumed helmet lying in a stream. Then she sees the white horse with its black trappings lying dead at the water’s edge, with the knight still in his saddle, partially trapped under the animal. He is weak and badly injured, but the white lily that she had pinned on him, still blooms on his breast. The lily continues to bloom indicating that it has regenerative powers from Hannah, and showing a similarity between her and Persephone, for when she ascended from the Underworld, the earth too blossomed and flourished.

Hannah sends Rain Crow, to fetch Blond Grizzled Bear to help drag the knight free from the saddle and to carry him home. When Bear arrives he snuffles the knight, exclaiming, “He smells of foxes. Foxes and sorcery. Who is he?” (Pierce 2001: 77). Fontana (1993:84) points out that “the Chinese credit the fox with the power to change shape and even assume human form.” In this story this is an omen of things to come. The “smell of sorcery” relates to something magical about the knight and his origins. Hecate was the only goddess in the Demeter/Persephone myth to help Demeter find her daughter. She

was the patron of magic and sorcery and linked to darkness and the Underworld. “Her association with Demeter was enhanced by the belief that both goddesses looked after the fertility of the ground” (Grant & Hazel 1973:151). This passage thus hints at another connection between the myth and the novel.

Once back at the hut, Hannah tends to the knight’s wounds. Eventually he awakens and tells her that although a Boar had killed his horse it could not touch him, because of the lily pinned to his breast. The sight of the lily had enraged the Boar. The rage of the boar at the sight of the lily points to the fact that he must have recognised something special about it.

When Hannah asks the knight for his name he tells her that he has none and that until he succeeds at achieving his quest, only his Queen knows his name. “‘Who is this Queen?’ Hannah asked the knight” (Pierce 2001: 78). “The young knight’s eyelids drifted shut. Ever so faintly, he smiled. ‘Faraway She fostered me A thief stole her treasure long ago. Countless of her champions ... have sought to reclaim it’” (Pierce 2001: 78). The young knight who was fostered by a Queen, indicates a similarity to the myth, such as when Demeter took care of Demophon, the son of Celeus and Metaneira, while grieving for Persephone. Furthermore, when the knight tells Hannah that a thief, believed to live in the heart of the Tanglewood, stole his Queen’s treasure, this is a parallel to Demeter’s treasured daughter Persephone, who was abducted by Hades.

As the young knight does not know his name, Hannah resolves to call him Prince Foxkith, while he recuperates in her hut. Once more the moon is waxing and Hannah realises that she must take the Wizard his draught. Again she prepares him a weaker brew. She realizes that her hair, with its verdant foliage and flowers mostly unpicked provides her with more stamina than even sips of the Wizard’s tea can provide her. She wraps her hair in a shawl, so that he cannot see the lush growth on her head.

She does not find the Wizard in his lair, and leaves the goblet for him. Retuning home, she discovers that an impenetrable magical thorn hedge has grown around the hut. When she approaches with her hand outstretched, the branches let her through, and seal up the hedge behind her.

Hannah continues to tend Foxkith, and picks herbs from her hair to speed up his healing. As the days go by, Hannah realises that he no longer needs the healing herbs and she notices that the herbs have stopped growing amongst her hair, and eventually her hair only produces scented flowers. “Oddly, ever since the thorn fence grew, Hannah had begun discovering charms she had never known before” (Pierce 2001: 83).

By retaining the flowers and other verdant growth in her hair, Hannah’s magical powers have returned to her. While Hannah was giving the full strength draught to the Wizard, she herself became weak with little strength and few powers. This suggests that any woman, who is repressed, becomes disempowered, losing her power of being an individual and the ability to be her own authentic self, or to act spontaneously and with confidence.

When Foxkith is well, Hannah presses him once more to tell her of his quest and where he has come from. Although he can remember the recent past, he struggles to remember much about his Queen. He tells her that he can remember that she is wise and kind, and that for some reason, Hannah reminds him of his Queen.

Hannah has never told Foxkith about the Wizard. Now that he is completely healed, he is anxious to go in search of his Queen’s treasure. Hannah promises to help him on her return to the hut. It’s once again time to take the Wizard his brew. When she is about to leave, Foxkith questions her on who she takes medicine to, as he has twice seen her leave with the goblet. Hannah rushes away murmuring that it’s for a cotter.

On arriving at the crux of the Tanglewood, Hannah discovers that the Wizard is nowhere to be seen. She is drawn to look at his treasure of coins and jewels amongst the rusting armour and bleaching bones. Suddenly Foxkith appears carrying homemade spears fashioned from wood, with Magpie, Old Badger and the fox pups following close behind. Foxkith reveals that he has found the three coarse golden hairs in the hut and has followed her. “Is this treasure yours, Hannah?” he asked her softly, nodding all around. “Are you some sorceress? Is the Golden Boar your beast?” The three hairs glinted on his palm. His black eyes seemed infinitely saddened, his voice astonished with pain. “Are you the thief who stole my lady’s trove?” (Pierce 2001: 97).

Hannah tells Foxkith about the Wizard, his treasure and that the Golden Boar belongs to him, and how she is commanded to bring him a draught every month at the time when the moon waxes. Now, more than ever, Foxkith is determined to complete his quest. Hannah begs him not to try, as the Golden Boar will kill him. Foxkith is unperturbed and asks Hannah to kiss him, as then he will not die. Hannah kisses the knight and he tells her “you taste of green things growing” (Pierce 2001: 98). This statement proposes a similarity between Hannah, who is about to enter spring – the taste of the kiss brings the promise of growth. It reminds one of Persephone when she is about to re-emerge from the Underworld, and once she emerges, the promise of spring gives birth to “green growing things” and the earth is no longer a barren wasteland.

Suddenly there is a tremendous thundering and crashing through the forest and Hannah spins around to look. An enormous wild boar with golden bristles is stamping the ground, not twenty feet from where they stand. Clenched between its ivory tusks is the Wizard’s covered flagon. Hannah suddenly realizes that the Wizard and the Golden Boar are one and the same. She demands that the Boar take its human shape. When he does, she notices that the Wizard has become thin and drawn – probably as a result of receiving weaker brews from her hair.

What follows is a fierce interchange between Hannah and the Wizard. Foxkith asks if the Wizard is Hannah’s father. The Wizard asserts that he is. Hannah vehemently denies this and he counters that he may not have fathered her, but it is he who created her.⁴² This suggests that the Wizard is like Zeus, who Hesiod designated as “father of gods and men,” Harris and Platzner (2001:75), referring to his role as the ruler of the gods of Olympus, whilst the Wizard “fathered” or ruled over the creatures of the Wood – an example of the patriarchal system, where the female has subordinate status to the male, and in this case, the great god/creator of lesser beings.

The Wizard accuses Hannah of not bringing him a worthy brew, and of wasting her time with the knight, giving his brew to the injured man instead of bringing it to him. He shouts at her that due to this neglect she has caused her hair to flower, her dress and even the

⁴² When an argument breaks out about Hannah’s paternity, the Wizard is quick to tell the group: ‘Of course I’m her father’ His beadlike eyes flicked back to Hannah. ‘I raised you didn’t I?’” (Pierce 2001: 101). When Hannah vehemently denies this, saying that Magpie and Old Badger raised her. The Wizard counters, “I’m your creator, Hannah, even if I’m not your sire” (Pierce 2001: 101).

Wood has turned green. Sure enough, the drab winter in the Wood has disappeared. Suddenly everything is fresh and clean, and indeed, even her dress has become green.⁴³

Hannah accuses the Wizard of killing the knights. Angrily the Wizard points out to Hannah and Foxkith that the bones in the Wood are those of woodland animals. He laughs at her accusation, telling Hannah that even the knight is nothing but a woodland animal, whose Queen has only animals for company. He tells Hannah that he has been to the island where Foxkith's mistress lives, and that she turns animals into knights to find and harass him. Something that the Wizard has said triggers a memory in Foxkith.

As Foxkith starts to tell Hannah of his past, the Wizard warns him to stop. "Not another whimper," the Wizard growled. "You've wildered my chattel quite enough" (Pierce 2001: 105). Metcalfe (1998:56) defines chattel as "a personal possession." Here once more is reference to a patriarchal attitude similar to the way that Zeus and Hades regarded most of the goddesses – as possessions, just as the Wizard regards Hannah. When Foxkith tries to continue, the Wizard changes him into a fox. The Wizard would have killed Foxkith, except for the lily that Hannah had earlier pinned to his breast, and which now appears as a splash of white fur in the shape of a lily on the chest of the black furred fox.

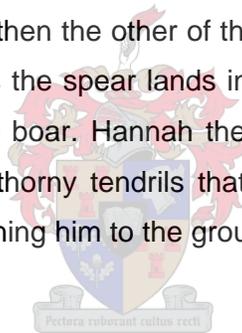
According to Fontana (1993:84), "the fox often symbolises cunning and deceit, although native North Americans credit it with great instinctive wisdom. In Oriental mythology, the fox was a powerfully positive symbol, representing longevity for the Japanese and serving as the magical messenger of the god Inari." In Greek mythology, Hermes was the messenger of Zeus, and was associated with the Underworld as he was the guide of dead souls to Hades. In the Demeter/Persephone myth, Hermes was sent by Zeus to negotiate with Hades for the return of Persephone to her mother, Demeter. In the novel, the knight's appearance in the Tanglewood is the catalyst for Hannah to return to her home and her mother.

⁴³ Hannah sees that her clothes and the forest surrounding her have changed colour from drab brown to green. "Startled, Hannah stared, realizing for the first time that her robe had indeed lost its shabby hue. Verdant as new leaves, it draped now in delicate, translucent layers. Jasmine and honeysuckle bloomed about the treeboles all around, their heady savor pervading the glade. The tangled boughs overhead were budded in leaf" (Pierce 2001: 102).

A tremendous fracas between the Wizard and Hannah ensues. The Wizard demands his draught, and on surveying the contents of the weak brew throws the goblet aside. It lands upon a chest spilling over with gems, next to the bones of many animals. Hannah asks him whether he has stolen these from the Sorcerer Queen. "These? Hardly!" His smile broadened. "I took far more than mere riches from that misshapen monstress" (Pierce 2001: 109). This passage brings to mind that just as Hades had abducted Persephone, the Wizard had abducted someone of great importance to the Queen.

The Wizard insists on a stronger draught. When Hannah shouts at him to brew his own draught the Wizard threatens to thrash her within an inch of her life. He once more turns into the Golden Boar and charges at Hannah. With that, Foxkith buries his teeth into the charging boar, the foxlets rushing forward to assist the mute black fox, ably assisted by Badger and Magpie.

As the Boar lunges after one and then the other of the group, Hannah throws one of the handmade spears at the Boar. As the spear lands in the earth, it takes root and grows tendrils that reach out to trap the boar. Hannah then throws the other spear, and the same thing happens again. The thorny tendrils that erupted from the wooden spears close over the struggling boar, pinning him to the ground and imprisoning him.



GREEN HANNAH – SPRING

Green Hannah and her companions flee the Tanglewood, running across sterile meadows and infertile lands.⁴⁴ As she runs, all Hannah sees is desolation – nothing grows and even the people in the distance are gaunt and thin. This barren landscape is similar to the landscape of the earth after Demeter discovered that Persephone had been abducted, and because of her grief, caused the earth to become barren and desolate.

⁴⁴ In this part of the novel, Hannah is called Green Hannah, which is linked to spring – the time when the green shoots appear on plants, buds open and the world prepares for an abundance of fruit, flowers and grain.

As Hannah races on with her companions, blossoms and shoots fall from her hair, taking root in the ground and turning the infertile earth into verdant green and colour as buds start growing in the previously barren earth. There is a similarity here between the myth and this novel. While Persephone was in Hades, the earth was barren and it was winter. When she emerged from the Underworld, the earth regained its vitality and fertility and burgeoned with growth. Similarly when Hannah was in the Tanglewood it was always cold and drab – winter. When she left the Tanglewood (a place that suggests a similarity to the Underworld) it was winter and the earth was sterile and desolate, but as she moved over the land, the earth suddenly burgeoned with growth and fecundity – spring.

“Lost in grief, never casting a backward glance, she had remained until this moment completely insensible to the trees bursting into foliage, fields teeming suddenly into flower. Hannah held out her hands to the distant verdure, crying out in delight, ‘What is it? What is it?’” (Pierce 2001: 121). Magpie responds “It’s you, dear one. Here’s what you’ve been meant to do all your life, it seems” (Pierce 2001: 121). This passage indicates that a woman will often find her path in life after a descent into darkness (under world) and then coming into the light (upper world) will find her true role in life. In this story, Hannah has left the darkness behind – she has ascended from the Underworld (Tanglewood) and as Magpie points out, she has now found her role – to bring fertility back to the earth and abundance to all who live on it. However, at this stage of the novel, Hannah does not realise her important role.

Hannah realises that the only one who can help to change Prince Foxkith back into a human and cure his muteness, is his Sorcerer Queen and she decides to look for her. As they travel through the countryside, she questions the animals, yet not one creature has ever heard of the Sorcerer Queen. Hannah decides to question the humans about the whereabouts of Foxkith’s Queen.

Magpie wisely suggests that Hannah cover her clothes and hair, as she looks very different to the humans they have seen along their travels. The travelling group come upon a group of young girls doing their laundry on a riverbank. They watch them from behind a stand of bulrushes. The girls start playing and one of them pretends that she is the Maiden of the Spring. The young girls at the water remind the reader of the daughters of Keleos and Metaneira whom Demeter met at the well on the edge of the

town of Eleusis. As previously mentioned, in Greek myth, a meeting between mortals and disguised immortals often occurs beside water.

Eventually the girls prepare to leave the riverbank, a shabby old hooded cloak of many colours left forgotten behind. Hannah asks Magpie about spring and the Spring Maiden. Magpie tells Hannah that spring is a season, when the weather changes. Hannah is surprised, because she believes that the weather never changes – it is always cold and dismal. She suddenly realises that this is no longer true – there is nothing cold and drab about the weather now.

When Hannah tries to return the cloak to the group, the terrified young women run off in fear. Magpie suggests that Hannah put on the cloak to avoid humans being startled by her appearance. Days pass, but Green Hannah is nowhere closer to finding directions to the Sorcerer Queen.

One day, she meets up with an old woman walking along a road on her own. The old woman has failing eyesight and Hannah offers to lead her along the road. The woman's name is Marda and she tells Hannah that she is a needlewoman. When they reach her home, Marda invites Hannah to stay the night, as she is concerned about a young woman on her own along the deserted road. She tells Hannah that she is going on to the town of Linnel in the morning and assumes that Hannah is as well. To avoid suspicion, Hannah has no choice but to accept the invitation and abandon her companions to spend the night at the old needlewoman's home.

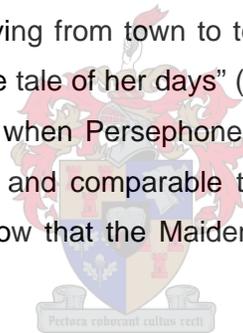
After supper, the old needlewoman sits by the fire stitching a cloth. She invites Hannah to take off her cloak, as she will get too hot. Marda has also noticed that the hem of the cloak needs mending. Hannah is hesitant, anxious that she will startle the old woman. She decides to take off her cloak, as with Marda's weak eyesight she may not notice that Hannah looks different to other girls.

As Marda repairs the cloak, she compliments Hannah on her beautiful green gown and the sweet smelling flowers in her hair, mentioning that it is obvious that Hannah is also on her way to the festival in Linnel. Hannah discovers that there is a religious festival in Linnel on the following day and that there will be holy people in attendance. When asked

why she is travelling alone, she tells Marda that her companions are lodging elsewhere and that she will meet up with them the next day.

Marda then enquires about why she is in such a rush to get to Linnel. Hannah explains that she is looking for someone whom she does not know, but is known to a friend who is ill, and called the Sorcerer Queen. She tells Marda that her friend has lost the power of speech, and that he does not seem to know her or his other companions anymore. Although Marda knows of no such person, she suggests that Hannah ask the holy people who will be at the tabernacle on the following day. She tells Hannah that the holy ones are travelling to Linnel to celebrate the arrival of spring. Marda assures Hannah that if anyone can help her, it will surely be the holy people.

Hannah asks Marda to tell her more about these holy people. “Ah, now, my dear, they’re a rare sort. Usually they travel solitary, but since the Maid’s slipped free and brought back spring, they’ve banded, moving from town to town, ‘following the footsteps of the Maiden’ so they say and telling the tale of her days” (Pierce 2001: 139). This is similar to the return of spring and summer when Persephone was set free from the Underworld and returned to the upper-world, and comparable to the people in the story who will celebrate the advent of spring, now that the Maiden has slipped free from where she was obviously imprisoned.



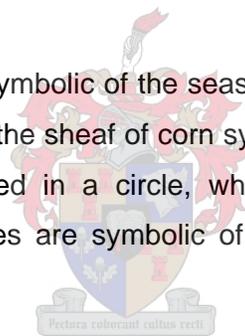
Marda further explains to Hannah, “and of course they preach of the Lady, who embodies Maiden, Matron and Ancient Mother in one” (Pierce 2001: 140). The Lady could indicate the Great Goddess who represents the maiden, mother (matron) and crone. As previously mentioned, Conway (1994:80) indicates that the diverse elements of the Goddess are so combined that they cannot be separated as one element automatically leads into another. The Great Goddess is each of these and all of them, similar to the “Lady” in the novel, who embodies Maiden, Matron and Ancient Mother.

Marda in the novel draws a parallel to Hecate (wise woman or crone) in the Demeter/Persephone myth. Marda’s caring ways are similar to Hecate, who promised to be Persephone’s attendant (take care of) when she returned to the Underworld. Marda takes Hannah into her home out of concern for her safety. She also provides her with food and mends her cloak – something an attendant or caregiver would do.

The next day, just before noon, the old needlewoman and Hannah reach the crowded tabernacle in Linnel. A tabernacle is a holy place of worship. This reference in the novel suggests a similarity to the myth, where a temple was built on a hill of the town Eleusis in honour of Demeter, and where Hermes took Persephone to her mother after being released from the Underworld.

Marda's nephew has kept her a place with a good view of where the proceedings are to take place in the tabernacle. The holy people enter and walk down the centre aisle. Some are old, others are young, with both men and woman in the group. They all carry staves. "Their leader's was intricately carved. Atop its shaft, a snowflake, lily, cornsheaf, and acorn twined in a ring. Others bore single images of seedheads or pomes. Several were wrought in the shape of a girl. One looked like a little flowering tree" (Pierce 2001: 152).

The head of the leader's staff is symbolic of the seasons, i.e. the snowflake symbolising winter, the lily symbolic of spring, the sheaf of corn symbolises summer and the acorn, a symbol for autumn, all intertwined in a circle, which is the symbol of infinity. The seedheads on some of the staves are symbolic of fertility – the mother carrying the seeds of new life within.



The other staves are also symbolic and suggest parallels to the myth. For instance Metcalfe (1998:634) indicates that a pome is "a firm-fleshed fruit in which the carpels from the central core enclose the fruits, e.g. the apple, pear and quince." This would be a symbol of fertility, such as the mother carrying the seeds within her. The girl on the staff could be a symbol of the Maiden and the flowering tree on the staff would be a religious symbol of the holy people. It is also a similar symbol to that of Foxkith's cloakpin, where we have previously discussed that the tree is an elemental mother-symbol in mythology – a symbol of fertility and life.

The leader greets the people in the tabernacle. He tells them that the group of holy people have banded together now and that after such a lengthy time there is evidence that the Lady is not far. He further announces, "for the signs are all around us. Who now

dare doubt the Lady lives? That evil grasp which held her is broken. She is clothed now as the Summer Girl – and we, too, are set free!” (Pierce 2001: 153).

The evil that the holyman refers to can be linked to Hades/the Wizard, whose grasp is now broken, and Persephone/Hannah are linked to being set free from the Underworld/the Tanglewood. With the release of the Maiden, humans are also set free from lack, hunger and the barren earth. Similarly, as in the myth, when Demeter could not find Persephone, she had a temple built for her, and withdrew into the temple and continued brooding over her lost daughter. Her brooding caused suffering for the mortals, as the following year no seed sprouted and no barley would grow in the ploughed fields. Only when Persephone was released from the Underworld, the Earth started to produce food, a famine was averted and mortals were set free from hunger and starvation.

“All of us know,” the holyman began once more, “what we learned in our cradles of the Mother and matron, who is also the Girl. It is this youngest incarnation that we seek for – so the signs tell us – it is she who walks among us now, warming the world, renewing all things, and bearing the promise of harvest in every golden step” (Pierce 2001: 154). The “Girl” can be a reference to Persephone/Hannah.

The holy man then invites the crowd to come forward with questions and for blessings. Marda urges Hannah to go forward to ask the holy man about the Sorcerer Queen. Hannah approaches the stage and kneels in front of him. She notices that other pilgrims have stepped onto the platform and kneel before the holy people, giving them a small token or coin. She realises that she has nothing to give. Then she remembers that she has flowers growing in her hair under the hood of her cloak. She slips her hand under the hood and, instead of flowers, she is surprised to see that she has pulled out a stalk of ripened grain. The holy man graciously accepts her gift.

Hannah asks him about the Sorcerer Queen, but becomes distracted when she realises that something is happening under her hood. “Little particles, no bigger than peppercorns, were starting to sprinkle, some falling down the throat of her cloak to plink and rattle to the floor about her concealed gown. Others – fewer – slipped free of her cowl altogether and bounced along the hardwood floorboards. Grain, Hannah realised with a start: ripe seeds of barley and millet, marsh rice and rye. Still kneeling, she

stiffened, drawing back, and more of the kernels danced across the floor. The holyman's gaze followed her own" (Pierce 2001: 158).

Just then, there is a commotion as Foxkith followed by Old Badger and the fox pups run down the aisle. Magpie follows screeching. Suddenly the crowd starts shouting to kill the creatures – vermin defiling the holy place. Hannah jumps up shouting at the crowd not to touch the animals, screaming that they are her companions.

As the holyman tries to calm Hannah, he inadvertently pulls on the sleeve of her cape, causing it's clasp to loosen and the garment to pull free. "Grain spilled through the air, both onto the platform and into the crowd. Hannah threw up her hands, wincing at a sudden brightness, which filled the shaded hall. A moment later, she realised that it was herself that glowed, or rather, her gown: no longer green, but grown yellow, incandescent as sunlight, as daffodils. Her hair, she realized in astonishment, was no longer verdant with flowers and leaves, but rife now with stalks of wild grasses and cereal corn" (Pierce 2001: 159). The crowd gasped and fell to their knees, crying out "the Summer Girl!"

