

SPRING COMES TO HADES AND KEEPS COMING BACK: AN ANALYSIS
OF HISTORICAL AND MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF THE PERSEPHONE
MYTH

by

Lauren Virlee Schmidt

Thesis Supervisor:

Susan Morrison, Ph.D.
Department of English

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.
Dean, Honors College

SPRING COMES TO HADES AND KEEPS COMING BACK: AN ANALYSIS
OF HISTORICAL AND MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF THE PERSEPHONE
MYTH

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

Lauren Virlee Schmidt

December 2016

Copyright
by
Lauren Schmidt
December 9th, 2016

ABSTRACT

The arrival of the twenty-first century signaled a new era of development and reevaluation of cultural beliefs and mores. Changes to the West can be observed in new forms of media and perspectives on gender, power, and choice. The myth of Persephone, after being adapted sporadically in the last two hundred years, experienced a resurgence in the new millennia. Its new adaptations by young creators exemplify a shift in the West towards acceptance and common ground. By analyzing works of art and literature both before and after the year 2000, this thesis will assess what trends are upheld and which are discarded with the new age. Decreased gender rigidity, reevaluation of choice, and exploration of power are all rising themes in new adaptations of the Persephone myth, mirroring societal development and new accepted norms in modern Western culture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTERS	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. METHODOLOGY.....	4
III. THE HOMERIC HYMN.....	7
IV. ART ANALYSIS.....	21
V. POETRY ANALYSIS.....	28
VI. LONG-FORM WORK ANALYSIS.....	39
VII. CONCLUSIONS.....	48
APPENDIX A: ARTWORK.....	51
APPENDIX B: POETRY.....	53
REFERENCES.....	59

INTRODUCTION

Languages fall into countless categories in academia. Considering country of origin, sentence structures, historical evolution, their alphabet, and more, languages can be compartmentalized and connected by scholars. However, a more common designation of languages is a simple binary: living and dead. Latin is possibly the most famous dead language in the West, but what does “dead” mean in linguistics? Latin is still taught in schools, recited in religious ceremonies, and even spoken in the Vatican. If people still understand the language, how can it be dead? Languages are considered “dead” when they cease to change. No longer existing as a vernacular dialect, dead languages become preserved relics of a previous age. It is taught and understood in a frozen form; unlike living languages, changes or additions are not new developments, but simply mistakes (Baugh and Cable 2).

Stories can similarly be considered living or dead, but they require a few modifications in classification. Countless books, myths, and folk tales have been immortalized, frequently taught in schools or preserved in libraries. The more a story is used, the stronger its connection and relevance to modern cultures. Fairy tales are used to entertain and teach lessons to young children, and books like Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Homer’s epic *The Odyssey* are known by almost every high school graduate in the United States. These texts are part of the culture, but are they living or dead? In order for a text to be alive, it must be not

only be told but also be engaged with and possibly changed. For example, fairy tales are told to children at a young age, but they continue to be reintroduced in new contexts. The story of Little Red Riding Hood has evolved to emphasize explicit themes of sexuality (Angela Carter's short story "The Company of Wolves"), the cleverness of young people (Steven Sondheim's play "Into the Woods"), and the now-common presence of the bad-boy werewolf love interest (Catherine Hardwicke's film *Red Riding Hood* and Stephanie Meyer's novel *New Moon*). Stories must address contemporary issues or be altered to fit with the current culture.

Mythology is especially vulnerable to this academic stagnation. Maintained conventions of oral traditions, nonsensical story logic, and uncomfortable themes such as sexual violence and incest make for unappealing source material to modern content creators. Beyond commenting on the appalling behavior of these immortals, stories tend to be repetitions of what is already known. The stories become increasingly disconnected from modern audiences until they are relegated to be repeated as simple stories from a bygone era.

Enter the myth of Persephone. Involving every uncomfortable convention from uncle/niece incest to violent kidnapping to threats of the Earth's destruction, Persephone's story defies the odds and lives on as a dynamic, changing text.

This thesis will analyze six texts in order to observe the myth's evolution as themes are both upheld and discarded. The texts will be discussed in four parts.

The first is the Homeric Hymn of Demeter, which includes the myth of Persephone. The Homeric hymn will serve as the comparative texts for all subsequent adaptations. Second will be two works of visual art: one from the nineteenth and one from the twenty-first century. Third will be two poems published in the same year by authors who demonstrate the intersection of pre- and post-2000 sensibilities. Fourth will be a web comic, serving as the most modern adaptation of the myth. After the analyses of all six texts, common themes and adaptational implications will be discussed and evaluated. In addition to traditional literary and art reviews, this thesis will include a new element to liberal arts analysis: graphs. Based in the mathematical field of graph theory, these graphs will illustrate concepts of power and relationships, and triangulation inspired by the theoretical framework of family systems theory.

METHODOLOGY

For this thesis, I primarily used traditional art and literary analysis in order to make my argument for changing themes in the Persephone myth. However, the addition of graph theory is a clear departure from a traditional English research project. While the combination of liberal arts and mathematics may be nontraditional, I believe that the two subjects are different but not incompatible.

In the spring semester of 2016, I took a class titled “Intro to Graph Theory” through the Honors College with Dr. Danielle Ferrero. As an English major, I was required to take one math class, so of course I delayed it to my penultimate semester. Little did I know that this class would change the way I saw mathematics and open my eyes to its use as a tool for literary analysis.

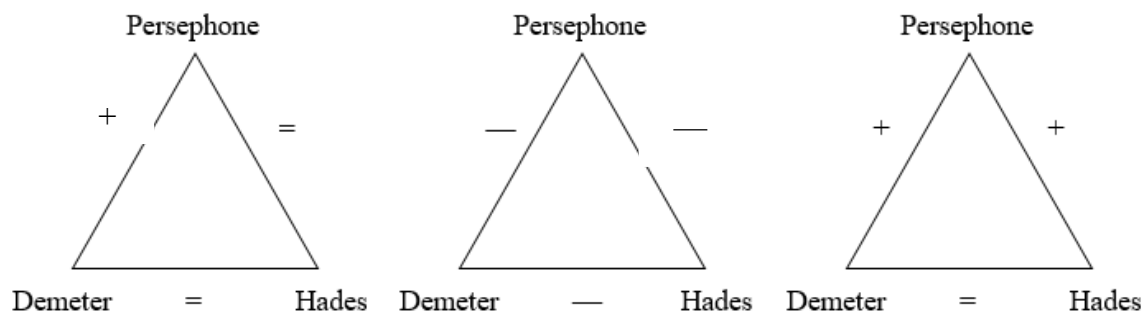
A graph, very simply put, is a visual representation of data normally using points, also called nodes, and lines, also called edges. Graph theory is all about depicting connections via graphs and can be applied to any number of fields. Over the course of the semester, we talked about chess boards, arranged marriages, computer programming, city planning, even the Dark Web. For my final project, I used a method of graphing relationships (that I will describe further in the following paragraph) to evaluate how triad relationships change over the course of three young adult books by author Sarah Dessen. I took the original concept of the graph and expanded it to cover multiple events rather than a snapshot of a relationship and was able to see patterns and themes in my data. After finishing

this project, I discovered myself using this graphing system for other books and even movies and television shows. I found that the graph could be easily explained and, thereafter, the illustration was faster to create and easier to understand than traditional written notes. These triangular graphs inspired me to include more mathematics in my studies and saw a connection with family systems theory, a critical approach that uses genomes and triangulation to depict relationships in families. By using graphs in this thesis, I hope to provide an example for other academics that incorporating other fields can strengthen an argument and tell a story in a new way

Triangles can be used to depict relationships in both literary family systems theory and graph theory's use of triangulation. Using what I call a relational triangle set, simple graphs are used to show changing relationships over a narrative. Positive relationships are shown with a plus sign (+), negative relationships are shown with a negative sign (—), and neutral relationships are shown with an equal sign (=). In order for a graph to be stable, all relationships must be either positive or neutral. If not, either a relationship has to change or a person must be removed.

In graph theory, only one triangle is used; its purpose is to capture the essence of a relationship. Family systems theory depicts the triangle as a pair who have brought another person into their relationship in a process called triangulation. The relational triangle sets that I have created show how people's

attitude towards one another change with each character as an equal part of the graph. Below are three graphs making up one set that demonstrates how Persephone, Hades, and Demeter feel about one another during the analyzed myth. In the beginning of the story, all relationships are neutral but Persephone and her mother, Demeter. In the middle of the story after Persephone's kidnapping, all of the relationships are negative; Persephone is angry at her mother for abandoning her and her husband for kidnapping her, and Demeter is angry at Hades for kidnapping her daughter. By the end of the myth, Persephone has restored her relationship with her mother and neither Persephone or Demeter are openly antagonistic towards Hades.



Using the above graph shortcuts all of the lengthy description in favor of a simple illustration. Other types of graphs will be used in this paper, but this one is fundamental in order to understand relationships and how connections can be either positive or negative. For later graphs, rules will be established and explained, then the graphs should be able to be understood.

ANALYSIS OF THE HOMERIC HYMN

Knowledge of the Persephone myth is imperative to understanding its historical and modern adaptations. Many versions of the Greek myth exist; however, this paper will revolve around the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.

Translated by Gregory Nagy, a Harvard scholar on archaic Grecian poetry, this Hymn is a widely accepted and referenced translation.

Zeus, the king of the gods and Persephone's father, calls upon Hades, his brother and ruler of the underworld, and orders him to abduct Persephone to be Hades' wife. Persephone is the goddess of springtime, a fairly young goddess in the Pantheon. Demeter, Persephone's mother and Hades' and Zeus' sister, is not informed or consulted.

Away from Demeter, Persephone gathers flowers in a large field with her maidens. She is entranced by the narcissus flower and wanders away from the other women. As she grasps the flower, the earth breaks apart underneath her and she is seized by Hades and is brought to the underworld in a golden chariot. Persephone lets out a great wail to her father Zeus, but she is heard only by the crossroads goddess, Hecate, and the sun god, Helios. After arriving in the underworld, Persephone continues calling out, her cries finally reaching the ears of her mother.

A distraught Demeter demands information from gods and mortals alike, but none would tell her the truth. After nine days of desperation and fasting,

Demeter is approached by Hecate and Helios who offer enough information for Demeter to place the blame on Zeus. She then wreaks havoc across the world, creating great destruction and famine. Zeus and the other gods are appalled at this behavior, especially since the humans are no longer able or willing to make sacrifices. Zeus bargains with Demeter and promises that her daughter will be returned. Hermes is sent to the land of the dead to convey Zeus' message, which Hades' receives with a sly smile. He implores Persephone, now his wife, to return to her mother, asserting that preventing her would hardly make him a good husband. He promises her that whenever she resides with him, she will be a queen, worthy of respect and sacrifice. Before Persephone makes her hurried exit, Hades surreptitiously gives her pomegranate seeds in order to prevent her from permanently staying with her mother.

Persephone and Hermes ride together in Hades' golden chariot, and Demeter and Persephone joyfully reunite. Demeter asks for Persephone's version of events, and Persephone is able to recount the story from her point of view. Despite the happy reunion, both acknowledge that Persephone must eventually return to the underworld for one-third of each year. When her daughter departs for the underworld, Demeter wills no crops to grow, creating famine winters. When Persephone returns, life bursts towards the sun and spring arrives.

The "Hymn to Demeter" sheds light on the creation and rituals of Eleusis, a secretive cult devoted to Demeter. Little is known about Eleusis, but the events

in the Hymn help connect various archeological findings and historical manuscripts. Including Eleusis explains why the myth focuses so intensely on Demeter. As orators travelled, they altered their stories to suit various audiences. Perhaps Demeter's wrath compelled Grecian audiences much more than the perspective of Persephone.

Themes found in this translation can be seen in adaptations centuries later. Myths relied on universal appeal, and accessing common struggles or experiences was a sure way to attract a wide audience. These themes endure to present day, thereby helping to establish the Persephone story as a relevant myth today. Among the major themes of the myth are family and power dynamics. In an ordinary situation, these themes could be discussed independently; however, in this myth, their intertwining nature makes it impossible to separate. Throughout the following section, either family or power will be highlighted, but the other theme will inevitably make an appearance.

The first theme is complex family dynamics. With a family as incestuous and dysfunctional as the Greek gods, this is unsurprising. Two siblings conceive a child who is married off to a third sibling—it would make for a very non-traditional Rockwell family portrait. Part of analyzing Greek mythology is accepting the violation of traditional social mores while not disregarding them completely.

From reading the text, Demeter and Persephone appear very close. Demeter's extreme reaction of wrath, Persephone's pining for her mother, and their joyous reunion all confirm their deep connection. Beyond being mother and daughter, the two women experience what the Greeks called *thûmos*, where multiple people are able to share a single mind or spirit. Despite the close relationship she shares with her daughter, Demeter cannot avoid her (im)mortal nature and makes mistakes. When her daughter is kidnapped, Demeter is absent and takes some time before recognizing her daughter's cries. By resorting first to rage and destruction, Demeter caused many deaths and great suffering, all while possibly extending her daughter's stay in the underworld.

Persephone and Zeus never directly interact in Homer's hymn. Despite putting the events into motion, Zeus remains in his celestial temple and calls for others to do his bidding. However, when Persephone is kidnapped, she cries out for Zeus instead of Demeter. This raises some questions: Why not Demeter? In that moment, did Persephone revert to her instincts that she trusted Zeus more? This touches on another theme to be discussed later: the appeal of ambiguity.

Hades, Demeter, and Zeus are equals on a family tree, all products of Titans. However, all oversee different domains which keep the world and heavens in balance. Zeus is the king of the gods, giving him the most power; however, he must also maintain harmony among the gods and therefore must keep in mind their input and concerns. As the goddess of the harvest, Demeter is responsible for

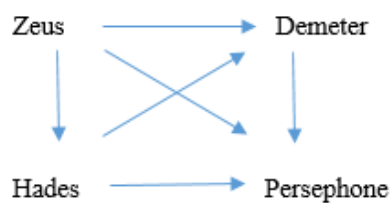
the wellbeing of humans who provide the gods' sacrifices. Hades rules the land of the dead and must control a constant influx of deceased humans. If Zeus slacks off, weather could destroy crops and kill countless humans. If Demeter creates a famine, no one sacrifices to Zeus and Hades has more corpses to manage. Without Hades, souls will have no rest and humans will lose faith in the Pantheon. A tense peace (but a peace nonetheless) must be maintained; the Persephone kidnapping disrupts this balance and gives way to disorder and discord.