Picking up Badger and whistling for her other companions, Hannah races out of the hall and away from Linnel, tears streaming down her cheeks. She regards herself as an oddity and is convinced that she will never find Foxkith's Sorcerer Queen, for no human will help her because she is so strange.

GOLDEN HANNAH – SUMMER

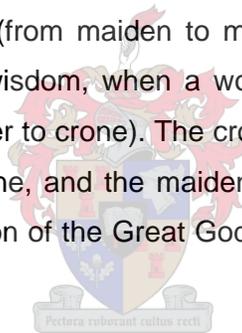
Golden Hannah flees Linnel with her companions.⁴⁵ Speeding across fields and meadows, she avoids villages and farms. Months have passed since Hannah fled the Tanglewood in her green gown, which has now turned golden. She comes to a stop on the top of a hill, and looking down, sees people at work harvesting their crops. They are healthy and robust, and as they work they sing a song that seems so familiar to her – it is a song about spring, summer and winter. This denotes one of the themes of the novel

⁴⁵ In this part of the novel, Hannah is called Golden Hannah, who is linked to the summer season.

– the seasons of the year, which is also an etiological explanation of the Demeter/Persephone myth.

Hannah remembers that the cotters had called her the Winter Damsel, the girls at the river had spoken of the Spring Maid and now recently the people in Linnel had spoken of her as the Summer Girl. Hannah wonders about the meanings of these names and of the song of the reapers. Hannah asks Magpie what possesses her “Nothing ‘possesses’ you,” the bird tartly insisted. “You are simply becoming whatever you were always meant to be and don’t yet know yourself” (Pierce 2001: 171).

“A woman becoming” can refer to finding her truth or authentic path – her purpose in life. On the other hand this can refer to the stages a woman goes through in her life, which at the start of each stage, she doesn’t quite understand. Such as menstruation is the doorway to becoming a woman (from child to maiden), loss of virginity is the gateway to becoming a woman and mother (from maiden to mother), and the menopause is the bridge to new experiences and wisdom, when a woman becomes more aware of the cycle of life and death (from mother to crone). The crone is also maiden and mother, just as the mother is maiden and crone, and the maiden is mother and crone. They blend together and are the personification of the Great Goddess, which is what all women are at different stages in life.



Eventually Hannah finds herself and her companions upon a beach. Foxkith stares transfixed at something in the distance, and dashes off to find it. She finally reaches Foxkith, who is digging furiously on the beach. Hannah manages to unearth the object and sees that it is a piece of a boat. Finally Foxkith and the fox pups have dug up various parts of a boat and find the prow, which is a carved fox’s head.

Foxkith digs up another object and drops it at Hannah’s feet. Although weathered by sea and sand, Hannah recognises it – it is a silver circle containing a leafy tree in fruit and in flower. She realises that it’s the mate of the cloak pin that the knight had been wearing when she had first met him. The pieces of wood lying around must have been his boat, and he must have landed on this shore from wherever he had come from. Holding a fragment of the boat, Golden Hannah is at a loss on what to do with the pieces of the wrecked boat, and how they can travel further to find Foxkith’s Sorcerer Queen.

Growing quiet, she concentrates and suddenly she knows how to turn the pieces of driftwood back into a boat. Breathing gently on a piece, it becomes heavy and turns into a miniature boat in her hands.⁴⁶ Right before her eyes, Hannah sees the tiny craft grow – she has to let it go as it expands to a full-size boat. Once all are aboard the boat heads out to sea. Finally as the sun is setting, the boat arrives at the shore of an island. As they disembark Hannah spots the ruins of many boats. There are no people about, and all she sees before it grows too dark, are abandoned boat sheds and buildings. The group of travel companions follow Foxkith along a cliff.

At dawn, Hannah notices that the whole area is a barren wilderness, with hardly a sign of grass in sight. The band of travellers venture forth across the inhospitable landscape where nothing grows and all is desolate. Hannah is also bewildered by the condition of her hair. It has become limp and lifeless and the last few seedheads are depleted. The colour of her dress is changing colour too, becoming darker.

The smell of ancient sorcery fills the air and as little group moves on, no people are to be found, and those few animals that they come across are shabby and thin. When Hannah tries to talk to them, they ignore her – they seem preoccupied and they remind her of the knights who entered the Tanglewood, so intent on their mission, they hardly noticed her. Eventually they come to an abandoned city, the homes with furnishings intact, are faded and rotting, a huge tabernacle at the centre of it. The smell of sorcery is even stronger around the tabernacle. Hannah wonders what happened to the people who had lived here – they could not have left by sea, as their abandoned boats are in the harbour. Both Magpie and Badger remark that there is something strangely familiar about the place.⁴⁷

Foxkith has run off, and the rest of the group agree to take different directions to look for the Sorcerer Queen and to meet again at sunset. Hannah wanders too far, and realises too late that she will not get back to the others at sunset. As she walks in the twilight she comes to a large tree – the only one that she has seen on the island. She feels

⁴⁶ “The tiny craft took shape within her grasp, no bigger than the toys with which cottar children played. The figure topping the bowpost was a minute fox’s head, exactly like the one they had found earlier in the sand, only infinitely smaller” (Pierce 2001: 179).

⁴⁷ Magpie remarks, “it stirs my memory in some eerie sort of way” (Pierce 2001: 189).

something furry under the tree and realises it is Foxkith. They fall asleep together under the ancient tree.

Hannah awakens before dawn, reclining under the great old tree, gazing about her, confused at what she sees. Foxkith has gone off again. She notices that the old tree under which she has been lying bears the leaves of different trees. Yet she knows that the only tree that she has seen on the island is the great old tree where she has been sleeping. She notes that the tree carries a few meagre fruits of different types, and there are some scraggly looking blossoms and buds of different varieties. She smells the aroma of sorcery all around, as though coming from the tree itself. Once more there is reference to the aroma of sorcery – giving the reader an indication that “magic is in the air.”

What is significant here is that this tree is similar to the tree on the brooch that the knight wore – a universal tree carrying the fruit, flowers and leaves of different trees. This universal tree represents the universal Mother – symbolically bearing all the children of the Earth. It can be associated with a cornucopia, which is filled with the fruits of the harvest – be they nuts and fruits or other bounteous gifts from the harvest. As Carr-Gomm (1995: 97) mentions, “A cornucopia, represented as a horn or an ornamental bowl, offers an abundant supply of fruit and illustrates nature’s bounty. It is often depicted with Ceres (in Greek myth, Demeter), the goddess of agriculture, and with personifications of Abundance, Peace or Summer.”

Hannah hears sounds of tugging and chewing, and glancing around she sees some small animals eating fruit beneath the tree. “Gently, my children’ whispered the tree. ‘My old limbs bear all too little. Parcel my yield, that it may last.’ Hannah sat bolt upright. The animals near her froze or sprang away. The pilgrim girl stumbled to her feet, staring at the trunk of the tree. It bore a faint, unmistakable outline of a human figure. Even in this dimness before true dawn, she was able to discern it. Hannah gaped. The greenwood figure standing before her was silvery, tall, her body forming the great tree’s bole. Above, branches reached and radiated like a myriad of up-stretched arms that mingled with and became her leafy hair. Smooth ridges of bark outlined the treewoman’s venerable face. Below that, a dark and terrible hollow yawned in her breast as though, once lightning-rent, the wound had never closed” (Pierce 2001: 196).

Fontana (1993:103) points to the symbol of the Tree as a Woman “outwardly this image symbolizes the Earth Mother, the nurturing feminine principle. But inwardly it is also the invisible life-force slumbering within the Earth until inseminated by the masculine energy of the wind, rain and sun.” Here again is a reference to the Goddess, in this case the Mother Goddess.

The Tree Woman asks Hannah why she has come to the island. Shocked, Hannah tells the tree that she is on the island because of her friend, who has been changed into a mute fox. Hannah asks the tree, “But what are you? I’ve never before heard speech from a tree.” The other laughed, very delicately, her many branches tossing, quivering with mirth. “Is that what you take me for?” she whispered. “Well, in a way, I suppose I am – though my followers have long called me Ancient Mother, and once, long before that, Matron – and even Maiden at the dawn of my day.” Hannah realises who the Tree Woman is. “You’re the one whom the holyfolk spoke of!” she exclaimed. *The one they and the reapers mistook me for*, she added silently. And the girls doing laundry among the reeds. Aloud she said, “The one who embodies Mother, Matron and Maiden in one” (Pierce 2001: 198).⁴⁸

The Ancient Mother is significant as this relates to the Great Goddess who in primordial times gave birth to the Universe. Gaia, Rhea and Demeter were all regarded as great goddesses with maternal qualities in Greek mythology. The Great Goddess was associated with three functions, that of the source of life, and of death and rebirth, which symbolises heaven, earth and the underworld – or in other words, maiden, mother, crone. As people began to understand the life cycle of vegetation, and because the Great Goddess was responsible for the growth, death and the re-growth of plants, she was regarded as the Grain or Earth Goddess. Here the Tree Woman in the novel is a direct parallel to Demeter in the myth. Interestingly, in the myth Rhea is Demeter’s mother and Persephone’s grandmother, this indicates that the three goddesses also represent the three aspects of the Great Goddess, which is Persephone as the maiden, Demeter the mother and Rhea the crone.

⁴⁸ Conway (1994:80) mentions that the various aspects of the Goddess are so merged and intertwined that they cannot be separated; one aspect leads automatically into another. The Great Goddess is each of these and all of them.

Intrigued, Hannah asks the tree woman to tell her about herself and the scar that has started to ooze sap. She discovers that the Wizard was originally from this island, and that long ago, human beings worshipped the Tree Woman. Hannah tells the tree that she has seen the ruins of the city, the tabernacle, the palace and the harbour below. The woodland goddess tells Hannah that previously, her followers used the tabernacle. The palace housed her priestesses and philosopher kings and their sons, who all served her. From the harbour her people traded with the rest of the world.

She tells Hannah that the Wizard was one of the King's heirs, but that he left the island for many years. The fact that the Woodland Goddess had followers, priestesses and a Tabernacle can be linked to the Temple that Demeter had built at Eleusis, where secret rites were performed. The earlier reference in the novel to the "smell of sorcery" can also relate to the mystery religion that was practised both on the island in the novel, and at Eleusis in the myth.

The ancient tree goes on to tell Hannah that the Wizard had originally been one of her favourite subjects. After he had left the island she appointed one of his brothers in his place as the heir to the throne. A young man with jet-black hair and laughing eyes, who wisely ruled the prosperous island. Hannah is reminded of Prince Foxkith, the knight with his jet black hair, who when he arrived at the Tanglewood, was friendly and had spoken to her, not like the other knights who were so intent on searching for the treasure at the heart of the Tanglewood, that they scarcely noticed her. Even now as a fox, with his black fur, she is still reminded of him by the description. The tree tells Hannah, that the wayward brother returned, penitent, but kept himself away from her. "There, deep within himself, he harboured a secret intent" (Pierce 2001: 203). The mention of secret intent brings to mind the conspiracy between Zeus and Hades to abduct Persephone and take her to the Underworld. Just as Hades had conspired to "steal" Persephone, so the Wizard had secret intentions to "steal" from the Ancient Mother.

The Mother then relates to Hannah that her tabernacle contained secret texts, which the Wizard had discovered. He had found out the secret of the goddess' power. The secret texts and the tabernacle in the novel allude to the temple at Eleusis where sacred rites were performed and the initiates were sworn to secrecy. As the story in the novel

unfolds, it is obvious that the secret power that the Tree Goddess refers to is the three aspects of her being. Without one of these aspects, she cannot function as a whole and will be eventually rendered powerless.⁴⁹

The tree goes on to tell Hannah that her prodigal announced that he was ready to reconcile with her, and publicly apologised to the Mother. He came to her with a tool made of gold, silver, copper and bronze. She asked him whether he had come to pledge peace with a sword. Softly the Wizard whispered that he had brought to her a pruning hook, similar to those used by the gardeners on the island. “Closer, hag. I’ll trim you to a size more to my liking and seize what lends you all your power!” In that same instant, he lunged, lancing the terrible blade across my breast, cleaving me here, where the wound still bleeds” (Pierce 2001: 212).

“Then he had it, the thing he had come to steal, the sacred bud sprouting from my breast, sprung from my sapwood and green heart’s blood, the well of my strength and hub of my powers – gashed out of me now in a splintering wrench” (Pierce 2001: 213). The similarity here between the novel and the myth is the fact that Hades snatched / stole Persephone from Demeter, and the Wizard stole the goddess’ sacred bud. The Mother continues with her story, telling Hannah that her priestesses and all the people of the island were dashed to the earth, none dead but dazed and in pain. The Wizard used the tool again, changing her followers into small woodland animals.⁵⁰ The Mother tells Hannah that the Wizard then left the island – with her greatest treasure, knowing that without it she would not be able to restore herself.

As the sap that bled from the Tree Goddess stopped, her powers to change the seasons left her and the air became colder and colder, resulting in a never-ending winter, where nothing would sprout or grow. The Ancient Mother tells how she used the last of her strength to change some of her faithful followers – brave young men, back into human

⁴⁹ The Ancient Mother explains one of the aspects of herself: “Within me lay the key to my magical power: the life-green sap that coursed through me from my deep-set roots, permeating my heartwood, sweetening my fruit, and respiring from my leaves in numinous wafts” (Pierce 2001: 210).

⁵⁰ “My wound had very nearly drained me, but this much I recall: gleefully, my attacker swept his budding rod once more in the direction of my loyal followers. Instantly they began to change, some into cats or hares, brown bats, bears, raccoons and snakes, oxen, owls, loons, drakes, other fowls, lynx, deer, river minks – so many I cannot name all in their variety” (Pierce 2001: 214).

shape, even though they had retained little of their memory, to go after the Wizard and bring back the treasure that had been stolen from her.

Of note here in the novel, is that when the sap that bled from the Tree Goddess, stopped, it became winter and nothing would grow. Perhaps this is an allegory for the phase in a woman's life when she stops menstruating and can no longer bear children. Just as when Demeter loses Persephone (her maiden-self) she causes the earth to become barren – like a woman becomes infertile after menopause.

RUSSET HANNAH – AUTUMN

Foxkith has returned, and immediately the Mother recognises him. She asks Foxkith what has happened to him, as she had sent him forth as a man, but once more he is a fox. Hannah realises that the Mother is Foxkith's Sorcerer Queen. At last Old Badger and Magpie recognise the Mother. The ancient tree looks at Hannah, and asks her who is she. Hannah tells her that she was once Brown Hannah, and then she became Green Hannah, and now she is Golden Hannah.

“‘Hannah’ murmured the woman in the tree. Her lined face shone in mingled wonder and delight. ‘What a lovely name. But why call yourself brown, or green, or even golden, my dear, when you’re so clearly russet?’” (Pierce 2001: 221).⁵¹ Hannah looks down at her dress and realises that once more her clothes have changed colour to a rich chestnut brown.⁵² Bewildered, Hannah asks the tree woman why she keeps changing and why she has been feeling so tired since she arrived on the island. The Mother tells her that she can remember feeling the same “just before each change: Winter Damsel into Spring Maid, Spring Maid into Summer Girl, Summer Girl to Autumn Lass, and on and on. Pay it no mind. It passes” (Pierce 2001: 222).

⁵¹ Once again, Hannah's dress has changed colour, she is now called Russet Hannah, which in the novel is the colour linked to autumn.

⁵² The author describes the richness of Hannah's gown: “By the ember-colored light of dawn, it was rusty as redwood, a gorgeous, bright pigment more vivid than any it had borne” (Pierce 2001: 221).

When Hannah is told to ignore the feelings as she changes colour, and that the feelings will pass, this is reminiscent to how a girl feels when she starts to menstruate for the first time, or the emotions and physiology of a pregnant woman. It can also be associated with the emotional and physiological changes experienced by a pre-menopausal woman. Thus this passage suggests that there are emotional and physiological changes in the stages of a woman's life such as menstruation, pregnancy and menopause, just as there are changes in the seasons of a year.

When a woman journeys through her life, she will experience many physiological and psychological transformations. When a girl reaches puberty, her body changes – she starts to develop breasts and menstruate. The menstrual blood can be a symbol of the death of the child and the birth of the maiden. She feels different about herself – struggling with new emotions and new interests. When a woman falls pregnant more physical and emotional changes take place. Her hormones play havoc with her and she develops new emotions and fears – the protective mother instinct awakens. At menopause, other hormones come into play, she stops menstruating and faces many new emotions. At the start of all these stages, a woman feels unwell, whether it is pre-menstrual syndrome (menstruation) or nausea (pregnancy) or hot flushes and loss of menstruation (menopause).

The animals of the island that had previously taken no notice of Hannah are now moving closer, interested and watching intently. The Ancient Mother asks Hannah about Foxkith and what has happened to him – why he has changed from a man into a fox. Hannah tells the Mother about the Wizard, how he had changed into a Golden Boar and killed the knights. Furthermore, how the lily had protected Foxkith, but the Wizard had changed him into a fox, and finally that the Wizard is now incarcerated in a thorny prison. Then Hannah asks the Ancient Queen, why she had sent the knights to the Tanglewood, to which the Mother responded that she sent the knights to find her child.

She tells Hannah that what the Wizard had stolen from her breast was her child. "That pithy shoot the Wizard stole was my child" (Pierce 2001: 231). As Foley (1994:40) indicates in her translation of the myth, "Demeter calls Persephone a *thalos* or shoot." The Ancient Queen tells Hannah, that she is the treasure that the Wizard stole – she is the child of the tree goddess. "My unborn self, taproot of my power, the very essence of

the world's sorcery – of all magic, both mine and his. It's you. Don't you see daughter? Hannah, *you* are the treasure at the heart of the Tanglewood” (Pierce 2001: 231). Here is another parallel between the myth and the story, Persephone was regarded by Demeter as a *thalos* or shoot, and the Tree Goddess tells Hannah that she is the *pithy shoot* that the Wizard stole.⁵³

It is evident here that the Wizard stole one of the Ancient Mother's facets. As mentioned previously the various facets of the Goddess are entwined and inseparable, that one aspect leads automatically into another. Thus without the tender shoot (her maiden-self or daughter), the Ancient Mother can no longer cause Spring to arrive, and in that case Summer can no longer take place either, resulting in endless Winter.

Stunned, Hannah now knows where she belongs. Mother and daughter are reunited. With the knowledge of who she truly is, Hannah restores Badger to his old self, that of Broc, the gardener. Magpie is once again the King's cook, and the fox pups are her nephews. Finally, Foxkith, the King's heir will be reinstated, but this time as the King of Faraway Island. Once more the Earth's seasons are restored, Spring – when the earth awakens and starts to grow, Summer – a time of ripening and growing abundance, Autumn – the time to harvest, and Winter – a time of restoration. This is yet another parallel to the myth – just as when Demeter and Persephone were reunited, the earth once again regained its vitality and fertility, and burgeoned with growth, and became barren when Persephone descended to the Underworld.

Many similar motifs to those of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* were identified in this novel. In the myth one understands that the Underworld is a remote and desolate place – separated from Olympus and the Earth by a watery waste known as Oceanus. It is dark – where no sunlight penetrates. In the novel, The author of *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, Pierce (2001:14) describes the heart of the Tanglewood as a “labyrinthine snarl,” which brings to mind a place of death, and which the Egyptians believed symbolised the path that the dead followed through the Underworld to meet with Osiris who waited at the centre in order to pass judgment.

⁵³ See *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, line 66 (Foley 1994:4).

When Persephone ascends from the Underworld, Demeter tells her that, “when the earth blooms in spring with all kinds of sweet flowers, then from the misty dark you will rise again” (Foley 1994:22). This indicates that every spring Persephone will ascend to live with her mother, and in autumn, she will leave again to spend a third of the year with her husband. During that time it will be winter and the earth will be barren and infertile. In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the interesting aspect is that before Hannah fled the Tanglewood, it was eternally winter, and yet when she and her companions fled the Wood, the colour of her dress changed from drab brown to green. As Hannah raced away from the Wood, flowers and buds fell from her hair, taking root in the ground and turning the barren earth into verdant green, representing spring. And so as she moves further and further from the Tanglewood, the seasons change again, next to ripened gold – the colour of summer and harvest time, and finally to the reds and russets of autumn.

Another similarity to the myth is the mention of Demeter’s temple at Eleusis and the mysterious practises that are carried out there. In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* there is also mention of temples. The Ancient Mother had a temple/tabernacle dedicated to her, with priestesses, and this can be linked to the Temple that Demeter had built at Eleusis, where secret rites were performed. The earlier reference in the novel to the “smell of sorcery” can also relate to the mystery religion that was practised both on the Island in the novel, and at Eleusis in the myth.

Perhaps, because this story is a fantasy for teenagers, the analysis of the novel and highlighting possible similarities between the Demeter/Persephone myth was straightforward. However, from an adult feminine aspect, the novel also provided insight into the path that women will undoubtedly follow from their early days of spring right up to the winter of their lives, from maiden to crone.

In the myth, Persephone’s abduction to the Underworld by Hades caused Demeter so much heartache that the earth became sterile, and so the theft of Hannah by the Wizard caused the earth to die. Other similarities that were identified was the manipulation of Hannah to provide the Wizard his brew and Hades’ manipulation of giving Persephone the pomegranate seeds which meant that she would always have to return to the Underworld for a part of the year. Hannah’s travels from the Tanglewood (Underworld) to find the Sorcerer Queen (her mother) is similar to Persephone’s ascent from the

Underworld to be with Demeter. The restoration of the seasons was the most obvious link in both the myth and the novel.

Finally this novel revealed that the seasons could also denote the stages of a woman's life. Spring is the time for a young maiden – the virgin, to grow and develop – puberty. Summer is the time when a woman becomes a mother, nurturing her offspring. Autumn is the period when her children have grown up and leave home, and she prepares for, and enters the menopause, and finally, Winter is the time when she is the crone, post-menopausal – resting but also guiding younger females about the experiences and wisdom learned in her life. It is clear that this novel for a younger audience has succeeded in pointing out the more adult meanings and motifs of the myth, such as the stages in a woman's life. Females of all ages will discover in the narrative, aspects that will resonate with them, at the stage at which they find themselves, when reading the novel. Unlike *The Iliad* by Homer, the intention of which is to be specifically didactic, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, does not set out with this overt intention. It's potential for teaching is subtler, people of any age can find implicit meaning rather than a specific didactic lesson.