Persephone and Hades are technically niece and uncle. However, they seem to have no previously established relationship. On a surface level, one would be hard-pressed to find a pair more opposite one another. Hades represents the end of life and disconnect from others; isolated in the underworld, Hades is the outcast god. On the other hand, Persephone is associated with new life and connectedness, surrounded with flowers and maidens. However, upon further examination, one can see hidden similarities. Both are overshadowed by controlling entities: Hades by Zeus and Persephone by Demeter. When the two first interact, both are alone, as Persephone has wandered away from her community of women. Both are outsiders: Hades' physical separation from the other gods and Persephone's youth set them apart. Adaptors of the myth uncover more similarities; however, this section focuses only on what can be divined from the text.

As discussed in a previous paragraph, power is extremely important in the Pantheon. This hymn demonstrates the nuance of power dynamics as far more than just who can wield the largest lightning bolt. Power can be separated into two categories: direct power and power of influence. Distinguishing the two types of power will help articulate how a seemingly weak character can influence much stronger ones and vice versa. This section will include illustrations of graph theory, a mathematical field that explores how points are connected and how they interact. Directional graphs, or digraphs, will help to illustrate dynamics of power between characters in different contexts.

Direct power is easy to understand. Pecking orders, hierarchies, executive boards, and more all depend on an understanding of who has authority over who. When discussing the four major players—Zeus, Demeter, Hades, and Persephone—power must be understood. By using the following graph, one can understand who has the most reliable influence over others.

Graph 1.1 Direct Power in the Homeric Hymn



In this graph, arrows point to the less powerful person on the pairing. For example, Hades is more powerful than Demeter but less powerful than Zeus.

Certain rules were applied to this graph, including

1. Persephone is the least powerful of all, and
2. Zeus is the most powerful of all.

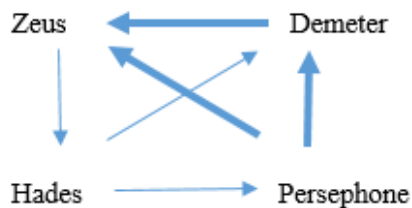
After these rules, only the interaction between Demeter and Hades remained. Because Hades' ability to keep Persephone superseded Demeter's power to retrieve her daughter, I considered him to be more powerful. From this chart, characters' "success rates" can be measured in terms of percentage of power over other characters. Zeus is successful in 100% of cases; Hades is in 67%; Demeter is in 33%; and Persephone is in 0%. These numbers serve as a touchstone for viewing power and these four individuals.

Direct power is important, but another type of power makes this myth interesting. If only direct power was valued, Demeter's concerns would have been disregarded and Persephone would remain with Hades for eternity. However, power of influence changed the landscape of the myth. Through relationships and untraditional action, characters asserted power of influence and altered the outcome of the myth.

As in the previous graph, Graph 1.2 will depict power dynamics with arrows. The standard of "power of influence" is drawn from the ending results of

the hymn and does not follow the same set of rules as Graph 1.1. Changed arrows have been bolded.

Graph 1.2 Power of Influence in the Homeric Hymn



All of Hades' relation lines remained the same; however, other deities' "success rate" has changed dramatically. Hades remains at 67% but is surprising joined by Persephone, also with 67%. Demeter remains at 33%, and Zeus is knocked down from the top spot to 33% as well.

So, why for the dramatic change? Of course, these graphs are very simple and cannot capture every nuance; however, showing the two sides of power brings up some interesting insights. Persephone gains power from her blood relationships; the ability to call on Mom and Dad makes her a more powerful player. By affecting his sacrifices, Demeter has leverage over Zeus and the other gods.

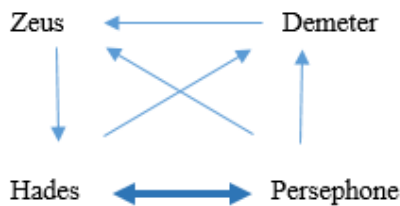
One nuance remains to be addressed before the graphs are finished. Near the end of the myth, Hades makes Persephone a promise:

...If you are here

you will be queen of everything that lives and moves about

and you will have the greatest *tîmai* in the company of the immortals.
 (Nagy 364-366) *Tîmai* has many meanings, but in this context either refers to “domain” or possibly “honor” according to Nagy’s footnotes. This is an extraordinary and unnecessary gesture on Hades’ behalf. He knows he will guarantee her return and has a “right” to power over his bride. But he offers her power over his domain nonetheless. These few lines of poetry suggest an alteration to Graph 1.2 to show a more balanced relationship between Hades and Persephone. All previous bolded lines were returned to normal, and the new line has been bolded.

Graph 1.3 Power of Influence Considering Hades’ Offer



With this change, Hades and Persephone have the potential to conquer the metaphorical board. Now that Persephone and Hades influence each other mutually, Persephone has nearly at 100% rate of success against all other characters, making her an incredibly powerful player.

Keeping this in mind, Persephone is full of contradictions. In terms of direct power, she is at the mercy of all other character to supersede her in age,

power, and social status in the Pantheon. While she does have significant powers of influence, this power is entirely dependent on relationships and not her own ability. In order to maintain her power, she must carefully negotiate a place within her dominant family members. Her options remain the same, but her choices are limited if she wants to maintain her influence and control.

Combining multiple options with limited choices represents the concept of agency in the Persephone myth. Agency is related to both power and choice, but it also must be understood as a separate entity. In order to avoid confusing agency and choice, the terms will be defined here using definitions and examples.

Choice is the presentation of options with the presence of choosing one or more but not all. Agency, on the other hand, is the ability to choose any number of options provided that they do not contradict one another. In order to illustrate these concepts, examples will be provided in the following sections.

Imagine Persephone is going out for lunch. Being married to a god with immeasurable wealth has its benefits, and she is able to purchase any combination of items on the menu. In this situation, Persephone has both choice and agency. The options are presented to her and she is able to take full advantage of any number of possibilities. Agency is the ability to realistically choose any presented option.

A second scenario: Demeter wants to take Persephone out for lunch in the middle of winter. She has two options—eat lunch alone or storm the gates of the

underworld and steal her daughter. While Demeter technically has two choices, she lacks the ability to carry out all alternatives. If she chooses to kidnap her daughter, she would violate the deal struck by the gods and disrupt the uneasy balance. Demeter has choice, but not agency.

Throughout the myth, agency and choice repeatedly bump heads. Zeus is technically the most powerful of all gods; however, he lacks the ability to disregard Demeter's actions, giving him choice but not agency. Hades is not given a choice whether or not to abduct Persephone; yet, he does have the ability to return her to her mother. This is a rare situation where agency supersedes choice. Agency could be described as the ability to take action in order to change the course of events. Persephone often has neither; she is not given choices and lacks the power to alter her fate through her own actions.

Now that agency has been explored, it can be related to power and the events of the myth. By looking at the hymn as a series of choices, one can see how agency affected the turn of events. In the following graphs, rectangles indicate a choice made without agency, while ovals indicate a choice made with agency.

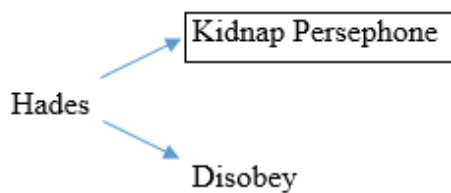
Zeus decides that Hades needs a wife and identifies Persephone. Being both king of the gods and highly capricious, Zeus has both agency and control in this situation.

Graph 2.1



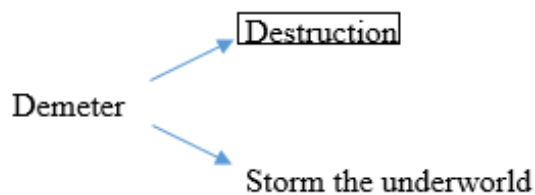
Zeus commands Hades to kidnap Persephone. Zeus's status as king of the gods gives Hades choice but not agency.

Graph 2.2



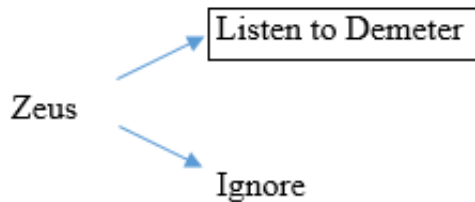
Demeter discovers that her daughter has been kidnapped. Unable to recover her daughter on her own, she resorts to violence and destruction in order to force Zeus' hand.

Graph 2.3



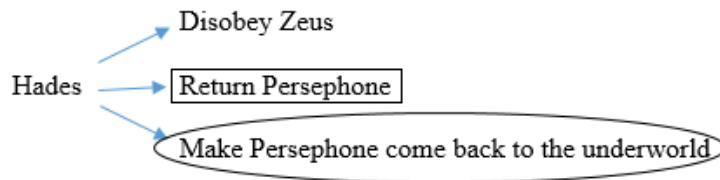
After going without sacrifices and witnessing the suffering of the humans, Zeus must choose between respecting the will of Demeter or ignoring her and allowing the destruction to continue.

Graph 2.4



Upon receiving Zeus' message from Hermes, Hades has multiple options. He can prevent Persephone from leaving, disobeying Zeus and disrespecting Demeter; he can let Persephone return; or he can devise a way to make Persephone return to the underworld. Lacking the ability to pursue the first option, Hades chooses the remaining two choices.

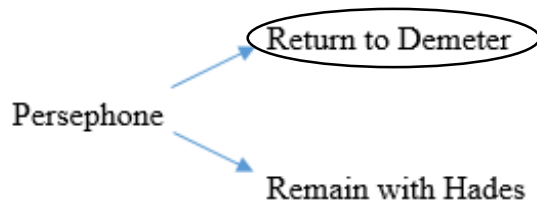
Graph 2.5



This brings us to Persephone. After hearing Zeus' message and Hades' offer of power, Persephone is suddenly a character with both agency and choice. Persephone is able to remain in with Hades as queen without enraging Demeter. At the same time, she is able to return to her mother without violating Hades' wishes. Throughout the myth, almost every choice has been predictable; no other option was able to be explored without contradicting set power relationships. Not only does Persephone have significant power of influence, but she also

experiences a moment of agency in choice. While she is affected by her relationship with her mother, her husband's promise of power presents a compelling argument to stay. Knowing that she will inevitably return to Hades, she returns home with Demeter.

Graph 2.6



As shown in the graphs, almost all characters are presented with choices that they are not free to make. However, the moments of agency create interesting moments to explore in the myth. These choices are taken full advantage of by modern interpreters. The ambiguity in the text itself gives creators ample room to give explanations without deviating too far from the canon.

ANALYSIS OF ARTWORK

Adaptations of the Persephone myth in the last twenty years have adapted old conventions and adopted new ones to reflect modern perspectives on the myth. By comparing works of art and poems from both pre- and post- 2000, one can observe this shift and assess its commentary on its contemporary culture. Both images can be found in Appendix A.

One of the most prominent depictions of Persephone is Frederic Leighton's "The Return of Persephone", painted in 1891. Demeter greets Hermes and her daughter with open arms as he lifts Persephone from the underworld. This painting uses multiple motifs which can be found in works from the nineteenth century to modern day.

The juxtaposition of light and dark is an obvious theme in the Persephone myth. The goddess of springtime against the lord of the dead; a field of flowers against the dark underworld; and the prosperous crops dedicated to Demeter against her razed earth. However, this work adds another layer to establishing Persephone's light in contrast with the darkness. Persephone is depicted with light blond hair, light colored robes, and almost white skin, making her the most prominent figure in the frame. Under her pale tiny feet is the darkness of the underworld, almost pitch black and menacing. Despite being placed in the lower third of the painting, Persephone automatically calls the for the viewer's attention as the most distinct figure against the darkness.

However, Persephone does not hold attention for long. Her outstretched arms guide the audience towards Demeter who stands at the entrance of the underworld awaiting her daughter's return. Demeter is painted with coral robes, brown hair, and darker skin and is set against a blue sky. Her entire face can be seen, and her dress and figure are highly detailed without anything to obscure them. She is aesthetically pleasing and bears some resemblance to the Virgin Mary, with her hooded face, open arms, and heavenly background. Even in a depiction of a pagan myth, Christian imagery remains a strong convention.

Lastly, Persephone is rarely the only figure in her visual depictions and can be overlooked in favor of more powerful players. Other characters command the scene: Demeter destroys the Earth, Hades looms over his bride, and Hermes returns Persephone to her mother. In Leighton's work, something is off with Persephone. First, her neck is uncomfortably craned towards her mother. Her head and her body form a ninety-degree angle, a sight more commonly seen in horror movies. The second abnormality is somehow stranger; Persephone appears to be missing her eyes. Her pale white skin had indentations where her eyes should be, but no pupils or eyelashes can be seen by a casual viewer. Only by finding an art printing company's website with a high-resolution picture and a full-resolution zooming feature can the pale, empty eyes of Persephone can be seen. Even then, her barely grey pupils and whites of her eyes can hardly be detected. Compared to the clarity of Demeter's body, Persephone looks like a ghost or some other

undead being. She is somehow incomplete and inherently flawed, making her dependent on those around her. This emphasizes her characterization of helplessness and abilities to be manipulated by others.

Modern adaptations maintain many of these motifs; their influence is undeniable on new readers of the myths and the motifs themselves are highly effective at exhibiting contrasts and nonverbally communicating narratives. However, modern adaptations give a new perspective by adding nuance to old themes and ushering in the new. Digital art is a popular medium for young artists. Not only can it be more accessible than traditional painting or sculpting supplies, but digital art is much easier to share online. Without sacrificing quality, new artists can independently share their work with their audience. Online communities form around common interests, and artistic and written works create themes that are circulated and strengthened through repeated use and community conversation.