CHAPTER 4

TWO MODERN NOVELS FOR ADULTS

As Harris and Platzner (2001:981) mention, classical myth has persisted through the ages. It has endured by inspiring literature and art based on ancient myths and imbedded in ancient literature, and has highlighted the concerns of both men and women in every age – right up to modern times. Even in the 20th and 21st century the themes and motifs of Greek mythology can be explored in modern literature, films, computer games and even advertising.

The following two works of fiction were written for adult readers and themes from the Demeter/Persephone myth can be identified in both of them. The first novel, *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris is an example of modern fiction that has aspects of the Demeter/Persephone myth running through it. Briefly, the similarity in the story and the myth is about a mother and her daughter and their fight to have a life together. It does not focus on the aspect of Hades' actual abduction and rape of Persephone, it is more about the threat of loss (abduction) due to patriarchy that could result in the separation of mother and daughter. In the case of this novel, the Church or its representative, is the patriarchal threat, wanting to remove a child, from its mother, as it deems fit. In the myth, the conspiracy of Zeus and Hades to abduct Persephone is the connection where Zeus as Persephone's father is of the opinion that she is his daughter and thus his possession, and consequently he can do with her, as he sees fit.

The second novel by Lynn Freed is titled *House of Women*. The novel focuses more on an arranged marriage, and casts the principal male character and his similarity to Hades, in a more positive light. Aspects such as patriarchy on the part of the father, and the empty-nest syndrome on the part of the mother, are also covered in this work.

As patriarchal issues are particularly highlighted in these two novels, a definition of the term would be of value at this stage. Harris and Platzner (2001:1045) define patriarchy

as “a socio-political system in which male leadership and values dominate” in other words where females have subordinate status to males.

THE NOVEL: CHOCOLAT BY JOANNE HARRIS

In the modern novel *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris, which has a mother and daughter as the main characters, similarities were traced between the mother and daughter pair, and Demeter and Persephone. The following issues relevant in the ancient myth and in this modern work of fiction were identified: the mother and daughter relationship, fear of loss and patriarchal issues in society today.

This is the story of Vianne Rocher, a chocolatier who provides sustenance in the form of chocolate to the village,⁵⁴ and in fact provides much more than just physical nourishment – she is a source of inspiration to the women in the village and instinctively ‘knows’ what they need. Along with her daughter Anouk, she has links to mysterious practices.⁵⁵ Vianne constantly fears the loss of, or a separation from her daughter.

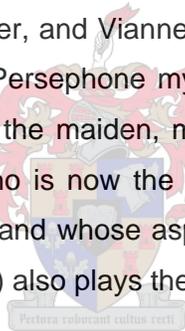
In the myth, Demeter is the goddess of agriculture (sustenance) – the mother of Persephone, and both are linked to mystery and the experience of loss. Vianne’s mother had the ability to “see” using the tarot along with other mysterious practises. During her short life with her mother they travelled through Europe and the United States of America, like gypsies, never settling down, always on the move. There was the constant threat of Vianne being removed from her seemingly ‘unfit’ mother, by the ‘powers that be.’ Vianne in turn, who also has other worldly abilities, also moves from town to town with Anouk. The fear that was instilled in her as a child of being removed from her mother is projected in her life with her own daughter.

⁵⁴ It is interesting that this book is about chocolate, served either as a beverage or a sweet delicacy. It is made from cocoa beans – the fruit of the cacao tree. This scientific name for cacao is *Theobroma [cacao]* and means “food of the gods” in Greek. The Mayans, Toltec and Aztecs cultivated a beverage, which was used as a ceremonial drink for their royalty. In modern western times it is seen as an aphrodisiac and is related to sensual and sexual pleasures - which in turn relates to fecundity and bountiful abundance.

⁵⁵ This brings to mind the mysterious practices of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Vianne reflects on her childhood. As a child she remembers how a black-frocked man tried to convince her mother to leave her in the care of nuns. In the novel, Harris (1999:53) writes, “That night my mother wept, rocking me to and fro in her arms. We left Reims in the morning, more like thieves than ever, she carrying me close like stolen treasure, her eyes hot and furtive. I understood that he had almost convinced her to leave me behind. For years we ran from the priest, the Black Man.” The fact that the man dressed in black tried to convince Vianne’s mother to leave her with the nuns, suggests a similarity to the daughters of Oceanus, Artemis and Athena – all females who witnessed Persephone’s abduction – just as the nuns would then have witnessed the removal of Vianne from her mother, and possibly believed that this would have been the best for the girl.

The fear that her mother revealed to her as a child is instilled in Vianne, and she in turn, fears that she will lose her daughter. It is Anouk, Vianne’s daughter who comforts her mother as if she, Anouk is the mother, and Vianne the child, consoling her that they will never be separated. The Demeter/Persephone myth clearly indicates that a woman at various times in her life represents the maiden, mother (matron) and crone. Here one sees that the daughter (Vianne) who is now the mother, is like her own mother, who would have been the grandmother, and whose aspect would have been the crone, and the granddaughter – maiden (Anouk) also plays the mother role to Vianne.



The story begins with the arrival of Vianne Rocher and her daughter Anouk in the French village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes on the day of the annual carnival.⁵⁶ The novel never gives a reason for their abrupt arrival in Lansquenet-sous-Tannes. There are hints of constantly being on the run – of running away from something or someone from the past. They move into premises that Harris (1999:15) indicates “was formerly a bakery and still carries the baker’s wheatsheaf carved above the narrow doorway.” A sheaf of wheat can be a symbol of the Grain Goddess, Demeter, which is appropriate for the shop that Vianne is about to open, considering that she, like Demeter in the myth, will provide sustenance to the villagers.

⁵⁶ Carnival means “farewell to meat” in Latin, and is a celebration held by Catholics before Lent (a time of encouraged fasting) commences.

Much work is needed to make the bakery habitable, and Anouk mentions to Vianne, “It’s so dark Maman. And it smells so sad” (Harris 1999:16). “She is right. The smell is like daylight trapped for years until it has gone sour and rancid, of mouse-droppings and the ghosts of things, unremembered and unmourned. It echoes like a cave, the small heat of our presence only serving to accentuate every shadow” (Harris 1999:16). This description brings to mind the Underworld, when Vianne and Anouk discuss the conditions of their new home and business premises.

The Underworld is dark and cold like a cave, with ghosts of the past, haunting the present. “According to Minucius Felix, the Goddess Persephone was imprisoned by Hades in a cavern, representing the psyche imprisoned in the cosmos” (Freke and Gandy 2001: 160). Perhaps the restoration of the bakery will be a new beginning for the old shop and will signal for Vianne and Anouk, a new beginning leaving behind their past that seems to haunt them. In the myth, when Persephone ascends from the Underworld, it is a new beginning in the cycle of the lives of Persephone and Demeter, signalled eventually by spring.

While cleaning the bakery and making it habitable, Vianne and Anouk have their first encounter with the village priest who later in the story represents ‘The Black Man’ or their fear of loss and separation. ‘The Black Man’ can be regarded as similar to Hades or even Zeus, as in the case of Demeter, both conspired to take away her daughter Persephone, and in *Chocolat* Vianne has a constant fear that the Black Man – or what the Black Man represents, the Church, will take away her daughter. The Black Man can also represent patriarchy.

This is also the story of the priest, known to his parish as Monsieur le Curé or Père Francis Reynaud who reveals his true self to the reader through his weekly visits to the former priest of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes who lies in a coma in the sanatorium, Le Mortoir, after having had a stroke. From these one-sided pious conversations the darker side of the village and the priest is revealed. This brings to mind the darker side of Zeus and Hades’ relationship in conspiring to abduct Persephone. Although the novel focuses on Vianne and Anouk, it is also the story of the citizens of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes – their relationships with each other and with the newcomers “who came on the wind of the carnival” (Harris 1999:11).

Vianne learnt mysterious practices from her mother – rituals that provide clarity on matters of importance in her life and the lives of others.⁵⁷ Throughout the novel there are hints of mysterious rituals which gives Vianne certain ‘powers’ such as knowing each villager’s favourite chocolate which sets in motion events that change their lives, and reminds one of possible similarities to the Eleusinian Mysteries and the roles of the priestesses. Anouk, Vianne’s beloved daughter has similar powers and has a special ‘companion’ Pantoufle who is thought by the villagers to be her imaginary friend.

However, Vianne and others like her, who have such mysterious powers, catch glimpses of this companion.⁵⁸ Although Pantoufle could relate to Persephone’s friends, the daughters of Oceanus in the Demeter/Persephone myth, more pertinently there could be a link to Hecate, as Pantoufle always seems to accompany Anouk – like a protector or attendant which brings to mind a parallel to Hecate (wise woman or crone) in the Demeter/Persephone myth. Hecate promised to be Persephone’s attendant when she returned from the Underworld. Hecate was the patron of magic and sorcery and linked to darkness and the Underworld, and the mysterious Pantoufle seems to be around whenever magical occurrences take place.

During Lent, Vianne opens a chocolate shop, La Celeste Praline. The name of her shop is appropriate as it refers to an earthly heaven (through the immediate glorious consumption of chocolates) as opposed to the heaven that the Church preaches of in the afterlife, which the villagers believe will only happen in the far distant future. Her uncanny ability to sense her customers’ favourite chocolates – or is it their private pleasures and their desires to abandon themselves to better things – sparks a battle between her and the priest Père Reynaud who wants to get her out of town. He forbids his parishioners to enter her shop and vows to obstruct the chocolate festival that Vianne

⁵⁷ This practice brings to mind an oracle, which gives guidance or a prophecy about the future. In Olympian times such a visionary was the Delphic Oracle, which Harris and Platzner (2001:1036) indicates was “the priestess (Pythia) who acted as Apollo’s mouthpiece or prophet at Delphi, the most sacred prophetic institution in Greece.”

⁵⁸ Pantoufle is a rabbit that Anouk can see, as can others with similar powers to Vianne and Anouk. Metcalfe (1998:56) defines a hare as “any of various mammals esp. of the genus *Lepus* resembling a large rabbit.” The hare is a symbol associated with ancient pagan religions and according to Jung, the hare is associated with the mother archetype, and biologically is known to have vast numbers of offspring indicating its fecundity.

has planned for Easter. As the representative of the Church in the village, Reynaud considers Vianne's actions as sinful. She is the temptress leading his flock astray.

Lent is the period before Easter, where Christians, and more specifically Catholics, repent, fast and pray for a period of forty days, in preparation for celebrating the resurrection and then the ascension of Jesus Christ. This period of fasting is in commemoration of Jesus Christ's fasting and praying in the Wilderness. The fact that Catholics abstain from certain food during this period can be linked to the Demeter/Persephone myth, where the earth became barren when Demeter could not find Persephone, and humans went hungry. Furthermore, in the Northern Hemisphere, Lent takes place at the beginning of spring, which in itself can also be seen as a link to the myth. After spring – when all plants start to bloom, they ripen in the summer providing food for the earth, and after Lent, the parishioners no longer have to abstain from certain foods.

Just as Demeter's world was a patriarchal one, so too is the village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes. This novel, set in relatively modern-day France, centres on a patriarchal society and the Catholic Church. Many of the women in the village subscribe to this patriarchal behaviour, such as Caroline Clairmont, who in the hope to attain eternal life through her pious actions assists Monsieur le Curé to block the “heathen” chocolate festival from taking place.

The Church stands across the square from Vianne's shop, with her and Anouk's living quarters above the *chocolaterie*, La Celeste Praline. Behind the square a hill drops off to a neighbourhood called Les Marauds, which is made up of narrow streets that are built close to the banks of the River Tannes. Les Marauds is Lansquenet-sous-Tannes' slum area. As Harris (1999:39) indicates “the people of Les Marauds are scavengers, living from what they can claim from the river. A couple of skinny children dabbled in the mud by the waterside; even in February there was a mellow stink of sewage and rot.” This description of the slums is a correlation to the Underworld since the people of Les Marauds who live along the banks of the Tannes River lead an unhappy, banal existence – much like the souls of the dead, who cross the River Acheron in the Underworld, which was also known as the River of Woe.

One day when walking down to the river Tannes, Vianne remarks that the world has suddenly brightened and “as if by a strange transference, I have become Anouk, seeing with her eyes, following where she travels.” (Harris 1999:40). This aspect of the mother being the daughter and vice versa is often seen in myth such as in the Demeter/Persephone myth. In this novel this also occurs a number of times, where Anouk appears to be the mother and Vianne the daughter. Also in her reminiscences about her childhood and her own mother – Vianne appears to be the mother and her mother, the child. As has already been established, a woman in the various stages of her life can simultaneously be maiden, mother or crone.

On their walk they meet a tiny old woman dressed in black, Armande Voizin,⁵⁹ with her black cat, who recognises Vianne’s special powers and can also “see” Pantoufle. Armande asks Vianne whether the priest knows that she is a witch. When Vianne asks Armande why she thinks such a thing, she replies, “takes one to know one, I expect” (Harris 1999:41). Armande correlates to Hecate in the Demeter/Persephone myth – the wise woman or crone. Harris (1999:40) describes Armande as “a tiny old woman. Black skirt, black coat, grey hair coiled and plaited into a neat, complex bun. Her eyes were sharp and black as a bird’s.” The bird-like description of Armande brings to mind a black bird such as a raven, which is connected to the gift of prophecy. Just as Hecate is an annoyance to Zeus, so Armande has a negative relationship with the priest. She tells Vianne that she will disobey Monsieur le Curé who has forbidden her to visit the chocolaterie – just to infuriate him.

The mention here of witches, once more brings to mind mysterious practices, which can relate to the Eleusinian Mysteries in the myth, and the fact that Hecate was associated with witchcraft, sorcery and the moon. Hecate is also associated with Demeter as they are both connected to the functions of caring for the fertility of the earth. Hence there is a correspondence here between Armand and Vianne, as both are associated with a similar function – in this case, magic.

Wilson (1971: 245) claims that the aim of the Mysteries “was to raise the mind beyond triviality to steady contemplation of the miraculous character of nature. The method was

⁵⁹ The mother of the self-righteous Caroline Clairmont, who disapproves of Armande’s lifestyle and who has kept her son Luc away from his grandmother.

to make the aspirant identify himself with the story of Demeter and Kore or Orpheus, in much the same way that a good preacher can make his congregation identify themselves with the passion of Jesus on Good Friday.” In his role as the priest, Francis Reynaud is also linked to the mysteries, as he wants to ensure that his parishioners remain focused on the passion of Jesus Christ, but his adversary Vianne Rocher poses a danger to the Church and his flock. Her chocolates are a temptation that few can resist, especially during Lent. Moreover, he suspects that her mysterious abilities can lead his flock away from the passion for the Church, toward a passion to satisfy their own needs.

The priest sees the situation as a question of the Church battling the pagan chocolate festival and its pagan priestess, Vianne. These two characters in the novel represent the opposites. The male principle here of patriarchy as symbolised by the Church and society, represents the forces of domination, penetration and aggressive power, whilst Vianne symbolises matriarchy and the sacred female principle or goddess, embodied by the female powers of collaboration, procreation and nurturing.

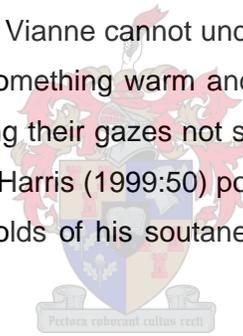
Later, Vianne thinks back on her conversation with Armand and reflects that the priest, Francis Reynaud is the lynchpin of the community – “the essential core which turns lives” (Harris 1999:43). Just like Zeus is the lynchpin of Olympus, Francis Reynaud is the lynchpin of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes. Both Zeus and Francis Reynaud have a powerful command over their respective communities. On a whim, they can cause the utmost joy or terror in those who serve them or what they represent within their respective communities. Whether it is because one is the head of the pantheon of the gods on Olympus, or the other provides sanction to pass a soul on to eternal life, the effect that they have on their communities can devastate or restore an individual’s expectation for their life ahead.

Francis Reynaud continually protests to the comatose priest about the negative influence that Vianne has on his parishioners, calling her “the parasite which has invaded our garden” (Harris 1999:305). In one of the priest’s monologues with the former priest, he tells him that he’ll have her in the end. He says, “This is why I came to Lansquenet, mon père. To fight for my people. To save them from temptation. And when Vianne Rocher sees the power of the Church – my influence over every single soul in

the community – then she will know that she has lost. Whatever her hopes, her ambitions. She will understand that she cannot stay. Cannot fight and hope to win. I will stand triumphant” (Harris 1999:96).

This monologue by Francis Reynaud is typical of the underlying purpose of a patriarchy which is to control women and the aspects of women as the Great Goddess, because the male power could be eclipsed – seduced by the female. Thus as a man of the cloth, the priest uses this as an excuse to “save” his congregation from temptation. Temptation is what he himself is actually struggling against – the temptation of the seduction of chocolate, a representation of the seductive powers of women as strong, independent individuals.

On the first Sunday of Lent, Vianne is ready for her customers. She bakes a cake and hot chocolate is bubbling on the hob – ready for the parishioners who will come after Mass. However, Mass is over and Vianne cannot understand why nobody comes in from the cold, miserable weather for something warm and comforting. She notices that they hurry past the *chocolaterie* averting their gazes not stopping to come in, as they usually do. Suddenly the door opens and Harris (1999:50) points out that the priest stands in the doorway, “the wind blowing the folds of his soutane into the shop, like the wings of a black bird.”



The reference here to a black bird is ominous. As a symbolic colour, Fontana (1993:66) indicates that “in the West, black is a symbol of death, sorrow and the underworld.” Birds on the other hand, “because they come from the skies they can also assume the role of messengers from higher powers, whether for good or ill” (Fontana 1993: 86). Reference is made in the novel to birds in describing Armande and the priest, Francis Reynaud. They both represent having a role as a messenger – one for good and one for evil, which as Fontana (1993:86) indicates is also representative of the “dual nature of reality.” Life and death, good and bad, lightness and darkness – without the one aspect, the other aspect cannot exist. As much as Armande has a life replenishing quality about her, even in her old age, the priest is the opposite. There is a life depleting aspect about him.

Vianne tries to find a point of contact with the priest, who is aloof and contemptuous towards her. With the other villagers she intuitively knows what they want, with him there is nothing – just darkness in the air. She remembers an earlier conversation with Armande. “*I hear our M’sieur le Curé already has it in for you.*”⁶⁰ Why? An instinctive mistrust of unbelievers? Or can there be more?” (Harris 1999:50). Under the counter, where the priest cannot see, Vianne forks her fingers at him, to ward off the cold darkness that emanates from him. The priest coldly informs Vianne that his devout villagers will not enter her shop on the first Sunday of Lent. She feels a growing fear again of losing Anouk. She remembers her mother’s fear of a priest, and how for years they fled the Black Man.

There is a similarity here between the dependence of the mortals on Zeus’ good will and the attitude of Francis Reynaud and the power that he perceives to have over his parishioners, or the Church over its people. Although Zeus and Hades were not perceived as vengeful in the myth, the resemblance between the story and the myth lies in patriarchal dominance of the mother and daughter figures.

Vianne worries about the attitude of the priest. “Perhaps this is what Reynaud senses in my little shop; a throwback to times when the world was a wider, wilder place. Before Christ – before Adonis was born in Bethlehem or Osiris sacrificed at Easter – the cocoa bean was revered. Magical properties were attributed to it. Its brew was sipped on the steps of sacrificial temples; its ecstasies were fierce and terrible. Is this what he fears? Corruption by pleasure, the subtle transubstantiation of the flesh into a vessel for debauch?”⁶¹ Not for him the orgies of the Aztec priesthood” (Harris 1999:64).

Later, Vianne recalls how she, like her mother before her, had taught her daughter about the hypocrisy of the Church, and the way it persecuted people of other faiths, the witch-hunts and how it had tried to take Vianne from her mother – just as Hades and Zeus took Persephone away from Demeter. Now Vianne fears that Anouk could be taken from her too. Vianne knows – just as her mother had known, that the Church would condemn

⁶⁰ The Priest, Francis Reynaud is also known by his parishioners as Monsieur le Curé.

⁶¹ Metcalfe (1998:884) defines transubstantiation as “the conversion of the Eucharist elements wholly into the body and blood of Christ, only the appearance of bread and wine still remaining.”

the powers they possess. It is this secret that Vianne harbours, which causes her to fear the Black Man or priest – a representative of the Church.

The Catholic Church's patriarchal ideology has always condemned witches, although anthropologist, Margaret Murray argued that the witches of the Middle Ages were not devil-worshippers, but followers of pagan, women-dominated religions that predated Christianity. The Catholic Church has stated that "for women, apostasy has gradually taken shape under the name of a new religion based not on the teachings of Jesus, but on the foundation of the old lies of Gnosticism and the new patriarchal heresy of modern witchcraft, or Wicca" (Eady:www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=611).

The article goes on to relate that "both the old witches of the past and those of today are noted for their rage against God the Father (or to use the modern term "patriarchy") found in everything even remotely authoritative, hierarchical or male -dominated" (Eady:www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=611). The Church warns its followers, "to be wary of those who reject legitimate religious authority or who appear to be obsessed with the "environment" and so-called women's rights" (Eady:www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=611).

In this novel, the Church represents Hades and Zeus in the Demeter/Persephone myth, where the female has subordinate status to the male, just as Zeus believed that it was his right to "give away" Persephone to his brother, and Hades believed it was his right to "take" Persephone. Just so the Church "has the right to save and remove" Anouk from her mother. In this story the Church can also represent the Underworld. In the Underworld, the soul is judged at the Plain of Judgement (Vergil, *Aeneid* 6), which stands at a fork in a road. One leads to the Isles of the Blest (Elysium) and the other to Tartarus, which is a place of punishment.⁶² This is also similar to a person being judged by the Church as a sinner or as saved, because of his/her "bad" or "good" deeds and obedience or lack thereof.

⁶² Parada, Carlos. "Underworld and Afterlife." <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/Underworld.html> (6 June 2006)

During the week, Armande visits La Celeste Praline, despite the priest and her daughter's warnings that chocolate is bad for her due to her diabetes. Vianne manages to arrange a meeting between Armande and her grandson Luc, without the knowledge of Armande's daughter Caroline, who has been the cause of the grandmother and grandson's estrangement. Armande is reunited with Luc (just as in the myth Demeter was reunited with Persephone and Metaneira with her son Demophon) thanks to Vianne's special chocolate magic.

Vianne's interventions also empower Josephine Muscat, a kleptomaniac, and the abused wife of Paul-Marie Muscat, a local bar-owner. Paul-Marie is Josephine's Black Man. She eventually leaves her husband and with Vianne's guidance, once again becomes her own person.