English artist Christy Tortland began posting her work online in November of 2013. She has a small but significant following, and she now works as an illustrator represented by a literary agency and sells her art online. When she was interviewed for an article in *ImagineFX*, a prominent magazine for digital artists, she included her own interpretation of the Persephone myth. In the description given at her online store, the official name is simply “Hades and Persephone” but she also includes a second title: “The Willing Return”.

Tortland's illustration upholds several classic conventions. Hades is drawn as extremely masculine with a hint of Byron with a chiseled jawline, black armor, and long black hair. His arm is wrapped around Persephone who is smaller, in a dress, and has long hair. Tortland also brings in new themes to subvert the old. As opposed to the light, flowing dresses as depicted by Leighton, Persephone's dress is bright red and extends behind her like a phoenix tail. Her face is calm and her body is straight, not contorted or manipulated. Unlike Leighton's illustration, this Persephone commands attention and holds on to it.

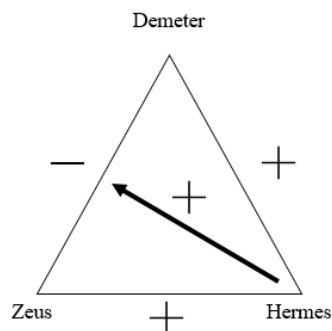
From left to right, the picture goes from darkness to light, but most of the image exists in the middle: not in grays, but in bright reds. Red can be interpreted several ways. Tortland mentioned Asian influences in her work, and red and gold are often associated with Chinese culture, from their flag to their New Year. Red may also be emblematic of the underworld, replacing the darkness with flames: perhaps another nod to Christian imagery. Persephone's dress being flowing and red can be seen as a symbol of fire; even her hair looks like a flame. Finally, red can be interpreted as a color of power and strength. According to a publication by the Computer Science Department at New York University entitled "Color Theory", red is an "aggressive" color, normally appearing "louder" than other colors. The use of orange and purple along with red creates what is called an "analogous color scheme", being both impactful and harmonious.

The image itself speaks volumes about changing themes and motifs, but the alternative title has an agenda, too. Its similarity to Leighton's title is notable—"The Return of Persephone" versus "The Willing Return"—but both speak to very different aspects of the myth. "The Return" depicts Persephone as passive, being brought to the surface by Hermes. Persephone may be the subject of the painting, but she is not initiate of action. "Willing" has a very different message. Works involving Persephone's descent into the underworld normally take place during the initial kidnapping. This image, however, suggests that Persephone has made the journey before and has chosen to go back. Tortland's image instills power in Persephone.

In both images, a man has his arm wrapped around Persephone's waist. In Leighton's, Hermes' arm is holding Persephone up as she nearly collapses into his chest. Once again, Persephone must be supported by others. Tortland has Hades' arm around Persephone's waist, but the implication is very different. As previously mentioned, Persephone is in control of her body, from the tips of her extended fingers to the determined look on her face. If anything, this image makes it look like Hades is holding on to her in order to support himself.

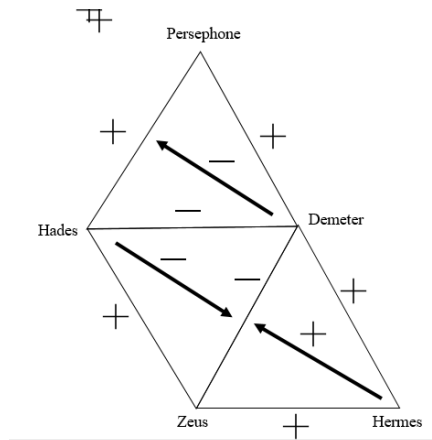
Tortland and Leighton uphold themes of light and darkness and traditional masculinity, but Tortland subverts the themes of female fragility and dependence. These power dynamics demonstrate how characters can influence one and other, and how audiences use images to strengthen or validate feelings of powerlessness.

In the theoretical approach to literature called family systems theory, triangulation is a major theme. Used in family trees, triangles represent how family members bring in other parties to “solve” a problem, with the quotes suggesting that this is largely unsuccessful. The following graphs will take this concept a step further by demonstrating what the influence was of the third party, as well as the motivation for their involvement. As animosity heightened between Demeter and Hades, Zeus was placed in an uncomfortable position. He had an obligation to protect his power and stand firm in his decision; however, he could not allow Demeter to cause such significant destruction on Earth. Zeus brought in Hermes, a neutral party, in order to facilitate the exchange of Persephone.



Interestingly, Persephone and Hades have no place in this triangle. After the kidnapping, the two play very little part in the machinations of the gods. In a sense, they are triangulated “out”. Below is a graph with Persephone and Hades included. Hades inadvertently negatively affects Demeter and Zeus, while

Demeter's disapproval of Hades negatively affects Persephone and Hades' complex relationship.



LITERARY ANALYSIS

Poetry can be both an approachable and unwelcoming medium. When taught in schools, poetry is often a source of angst as the condensed and esoteric form may be less than relatable or even understandable to its students. However, while poetry can be difficult to decipher, it can be easy to compose. The loose structure of free-form poetry is an appealing outlet for young people to dive into the writing process without concern for following strict rules of form or even punctuation. Combine the ease of composition with countless free online publishing platforms and a thriving community of young poets is formed.

Writing about poetry prompted me to look for my first online profile on a website simply called my-poetry.com. I had never deactivated my profile, and my short bio is painfully awkward. However, this platform and the poems I published there were incredibly important to my development as a writer. Not only did I write, but I commented on others' works, and they in turn responded to mine. While my poems were publically accessible, it was still a space that I owned; private from my friends and family, I engaged only with my fellow creators.

For my analysis of poems, I selected two poems published in the same year, 2006. While this may seem odd when comparing historical and modern texts, it demonstrates the importance of sensibilities and creative contexts. Both texts can be found in Appendix B. The "modern" adaptation was written by an independent creator on an internet platform, whereas the "historical" adaptation

was written by an established writer and published in a formal collection of her work. Their differing viewpoints are apparent in their work and can speak volumes to the evolution of the myth over time.

Published by Kelly Dalton, the poem “Persephone Lied” appeared on LiveJournal in 2006. After the decline and demise of LiveJournal and about ten years of anonymity, Dalton’s poem was discovered by the blogging website Tumblr, where it was skyrocketed to prominence. It became almost a required reading for discussions of Greek mythology and was adapted into illustrations and even playlists. This poem captures trends of early online poetry as well as changing attitudes towards depictions of agency in Persephone’s story.

The juxtaposed text is Louise Glück’s poem “Persephone the Wanderer”. While this poem was published during the twenty-first century, Glück was born in 1943 and was an active writer beginning well over twenty-five years ago, meaning that her aesthetics are much closer to those of a twentieth century writer. Glück’s work is much more formal both in structure and, unsurprisingly, methods of publication. Glück’s work explores significantly different themes, concentrating more on the sexual and violent aspects of the Persephone myth. These themes reflect previous versions of the myth, but Glück also demonstrates movement towards a more thoughtful consideration of events.

Both poems focus on the mother-daughter relationship between Persephone and Demeter. Dalton, through Persephone’s eyes, critiques the

relationship and the ideal that her mother tries to present. The reader's first introduction to Demeter is of her "blissing ahead of [Persephone].../ And [Persephone] skulking behind" (2-3). In Dalton's version, Persephone believes that her mother wants

A decorative daughter. A link to the humans
 She feeds with her scattered wheat.
 A daughter to wed to a swineherd's just the thing
 To show that Demeter's a down-to-earth
 Kind of goddess. (10-14)

Dalton posits that Demeter sees Persephone as a means to an end, a way to enhance her public image. Even though at the end of the poem Persephone realizes that her "poor mother... missed [her] after all" and accepts the relationship, she still stands behind Demeter "in her candy-colored wake" (53, 61). Dalton emphasizes the imbalanced power, which she will use to make claims for Persephone's agency.

Glück's portrayal of Demeter and Persephone humanizes Demeter and deemphasizes Persephone. When establishing the events of the myth, Persephone is "taken from her mother", placing Demeter as the protagonist of the story (2). After this line, all of the lines about the two women relate to how Persephone has been changed by her kidnapping and how she is now detached from both the worlds of her mother and her husband. She becomes "an existential/ replica of her

own mother..." (30-31), meaning that her whole identity is overtaken and she becomes a copy of her mother. Glück details the few certainties in Persephone's life, several pertaining to her status as a daughter:

She does know the earth
is run by mothers; this much
is certain. She also knows
she is not what is called
a girl any longer. Regarding
incarceration, she believes

she has been a prisoner since she has been a daughter. (56-62)

Unlike in Dalton's poem, Persephone does not seem to reconcile this relationship with Demeter. In these grim lines, Persephone's powerlessness is made clear:

In the tale of Persephone
which should be read

as an argument between the mother and the lover—
the daughter is just meat. (84-87)

Glück's poem disempowers Persephone by emphasizing her role as a dependent daughter. However, there are many other ways in which power is given and taken away by these two poets.

The theme of growth should be an assumed theme for a myth involving the goddess of springtime and the goddess of the harvest and prosperity. Dalton embraces this theme wholeheartedly, never missing an opportunity to mention blossoming plants and flowers. As Persephone trails behind her mother, she observes how her mother is surrounded by her creations, such as “rosebuds”, “wheat”, and “honeysuckle” (2, 11, 21). Persephone initially dismisses these symbols, seeing only weakness in using divine powers to grow plants. She addresses the audience directly, saying

[Demeter’s] powers could boil rivers, if she chose.

She doesn’t choose. She scatters

Heliotrope behind her. (6-8)

When Persephone can bear no longer her mother’s machinations to marry her off to a swineherd, she runs off to find that “a hole opened up, a beautiful black, in all the pastels of [her] mother’s sowing” (25). This destruction of her mother’s precious bounty clearly illustrates Persephone’s disdain and enables her to escape to the Underworld, albeit unintentionally. However, after witnessing the havoc her mother wreaks on the world after her disappearance, Persephone decides not to “eat the food of the dead” and “spat out half the seeds” (49, 56). Upon returning to earth, Persephone begins exhibiting powers similar to her mother, scattering “[s]undew and flytrap, nettles and belladonna” (62). Persephone is given a character arc, going from angry and rebellious to understanding and

respectful of differences. Her growth is a critical part of the poem; Persephone is able to change her outlook without sacrificing her personality or beliefs.

Glück, on the other hand, completely ignores this theme. Persephone shows no sign of growth, rather the opposite; she becomes completely directionless and is isolated from all other characters. In reaction to Demeter's destruction of the earth, Glück coins the phrase "negative creation", which may serve as a perfect foil to Dalton's focus on growth (10). Instead of images of lush growth, Glück evokes themes of winter, with its snow and freezing wind (46). Without the green home of her mother, Persephone

...drifts between earth and death
 which seem, finally,
 strangely alike... (69-71)

Glück's only reference to anything growing is a mention of its absence. As she describes Persephone's confrontation with death, Glück imagines that "she has never seen/ the meadow without the daisies", meaning that Persephone has no concept of death where life once was (88-89). Without the theme of growth, Persephone is undeveloped and further distanced from any form of agency.

Agency and choice are valuable points in any Persephone discussion. Older texts emphasize Persephone's lack of choice, while modern texts revise the myth in new contexts to give her more power. Unsurprisingly, Dalton supports the latter and Glück the former. Persephone's hidden choices are the crux of Dalton's

poem, as Dalton purposefully and repeatedly draws attention to Persephone's new choices. The title itself frames the reader to question previous conceptions of the myth: "Persephone Lied". When confronted with the hole in her mother's field, she speaks directly to the audience:

That's when I snapped, I howled, I ran.

.....

Let me fix the life: Nobody grabbed, nobody pulled.

I jumped. (24, 26-27)

This choice turns the kidnapping narrative on its head, insisting instead that Persephone initiated her own descent. Dalton even claims that she chose to remain in the Underworld, intending the change to be permanent:

...the gardener said, "Little girl,

Little sunlit flower,

You belong in the world above.

Trust that they will come for you,

But while you wait

Don't eat the food of the dead, for it will trap you here."

And I said give me the fucking fruit. (44-50)

The final line, embraced by its online fans, asserts that Persephone not only had choices, but also that she seized them aggressively, perhaps even compulsively.

While she does undo part of her decision as described in a previous stanza, this does not diminish her ability to determine her own fate.

One technique used by both poets is particularly striking and speaks to the adaptation of myth in a modern age: the changing subject of “you”. In previous sections, Dalton has been given the spotlight, but this theme was best illustrated by Glück.

Dalton’s poem is narrated by Persephone herself, meaning that the pronoun “I” is used throughout the text. The tone of the piece seems confessional; she speaks at an audience with no anticipation of response. When she conveys the absurdity of her mother’s plan to marry her to a swineherd, she breaks the fourth wall, asking the reader, “Do you know what swineherds talk about?/ Swine” (15-16). While readers may assume that the “you” in question is themselves, Dalton’s poem may suggest another. In the final stanza, Persephone describes how she will

...smile and wait for November,

For when I come back to you.

Your clever cold hands and your hard black boots. (63-65)

In that stanza, the “you” is Hades, her husband in Hell. So, was this an oversight by the author, a shift in usage for a concise end? Perhaps, but the overlap of this technique in Glück’s work would suggest otherwise.

Glück’s poem is narrated by a third party who, from the beginning, also engages the audience, using the pronoun “we” to include the reader in the story

(9). The first use of “you”, however, seems a bit out of place; after questioning the reader about Persephone’s role in her own story, the narrator says

You are allowed to like
no one, you know. The characters
are not people. (33-35)

After the narrator’s relentless questioning, this frank address disrupts the flow of the poem. A few stanzas later, she speaks to the reader again: “You must ask yourself/where is it snowing?” (42-43). The line is justified in the subsequent stanzas, meaning that the reader is confused once again.

The perplexing tone and use of you comes to a head in the middle of the poem. The narrator begins a stanza referring to Persephone as “her”, as established in a previous section (63). However, in that same stanza and the following two, she seems to change that pronouns as well. In order to understand this shift, Glück puts it best in her own words:

The terrible reunions in store for her
will take up the rest of her life.