Early in the novel Josephine Muscat, who with her husband runs the Café de la République, pilfered some chocolates at La Celeste Praline. Although Vianne had seen her do this, she ignored the incident, knowing that behind the action was a woman in great pain. As time goes by Josephine and Vianne become friends. One day Vianne mentions to her that she has come to know Armande. Josephine responds that no one speaks to Armande except her – Josephine.

When Vianne questions her on the matter, Josephine angrily responds that in this village you don't talk to a "mad woman." Josephine furiously explains that "There is a line across Lansquenet, if you cross it, if you don't do go to confession, if you don't respect your husband, if you don't cook three meals a day and sit by the fire thinking decent thoughts and waiting for him to come home, if you don't have children – and you don't bring flowers to your friends' funerals or vacuum the parlour or – dig – the flowerbeds! You're crazy, you're abnormal and people – talk – about – you behind your back" (Harris 1999:72). Josephine angrily indicates to Vianne that the village condones a patriarchal system, which is to control and undermine the women, and which unfortunately many women of the village accept unquestioningly, and if a woman dares to be different they are considered abnormal.

Evidence of rejection by some of the villagers becomes evident when Anouk tells Vianne that her new friend Jeannot has been forbidden by his mother to play with her. Vianne

asks Anouk why, and she indicates, “She says I’m a bad influence. Because we don’t go to church. Because you opened on Sunday” (Harris 1999:58). Here is evidence once more on how patriarchy – especially because of the influence by the Church on society affects the life of Vianne and Anouk, just as Zeus and Hades’ conspiracy affected Demeter and Persephone.

Two weeks after moving to the village, Armande Voizin’s daughter Caroline Clairmont, visits the *chocolaterie*. She asks Vianne to display a notice in her shop window informing all that enter the shop that no hawkers, peddlers and vagrants are allowed. She tells Vianne that this is to keep out the river people – gypsies –and that the other shops in the village will display similar signs. Vianne is enraged at this judgemental behaviour and refuses to have anything to do with such bigotry. Later that day she sees Josephine Muscat hurrying past the shop, ignoring Vianne – her face puffy and mostly hidden by a scarf. Josephine eventually visits Vianne and tells her that her husband, Paul-Marie beat her up because she had tried to serve the gypsies in their café. As the story unfolds it is evident that Josephine Muscat is an abused woman. Her husband Paul-Marie abuses her both physically and emotionally.

Vianne befriends the river people (gypsies), especially Michel Roux, who at first appears bitter and angry towards people due to the prejudice and intolerance that he and his fellow gypsies have experienced at the hands of society. Nevertheless, Armande has always accepted him, and over the years they have become close friends. Whenever he visits the village he helps Armande by carrying out maintenance work on her home. Michel has become Armande’s substitute for family after her estrangement from her daughter, Caroline, and her grandson, Luc. Here is a further correlation to the myth. Demeter substituted Demophon after she lost Persephone, and similarly Armande has substituted Caroline and Luc with Michel Roux.

One Sunday, Josephine slips out of Church, while Paul-Marie is in the confessional to tell Vianne to warn her gypsy friends to leave the village, but she does not tell Vianne why they should do so. The following Thursday night, an unknown person sets fire to Roux’s well-maintained houseboat, resulting in Roux’s home being destroyed and the gypsies leaving the village. Roux however, has nowhere to go and stays behind to complete maintenance work on Armande’s house.

The sabotage of the travellers/gypsies is symbolic in the story. What the gypsies or 'travellers' represent is a freedom of their way of life from a patriarchal structure. They are reviled because they do not subscribe to the accepted societal system. They are feared because their way of life is not understood and is 'different' to what 'good' citizens of society are supposed to do. In mythology they can be seen as symbolical of Dionysus (in Roman mythology, Bacchus) and his followers (bacchants). Dionysus was a traveller wandering from land to land. He frequented woods, mountains and valleys and his main contribution to humanity was his discovery of wine – thus liberating the human spirit.

Whereas many of the Olympian gods seemed cold and forbidding, like the Church, the gypsies like Dionysus, roamed the lands – free spirits not conforming to the norms of society, or in this case Olympus. A similarity that Dionysus has to Demeter is that "he may have been a deity of grain and agriculture" (Grant & Hazel 1973: 112).

On the Saturday after the fire, an elated Josephine arrives at La Celeste Praline and tells Vianne that she has found the courage to leave Paul-Marie. Vianne realises that Josephine has had the courage to deal with her "own Black Man." "He has the unanswerable voice of authority, a specious logic which keeps you frozen, obedient, fearful. To break free from that fear, to run in hope and despair, to run and to find that all the time you were carrying him inside yourself like a malignant child" (Harris 1999:186). Just as Persephone descended into the darkness of the Underworld, and then ascended free again, so Josephine ascended from the darkness of her marriage to be a woman in her own right.

Josephine moves in with Vianne and Anouk, and assists in La Celeste Praline. As the days go by Josephine starts to blossom and regain her old confidence, in spite of Paul-Marie's alternative threats and wheedling to coax her to return to him. Harris (1999:210) describes Josephine, "she seems taller, sleeker, abandoning her permanently hunched posture and the multiple layers of clothing which gave her such a dumpy look." As Josephine has ascended from her own Underworld and left what is representative of her Hades – her husband, she is a new woman, just as in the Demeter/Persephone myth, the earth was renewed in the spring when Persephone ascended from the Underworld.

Vianne asks Roux to do some renovations in the living quarters above the *chocolaterie* – to turn the loft into a bedroom for Anouk. As the days pass, he and Josephine become close. He spends more time with the women who have been kind and tolerant towards him and the other gypsies, his manner softens and as Harris (1999: 123) mentions “there is always a bright look in his eyes like a smile waiting to happen.” Roux has also ascended his own Underworld, learning to trust people and to smile again.

As the days go by, the priest becomes resentful that Vianne has become a bad influence on some of his parishioners such as Josephine and Armande and that he no longer has any control over them. He also begins to feel that he is succumbing to the seduction of Vianne’s chocolates. “Physical pleasure is the crack into which the devil sends his roots” (Harris 1999:235).

A week before Good Friday, Anouk’s teacher, Joline visits Vianne. She complains that Anouk is disruptive in class – telling her fellow classmates inconceivable things. Joline tells, Vianne “It seems Anouk has been telling them that Easter isn’t really a Christian festival at all, and that Our Lord is’ – she paused, embarrassed – ‘that Our Lord’s resurrection is a kind of *throwback* to some corn god or other. Some fertility deity from pagan times” (Harris 1999:255). The horror with which the villagers receive this information – and from a child as well – results in a call for a boycott of the Chocolate Festival. Leaflets are distributed calling for the faithful not to attend the festival, naming it pagan and a revival of ancient traditions.

Meanwhile Armande Voizin is diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy. She knows that it is incurable and that she is turning blind. On her next birthday, which is Good Friday, she will turn eighty-one. She decides to give herself a birthday party. She knows Vianne loves to cook and asks her to prepare the meal. Harris (1999:62) indicates “there is a kind of sorcery in all cooking: in the choosing of the ingredients, the process of mixing, grating, melting, infusing and flavouring.” Here once more is reference to magic and sorcery, in this part of the novel Vianne resonates with Hecate – the attendant and caregiver, and Armande seems almost maiden-like – the young Persephone in her excitement about having a birthday party. Vianne suspects that Armande has another plan with her party and respects her wishes. She remembers when her mother was dying of cancer she had said to her, “*Death should be a celebration, she told me. Like a*

birthday. I want to go up like a rocket when my time comes, and fall down in a cloud of stars and hear everyone go: Ahhhh!” (Harris 1999:219).

The day before the Chocolate Festival, Armande has her party surrounded by her friends. She invites Luc and his parents and she and her daughter are reconciled. She follows no rules – eating and drinking whatever she wants. When everyone goes home, Vianne helps her into bed and during the night Armande dies from insulin shock, after having had the party of her life with her closest friends. It was Armande’s wish to forget her diabetes and to consume the best chocolate-laden desserts, eat glorious dishes and imbibe the best wine, rather than linger on at Le Mortoir, with no independence as a blind invalid.⁶³ Armande has passed through her cycle as a woman, from maiden to mother and crone, the cycle that all women will follow to be reborn again into their next existence.

The book is filled with descriptions of food and bounty. Like the advent of a fertile and bountiful harvest in the Demeter/Persephone myth, Harris (1999:217) describes one of the meals as containing pains au chocolat and brioches with raspberry jam, and plump sweet apricots. Harris (1999:244) goes on to depict the shop window at La Celeste Praline for the Chocolate Festival that includes a giant chocolate statue of Eostre with a sheaf of wheat in one hand and a basket of eggs in the other – a symbol of fecundity,⁶⁴ and a figure much like that of Demeter the goddess of the harvest – enough to upset Père Reynaud even more!

Francis Reynaud finds himself fighting the seduction of chocolate as he suffers self-righteously through Lent. He tells the comatose priest of the plants growing in spring and relates this to the chocolates at La Celeste Praline. “This profusion seems somehow wrong, irreverent, a savage thrusting of life, one plant choking another in a vain attempt at dominance” (Harris 1999:236). This description immediately brings to mind the rape of Persephone or ferocious sex, but it also refers to the fertility of spring, as the buds thrust through the earth and the bounty that follows.

⁶³ Le Mortoir is a sanatorium for the infirm.

⁶⁴ Easter is the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the third day after his crucifixion. It is also a celebration of the pre-Christian goddess – Eostre.

The priest Francis Reynaud could no longer stay away from the chocolate shop and its delicacies, and early on the morning of Easter Sunday – the day of the Chocolate Festival, he breaks into the *chocolaterie* and greedily stuffs himself with chocolates. Vianne finds him fast asleep in the shop window of La Praline, like a drunkard sleeping off his hangover, but in this case seduced and smeared with chocolate. The villagers on their way to Mass see him lying in the shop window surrounded by the Easter display. In shame the priest runs off toward Les Marauds and the Chocolate Festival starts early and is a resounding success.

Michel Roux and Josephine Muscat fall in love, they settle down together and run the bar that used to belong to her husband Paul-Marie. Paul-Marie Muscat disappeared from Lansquenet-sous-Tannes after suspicions were founded that he set alight the houseboat of Roux. To make matters worse the priest knew about the incident. Just as he knew that Paul-Marie beat up Josephine. Francis Reynaud himself told the comatose priest at the sanatorium, “To know a man beats his wife – to know in secret – is one thing. But to see it in all its ugliness”(Harris 1999:277). Here is evidence of the hypocrisy of a patriarchal institution, where the private knowledge of the abuse and control of a woman is acceptable, but for the sake of “society” it cannot be made public.

Important here is the fact that Josephine has ascended from maiden to mother. Although she has not physically had children, the ascent from the darkness of her marriage to a new life with Roux, having their own business – the Café de la République is indicative of her becoming complete – which is the next stage in her life, where she uses her creative force to be a woman in her own right.

Harris (1999:318) concludes the story of Vianne and Anouk Rocher with a thought that Vianne has: “Perhaps it is what I suspected from the first, that Reynaud and I are linked, that one balances the other and that without him I have no purpose here.” Had Hades not abducted Persephone, what would her purpose have been? Or his for that matter? She would not have represented spring and fertility or become the Queen of the Underworld. Had man not existed, then there would be no existence of the Church, and with the existence of man, the Church’s purpose is to save the souls of man and man has the right to question the its purpose.

As mentioned earlier, Demeter's world of Olympus was a patriarchal one, just as Lansquenet-sous-Tannes was governed by the patriarchy of the Church. And just like Demeter resisted the illogical and despotic exercise of patriarchal power and defined her own levels of power and authority, so too does Vianne resolve not to give in to the patriarchal tyranny of Francis Reynaud and his small band of narrow-minded parishioners who are afraid of pleasure and indulgence.

As Persephone is the maiden in myth – so is Anouk in this modern novel. Demeter like Vianne is the mother and sometimes – even Hecate. Armande represents the older woman or crone. This is a story about new beginnings, about ascendance from the Underworld (darkness) into a fresh new start, where there is the promise of new life – or as in the Demeter/Persephone myth, spring. Novels rich in tales and characters like *Chocolat* have been influenced by myths, and the struggles and the lessons of the gods are repeated time and again in modern literature as will be apparent in the following novel.

Apart from the abovementioned similarities to the myth, there are a number of other motifs that are similar to the *Hymn*. For example the character of Hecate can be a correlation to Anouk's invisible friend, Pantoufle who always seems to accompany Anouk – like a protector or attendant. Furthermore, Hecate was the patron of magic and sorcery, linked to darkness and the Underworld, and the mysterious Pantoufle seems to be around whenever magical occurrences take place.

With regard to the reunion between mother and daughter a similar incident occurs in the novel. Caroline Clairmont, and her mother Armande Voizin who are estranged, become reconciled and reunited at Armande's eighty-first birthday party. With regard to the aspect of fertility and fecundity in the myth, this novel is filled with images of bounteous images of food and fecundity. For example the book is filled with descriptions of food and chocolate that make the villagers happy. Harris (1999:244) also describes the shop window at La Celeste Praline that has been prepared for the Chocolate Festival and includes a giant chocolate statue of Eostre with a sheaf of wheat in one hand and a

basket of eggs in the other – a symbol of fecundity, and a figure much like that of Demeter the goddess of the harvest.⁶⁵

Here once more, similarities between the themes of the ancient myth and a modern novel have been identified. As mentioned earlier, Demeter's world of Olympus was a patriarchal one, just as Lansquenet-sous-Tannes was governed by the patriarchy of the Church. Just as Demeter resisted the illogical and despotic implementation of patriarchal power and defined her own levels of power and authority, so too does Vianne resolve not to give in to the patriarchal tyranny of Francis Reynaud and his small band of narrow-minded parishioners who are afraid of pleasure and indulgence.

THE NOVEL: *HOUSE OF WOMEN* BY LYNN FREED

Another novel, which has a similar narrative to the Demeter/Persephone myth, is the South African novel by Lynn Freed titled *House of Women*. This novel focuses on an arranged marriage, and casts the principal male character and his similarity to Hades in a more positive light than in the previous two novels. Depending on which view one takes of Hades, he can either be regarded as a monstrous rapist, or looking through particular cultural lenses, his actions could also be seen as a logical way to obtain a bride.

The title of the novel is of interest, as a house symbolises a place of protection and nurturing – such as the womb. It can thus also be representative of femaleness and womanhood. However the concept of a house can also be perceived as a prison – where the people within are confined and protected from the outside world and cannot experience the fullness of life.

This is the story of a young woman, Theadora, also known as Thea, the daughter of a wealthy womaniser and a proud and self-important opera singer – Natalia. Theadora

⁶⁵ "Easter eggs, classic womb-symbols of the goddess Eostre, were traditionally coloured red and laid on graves to strengthen the dead" (Elworthy 1996:107). The red colour relates to the colour of menstrual blood, and is also the colour of the pomegranate seed in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.

grows up in a large home in South Africa on the coast, both spoilt and similarly sheltered by her mother. She is never allowed to leave home unescorted and the gate to the property is always locked. Men are seldom allowed onto the property – even her own father, whom her mother never married. Thus Thea's house could be regarded as a prison, never having had the freedom to explore her youth.

Unknown to Thea, she is promised to her father's middle-aged cousin, a Syrian. Like all young women who have lead a sheltered life, she is seduced by the idea of leaving her home and her yearning for male attention, and thus allows herself to be ensnared into this arranged marriage. But as she realises that the lure of adventure has deprived her of her over-protective mother, she becomes aware that she is once more a prisoner in the home of her husband on an unknown island, and whose name she only learns when she herself, becomes a mother. Both Thea and her mother Nalia (short for Natalia) struggle to cope with their forced separation and the story is mostly told through the unanswered letters that Thea writes to her grieving and depressed mother.

The story begins with the seventeen year-old Thea watching a stranger – the Syrian, who is looking out over the bay, on her mother's terrace. He is thought to be a friend of her father's but the reader soon discovers that he is actually his cousin. They are to join Nalia and Thea for dinner. Thea is unused to men visiting their home, even her father is seldom allowed to visit. Her adolescent mind romantically muses on the man.

"His head and shoulders are caught in the last of the light, massive like a centaur's. He could be Apollo on his chariot with his hair blown back like that. Or Poseidon. Or Prometheus.⁶⁶ He is the darkest white man I have ever seen. It is a sort of gilded darkness, gleaming and beautiful. Even an old man can look like a god, I think" (Freed 2002:3). Just like Persephone's father, Zeus, Thea's father has had many lovers and he is used to getting what he wants. "I am not his first child, nor I suppose, will I be the last" (Freed 2002:4).

⁶⁶ Reference is often made to Greek mythology in the novel. A centaur is a creature that is half man and half horse. It is a symbol of man's dual nature – indicating that a man can be both gentle and harsh, caring and dominant. Apollo is the son of Zeus, the god of light, prophecy, music and the arts; Poseidon is the brother of Zeus and is the god of the sea; Prometheus is a cousin of Zeus, who befriended humanity and because of his theft of fire to enlighten mankind, resulted in his endless suffering at the hands of Zeus. Zeus and Prometheus were eventually reconciled and Prometheus ascended to Olympus and is known as the divine fire-bearer.

The dinner is an uncomfortable affair, as both Nalia and Thea are not used to having men in their home. The next day, Nalia leaves to go inland to visit her psychoanalyst Katzenbogen, who like Nalia, is a Holocaust survivor. When Nalia goes inland, Maude, the housekeeper is in charge, and the only person with the keys to the property. Thea thinks about the fact that Maude carries out Nalia's instructions to the letter and always ensures that no one enters the property. "She is like Cerberus, she sees everything, she hears everything too, even when she's snoring" (Freed 2002:4). Again Freed refers to mythology. Cerberus is the three-headed watchdog of Hades. Thea's home can be likened to a prison, or a form of the Underworld, where her youth is stifled, and Maude like Cerberus in the Underworld, keeps a close eye on her.

Maude has left the house to do some shopping, leaving Thea with the housemaid and the gardener to guard and protect her. Thea discovers that the Syrian has left his valise, which is made of beautiful brown leather with a leather lining. She takes it to the summerhouse to examine its contents. Just then the Syrian arrives and rings the gate bell explaining to the gardener that he has left his valise behind the previous night.

The gardener is frightened of any strange man that appears at the gates, especially when both Nalia and Maude are not there to resolve the intrusion. He runs off to find the housemaid. Thea hears the Syrian's voice and knows that the maid will not call her, and that she will tell the Syrian to wait for Maude to return, as only she has the keys to unlock the gate.

Thea grabs the valise to return it to the Syrian and runs to the gate, which is already open, as the chain has been cut and hanging loose. The Syrian has cut the chain breaking into the property – he is in a hurry and will wait for no one. The similarity here to the myth is a sense of great hurry. In the case of Persephone, Hades snatches her from the meadow and carries her off in his chariot. In the novel, the Syrian throws the valise into the car, pushing Thea ahead of him into the waiting vehicle. "Go!" he says to the driver" (Freed 2002:17). And so, the car roars off down the hill and to the docks where a boat is waiting – the whole incident having been witnessed by the gardener and housemaid.

There is a similarity between the myth and the novel, just as the narcissus which was beautiful and enticing, was a trap for Persephone to lure her to be taken away by Hades, so is the beautiful leather valise a trap for Thea, left on purpose the night before. In the myth, the daughters of Oceanus had witnessed Persephone's abduction in a meadow of flowers, and in this novel Thea's abduction in the garden is witnessed the gardener and maid. She is abducted by the Syrian, who represents Hades in the novel, borne away not in a chariot pulled by immortal horses, but in a motorcar.

As in the myth, at the time of Persephone's abduction, her mother Demeter, was not close by, and in the novel, the abduction of Thea occurs when Nalia has gone inland to visit her psychologist. Persephone's abduction was orchestrated by both her father Zeus and Hades, and in the novel, it is obvious that Thea's father conspired with the Syrian to arrange his daughter's abduction. Otherwise how is it possible that both men managed to be invited to dinner the night before, and the valise (trap) was left behind? Furthermore without the help of Thea's father, the Syrian would not have been aware that Nalia was going to be away from her home on that fateful day. The valise as a trap to gain access to Thea is similar to the facilitation by Gaia of causing a narcissus to spring up from the earth to lure Persephone. This, like the myth is the first deception in the novel to achieve a means to an end.

Thea is frightened of walking up the gangway of a huge, grey ship. She remembers as a child that her mother brought her to a ship to say goodbye to a friend and they were to have gone on board to look around before the ship put out to sea. "But the gangway terrified me, swaying high and loose over the water. The water itself was terrifying – dark and deep and oily" (Freed 2002:17). The description of the water presents an ominous picture both physically and psychologically. Water is the primordial fluid, which can be life giving but also treacherous. The darkness and depth of the water in the harbour indicates aspects of the unknown, signifying danger and loss. Perhaps that day in her childhood Thea had a premonition of what lay ahead in her future.

The Syrian takes Thea by the elbow and pushes her ahead of him. Slowly she moves up the gangplank and as she stares ahead at the dark entrance, she sees a shadowy being, waiting for them. This presents an image of what Persephone may have felt when first entering the Underworld. One immediately thinks of the Underworld, and the fear of

being confronted by the dark and the unknown. When Persephone descended into the Underworld, she would have had no idea what would confront her and whether she would ever see her mother again. Similarly, Thea has no idea what awaits her and whether she will ever see Nalia again.

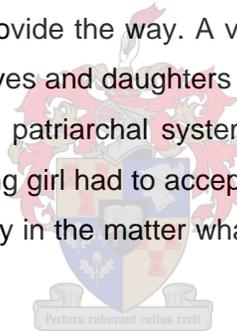
As Thea approaches the top of the gangplank, she sees that the shadowy being waiting for her is her father. The shadowy being – like a shade in the Underworld, which is Thea’s father, is suggestive of Charon the boatman who ferries the souls of the dead across the River Styx to the entrance to Hades. The father gives away his daughter to the Syrian on a boat in the harbour of the Indian Ocean to be ferried away to her new home far from her mother. Freed (2002:18) indicates that the father is delighted at the arrival of the daughter, “There’s my girl!” His eyes are glinting with delight. “Come along now, *tempus fugit*.⁶⁷ I have the papers all ready.” Thea realises that her father and the Syrian have tricked her into marriage. The papers referred to are the legal documents that will bind Thea in a marriage to the Syrian. Arranged marriages were not uncommon in Ancient Greece and Zeus’ decision to give Persephone in marriage to Hades without consulting Demeter would not be considered out of place amongst the mortals, as this would have been an agreement between the two relevant parties for a legitimate marriage.

However amongst the Olympian gods there was never a need for the bride to move to another residence as they lived in one community on Olympus. In the myth however, Persephone would leave Olympus to live somewhere completely different – in the Underworld. As Foley (1994: 107) indicates “this marriage, in which the bride undergoes a symbolic death in the transition from one household to another, brings Persephone closer to the human experience.” The Syrian explains to Thea that the only way she can leave the country is as his wife, which means she will move away from all that is familiar to her, just as Persephone had to do. Zeus, Persephone’s father, and her uncle, Hades – the Lord of the Underworld – plotted the abduction of Persephone from Olympus to the Underworld, and similarly, Thea’s father and his cousin, have plotted and planned her arranged marriage and her relocation to another part of the world.

⁶⁷ *Tempus fugit* means “time flees”. The speed at which Hades abducted Persephone, and the speed at which the Syrian abducts Thea, is important to both the myth and the story, as an unhurried abduction of both young women would never have succeeded.

Thea aches for her mother. With the excitement of the drive to the docks she has temporarily forgotten her, but now faced with this collusion between her father and the Syrian, she thinks of Nalia, left behind. Still, Thea agrees to marry the Syrian and twelve miles out to sea, the Captain of the ship marries her to him. Just as Persephone was tricked into going to the Underworld because of Hades and Zeus' complicity, so has Thea married the Syrian because of the conspiracy between her father and his cousin – her new husband. Possibly, both young women were seduced by the thought of adventure and a new exciting and less stifling life, without their mothers, which was the catalyst, conveniently provided by the trickery of their fathers and close family members who were to become their husbands.⁶⁸

On the other hand, in the course of nature – the phases in a female's life – both these young woman may have sub-consciously known their time had arrived to become women and their fathers would provide the way. A view of this would be the fact that in Ancient Greece, women – both wives and daughters – were seen as the property of men and thus they were a part of the patriarchal system. Agha-Jaffar (2002:15) indicates, "The probability is high that a young girl had to accept her father's choice of a spouse for her and that the mother had no say in the matter whatsoever." It was an acceptable way to marry off a daughter.



Just as Gaia, the great grandmother of Persephone, facilitated the abduction of her great granddaughter, by pushing up a narcissus as a trap for her to pick, Thea's mother knew that there was an arrangement of marriage between Thea's father and one of his cousins. This is why she hardly ever allowed men near her daughter and was overprotective of her. This brings to mind the fact that Nalia knew on some level that eventually she would have to let Thea go, and Gaia plays a similar role to ensure the "the succession of her male descendants in Hesiod's cosmology, the *Theogony*" (Foley: 1994: 35). In both the myth and the novel, these are secretive acts that can be regarded as deception or a means to an end – the continuation of the bloodline of the families. This can be regarded as the second deception in the novel.

⁶⁸ Hades was Zeus' brother and the Syrian was Thea's father's cousin – indicating a similarity between the novel and the myth with the males in both stories having close family ties.

Thea realises that “they have arranged everything perfectly between them, my father and his friend” (Freed 2002:20). She is upset by this exploitation of her and sits on her bed. Her husband comes to her, trying to comfort her, but all that Thea can think about is her mother – it is as if from this long distance she can hear her screaming for her. In the myth it is Persephone that screams for her mother, but here Thea imagines that her mother is screaming for her, while she deafens herself with her own pitiful crying. “He is saying things, but I can only hear her screams” (Freed 2002:20).

The Syrian offers Thea some fruit. They have a suite of three cabins to themselves, which is filled with fruit, nuts and flowers. Ignoring Thea, her husband selects some Brazil nuts, ladyfinger bananas and a bunch of litchis, arranging them on a plate for her. Thea’s favourite fruit are litchis, and when she refuses to eat, the Syrian peels a litchi and holds it to her mouth. She remembers her mother going to the Indian market to buy the fresh fragrant pink fruit.

According to Foley (1994:108) in Ancient Greece, “the bridal couple was showered with dried fruits and nuts (*katachysmata*) and presented with a basket of bread; the bride ate a quince on arrival at the groom’s house; the bride’s acceptance of the food (*trophê*) was a form of acknowledging the groom’s authority (*kyreia*) over her.”⁶⁹ For now, Thea refuses to eat what her husband offers her, but just like Persephone who also declined to eat anything in the Underworld, she will eventually succumb to the offerings of her husband – which will bind her to him.

Days at sea go by, and the marriage has yet to be consummated. Thea thinks a great deal about her relationship with her mother. She justifies leaving her mother, “Surely, surely I would have had to find a way to be taken from her sooner or later? Or even ripped from her as I have been, like a baboon – one minute a young female picking grubs out of her mother’s fur, and the next, snatched off into a future, screeching” (Freed 2002:27).⁷⁰ Thea, less naïve than Persephone, appears to realise that this is part of a woman’s journey – at some stage she needs to move on from being a virgin (maiden) to the next step in her life as wife and mother.

⁶⁹ The quince can be likened to the pomegranate seeds offered to Demeter or the litchis offered to Thea.

⁷⁰ Here again, one must consider whether this is possibly the order of nature, to move on from being a maiden to a woman and mother and then in later years, to becoming the crone.

The night before the couple arrive in America, Thea's husband gives her a gift – a double string of pearls with an emerald and diamond clasp and matching earrings. She wears her new necklace to dinner and joins her husband and the Captain after dinner, accepting a cognac. Cognac is made from fermented grapes, and thus as Persephone accepted the pomegranate seeds, Thea accepts the fruit of the vine. With two cognacs coursing through her veins, Thea is ready for her husband.

They consummate the marriage and then she remembers her mother "...and I know that it is too late, I have let it happen. I pull myself away from him and begin to cry, terrible gasping sobs" (Freed 2002:40). Just as in the myth, Persephone is portrayed as reluctant and wanting her mother after consummating the marriage, Thea starts to cry wanting her mother too. It is then that Thea knows that she will be his forever. The cognac is Thea's 'pomegranate seed' – just as Persephone was about to leave the Underworld, Hades gave her a pomegranate seed to eat, which forever bound her to him and the Underworld. The necklace and the cognac result in the consummation of Thea and the Syrian's marriage, which binds them together.

As Foley (1994: 35) mentions "Persephone's eating of the pomegranate seed may signal a shift to seduction, a careful preparation of the bride for sexuality, rather than violence." The Syrian gave Thea jewels and cognac, he was patient in preparing her for the marriage act. There is no violence on his part, he waits for Thea to be ready for him.

Close to the end of the myth, when Persephone tells her mother that Hades forced her to eat the pomegranate seed, Foley (1994:60) mentions, "No violence is mentioned in the impersonal narration of this event in 371-372, only secrecy. Does she, as Richardson argues here protest too much for the benefit of her mother?" It could be that she knew exactly what she was doing when she swallowed the pomegranate seed. Thea's decision to accept the jewellery and drink the cognac can also be regarded as a conscious decision to accept her husband and consummate the marriage, even though later she appears to regret the course of events.

Both Persephone and Thea's acceptance of their "marriages" through the consumption of food or drink from their husbands' hands, indicates that they probably did this in the

knowledge that they have, as Agha-Jaffar (2002: 49) mentions, “absolutely no intention of regressing to identification” with their mothers again. As part of the growth of any young woman, she needs to develop her own identity with new ideas and her own direction, which is precisely what occurs when the maiden descends into the Underworld and ascends as a woman in her own right. This is a part of the journey that all women must take, to leave behind the mother and undergo the transition into the next phase of her life, to become the mother.

Meanwhile, Thea’s mother Nalia is mourning the loss of her daughter. She rants and raves at her loss – much like Demeter did, when she found out that Persephone had been abducted. Nalia takes to her bed and refuses to eat or drink anything. She instructs Maude, the housekeeper to sack the staff and pay them three month’s notice. When Maude enquires of Nalia about herself, she replies: “You will sit here and watch me die” (Freed 2002:43). Just as in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, when Demeter discovered that Persephone was gone, she denied herself food and drink.

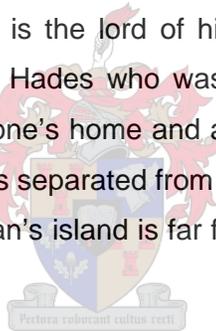
Another significant point in the novel is that Nalia and Maude, having sacked the staff are left alone in isolation in the house. This correlates to the isolation of Demeter and Hecate from the rest of the universe at one point in the myth, while looking for Persephone. Hecate herself was unaware of what had happened to Persephone, but offers her support to Demeter. Although certain aspects of Nalia can be likened to Demeter, Maude is much younger in the novel, than what Hecate is in the myth. However the role she plays as housekeeper is significant, as she is a caretaker/attendant, now taking care of Nalia, whereas previously she took care of Thea.

As the days go by, Nalia becomes weak and eventually Maude contacts Thea’s father to inform him that Nalia is pining for her daughter. As Hecate tried to help Demeter in her search for Persephone, Maude does the same, helping Nalia, taking care of her and calling on Thea’s father for help. He visits Nalia and is moved by the state she is in. “Natalia’ he says, I’ll see what I can do to bring her back” (Freed 2002:45). Just as Zeus wanted to help Demeter to assuage her anger at the loss of her daughter, Thea’s father promises Nalia “‘If I can have it annulled, you can have her back,’ he says. He knows that the marriage is not yet a marriage. He has had a telephone call from the ship”

(Freed 2002:46). Unknown to him, Thea has succumbed and has become the Syrian's wife in the true sense of the word, and cannot return to her mother.

The Syrian takes Thea to his home on an isolated island, "It is bare and stark and also dark and damp" (Freed 2002:51), and just like the Underworld it is remote and far away from home. The dark, desolate landscape poses another similarity in the novel to the myth. Just as the Underworld is an austere, dark place – far from the living, so is the Syrian's island home, far from all that is familiar to Thea and especially her mother. The Syrian's house is built on a cliff. "When you look out there, it is as if the gardens in the front don't exist, because it is as bleak and bare as it was coming up. The villa is bleak, too, with its winding passages and stone stairways, and its large, gloomy rooms" (Freed 2002:53).

There is a similarity between the location of the home of Thea's husband and that of Persephone's husband. The Syrian is the lord of his distant and isolated island. This brings to mind the Underworld and Hades who was Lord of the remote and desolate Underworld. Olympus was Persephone's home and after her abduction she goes to live in the Underworld. The Underworld is separated from Olympus and the earth by a watery waste known as Oceanus. The Syrian's island is far from Africa, surrounded on all sides by the ocean.



Thea feels lost and alone, just as Persephone must have felt in her new home in the Underworld. "And so I don't know where I am at all. But, wherever it is, I have gone too far, Ma, you are never behind me anymore" (Freed 2002:53). This is typical of how a sheltered daughter would think – the over-protective mother is always close by to take care of her needs. Thea considers, "What is marriage anyway, but a form of theft? Someone taken, someone left behind. But with this, I am his, I will always be his. And I know there is no way back" (Freed 2002:59). This passage in the novel, likens marriage to theft, similarly it can also be associated with death. As Foley (1994:107) indicates "this marriage, in which the bride undergoes a symbolic death in the transition from one household to another" also explains that once a woman has undergone such a vital step as losing her virginity, she enters the next phase of her life as a woman, and possibly also a mother – there is no going back to a former way of life. While Persephone was 'stolen', and Demeter was left behind, so Thea has been taken and Nalia is left behind,

and just as Persephone will always have to go back to the Underworld, Thea knows that she will always belong to the Syrian –even if she visits her mother in South Africa at some time in the future.

Both are now legally bound to their respective husbands and it is only by their husbands' good grace that they will be allowed to visit their original homes. In the case of Demeter, it was due to Zeus' intervention that Hades allowed Persephone to visit her mother for a part of the year, and this was only as a result of Demeter's anger and despair that brought famine to the earth which resulted in the gods being deprived of the gifts and sacrifices that were made to them in their honour by the mortals. Demeter's despair could also be seen as an illness – her depression at the loss of her beloved Persephone. In the case of the Syrian, later in the story, Thea is allowed to return to South Africa to visit her mother who is ill.

Thea is pregnant and asks her husband if she can go home to see her mother, and have her baby there. His response is to try and take her in his arms, which just frustrates her even more. Freed (2002:68) describes her condition as follows: "Then I sit on my bed and stare at the cold window, full of pity for myself. I am a freak of nature, Ma, with no friend but you, and a husband before I even had a boyfriend." This is similar to Persephone who also had no suitors and was claimed while still a young maiden, to become Hades' wife.

On this same day, Thea asks her husband, why he has chosen her for his wife. Freed (2002:69) indicates his careless response: "I had a wager with your father, a sort of joke. We have a history of such jokes between us. Women mostly, harmless stuff. With this one, I demanded his favourite daughter as payment." Thea is devastated by this, and feels pure hatred for men at such an act of deception, as she never has before.

Although the mention of winning Thea as part of a wager between her father and his cousin is not an exact correlation to the myth, it is of relevance in terms of the fact that Zeus considered Persephone as his property and could do with her as he wished – even give her to Hades without consulting Demeter. Thea's father displays the same attitude. Furthermore, as Agha-Jaffar (2002: 137) mentions "the literature and mythology of classical Greece is littered with examples of women being carted off as spoils for the

victor.” Thus when the cousin – the victor, won the wager, he was entitled to payment, which in this case was Thea.

Here is another aspect of both the story and the myth when considering patriarchal systems and hence, arranged marriages. Both the myth and the novel communicate “the image of female disempowerment in a male-dominated world” Downing (1994: 147). Thus their husbands who establish their role in society define both females, hence the Syrian does not seem ashamed of the way he has “obtained” Thea as his wife. Being Middle-Eastern, this manner of obtaining a wife would be regarded as acceptable. Hades is of a similar opinion – that he legitimately acquired Persephone as his wife. Both the Syrian and Hades obtained their wives by way of the two respective fathers giving them away to become the wives of the chosen husbands.

On the day that Thea gives birth to twins, she finds out her husband’s name for the first time. His name is Naim. In Arabic *Naim* means ‘tranquil, at ease’. Naim has similar characteristics to Hades, who initially also appears as dark and dangerous. However as Persephone and Thea get to know their husbands they both experience a kindness in them. Both Hades and Naim are at ease in their respective domains – comfortable in their confidence of being lords of all they survey.

With the birth of her twins, spring has arrived. This is significant to the myth, as spring is the time of the birth of nature. “The wildflowers have come out for you,” he says. “They are dancing all over the mountain” (Freed 2002:79). This is noteworthy, as Thea has moved on to motherhood, it is the start of a new cycle in her life as a woman. The spring is also a new cycle in the life of the earth, where plants begin to bloom and grow, and Persephone’s ascendance from the Underworld caused the earth to blossom and grow.

Thea realises that all that surrounds her on this island belongs to him. She hears the cries of the seagulls circling above. “I will think of him as a gull, I decide. I will think of him as an enormous, dark, dangerous gull, whose prisoner I am now more surely than ever” (Freed 2002:81). This is again similar to the myth. Hades was the Lord of the Underworld, and Naim is the lord of this desolate distant island. At this stage, Thea still does not really accept her marriage to Naim, which is similar to Persephone who also did not accept hers to Hades until much later.

Meanwhile, Thea's mother, Nalia has moved inland to the mountains accompanied by Maude. This is reminiscent of Demeter, who leaves Olympus to look for Persephone and stays at Eleusis. Both mothers are mourning the loss of their daughters, and they deal with their pain in their own different ways. Demeter takes care of Demophon, and Nalia deals with her sadness and depression by having sex with a stranger. Both acts are life affirming, the one to take care of a child and immortalise him – to make him a god just as she is a goddess,⁷¹ the other by the co-joining of two individuals in an act which can produce life.

In the novel, Nalia's depression at the loss of Thea is strongly emphasised, and in the process she becomes very self-centred and demanding. She goes through life-depleting periods – hiding in her chalet, depriving herself of the company of others, feeling sorry for herself and then alternately, grandiose acts, such as insisting on giving a song recital at the hotel, dressing in her flamboyant opera gowns for dinner and pretentious displays of self-importance.

As Miller (1979:60) indicates “grandiosity is the defense against depression, and depression is the defense against the deep pain over the loss of the self that results from denial.” Nalia lived very much through the youthful Thea, who was an aspect of herself. Another aspect of depression is to emotionally withdraw and become passive. As Vera Bushe mentions “We see Demeter's depression in her unwillingness to allow anything to flourish, her mourning for a year, her unwillingness to be active in any form other than aimless wandering for almost a year” (Downing 1994: 175).

This depression is shown as emotional withdrawal and deprivation, which then changes to grandiosity where Demeter takes care of Demophon and attempts to immortalise him. When she doesn't succeed at this ostentatious act, she then demands a temple built in her honour – a very grandiose gesture on her part. She tells the people of Eleusis “For I am honoured Demeter, the greatest source of help and joy to mortals and immortals” (Foley 1994:16). The temple is built, yet Demeter is not appeased and decides to punish

⁷¹ In Demeter's search for Persephone, she poses as a nursemaid to a young boy, Demophon. His mother took in Demeter and asked her to raise her late-born child. Demophon grew quickly, anointed with ambrosia and was placed in the fire in Demeter's endeavour to make him immortal.

both the gods and the humans. She withholds the growth of all plants causing a famine, which hurts both gods and men. The gods are deprived of their gifts and sacrifices from the mortals, who in turn suffer greatly as no crops will grow.

Later, Nalia meets a woman, Vi, who is staying at the same hotel in the mountains as her. Initially Nalia displays animosity toward Vi, who wears bohemian clothes, is a retired singing coach, and who walks everywhere with her little dog, as if it is a human child. However when Vi's dog, which Nalia had thought, looked like a rat, is picked up and carried off by an eagle, Nalia takes Vi under her wing and comforts her. Eventually they become friends, feeding off each other's need for drama – two lonely old women who have lost their youth, their dreams and their “children”. When Nalia returns to the coast, she takes Vi with her to stay at her home, for company and also to fill the void that her daughter has left.

The relationship between Nalia and Vi is similar to a significant relationship reflected in the myth. When Demeter first entered Metaneira's home, there was a certain amount of hostility on the part of Demeter, due to the fact that she is a goddess and has to pose as a mortal. However Metaneira shows empathy to Demeter and allows her to be a nursemaid to her son, Demophon. This is a very valuable lesson where women show support for one another. Nalia and Vi's friendship also indicates the empathy and support women have for one another, especially in times of sorrow.

Meanwhile, on the island, Naim's older sister, Sonja has come to stay, and has taken over the care of the babies and the villa. She is tall and gaunt and reminds Thea of a stork. Storks are symbols of motherhood in Western culture, and Sonja is watchful and possessive of the twins and Naim, as if she is their mother. She has keys to all the room in the villa, and seems to be Naim's watchdog – like Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of Hades, always trying to keep Thea at bay. Sonja represents another characteristic of Hecate. Although she assists with the care of the children there is a much darker aspect to her.

She runs the affairs of the villa, and appears to spy on Thea, her whole demeanour appears very negative and thus she symbolises a negative, darker aspect of Hecate, who at times was regarded as a dark force of the Underworld. Although originally

regarded as one of the most powerful and benevolent of the goddesses, according to Hesiod, Hecate was a Titan and honoured by Zeus. However as an earth goddess, she became associated with the world of the dead, and eventually was regarded as a dark goddess and the patron of sorcery. Sonja could also be likened to Demeter, who during the time that she was searching for Persephone, was employed as a nursemaid to take care of Demophon. In the process she attempts to immortalise him by feeding him ambrosia and placing him a fire at night. In the novel, Sonja takes care of the twins and Thea is uneasy about the role she plays as the twins' nurse and caregiver.

The novel takes some twists and turns. After a time Naim informs Thea that he is sending her home to visit her mother, who is ill. However he does not allow the twins to go with her, as he wants to make sure that she will return to him. On the night before her departure, Naim gives Thea a gold locket, with tiny photographs of the twins and one of him. Thea realises now that no matter how much she has hated him, there is an ache within her for the man she is leaving behind to visit her mother. She recognizes that though Naim she has become a woman and a mother, that she has been set free of the ties that bound her to her mother and her mother's fears. Thea is to return to her home in Naim's boat, however he will not accompany her, but will stay on the island with the children. The gold locket can be likened to the pomegranate seed that Hades gave Persephone, just before she returned to Demeter. It was his way to ensure that Persephone would return to him. The locket with photographs of her babies will be a reminder for Thea of her children left behind, and this will ensure her return to Naim.

Just as Hades allowed Persephone to go back to Demeter for a period of the year, Thea will visit her mother and her home, but she knows that it is only for a period, and that she will return to the island to be with her children and husband. Here again is a similarity to the myth, when Hades kindly allows Persephone to visit her mother. "He recognizes she has been hurt and is experiencing feelings of pain and betrayal. At the same time, however, he tries to comfort her by suggesting that she curb her anger. In the process of doing so, he validates the legitimacy of her feelings" (Agha-Jaffar 2002: 129). Another similarity to the myth is that Naim's boat will return Thea to her mother, just as Hades' golden chariot returned Persephone to Demeter. In both cases neither of the husbands accompanied their wives on their return to their mothers, they were taken by other

males, in the case of Persephone, by Hermes, and in the case of Thea, by the captain of Naim's boat.

When Thea returns to her childhood home, Nalia and Vi have a falling out which results in Vi leaving. Here once more is a connection to the myth. Demeter looks for a substitute for Persephone and focuses on Demophon, and Nalia substituted Thea with Vi. When Thea returns home, Nalia finds fault with Vi, which is an excuse to be rid of her, as her daughter is back home. Similarly, when Demeter had no further use for Demophon as a mortal child and could not immortalise him, she no longer takes care of him and demands that a temple be built in her honour. This can be regarded as another deceptive act in the novel, when Nalia had no further use for Vi, she picked a fight with her and managed to dispose of her.

On her deathbed, Nalia indicates her hatred of men by instructing Maude to write to Thea: "Fathers are nothing. They are accidents of fate" (Freed 2002:201). After her mother's death, Thea wonders "what am I myself, now that I am no longer a daughter?" (Freed 2002:210). This is part of a woman's transition into the next stage of her life, where she leaves behind her youth and maidenhood to become a woman and possibly a mother. Agha-Jaffar (2002: 47) indicates that "a woman's journey to autonomy, power, and selfhood, therefore entails the difficult process of severing the connection to mother." The symbolic death of the virgin is essential so that the daughter progresses to being a woman and a mother in her own right. Although not all women may become mothers per se, it should be noted that the creative force within a woman can be likened to motherhood, whether it is the physical bearing of children or the creation of a lifestyle, business or project which makes a woman feel complete.