When the passion of expiation
is chronic, fierce, you do not choose
the way you live. You do not live;
you are not allowed to die.

You drift between earth and death
 which seem, finally,
 strangely alike. Scholars tell us

that there is no point in knowing what you want
 when the forces contending over you
 could kill you. (63-74)

Had Glück not used “you” to refer to her audience, one could argue that she switched from describing Persephone to addressing her. However, the rapid switch and the precedent of the usage of “you” suggest one of two things. First, perhaps this poem was addressed to Persephone all along, meaning that all instances of “you” referred to her. Yet, by speaking of Persephone in the third person rather than consistently in the second, this is less likely. The second option relied heavily on trusting authorial intention. Perhaps Glück intended for the audience to either relate strongly to Persephone or to embody briefly her experiences. After being introduced to Persephone’s many hardships and new directionless way of life, Glück may have wanted the reader to experience the messages Persephone was bombarded with: the hopelessness of her life, the impossibility of relief, and the devaluation of her voice. In the final two stanzas, her pronoun use is unclear, this time including “you” and “my”:

My soul
shattered with the strain
trying to belong to earth—

What will you do,
when it is your turn in the field with the god? (97-101)

Now, Glück seems to be taking on the perspective of Persephone. This heralds back to oral traditions of myth, where the orator would engage with the audience and blur the line between story and teller, story and listener. Another interpretation would be the “you” in reference to Demeter. After her disconnection from her daughter, perhaps it is her shattered soul and her choices going forward that concern the speaker. In Glück’s poem, the audience has been drawn into the life of Persephone, taking on roles of reader, daughter, and possibly mother.

Both Dalton and Glück have brought their readers closer to the Persephone story via first-person narration and second-person address. While their depictions of agency and choice lead to very different conclusions, both comment on uses for the myth. For Dalton, Persephone is a strong character making choices for herself that are unpopular. For Glück, Persephone is a victim of violation and manipulation, and her poem speaks to the confusion and lonely feelings associated with losing a part of one’s identity.

WEB SERIAL ANALYSIS

After analyzing visual and poetic adaptations of the myth of Persephone from both before and after the start of the twenty-first century, the many themes observe can be synthesized into a single work. Upon finding no satisfactory long-form adaptations of Persephone's myth pre-2000, I will examine only a twenty-first century text and consider how its representations of themes brings together new trends and classic conventions.

Hade's Holiday is an online web comic depicting Persephone and Hades' story in a next context. The creator is a freelance artist going by the aliases "elvishness" and "Liv", no last name given. Starting in 2012, Liv began publishing her artwork online via DeviantArt and Tumblr. Most of her art was inspired by popular television shows and movies, including *Lord of the Rings* and BBC's *Merlin*, and her work quickly gained a following due to her established subject matter and whimsical art style. In April of 2013, Liv posted her first illustration of Hades and Persephone, originally intending it a variation on another person's work. In March of 2014, almost a year later, she released another drawing of the two, and then one more at the end of that same month. For the next two years, she has published about two Persephone and Hades posts per month. Liv continued to return to the pair, and her drawings steadily grew in popularity. Using Tumblr's statistics on a post's popularity called "notes", the increase is

obvious. Her first Persephone post received 1,800 notes; the second, 6,000; and, fifteen months later, her eighth drawing of the couple received 32,000 notes.

Observing this significant response to her work, Liv proposed the idea of a web series to her followers in March of 2015. After an overwhelmingly positive response, *Hades' Holiday* was released to the world on October 15, 2015. Updated every Thursday, the comic now has fifty-three episodes, broken into three parts. With an audience of almost two million viewers, *Hades' Holiday* provides a fresh take on Greek mythology in a unique context with an original story.

Before exploring the themes of the comic, some basic framing is necessary. From the very beginning, the creator established that her world is inspired and informed by the myth but is free to deviate from the story's events. In the preface of Part 1, Liv writes:

...I, the author, took many liberties with [the] story, personality, appearance, lineage, interactions ...there is no incest (the gods aren't related...) and no dubious or non-consensual aspects in Hades' and Persephone's relationship.

Read Hades' Holiday with an open mind to a new interpretation of the Greek gods and their story!

By introducing the comic with this preface, Liv circumvents the need to justify the questionable aspects of the myth. In the paintings and poems previously

discussed, the incestuous nature of the myth's original story is seldom addressed or even mentioned off-hand. By acknowledging the incestuous, violent aspects of the canon and openly disregarding them, Liv is freed from the obligation to address the issue any further. Any adherence to the myth is inspiration; any deviation is her own creation.

The basic plotline of the comic is fairly simple. While working at her mother's store, creatively called "Demeter's Plant Shop", Persephone is surprised by Hades and his three-headed puppy Cerberus as they emerge from a dark portal in the wall (1.1-11). Knowing that Hades is not allowed to leave the Underworld as commanded by Zeus, the two decide to sneakily spend the day together (1.12-16, 2.1-7). Hades reveals his loneliness without Persephone, and Persephone mentions her disillusionment towards her life without him (1.17-18, 2.8-11). Upon discovering Hades' disappearance, Zeus and Hermes conspire to find him, looking first at Persephone (1.20, 2.12-13, 3.1). After being discovered by Artemis, who agrees not to report them, Hades and Persephone head towards the woods (2.12-2.21). Unbeknownst to them, Demeter has recruited Ares to find her daughter, who she believes has been kidnapped by Hades once again (3.2-3.4). Hades and Persephone are separated in the woods when Cerberus runs off, and Persephone senses that something is wrong (3.9-11). Unfortunately, that is where the story ends for now. As a continuously updating work, the ending may be years in the making. However, Liv has given more than enough information to observe

themes and visual conventions. Beyond the serial-style release of the comics, *Hades' Holiday* is remarkable for many other reasons, not the least of which is the story itself.

The events of *Hades' Holiday* take place in both a new place in time and a new place in the myth. From the illustrations, the reader sees that the story takes place in a roughly modern time: Persephone plays on a computer, Ares works in a coffee shop, and Hermes conducts business from his smartphone (1.9, 3.3, 3.1). However, the characters' mythical characteristics are not hidden or removed. While tending to her mother's plant shop, Persephone makes plants grow in front of a customer and is aggressively hit on by a satyr (1.3-7). While nonhumans and humans exist in the same world, they are divided: Demeter voices her hatred for talking to mortals, and Hades disguises his three-headed dog to avoid drawing attention (1.2, 2.4). The world of *Hades' Holiday* has roots in reality, but its differences are enough to classify it as a fantasy.

Not only is the physical and temporal context different, but the placement in the myth itself is largely unexplored. Liv's comic takes place after the myth: Hades is loved by Persephone and despised by Demeter, the gods are suspicious of Hades, and Persephone struggles to feel at home with her mother. Rather than retelling the myth, Liv is able to compose its aftermath and allows her audience to see the consequences of what choice were—or were not—made. Once her

audience understands the context of her story, Liv explores a variety of topics and events not only in the myth, but in her own life as well

Hades' Holiday addresses themes of gender and utilizes the visual to draw on classic techniques to create new meaning. Liv's online presence also comments on the life of an artist, showing how evolving creator culture can still include historical conventions, proving that change does not mean complete rejection of old ways. By reading the comic critically, one can observe how old motifs are being critiqued, new aesthetics are embraced, and how the two can be combined harmoniously.