Nalia dies, and Naim returns with his boat to collect Thea. "In a month I will be turning twenty, and I think I understand the sadness of life. If my mother had been able to listen, I would have told her this. I would have told her more, too – things that I have seen for myself, that I have known for myself as well" (Freed 2002:210). Thea has grown up and realises that she did not have the opportunity to talk to her mother about adult matters. Yet the reader is aware that Nalia always saw her daughter as a child, and never wanted her to grow up and move on to the next stage in her life. Nalia dedicated her life to protecting Thea, this may have been as a result of having been a Holocaust survivor. In

the process of trying to protect Thea, and her obvious hatred for men, after Thea had left, Nalia felt abandoned and diminished, everything that gave meaning to her life had been taken from her. This is typical of the empty-nest syndrome when women suddenly find as Agha (2002:86) points out, “the caring and nurturing involved in meeting the physical, emotional, and psychological need of others” is no longer required.

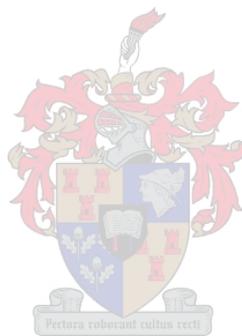
As mentioned previously, there are many references to classical myth in this story. Of significance is the name of the principal female character in the novel – Thea. Downing (1981:44) mentions, “Persephone is regarded as the secret, hidden, ineffable goddess, related to things beyond, not even to be named except as *Thea*.” Thea is also the name of a Titan goddess, often spelt Theia. She was the goddess of light, sight, prophesy and divine inspiration. Her parents were Uranus and Gaia. Theia and her brother Hyperion were the parents of Selene (the goddess of the moon), Eos (the goddess of the dawn) and Helios (the god of the sun who through the sun’s rays could see all the actions of men and gods) and who ignored Persephone’s screams when Hades abducted her. Thea in the novel brings light and joy to Naim.

In *House of Women* what is initially apparent, is the mother’s dread of most men, her over-protectiveness, the concept of arranged marriages and the empty-nest syndrome. Like the other novels dealt with in this thesis, this work of fiction identifies in its own unique way the possible stages in a woman’s life and the transition and initiation that a woman undergoes into the next phase of her life. This is often accompanied by disappointment and feelings of loss and failure, and inevitably having to face the death of the self.⁷² Whether this is death of the physical body or the death of innocence or the end of a phase in one’s life, it is a transition that all human beings face at different times in their lives.

Just as this story tells of Thea’s transition into the next phase of her life from sheltered girl to married woman, it shows significant correlations to the myth of Persephone and her transition from maiden to woman. Furthermore, the mother, Nalia, is very similar to Demeter, for example her grief, not eating or drinking, isolating herself, grandiose behaviour and finding a substitute to take care of in the place of Thea.

⁷² This brings to mind a woman’s symbolic descent into her own Underworld.

It is apparent that all three novels have some or many of the elements of the Demeter/Persephone myth in them. In the next chapter, the main themes and characters of the myth that have been identified, and the correlations between them will be summarised, in order to further attempt to demonstrate that ancient myth and modern fiction have similar aspects – issues that were relevant in ancient times, and that are still relevant in this modern age.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

At this point in the thesis, the Demeter/Persephone myth has been described to the reader, with explanations of the various theories that can be used to interpret it. Using these theories, the myth has been interpreted and the most important themes have been identified. The texts of three different novels have been analysed individually, in order to determine whether there are similar themes within these modern works of fiction, in order to establish whether similar elements of the myth function in these novels.

With regard to the gender of the writers of these narratives it should be noted that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* was in all probability written by a male poet or poets, whilst the three novels under discussion, were written by females. It could be argued that the various texts under discussion have been written from a gendered perspective – a male writer/s of the *Hymn* and three female writers of the novels.

The fact that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* was recited as a prelude to the recitation of epic poetry should not reduce its importance to ancient audiences – as if it was the curtain-raiser to introduce more important poetry about the gods and heroes of that time, such as Hesiod's *Theogony*. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* was not the only *Homeric Hymn*. There were also *Hymns to Hermes, Pythian Apollo and Aphrodite*, indicating that both gods and goddesses were praised. As Foley (1994:28) states “The Homeric Hymns were songs composed to honour and praise deities and apparently served as preludes (*prooimia*) to the recitation of other epic poetry,” and that “the hymns describe the acquisition of distinctive powers and honours (including major cults and ceremonies) by gods and goddesses.

Foley (1994:114) points out that in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* the goddesses retain a wide range of powers for independent action. In comparison to Hesiod's *Theogony* which “views female wrath and rebellion as dangerous and disruptive to the divine order

and potentially devastating to humanity, the *Hymn to Demeter* emphasises the creative and positive outcome of Demeter's nevertheless disruptive and dangerous wrath (to say nothing of her love)" (Foley 1994:116). To argue that the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* was written from a male perspective, one must then indicate that the writer/s of the *Hymn* had an understanding of the female perspective, unlike Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is a skewed male perspective and indicative of a patriarchal viewpoint. In fact as Fantham et al (1994:39) indicates, "The *Homeric* poems and early aristocratic lyric celebrate the importance of the woman's role as wife and mother, and praise her beauty, skill and intelligence. Like men, these women are viewed as adult moral beings; their decisions may be subject to divine interference, but they are equally rational and can be praised for their moral integrity."

When comparing the gendered perspective of the writers of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and those of the three novels under discussion, it is obvious that they indicate both the positive and negative aspects of both males and females. Feminists may interpret that the writer of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* as a male, portrayed Demeter as extremely vengeful, to such an extent that she would destroy the mortals and the earth through famine and desolation. However another perspective would be to note her great love and dedication for her daughter, her ability to rise above Zeus' autonomous rule, receive honours and be reunited with her daughter. Similarly Persephone could be regarded as being so meek that she would obey her father by returning to the Underworld for a third of the year. On the other hand, her so-called meekness could indicate her insight that this was part of her journey from leaving her mother to becoming the Queen of the Underworld.

It must be noted that the interpretation of myth has as much to do with the individual who is interpreting it, as the myth itself – persons with different belief systems, intentions and vocations will interpret the myth according to their own worldview. Harris and Platzner (2001:50) point out that Wendy Danziger in her work, *The Implied Spider* asserts "myth provides at least two lenses through which to view our world – the small world of individual experience through the lens of larger, universal reality and to experience the otherwise unimaginable cosmic vision through the concrete details of a particular narrative." The same can be said for the interpretation and insight that a reader has of a novel.

The main themes of the myth follow below, with an explanation of the similarity or difference between the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the three modern works of fiction. However, throughout the analyses of the novels, in Chapters 3 and 4, reference was also made with regard to the similarities and implied similarities between the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* on the one, and *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, *Chocolat* and *House of Women* on the other.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFIED MOTIFS IN THE MYTH

THE MAIN CHARACTERS

The main characters in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* are Demeter, Persephone, with Hades and Zeus. Hecate and Demophon are also important characters to the storyline of the myth, whilst Hermes and Metaneira play valuable but smaller roles as well.⁷³ In the novel *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the main character is Hannah, the Wizard, and the Tree Woman (Ancient Mother), with Foxkith playing an important role in the storyline, along with Marda and Hannah's companions.⁷⁴ Whilst in the novel *Chocolat*, the main characters are Vianne Rocher, her daughter Anouk and her friend, Pantoufle, along with the priest who represents the Church. Armande Voizin, Michel

⁷³ **Demeter** – goddess of agriculture, **Persephone** – Zeus and Demeter's daughter and who becomes Queen of the Underworld on her marriage to **Hades**, who is the god of the Underworld and brother to Zeus and Demeter, **Zeus** – supreme head of the gods on Olympus, **Hecate**, a chthonic goddess who helps Demeter to find out about Persephone's disappearance and who attends to Persephone in the Underworld at a later stage, **Demophon**, the late-born son of **Metaneira** and Keleos, who Demeter attempts to immortalize and discards when she is found out, and **Hermes**, who successfully negotiates Persephone's return and is the god of the sun.

⁷⁴ **The Wizard, who was the favourite of all the Ancient Mother's subjects on Faraway Island, stole Hannah, the young maiden in the story.** The Ancient Mother is also known as the **Tree Woman or Woodland Goddess**, and is Hannah's mother. **Foxkith** is a knight who goes in search of the Mother's child. **Marda** is an old needlewoman who befriends Hannah on her travels and takes her in for the night. Hannah has five companions, **Magpie**, **Old Badger** and the **three fox pups**, who were changed into woodland animals by the Wizard. Originally they were Broc, the gardener, Magpie the King's cook, and the fox pups that were her nephews.

Roux, and Josephine Muscat, play important, but smaller roles in the novel.⁷⁵ In *House of Women*, the main characters are Thea, Nalia, along with Thea's husband Naim, and her father. Other important characters are Nalia's newly acquired friend Vi, Maude and Sonja.⁷⁶

PLANS TO ABDUCT THE MAIDEN

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Zeus, Persephone's father, conspires with his brother Hades, to arrange the abduction of Persephone, so that she will become Hades' wife. Demeter is neither present nor consulted about the 'marriage' of Persephone to Hades. The action of Zeus and Hades can be interpreted in two different ways. Firstly, that this was a conscious and malicious act to exclude Demeter and rob her of her beloved daughter, or alternately that such an act was quite appropriate. The reason being that in Ancient Greece it was acceptable for fathers to arrange a daughter's marriage without the knowledge or consent of either mother or daughter. However, either way, the fact that Zeus did not discuss the matter with Demeter and Persephone, can be considered as a typical patriarchal attitude on the part Zeus, as if Persephone is his possession, to do with, as he desires.

The form of marriage that Zeus imposed on Persephone was different from what the gods had previously known on Olympus. There had never been a need for the bride to move to another residence upon marriage, as the gods all lived together on Olympus. However, in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone would have to leave Olympus to live somewhere completely different – in the Underworld.

A similarity to the abovementioned conspiracy in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is related in *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, is the wayward son (the Wizard) of

⁷⁵ **Vianne Rocher** is a chocolatier with mysterious powers, which are also exhibited by her daughter, **Anouk** who has an invisible friend, a rabbit called **Pantoufle**. **Francis Reynaud** is the priest in the village who represents the Church, **Armande Voizin** is an old woman who also has magical powers and recognises them in Vianne and Anouk. **Michel Roux** is a gypsy who is befriended by Vianne, Armande and Josephine, but despised by most of the villagers, and **Josephine Muscat**, who through Vianne's help leaves her abusive husband.

⁷⁶ **Thea** is a young woman and the main character of the novel. Her mother is **Nalia**. Then there is Thea's husband **Naim**, her father, Nalia's newly acquired friend **Vi**, **Maude** the housekeeper and **Sonja**, Naim's possessive sister.

the king of Faraway Island who returned home, pretending to be remorseful for having left the island. At first he stayed away from the Ancient Mother, pretending to be too ashamed to see her. Meanwhile, he was secretly planning to take her child from her. Just as Hades had conspired to “steal” Persephone, so the Wizard had secret intentions to “steal” the daughter of the Ancient Mother. The deception worked and the Wizard stole the Ancient Mother’s daughter and took her far from all that was familiar to her, to a place called the Tanglewood.

In *Chocolat*, there are no spelled out plans to abduct Anouk who is the daughter of Vianne. It is more an innate fear that Vianne has, due to circumstances that she remembers from her own childhood. Just as her mother had feared that Vianne would be taken from her, so Vianne fears that the Church will take Anouk away from her.

In *House of Women*, the main character, Thea, was promised to her father’s middle-aged cousin, a Syrian, named Naim. There is a correlation here to the way that Zeus and Hades orchestrated Persephone’s abduction. In this novel, it is obvious that Thea’s father conspired with the Syrian to abduct his daughter. The men had arranged to have dinner with Thea and her mother, the night before her abduction. After dinner they left with a plan (the valise was left behind) for the Syrian to return to the home the next day. This was the snare that would set in motion Thea’s abduction. After Thea’s marriage to the Syrian, he took her to his island home, which was far from all that she knew and what was familiar to her, just as Persephone had had to do, when she moved to the Underworld.

With this motif, we are able to identify similarities of the planned abduction between the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and the novels, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *House of Women*, and the fact that all three young women moved far from their homes.

WITNESSES TO THE ABDUCTION AND THE SITE OF THE ABDUCTION

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells of young Persephone picking flowers in a meadow on the Nysian Plain with the “deep-breasted daughters of Ocean” (Foley 1994:5). The

reference to “deep breasted” indicates that the daughters of Oceanus must have been older than the young Persephone was. In fact the description ‘deep breasted’ informs the reader that these young women were most probably mothers – their breasts being those of women who have nursed babies. Foley (1994:33) also indicates, that the “daughters of Okeanos, are water deities, who like all nymphs, protect and nourish the young.” Artemis and Athene were also present in the meadow. This raises the question why neither the goddesses nor the water deities tried to protect Persephone or stop the abduction?

The myth indicates that there were no witnesses to the abduction of Persephone, however if the daughters of Oceanus were present while she was picking flowers, then they must have witnessed the scene, as would have Athene and Artemis. This may indicate that amongst mature females, there would be an acceptance that the time had come for Persephone to live her own life and to move onto the next stage, as a woman and no longer a maiden. In the *Hymn*, Demeter was not present when the abduction occurred. Note that the setting of the abduction is the Nysian Plain, which is a remote site, which may indicate that the author wants to present the story in a manner that indicates that there were no witnesses about.

The site of the abduction in *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* is the forest where the Ancient Mother stood. The Wizard announced that he was ready to reconcile with her and to publicly apologise. With all her priestesses and the people of the island standing near by, the Wizard moved close to the Ancient Mother with a pruning hook and slashed her child from her breast. The similarity here between the novel and the myth is the fact that Hades snatched / stole Persephone from Demeter, and the Wizard stole the goddess’ sacred bud. In the novel, there were also mature witnesses to the event, as the Ancient Mother’s subjects were present.

Although no actual abduction takes place in the novel *Chocolat*, Vianne remembers how there was a constant threat of her being removed from her seemingly ‘unfit’ mother, by the Church. She in turn also fears that the Church authorities will remove her own daughter from her care. Vianne like her mother appeared different, eccentric maybe, but there had been hints that both mother and daughter had ‘other worldly abilities’ and the Church frowned upon witches and witchcraft.

Vianne remembered how when she was a child, a black-frocked man tried to convince her mother to leave her in the care of nuns. He nearly succeeded as he had almost convinced her mother to give her up to the Church. The fact that the man dressed in black tried to convince Vianne's mother to leave her with the nuns, suggests a similarity to the daughters of Oceanus, Artemis and Athena – all were females who witnessed Persephone's abduction – just as the nuns (all females) would then have witnessed the removal of Vianne from her mother, and would possibly have believed that this would have been for the best.

The abduction of Thea in *House of Women*, takes place at the garden gate of her home. She was alone at home with two adult servants, whilst her mother paid a visit to her psychoanalyst and the housekeeper Maude had gone shopping. The gardener and housemaid witnessed the abduction – both mature people, and once again, this presents a similarity to the witnesses of Persephone's abduction in the *Hymn*. Another similarity to the *Hymn* is the fact that Nalia was not present when Thea was abducted, just as Demeter was not present when Persephone was snatched.

The motif here is the abduction and whether there were witnesses present at that time. Similar themes have been established on the abduction of the maiden in *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, in *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *House of Women* with witnesses present. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter was not present at the abduction, and similarly, in *House of Women*, Thea's mother was also not present.

PATRIARCHY

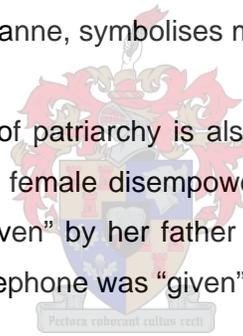
Another theme that is of importance in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the novels is the presence of patriarchy and patriarchal systems. Persephone's father, Zeus and her uncle Hades, plot her abduction. Demeter is not present and neither is she consulted when the marriage/abduction of Persephone is planned, and thus she does not give her consent to the act. This patriarchal attitude is typical on the part of the father, Zeus, as if Persephone is his possession, to do with as he sees fit. One must note here that Demeter was disempowered by having her daughter Persephone taken from her, yet

later she empowers herself by negotiating the return of her daughter. Furthermore, Persephone is also disempowered through being abducted but then becomes empowered by her new position as the Queen of the Underworld.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the Wizard also shows a patriarchal attitude – also as if Hannah is his possession. He calls Hannah his chattel, which is a reference to a patriarchal attitude, similar to the way Zeus and Hades regarded the goddesses as possessions.

The village of Lansquenet-sous-Tannes in the novel, *Chocolat*, centres on a patriarchal society and the Catholic Church. The priest in the novel regards Vianne' chocolate festival as wrong and sees the Church battling the pagan chocolate festival and its pagan priestess, Vianne. These two characters in the novel represent the opposites. The male principle here of patriarchy as symbolised by the Church and society, and the female principle represented by Vianne, symbolises matriarchy and nurturing.

In *House of Women*, the aspect of patriarchy is also present. Both the *Hymn* and the novel communicate “the image of female disempowerment in a male-dominated world” Downing (1994: 147). Thea is “given” by her father to his cousin in marriage, and she was never consulted, just as Persephone was “given” by Zeus to Hades.



THE FLOWERS

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter describes how Persephone and the daughters of Oceanus were picking flowers in a meadow. The flowers that the maidens picked varied, for there were roses, crocuses, violets, irises, hyacinths and narcissus. Foley (1994:34) suggests that because of Persephone's identification with the flowers and plants of the seasons,⁷⁷ “mythically speaking” makes her an appropriate wife “for an underworld god, for the seed with which she is identified in later myth and cult disappears and reappears from beneath the ground.”

⁷⁷ In the translation by Foley (1994:1) reference is made to “the flower-faced maiden” -Persephone's flower-like face, which can be a way of describing her youthful beauty or a link to her as a young maiden gathering flowers, and also the author connecting her to her future as the catalyst that causes the flowers and plants to return to the earth.

The hyacinth and the narcissus are part of the liliaceous group, which is any bulbous plant. According to Foley 1994:34), the narcissus is the “sacred flower to the underworld deities, the Eumenides,” and “was thought to have soporific qualities (the root *nark* in *narkissos* suggests torpor and death).”

In the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the lily is an important symbol. When the knight was about to enter the Tanglewood, Hannah, plucked a lily from her hair and pinned it to his breast. Later when he was found badly injured, the white lily that Hannah had pinned on him still bloomed on his breast, which indicated that it contained regenerative powers from Hannah. This poses a similarity between her and Persephone, for when she ascended from the Underworld, the earth blossomed and flourished.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* we discover similarities between the *Hymn* and the novel, with regard to the symbolic importance of the liliaceous families of plants.



THE TRAP

While Persephone was picking flowers, a magnificent narcissus suddenly appeared out of the earth, and she stretched out to pick the beautiful flower – which was the trigger to a trap created by Gaia.

The trap in *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* is not as obvious. Nevertheless, when the Wizard sought to reconcile with the Ancient Mother, all her subjects were in attendance, and happy about the reconciliation. The request for reconciliation caused the Ancient Queen’s subjects to be trusting and this naivety at the reconciliation, was the ruse that gave the Wizard the opportunity to steal the child of the Ancient Mother.

In *House of Women*, Naim, the Syrian, purposefully left his valise behind in Nalia and Thea’s house. The next day he returned to fetch it and the eager Thea ran to give it to him, providing him with the ploy to abduct her and take her from her home.

In this motif we find a correlation with regard to deception in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *House of Women*.

THE ABDUCTION

The Hymn describes that suddenly the earth opened up and Hades seized the screaming Persephone, and whisked her away to the Underworld in his golden chariot drawn by immortal horses. This act by Hades could have been regarded as acceptable in society at that time – and in many cultures, even now. In Ancient Greece arranged marriages took place without the consent of either the bride or her mother.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, once the Wizard had removed the child from the Ancient Mother and changed all her followers into small animals, he was free to leave and took her over the ocean to the Tanglewood. Furthermore, he took along five of the Ancient Mother's subjects – now woodland animals to take care of the little girl.

In *House of Women*, Thea's abduction was as swift as Persephone's. When Thea ran down to the garden gate to return the valise to the Syrian, the chain had been cut and was hanging loose. The similarity here to the myth is a sense of great hurry. In the case of Persephone, Hades snatches her from the meadow and carries her off in his chariot. In the novel, the Syrian throws the valise into the car, pushes Thea ahead of him into the waiting vehicle and shouts to the driver to drive, and the car roars off down the hill to the docks where a boat awaits to take them away.

The abduction of a daughter is swift, as is exposed in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and the novels, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *House of Women*.

THE RAPE

Nowhere in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, is there an implicit indication that Hades raped Persephone. In lines 30 and 31 of the translation by Foley (1994:4), the *Hymns* tells: "Against her will Hades took her by the design of Zeus with his immortal horses –

her father's brother." What does this mean? That Hades took her as in rape? Or does it mean that with his chariot and immortal horses he took her to another place, in this instance, the Underworld? In lines 20 and 21 of the translation by Foley (1994:2), the *Hymn* informs that Persephone "screamed with a shrill voice, calling on her father, the son of Kronos, highest and best." As Foley (1994:36) mentions, "a cry for help is a call for witnesses standard in primitive justice."⁷⁸

However, this is not necessarily feasible in the case of Persephone. Any young girl, who is snatched into a vehicle by someone that she does not know or recognise, will scream at such an act. Possibly her screams imply rape, but there is no clear indication that it was nothing more than a frightened maiden or an unwilling bride. Nonetheless, any violation of a woman can be seen as a form of rape, thus the myth can only imply such an act, simply by the power that Zeus has bestowed on Hades over Persephone.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, there is a scene, which is so violent that it is indicative of rape, or at the very least a violation of Hannah. Every month Hannah makes a brew for the Wizard, then one month she forgot to pluck the verdant growth from her head to make the monthly tea. The Wizard was filled with anger and he grabbed Hannah and violently started to pluck and tear out the green growth in her hair.

This passage in the novel indicates a rape scene – a male forcing himself on a woman. If Hades did rape Persephone, then this scene would be similar to the rape of Persephone by Hades, but in this case, the Wizard violated Hannah. As mentioned previously, rape has nothing to do with sex, but everything to do with exerting power over a woman. Here it is obvious that the Wizard exerts his power over Hannah in a violent way.

As for *Chocolat*, Josephine Muscat, who is Vianne's friend was abused by her husband – both physically and emotionally. One day Josephine hurried past La Celeste Praline, without stopping to greet Vianne. Her face was puffy and hidden by a scarf. When Josephine eventually visited Vianne she told her that her husband, Paul-Marie had beaten her up because she had tried to serve the gypsies in their café. Another interesting observation is that the priest found himself fighting the seduction of chocolate

⁷⁸ The reason for screaming can be attributed to the fact that in ancient times, if a woman who is raped screams in protest, then she will not be held responsible.

as he suffered self-righteously through Lent. On one of his visits to the comatose priest, he tells of the plants growing in spring and relates this to the chocolates at La Celeste Praline. “This profusion seems somehow wrong, irreverent, a savage thrusting of life, one plant choking another in a vain attempt at dominance” (Harris 1999:236). This description immediately brings to mind the rape of Persephone or violent sex, but it also refers to the fertility of spring, as the buds thrust through the earth to be followed by bountiful growth.

In *House of Women* there was no indication of any physical violation of Thea by her husband Naim. However, there was an indication of emotional violation, when Naim informed Thea that he had won her in a wager with her father.

Should one take the violation – any violation of a woman – as rape even if it is abduction? If so, then there are similarities between the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and all three novels.



SCHEMING RELATIVES

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* speaks of Hades as “the celebrated son of Kronos” and also of Zeus as “the son of Kronos highest and best” which emphasises that they are close relatives – in this case, brothers. Foley (1994:36) indicates, that not only were Zeus and Hades brothers, Hades was also the brother of Demeter indicating a very close relationship as a sibling of both Persephone’s parents.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the Wizard was the son of the King of Faraway Island, and one of the Ancient Mother’s most favoured subjects, indicating a close link between her and the one who betrayed her.

The Priest is symbolic of Hades in *Chocolat*, and as the priest/father of the local church and community, and the son of the Holy Father/Pope (symbolic of Zeus) a close relationship is also presented in this novel.

Finally, in *House of Women*, Naim, Thea's husband, is her father's cousin, indicating a blood relationship.

Thus in all three novels and the myth, there is a correlation between the relationship of Zeus and Hades and the main male protagonists in the novel.

BIRDS

According to Harris and Platzner (2001:101), birds are a common goddess symbol, and because of flight, link the earth and the sky. In the translation of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Foley (1994:4) tells that Demeter "cast a dark cloak on her shoulders and sped like a bird over dry land and sea, searching." The mention of a bird is significant, as all three novels mention birds, which are connected to various symbols.

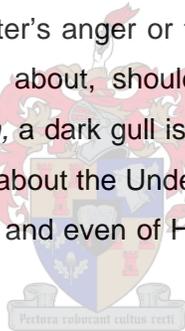
In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, after the Wizard violated Hannah, the bird, Magpie takes care of her – fussing and mothering over Hannah and preparing her broths and other titbits so that she can regain her strength.

When Vianne meets Armande Voizin in *Chocolat* for the first time, Harris (1999:40) describes her as "a tiny old woman. Black skirt, black coat, grey hair coiled and plaited into a neat, complex bun. Her eyes were sharp and black as a bird's." The bird-like description of Armande brings to mind a black bird such as a raven, which is connected to the gift of prophecy. This is a positive symbol of a bird. Later in the novel, the priest goes to the chocolaterie and opens the door with, "the wind blowing the folds of his soutane into the shop, like the wings of a black bird" (Harris 1999:50).

The reference here to a black bird is menacing. As a symbolic colour, Fontana (1993:66) indicates that "in the West, black is a symbol of death, sorrow and the underworld." Birds on the other hand, "because they come from the skies they can also assume the role of messengers from higher powers, whether for good or ill" (Fontana 1993: 86). Reference is made in the novel to birds in describing Armande and the priest, Francis Reynaud. They both represent having a role as a messenger – one is good and the other malevolent.

In *House of Women*, when Thea was at Naim, she decides to think of him as a gull. “I will think of him as an enormous, dark, dangerous gull, whose prisoner I am now more surely than ever” (Freed 2002:81). Later in the story, when Naim’s sister comes to stay, to help take care of the twins, Thea is reminded of a stork because she is tall and gaunt. Storks are associated with motherhood in Western popular culture, and Sonja is watchful and possessive of the twins – which would remind one of such a bird.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, there is only the one reference to a bird. However, the fact that Demeter puts on a dark (as in black) cloak – as one would when mourning and moves as fast as a bird looking for Persephone, is similar to the bird symbols in the novels. In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* Magpie is a black bird – and motherly which is symbolic of Demeter. Furthermore in *Chocolat*, Armande is likened to a black bird in a positive sense, whilst the description of the priest as a black bird is negative – being symbolic of Demeter’s anger or the symbolism of death and loss that the priest portentously could bring about, should Vianne’s fear of losing Anouk be realised. Finally in *House of Women*, a dark gull is symbolic of Thea feeling imprisoned, – just as Persephone may have felt about the Underworld. The symbol of the stork could be symbolic of Demeter, as mother, and even of Hecate, the attendant and caregiver of Persephone in the Underworld.



THE DESCENT INTO DARKNESS – THE UNDERWORLD

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* does not actually give a description of the Underworld. However from other sources, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, an image of the Underworld or the realm of the dead is provided. The Underworld is a remote and desolate place, separated from Olympus and the Earth by a watery waste known as Oceanus. It is foggy and misty where no sunlight penetrates.

In the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, Hannah’s Underworld is the Tanglewood. This is because like the Underworld, it is dark and dismal, and like Persephone she is held captive in the Wood. Pierce (2001:14) describes the heart of the Tanglewood as a “labyrinthine snarl.” The description of the focal point of the

Tanglewood as a “labyrinthine snarl” is important to the description because the ancient Egyptians believed that the labyrinth or maze symbolised the path that the dead followed through the Underworld to meet with Osiris who waited at the centre in order to pass judgment.

In *Chocolat*, there are a number of different places that can be regarded as being similar to the Underworld or what it represents, one being in Vianne’s mind – her fear that her child could be taken from her. When she and Anouk first moved into the old bakery, which they then converted into the chocolaterie, the place was dark and dismal. Vianne indicates, “the smell is like daylight trapped for years until it has gone sour and rancid, of mouse-droppings and the ghosts of things, unremembered and unmourned. It echoes like a cave, the small heat of our presence only serving to accentuate every shadow” (Harris 1999:16). This description also brings to mind the Underworld. Finally, Le Marauds is the slum area of the village, which lies next to the Tannes River. Harris (1999:39) indicates that the people who live along the banks are like scavengers taking whatever they can glean from the river. The description in the novel is another correlation to the Underworld, since the inhabitants of Les Marauds led an unhappy, banal existence, much like the souls of the dead, in the Underworld.

In *House of Women*, when Thea’s husband took her to her new home, she discovered that it was on an isolated island, “bare and stark and also dark and damp” Freed (2002:51). This is just like the Underworld because it was remote and far away from home. The dark, desolate landscape suggests a similarity in the novel to the myth. Just as the Underworld was an austere, dark place – far from the living – so was Naim’s island home – far from all that was familiar to Thea. The fact that the home was on an island is another similarity to the Underworld, which is separated from Olympus and the earth by a watery waste known as Oceanus.

A MOTHER’S GRIEF

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells how Demeter heard Persephone’s screams echoing from the mountain peaks into the depths of the sea. In her grief she tore off her veil, put

on dark clothing and began to search for Persephone. For nine days she searched for her daughter going without food or drink and not even bathing.

After Helios tells her that Hades had taken Persephone, she becomes so angry towards Zeus that she withdraws from Olympus, the mythical home of the Olympian gods, and roams the cities and fields of the mortals, consumed with anguish and despair at the loss of her daughter.

In the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, after the wizard had stolen the Tree Women's child – who was actually a facet of herself. She lost much of her powers with the result that she was unable to bring on the Spring, and hence Summer could also not take place, and the earth was permanently Winter. With the last of her strength and powers the Ancient Mother changed some of the woodland animals back into knights to search for her child. Although no specific mention of grief is made in the novel, the fact that she used the last of her powers to find her daughter, indicates that she did indeed grieve the loss of her child and sacrificed the last of her strength to get her back.

In *Chocolat* there was no loss of a child, just the fear of losing a child; hence there is no correlation to this theme in the *Hymn* and the novel.

Nonetheless, in *House of Women*, when Nalia found out that Thea had been abducted, the story is very similar to the myth. She rants and raves at her loss – much like Demeter did – takes to her bed and refuses to eat or drink anything.

Consequently the theme of the grief of a mother in both the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and *House of Women* is very similar, and indicates that a motif of the classical myth of Demeter and Persephone has been perpetuated in this work of modern fiction.

HECATE – THE HELPER CRONE

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Hecate informed Demeter that she had heard Persephone's screams but had seen nothing. This part of the Hymn is significant in that both goddesses were been cut off from the other gods and mortal men at that time, and

neither saw what happened to Persephone. Hecate accompanies Demeter to find out from Helios who had abducted Persephone. Although Hecate only played a small role in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, it is obvious that she wanted to assist Demeter find Persephone. Hecate was the only goddess in the Demeter/Persephone myth to help Demeter find her daughter.

As George (1992:141) mentions, “Hekate was also a key figure in reuniting the mother and daughter in the story of Persephone’s abduction into the underworld by Hades, and her periodic return to her mother, Demeter.” She was the patron of magic and sorcery, linked to darkness and the Underworld. When Demeter and Persephone were reunited, Hecate drew closer and from that time onward she promised to be Persephone’s attendant when she returned to the Underworld for a part of the year. As George (1992:141) mentions “She was worshipped as a goddess of fertility. Demeter was an expression of the force that sustains the vegetative growth above the ground, while Hekate, as a female keeper of the underworld, pushes the vital force of the plants from below to above, sending the wealth of the crops, to the living.” This was the reason for her being with Persephone for a third of the year in the Underworld, to ensure that the plants were ‘pushed above’ so that spring would arrive and the earth would proliferate.

In the *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, there are two characters that appear to be similar to Hecate in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*: Magpie the bird, and Hannah’s constant companion and adviser; and Marda, the old needlewoman. Magpie’s ministrations can be interpreted as the help that a crone (wise woman) would give a young maiden – the personification of Hecate. Marda in the novel also draws a parallel to Hecate (wise woman or crone) in the myth. She – like Hecate, tried to assist Hannah to find the Sorcerer Queen (later identified as the Ancient Mother). Marda’s caring ways are similar to Hecate, who had promised to be Persephone’s attendant. When Hannah was searching for the Sorcerer Queen, Marda took her into her home out of concern for her safety and provided her with food and shelter, mending her cloak – something a caregiver would do.

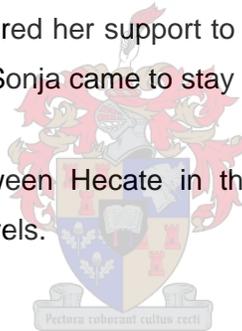
In *Chocolat*, Anouk’s invisible friend, Pantoufle could relate to one of the daughters of Oceanus in the Demeter/Persephone myth, but more pertinently there could be a link to Hecate, as Pantoufle always seemed to accompany Anouk – like a protector or

attendant, which parallels the role of Hecate (wise woman or crone) in the Demeter/Persephone myth. Hecate was the patron of magic and sorcery, and linked to darkness and the Underworld, and the mysterious Pantoufle always seemed to be around whenever magical occurrences took place.

Another character in the novel that can also be linked to Hecate is Armande Voizin, who recognises that Vianne, like herself, is a witch. Just as Hecate is an annoyance to Zeus, so Armande has a negative relationship with the priest.

Maude, the housekeeper in *House of Women*, can also be regarded as a parallel to Hecate. She took care of Nalia and when Nalia, sacked all the other staff members, Nalia and Maude were left alone in isolation in the house. This correlates to the isolation of Demeter and Hecate from the rest of the universe at one point in the myth, while Demeter was searching for Persephone. Hecate herself was unaware of what had happened to Persephone, but offered her support to Demeter. When Thea gave birth to twins, her husband's older sister, Sonja came to stay to help with caring for the babies.

Thus there is a correlation between Hecate in the Demeter/Persephone myth and various characters in the three novels.



THE SUBSTITUTE

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, after leaving Olympus Demeter, disguised as an old woman found work amongst the mortals in the town of Eleusis, as a nursemaid to Demophon. Demophon was the baby son of the ruler of Eleusis, Keleos and his wife Metaneira. When the goddess and Metaneira first met, there was a certain amount of tension between them. Demeter knew that even though she may be a goddess, she had to pose as a mortal, whilst Metaneira was overcome by fear, awe and reverence, as if some part of her recognised that the old woman was no mere mortal. When Demeter took on the job of raising Demophon, it appeared that in her grief, she had substituted him to replace the pain she felt about her missing daughter. As Downing (1981: 40) mentions, by immortalising Demophon, Demeter would raise a child that would escape death and the fates, and thus she would not suffer loss again. Anointed with ambrosia

and breathed upon by Demeter, Demophon grew quickly. At night, Demeter secretly buried him in the fire, endeavouring to immortalise him. When Metaneira discovered Demeter holding her son in the fire, she stopped the ceremony. Angry that the process had been stopped, Demeter abandons all interest in the child, as it had become apparent that her substitute child would no longer become immortal.

There is a similarity in the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*. After Foxkith had been hurt in the Tanglewood and was recovering in Hannah's hut, he vaguely remembered that after a thief had stolen his Queen's *treasure*, the Queen had fostered him, which resembles a moment in the *Hymn* when Demeter took care of Demophon, who appeared to be a substitute for Persephone. When the Sorcerer Queen's favourite subject disappeared with her child, she substituted her loss with Foxkith. Furthermore, the stolen treasure suggests a parallel to Demeter's treasured daughter Persephone, who was abducted by Hades, when the knight tells Hannah that a thief, believed to live in the heart of the Tanglewood, stole his Queen's treasure.

In *House of Women*, after Thea's abduction, her mother Nalia, moved inland to the mountains accompanied by Maude. This is reminiscent of Demeter, who left Olympus to look for Persephone and stayed at Eleusis. Both mothers were mourning the loss of their daughters, and they dealt with their pain in their own way. Demeter took care of Demophon, and Nalia dealt with her sadness and depression by having sex with a stranger. Both acts are life affirming, the one to take care of a child and immortalise him and the other to have sex – an act which can produce life, or at the very least, to affirm that Nalia herself is alive and can provide a form of love.

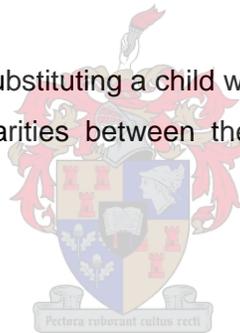
Later, Nalia met a woman, Vi, who was also staying at the same hotel in the mountains. Initially Nalia displayed animosity toward Vi, but later when Vi's dog was carried off by an eagle (there is a similarity here to Thea and hence Persephone's abduction), Nalia took Vi under her wing and comforted her. Eventually they became friends, feeding off each other's need for drama – two lonely old women who had lost their youth, their dreams and their "children".

There are a number of similarities here to the myth. Firstly, when Demeter first entered Metaneira's home, there was a certain amount of hostility on the part of Demeter, due to

the fact that she is a goddess and has to pose as a mortal, similarly Nalia was quite hostile to Vi, until she too suffered a loss. Correspondingly, Metaneira showed empathy to Demeter and allowed her to be a nursemaid to her son, Demophon.

When Thea returned to her childhood home, Nalia and Vi quarrelled, resulting in Vi leaving. Here once more is a connection to the myth. Demeter looked for a substitute for Persephone and focused on Demophon, and Nalia substituted Thea with Vi. When Thea returned home, Nalia found fault with Vi, which was an excuse to get rid of her, as her daughter is back home and she no longer needed a substitute. Similarly, when Demeter had no use for Demophon as a mortal child and could not immortalise him, she no longer took care of him and demanded instead that a temple be built in her honour. Sonja, Naim's sister could also be likened to Demeter, who was employed as a nursemaid to take care of Demophon. In the novel, *House of Women*, Sonja cared for the twins and was their nursemaid.

In two of the novels, the motif of substituting a child with another person has been clearly identified, indicating further similarities between the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and works of modern fiction.



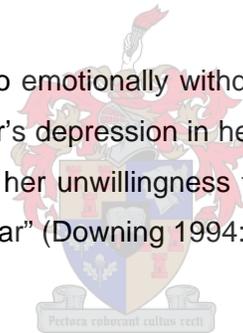
SUFFERING

As the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* informs the reader, once the temple was built at Eleusis, Demeter withdrew into the temple and continued grieving over her lost daughter. Demeter's withdrawal into the temple is a sign of depression. This depression is shown as emotional withdrawal and deprivation, which then changes to grandiose behaviour when first she takes care of Demophon and attempts to immortalise him. When she doesn't succeed at this ostentatious act, she then demands a temple built in her honour – another grandiose act on her part. She tells the people of Eleusis "For I am honoured Demeter, the greatest source of help and joy to mortals and immortals" (Foley 1994:16). The temple is built, yet Demeter is not appeased and decides to punish both the gods and the humans. She withholds the growth of all plants causing a famine, which affects both gods and men. The gods are deprived of their gifts and sacrifices from the mortals, who in turn suffer great hunger as no food grows.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, when Hannah escapes the Tanglewood, she and her companions run across infertile meadows and barren lands. As she runs, all that Hannah sees is desolation – nothing grows and even the people in the distance are gaunt and thin. This barren landscape is similar to the landscape of the earth, when Demeter discovered that Persephone had been abducted, and because of her grief, caused the earth to become infertile and desolate.

In the novel *House of Women*, Nalia's depression at the loss of Thea is strongly emphasised, and in the process she becomes very self-centred and demanding. She goes through life-depleting periods – hiding in her chalet, depriving herself of the company of others, feeling sorry for herself and then alternately, carrying out grandiose acts, such as insisting on giving a singing recital at the hotel, dressing in her flamboyant opera gowns for dinner and giving pretentious displays of self-importance.

Another aspect of depression is to emotionally withdraw and become passive. As Vera Bushe mentions “We see Demeter's depression in her unwillingness to allow anything to flourish, her mourning for a year, her unwillingness to be active in any form other than aimless wandering for almost a year” (Downing 1994: 175).



NEGOTIATION

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* points out that Zeus saw the plight of the humans, as the whole mortal race was about to be destroyed through famine, and similarly the gods of Olympus were also suffering, as their gifts and sacrifices from the mortals had ceased. After sending Iris and then one god after another to stop Demeter's vengeful act, Zeus eventually sends Hermes to the Underworld to negotiate with Hades for Persephone's return to her mother, so that Demeter will desist from destroying the mortals who honour the gods.

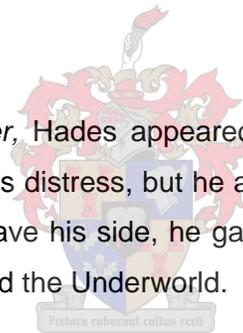
Hermes descends to the Underworld and finds a relaxed Hades, with his reluctant bride beside him, pining for her mother. He explains to Hades that Demeter's anger is dreadful, and that she refuses to communicate with the gods, but sits in her temple at

Eleusis, aloof and alone – intent on destroying both the mortals and the gods. Hades then urges Persephone to return to her mother, and insists that she not to be sad and angry, as he is a suitable husband for her.

In *House of Women*, Natalia becomes weak with longing and grief for Thea, and eventually Maude contacts Thea's father to inform him that Nalia is pining for her daughter. He visits Natalia and is moved by her physical and emotional state. "Natalia' he says, I'll see what I can do to bring her back" (Freed 2002:45). Just as Zeus wanted to help Demeter to assuage her anger at the loss of her daughter, Thea's father promises Natalia "If I can have it annulled, you can have her back," he says. At that stage, Thea's father is of the belief that she and Naim have not yet consummated their marriage.

CONSUMMATION

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Hades appeared to be compassionate toward the plight of the mortals and Demeter's distress, but he also wanted to keep Persephone as his bride. As she was about to leave his side, he gave her a pomegranate seed to eat, which forever bound her to him and the Underworld.



In *House of Women* Naim gives Thea a gift of a double string of pearls with an emerald and diamond clasp, and matching earrings. That night she wore her new necklace to dinner and joined her husband and the Captain of the ship for a cognac. Cognac is made from fermented grapes, and thus just as Persephone accepted the pomegranate seed, Thea accepted the fruit of the vine. With two cognacs coursing through her veins, Thea and Naim consummate their marriage. The cognac was Thea's 'pomegranate seed' – just as Persephone was about to leave the Underworld, Hades gave her a pomegranate seed to eat, which forever bound her to him and the Underworld. The necklace and the cognac result in the consummation of Thea and the Syrian's marriage, which binds them together.

Thus once more, there is a correlation between the novel, *House of Women* and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Thea's decision to accept the jewellery and drink the cognac

can also be regarded as a conscious decision to accept her husband and consummate the marriage. Both Persephone and Thea's acceptance of their "marriages" through the consumption of food or drink from their husbands' hands, indicates that they probably did this in the knowledge that they have as Agha-Jaffar (2002: 49) mentions "absolutely no intention of regressing to identification" with their mothers again.

THE RETURN

In preparation for Persephone's return to her mother, Hades, himself, harnessed his immortal horses to the golden chariot and allowed Hermes to take Persephone to her mother at the temple at Eleusis.

Hannah's return to her mother in *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* was by water. By taking driftwood she magically turned it into a full size boat. At that stage in the story, Hannah had no idea that she was to be reunited with her mother – which is very different to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where the male protagonist assists in ensuring the return of the daughter to the mother.

In *House of Women*, when Thea's mother, Nalia becomes very ill, Naim tells Thea that he is sending her home to visit her mother. Like Hades, Naim wants to ensure that Thea will return and does not allow the twins to go with her. On the night before he leaves, he gives Thea a gold locket, with tiny photographs of the twins and one of him – this reminds one of the pomegranate seed that Hades gave Persephone just before she left the Underworld. Just as Hades allowed Persephone to go back to Demeter for a period of the year, Thea will visit her mother and her home, but she knows that it is only for a period, and that she will return to the island to be with her children and husband. Here again is a similarity to the myth, when Hades kindly allows Persephone to visit her mother. "He recognizes she has been hurt and is experiencing feelings of pain and betrayal. At the same time, however, he tries to comfort her by suggesting that she curb her anger. In the process of doing so, he validates the legitimacy of her feelings" (Agha-Jaffar 2002: 129). Another similarity to the myth is that Naim's boat will return Thea to her mother, just as Hades' golden chariot returned Persephone to Demeter. In both cases neither of the males accompanied their wives on their return to their mothers, they

were taken by other males – in the case of Persephone, by Hermes, and in the case of Thea, by the captain of Naim's boat.

In this theme, *House of Women* is very similar to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, as it also indicates the assistance of the husband in the daughter's return to her mother, but does not accompany his wife.

REUNION

The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* indicates that when Hermes returned Persephone to Demeter, she “darted like a maenad down a mountain” (Foley 1994:22). Mother and daughter were overjoyed to be reunited once more. Demeter was angry when she discovered that Hades had tricked her daughter into eating the pomegranate seed, which meant that Persephone would have to return to her husband, Hades for one-third of the year. Persephone told her mother how Hades had forced her to eat the pomegranate seed and concluded that she was telling the whole truth. The story she tells her mother is not exactly the same as in the beginning of the myth, and the reader is inclined to wonder if Persephone protests a little too much about what has happened to her. This could be her way to appease her mother for having become a woman in her own right. Foley (1994:60) mentions that Persephone's account of what happened “differs in two significant ways from the poet's impersonal narrative. Demeter herself does not share Zeus and Helios's perspective on the marriage to Hades. The *Hymn* thus seems to emphasize the disparity in the point of view between the goddesses and others in the poem without explicitly questioning the “truth” of either view. In this passage Persephone' acquires an articulate voice (beyond a cry for help) in the narrative for the first time; this may affirm that she has acquired an adult role and a partial independence from both Hades and her mother.”

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, Hannah journeys to Faraway Island looking for Foxkith's Queen. She finds the Woodland Goddess who is also known as the Ancient Mother. As the young girl and the Ancient Mother tell each other about themselves, it becomes evident that Hannah is the Ancient Mother's long lost daughter who had been

stolen, while still a sacred bud by the Wizard. Hannah knows where she belongs, and Mother and daughter are reunited.

In *Chocolat*, although only mentioned in passing, Caroline Clairmont, and her mother Armande Voizin are estranged, but at Armande's eighty-first birthday party, the day before the Chocolate Festival, mother and daughter are reconciled. Thus in the second novel another mother and daughter are reunited.

The reunion of mother and daughter In *House of Women* is short lived. Not long after Thea returns home, Nalia dies. By now, Thea herself has become a mother and the loss of her own mother is part of her transition into the next stage of her life.

The motif of a reunion between mother and her daughter occurred in all three novels indicating another similarity between the works of modern fiction and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.



FERTILITY ON EARTH

After the reunion, of Demeter and Persephone, Zeus sent Rheia – Demeter's mother to plead with her to save the earth. It was agreed that for two thirds of the year, Persephone would stay with Demeter and the other gods, but for one third of the year, she would have to return to Hades. Rheia and Demeter were happy to see one another again, and Demeter was so moved by her mother's plea that she accepted Zeus' offer, and the earth regained its vitality and fertility and burgeoned with growth. Demeter tells Persephone "when the earth blooms in spring with all kinds of sweet flowers, then from the misty dark you will rise again" (Foley 1994:22). This indicates that every spring Persephone will ascend to live with her mother, and in autumn, she will leave again to spend a third of the year with her husband. During that time it will be winter and the earth will be barren and unfertile.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the interesting aspect is that when Hannah and her companions fled the Wood, the colour of her dress changed from drab brown to green. As Hannah raced on with her companions, blossoms and shoots fell from her

hair, taking root in the ground and turning the barren earth into verdant green and colour, as the buds started growing in the previously sterile earth. During this period of Hannah's journey she was called Green Hannah and linked to spring – the time when the green shoots appear on plants, buds open and the world prepares for abundant fruit, flowers and grain. Much later at the temple, Hannah found herself with the head holy man who inadvertently pulled on the sleeve of her cape, causing its clasp to loosen and the garment to pull free. Suddenly grain spilled everywhere and the tabernacle was filled with a golden light. It was Hannah's dress that glowed golden – it was no longer green. Her hair was no longer verdant with flowers and leaves, but filled with stalks of wild grasses and cereal corn. She was now the Summer Girl or Golden Hannah.

Then much later, on the island, Hannah's gown changed colour once again and her hair was filled with autumn fruits such as berries and crab apples, and the colour of her gown had turned russet. At this stage she was known as Russet Hannah or Autumn Girl. Thus as Hannah journeyed over a period of a year, the colour of her dress changed and the seasons changed simultaneously, as if being released from the Tanglewood set free the seasons, the flowers, fruit and grains that grow within the course of a year.

In *House of Women*, when spring arrived, Thea gave birth to twins. This is significant to the myth, as spring is the time of the birth of nature. Naim tells Thea, "The wildflowers have come out for you," he says. "they are dancing all over the mountain" (Freed 2002:79). This is noteworthy, as Thea has moved on to motherhood, it is the start of a new cycle in her life as a woman. The spring is also a new cycle in the life of the earth, where plants begin to bloom and grow, and in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone's ascendance from the Underworld caused the earth to blossom and grow.

There are specific incidents in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and the two novels, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *House of Women*, which reveal the return of the season, as has been discussed here, indicating similarities between the Demeter/Persephone myth and the novels.

THE TEMPLE, MYSTERIES AND MYSTERIOUS PRACTICES

After the incident with Demophon, Demeter discarded her disguise as an old woman, revealing her divine self and demanded that a temple be built in her honour, and she informed the folk of Eleusis that she would lay down the rites that would take place to appease her spirit. From this temple the Greater and Lesser Eleusinian Mysteries were celebrated in honour of Demeter who was the source of the cycle of human life, death and transfiguration. As this was a mystery religion, initiates were forbidden to reveal the sacred rites. Thus there is an air of mystery and of the unknown about the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Similarly in the novels, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and *Chocolat*, the same air of mystery and magic is apparent throughout the works.

In *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the Ancient Mother also had a temple/tabernacle dedicated to her on Faraway Island, and she told Hannah that long ago, human beings had worshipped her. The fact that the Woodland Goddess had followers, priestesses and a Tabernacle can be linked to the Temple that Demeter had built at Eleusis, where secret rites were performed. The earlier reference in the novel to the “smell of sorcery” could also relate to the mystery religion that was practised both on the Island in the novel, and at Eleusis in the myth.

Furthermore, in the book, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, there was also a tabernacle in the town of Linnel, where the humans gathered to celebrate the arrival of spring. Marda told Hannah about the holy people who would be giving a message at the temple, and that they preach of the Lady, who is Maiden, Matron and Ancient Mother in one. This is a very specific link between the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* and the Demeter/Persephone myth

ACTS OF DECEPTION

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, there were a number of so-called deceptions, which was actually different means to achieve what the protagonists who instigated them wanted to accomplish. The first act was Gaia's secretive ruse of causing the magnificent narcissus to bloom from the earth and to be a snare for Persephone to pick so that

Hades could snatch her way to make her his wife. The second act of deception in the myth, was Demeter's wish to immortalise Demaphon, by covertly placing him in the fire and anointing him with ambrosia – possibly as a way of assuaging her sorrow for the loss of her own goddess-child. Finally, the third act was by Hades and he gave Persephone a pomegranate seed, which if she ate would mean that she accepted her transition to a new life under her husband's authority. This was the third and final act of deception in the Hymn. It was a means to an end and Hades' way of ensuring that Persephone would always come back to him.

In the novel, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, the first act of deception was by the Wizard who demanded a brew of tea made from the lush growth of foliage and flowers that grew in Hannah's hair, and which he told her would 'addle her brains' if she kept it growing in her hair. However it was is really the source of her physical and magical power, which he received from her on a monthly basis. The second deception was again by the Wizard who told Hannah that when the knights became lost in the forest, he guided them out of the Wood, and he also emphatically told her that there was no Golden Boar in the Tanglewood. The third deception was from Hannah, herself. When she realised that the plants and flowers growing in her hair gave her strength and magical powers, she greatly reduced the amount that she brewed for the Wizard and with her hair covered by a shawl, she took the Wizard weak brews of the tea, and retained most of her physical and magical powers for herself.

In *Chocolat*, the deceptions that Vianne's mother experienced were in the past and most of what she fears were thus related to that time in her life. However, other acts of deception in the novel, included Vianne assisting Armande to meet with her grandson, Luc, without the knowledge of his mother, Caroline, who was responsible for the separation of grandmother and grandson. Secondly, Paul-Marie Muscat, Josephine's husband, secretly burned the houseboat of Michel Roux in an attempt to rid the village of the gypsies. Finally, the greatest deception occurred when Armande Voizin, invited her friends and family to her birthday party, and ate and drank whatever pleased her. Vianne suffered from diabetic retinopathy, and because would rather die than live out her years as a blind invalid in a home, she took no insulin after her party and died in her sleep.

Finally, in the book, *House of Women* there were also three specific acts of deception. First, Naim left behind his valise in Nalia and Thea's house, and thus had an excuse to return. This was the ruse to get back to Thea's home and he managed to abduct her. Secondly, Thea's mother knew that there was an arrangement of marriage between Thea's father and one of his cousins. That was why she never let men onto the property. In both the myth and the novel, these were secretive acts that could be regarded as deception or a means to an end – which was the continuation of the bloodline of the families. Finally, when, Thea asked Naim, why he had chosen her for his wife, he indicated that he had won her in a wager with her father. This was the third and final act of deception in the novel.

In the *Hymn* and all three novels, the acts of deception were due to the fact that the instigators wanted to find a means to an end, in order to get exactly what they needed or wanted.

SYMBOLISM OF FRUIT, FECUNDITY AND THE SEASONS

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Hades gave Persephone a pomegranate seed to eat, which bound her to him and the Underworld. The pomegranate could be associated with fertility (Upper-World) and death (Underworld). The red colour is symbolic of blood (death) and menstruation (a woman ready for child-bearing), and as well as this, the pomegranate seeds represent fertility. The red of the fruit is also symbolic of a maiden losing her virginity, as bleeding will occur when the hymen is torn, which through the sex act will result in her becoming a woman. By accepting the pomegranate seed, Persephone would always return to her husband in the winter. However, in the spring, she would ascend once more and plants would blossom and grow.

In the book, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood*, at the scene of the tabernacle, when the holy folk entered, they were all carrying staves. The leader's staff was intricately carved. At the top of the shaft was a snowflake, a lily, a cornsheaf, and acorn entwined in a ring. Others bore single images of seedheads or pomes. Several were wrought in the shape of a girl and another looked like a tree with flowers and leaves on it. The head of the leader's staff is symbolic of the seasons, i.e. the snowflake

symbolising winter, the lily symbolic of spring, the sheaf of corn a symbol of summer and the acorn a symbol for autumn, all intertwined in a circle which is the symbol of infinity. The seedheads on some of the staves was symbolic of fertility – the mother carrying the seeds of new life within.

The others staves were also symbolic and connected to the Demeter/Persephone myth. For instance Metcalfe (1998:634) indicates that a pome is “a firm-fleshed fruit in which the carpels from the central core enclose the fruits, e.g. the apple, pear and quince.” This would be a symbol of fertility, such as the mother carrying the seeds. The girl on the staff could be a symbol of the Maiden and the flowering tree on the staff would be a religious symbol of the holy people – a tree that is an elemental mother-symbol in mythology – a symbol of fertility and life.

The novel *Chocolat* is filled with descriptions of food and bounty. Like the advent of a fertile and bountiful harvest in the Demeter/Persephone myth, Harris (1999:244) depicted the shop window at La Celeste Praline for the Chocolate Festival which included a giant chocolate statue of Eostre with a sheaf of wheat in one hand and a basket of eggs in the other – a symbol of fecundity, and a figure much like that of Demeter the goddess of the harvest.

In *House of Women*, after their marriage, the Syrian offers Thea some fruit on the ship. They had a suite of three cabins to themselves, which was filled with fruit, nuts and flowers. Naim placed some Brazil nuts, ladyfinger bananas and a bunch of litchis on a plate for Thea. Her favourite fruit was litchis, yet she refused any of them.

According to Foley (1994:108) in Ancient Greece, the bride and groom were showered with fruits and nuts (*katachysmata*) and offered a basket of bread. The bride would be offered a quince on her arrival at the groom’s house, and upon eating it, would signify her acknowledgment of the groom’s authority (*kyreia*) over her. However, Thea refused to eat what her husband offered her, but just like Persephone who also declined to eat anything in the Underworld, she eventually succumbed to his offerings, which bound her in marriage to him.

THE TRUE PATH OF THE MAIDEN

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the fact that no one stopped the abduction of Persephone, suggests that the other females who were present (the daughters of Oceanus and the goddesses Artemis and Athene) may have accepted that what was to take place was inevitable and part of her journey to let go of her ties to her mother and be confronted by heterosexual and social roles that she would not face while so closely attached to her mother. As the Queen of the Underworld, Persephone's mother would eventually have to accept that her daughter was a goddess in her own right.

The *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* tells that when Hannah and her companions fled the dark and dreary Tanglewood, they placed as much distance as possible between themselves and the Wood. After running for quite a distance, Hannah noticed that the trees were bursting into foliage and the fields were filled with flowers and young shoots of grain. Surprised and delighted Hannah, who had never seen such verdant growth before, cried out in delight, "What is it? What is it?" (Pierce 2001: 121). Magpie responded that it was Hannah that was causing it, and this was what she was meant to all her life. This passage is indicative that a woman will often find her path in life after a descent into darkness (under world) and then when coming into the light (upper world) she would find her purpose in life. In this story, Hannah left the darkness behind for she had ascended from the Underworld (the Tanglewood) and as Magpie pointed out, she had now found her role – to bring fertility back to the earth and abundance to all who lived in it.

In the novel, *Chocolat*, after the confrontation with the priest, who had fought against the seduction of eating chocolate during Lent, Vianne felt free at last of the Black Man, and Josephine Muscat had ascended from her own Underworld, from maiden to mother. Although she did not have children, the ascent from the darkness of her marriage to a new life with Roux, with their own business which was the next stage in her life, where she would use her creative force to be a woman in her own right, and not subjected to violence and belittlement by an abusive man.

Finally, in *House of Women*, after the death of her mother, Thea realised that she was the mother now. This was part of her transition into the next stage of her life, where she

left behind her youth and maidenhood to become the mother. The symbolic death of the virgin is essential so that the daughter progresses to being a woman and a mother or creator in her own right.

The story of Persephone in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* reveals how she was initiated into the patriarchal world, but similarly, it can be seen as a transformation from just being the daughter of Demeter to becoming the Queen of the Underworld. In all three novels, the heroines are also transformed through their encounters in a patriarchal society to find their true purpose in life after ascending from their own Underworlds, to live the lives that they were intended to live in their Upper-Worlds.

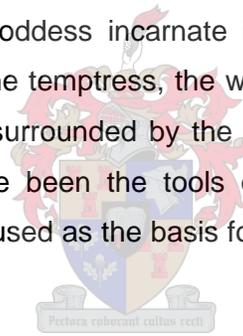
CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, altogether, twenty-seven key motifs were identified in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, plus four main characters. All three novels had corresponding characters to the *Myth*. With regard to the motifs, *Treasure at the Heart of the Tanglewood* had twenty-five similar themes, *Chocolat* had twenty corresponding motifs, whilst *House of Woman* proved to have twenty-six parallels to the myth. See Appendix 1, on pages 142-144.

This myth has shown that a woman's life can be regarded as a passage to power, from the start as a maiden to becoming the mother, and then reaching the stage and power of the crone or the old wise woman. Persephone – the virgin/maiden reaches womanhood symbolised by eating the pomegranate (which red juices are the colour of blood and symbolical of menstruation and childbirth – the very essence of femininity and motherhood). Demeter symbolises the mother who suffers the pain of separation from her child and grows in awareness and acceptance of the child in her new role as a woman. The menopause is the time in a woman's life when she enters the crone stage, yet aspects of her remain maiden and mother, but she now has the wisdom of the older woman. A similarity between all the mothers and daughters in the novels and Demeter and Persephone was established, suggesting that the issues that were raised in an ancient myth such as that of Demeter and Persephone is pertinent and important today.

Myths are not always easy to understand or to describe to another, and as De Beauvoir (1949:175) stated, "It is always difficult to describe a myth; it cannot be grasped or encompassed; it haunts the human consciousness without ever appearing before it in fixed form. The myth is so various, so contradictory, that at first its unity is not discerned: Delilah and Judith, Aspasia and Lucretia, Pandora and Athena – woman is at once Eve and the Virgin Mary. She is an idol, a servant, the source of life, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip, and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything that he is not and that he longs for, his negation and his *raison d'être*." Demeter is an example of this description, she is nurturing, yet vengeful, loving, and yet destructive, she is both nursemaid and goddess – she symbolises the different aspects of what a woman can be.

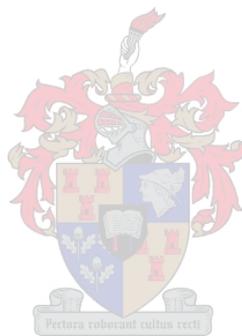
Through myth, women can learn more about their inner selves. They are neither good nor evil, they are women, the goddess incarnate in all her guises – the virgin, the huntress, the lover, the mother, the temptress, the witch, the sister, the maiden and the heroine. Women (and men) are surrounded by the lessons that these myths teach us throughout our lives. Myths have been the tools of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists. They have been used as the basis for philosophy, the arts and literature down through the ages.



This thesis has attempted to show that a myth as ancient as the Demeter/Persephone myth is still relevant today, whether in literature or other art forms. The myth is the inspiration that shapes the narrative in literature, and which indicates that myth continues to have the power to spell out our fears, triumphs, losses and victories. The aim of my thesis was to discuss the Demeter/Persephone myth, and to show how the issues identified in the myth are reflected in different modern works of fiction. By researching the different interpretations of the Demeter/Persephone myth and analysing the texts of three modern works of fiction, similar elements of the myth have been highlighted, and the different aspects of the myth have also been reflected.

This thesis aimed to examine whether the motifs of the myth of Demeter and Persephone have been perpetuated in three modern works of fiction. The fact that myths are so rich in the themes that have troubled human beings throughout the ages, and that

their motifs are of universal concern, has influenced literature and other art forms throughout the ages. Because of the universal nature of myth, this thesis has been able to trace the impact thereof in modern works of fiction. Myth is not dead, but is very much alive today.



APPENDIX 1

COMPARISON OF THE IDENTIFIED THEMES OF THE DEMETER / PERSEPHONE MYTH AND PARALLELS IN THE NOVELS

<u>MOTIF / THEME</u>	<u>HOMERIC HYMN TO DEMETER</u>	<u>TREASURE AT THE HEART OF THE TANGLEWOOD</u>	<u>CHOCOLAT</u>	<u>HOUSE OF WOMEN</u>
THE MAIN CHARACTERS:				
Mother	Demeter	Ancient Mother / Tree Woman	Vianne / Armande	Natalia
Father	Zeus	-	Church / Pope	Thea's father (unnamed)
Daughter /Maiden	Persephone	Hannah	Anouk / Josephine	Thea
Abductor / Husband	Hades	Wizard	Priest	Naim
THE MOTIFS / THEMES:				
Home - close to Mother	Olympus	Faraway Island	La Celeste Praline / anywhere safe from the Church	Mother's home in coastal town in South Africa
Plans to Abduct	Zeus and Hades	Wizard	Fear of abduction – the mind	Thea's father and Naim
Witnesses	Daughters of Oceanus, Artemis and Athene	The Ancient Queen's subjects	Nuns	Gardener and Housemaid
Site of Abduction	Meadow on the Nysian Plain	Forest on Faraway Island	-	The garden gate at Thea's home
Presence of mother at abduction	No	Yes	-	No
Presence of Patriarchy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Flowers	Liliaceous family and other flowers	Lily and other flowers	-	Wild flowers-
The Trap	Narcissus	Reconciliation	Better life for child as mother different to society's expectations	Leather valise
The Abduction	Golden Chariot with Immortal Horses	Takes child over the ocean	Fear of abduction – the mind	Motor car and boat

COMPARISON OF THE IDENTIFIED THEMES OF THE DEMETER / PERSEPHONE MYTH AND PARALLELS IN THE NOVELS

<u>MOTIF / THEME</u>	<u>HOMERIC HYMN TO DEMETER</u>	<u>TREASURE AT THE HEART OF THE TANGLEWOOD</u>	<u>CHOCOLAT</u>	<u>HOUSE OF WOMEN</u>
The Rape / Violation	Hades	The Wizard	The Church	Naim
Scheming Relatives	Zeus and Hades (brothers) with Gaia (their mother)	The King's son and Ancient Mother's favourite subject	Priest and the Church	Thea's Father and Naim (cousins)
Birds	Sped like a bird to look for Persephone	Magpie	Armande – bird like (positive) Priest – black bird (negative)	Sonja - stork Naim – seagull
The Descent into Darkness	Underworld	The Tanglewood surrounded by moorlands and ocean	Vianne's mind Village near a river, Old Bakery Les Marauds	Island home of Naim
A Mother's Grief	Demeter goes without food and drink	No power to change the seasons	Vianne's mind	Nalia -empty nest syndrome and goes without food and drink
Crone / Helper	Hecate	Magpie / Marda	Vianne / Armande / Pantoufle	Maude / Sonja
The Substitute	Demophon	Foxkith	Michel Roux	Vi
Suffering	Depression and grandiose behaviour leading to barren earth, famine	Barren earth, famine	-	Depression and grandiose behaviour
Negotiation	Hermes	-	-	Thea's father
Consummation	Pomegranate seed	-	-	Cognac
The Return	Golden Chariot and Horses driven by Hermes	Magical boat steered by Hannah	-	Naim's boat steered by Captain

COMPARISON OF THE IDENTIFIED THEMES OF THE DEMETER / PERSEPHONE MYTH AND PARALLELS IN THE NOVELS

<u>MOTIF / THEME</u>	<u>HOMERIC HYMN TO DEMETER</u>	<u>TREASURE AT THE HEART OF THE TANGLEWOOD</u>	<u>CHOCOLAT</u>	<u>HOUSE OF WOMEN</u>
Reunion	Eleusis, Demeter angry about pomegranate seed	Faraway Island	Caroline and Armande	Thea's home
Fertility on Earth	Fertility and Fecundity	Fertility and fecundity after escaping the Tanglewood	Chocolate Festival	Birth of twins
The Temple, Mysteries and Mysterious Practises	Temple at Eleusis - Mysteries	Magic, smells of sorcery, Tabernacle at Linnel, Temple on Faraway Island	Magic	-
Acts of Deception	3 acts identified	3 acts identified	3 acts identified	3 acts identified
Symbolism of Fruit, Fecundity and the Seasons	Pomegranate seed	Descriptions of Growth, Fruit and Fecundity	Chocolate	Litchis
The True Path of the Maiden from Maiden to Matron	Queen of the Underworld Ascent from Underworld	Creator of the Seasons Leaving the Tanglewood and finding the Sorcerer Queen	Freedom Success of Chocolate Festival	Mother Becoming a woman and mother in her own right

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