Throughout this thesis, gender has been discussed, but only tangentially. In Leighton's painting and the poems by Dalton and Glück, Persephone's identity as "daughter" is extremely important in order to understand the work itself. However, other than references to Demeter as "mother", no other characters are defined solely by their gender. For Demeter, Hades, and Zeus, gender is a part of their character, but not a central feature. Demeter is the protective parent and guardian of the harvest; Hades is the ruler of the underworld; and Zeus is the overseer of the heavens. Through her long-form storytelling and art style, Liv emphasizes that while gender still plays a role in her comic's culture, the strict barriers can be broken down t

Liv's Persephone is an extremely feminine character. She has long brown hair, a flowery headband, and ever-blushing cheeks. She wears fitted shirts and

flared skirts, all accessorized with a small purse reading “Hella Cute” (2.2). She is shown to be loving, helpful, and accommodating, and she maintains a sunny attitude, optimistic to the point of obliviousness. Upon taking Hades to the beach, she comments that “the sun could do [him] some good” and that he is “pale as a ghost” (2.9). Her colorful presence and cheerful outlook on life are classic feminine conventions, and one could argue that this upholds the myth’s characterization of the submissive, naïve Persephone.

However, her femininity does not equate to weakness; in fact, her personality and aesthetic incorporate aspects associated with strength. In the first image of Persephone, she is standing in a library looking at a calendar, likely calculating how much longer her separation from Hades would last. The image of a love-sick girl reading and thinking about her lover is not particularly revolutionary; the exceptions are found in the details. Persephone is not hunched over, crippled by her emotions. She stands tall, leaning against a bookshelf and pursing her lips in frustration. Throughout the comic, Persephone is shown to be stubborn and fiercely loyal; her emotions are tools to form and protect her relationships. In the most recent comic, upon realizing that something has gone wrong, Persephone rapidly considers her options in a frantic internal monologue:

OMG

THIS IS BAD

SHIT

OMG

WAIT

DON'T PANIC!

IF THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG I NEED TO HELP THEM! (3.11)

Persephone reacts like anyone would: with fear and confusion. However, she is able to control her emotions and evaluate the situation in order to take action. Her initial panic should not discount her; her ability to move on from the fear shows her strength.

Liv also incorporates visual cues to the reader that Persephone is tougher than she may appear. On the library's windowsill sits a flowerpot which houses not roses but two Venus fly-traps. Her exaggeratedly flared skirt is paired perfectly with none other than a brown pair of combat boots. In this single image, readers can unpack much of Persephone's characterization. Her own presentation along with her surroundings support her ability to embrace emotions and strength. Being feminine and being strong are not two disparate options that she forces together; rather, the two complement each other. She has not chosen what aspects of femininity to accept or reject; her synthesis is natural, making her a compelling character from the very beginning.

Hades' presentation in the comic also comments on conceptions of gender. In Tortland's illustration, Hades is frightening to look at, with his contorted face and menacing armor. To an extent, this is echoed by Liv. His face is gaunt and

pale, perhaps signs of age and a Vitamin C deficiency. Hades is also depicted in flashbacks as wearing imposing black armor; however, they are invoked in moments of weakness. In the first, he is revealing to Persephone why he abandoned the Underworld to see her. Facing away from the reader, Hades confesses to Persephone:

Your return seemed so far away this time...

And I've been locked in the Underworld for so long...

Centuries in the dark... (1.17)

The second use of his armor is during his defense of Zeus. As Persephone protests Hades' treatment by Zeus, Hades recalls their struggle against their father, telling Persephone:

We went through a lot when we had to go against our father, but I think it was the hardest for Zeus.

Despite being the youngest, the responsibility went all to them.

I believe I have a huge debt to my brother. (3.7)

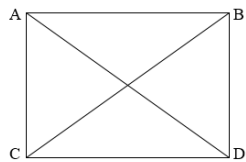
In this image, Zeus is clad in white and gold armor, facing the reader and holding a sword to his black-cloaked father. Hades is on the ground behind his brother, his helm removed and his face bloodied. These moments of vulnerability demonstrate Liv's subversion of gender-acceptable behavior. Hades openly admits these "failures" to Persephone, possibly emasculating himself. By illustrating these moments with Hades in his intimidating armor, Liv suggests that those symbols of

masculinity do not denote brutish strength or emotional disconnect. Rather, Liv posits that symbols of gender demonstrate not personality, but preference or necessity.

Hades' presentation during the story's events is also not traditionally masculine. As mentioned, he is gaunt, pale, and skinny. In his first full-frame shot, only his suit coat—black and fairly neutral—and his suitcases—battered and plain—are classically masculine. His pants are incredibly tight and a little short; his shirt is not only dark pink but also festooned with polka dots; and the look is topped off with a small black bow tie. Liv's depiction of Hades reflects the twenty-first century conception of masculinity. Men developing aesthetics that include male and female elements are not only becoming more common, but also more culturally acceptable. Both Hades and Persephone embrace aspects of their respective gender roles, but neither is afraid to deviate to the "opposite" side.

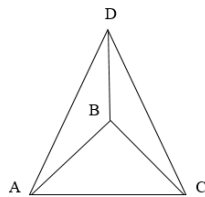
CONCLUDING GRAPH

This graphical example is less mathematical and more illustrative, as the construction of the graph itself proves the meaning of the information conveyed. First, some vocabulary must be established—I'll try to keep things monosyllabic. A point on a graph is called a node; two nodes are connected by an edge. In graph theory, a complete graph, also called a k -graph, has all nodes are connected to all other nodes via edges. Triangles are good examples of complete graphs; all three nodes are connected to one another. A complete graph with four nodes would look like this:



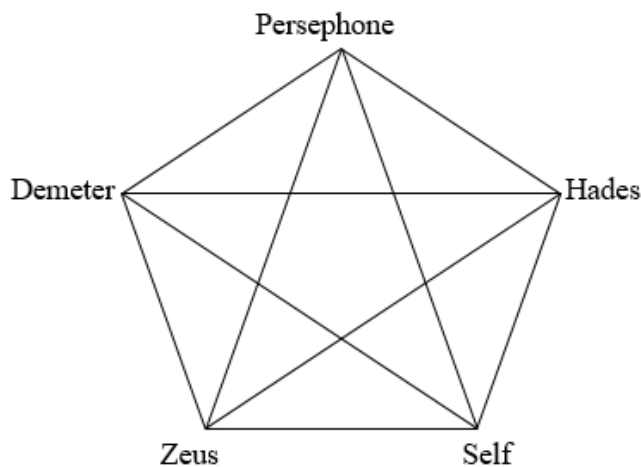
k-4 graph

The graph above is also an example of a planar graph. Planar graphs can be rearranged so that no two edges cross. Below is the k-4 graph manipulated so that no edges cross:



Manipulated k-4 graph

Now, to connect these graphs with Persephone. In the graphs of power dynamics, we used four nodes to represent the four Greek gods involved in the story. In the following graph, the connections represent not only relationships, but commitments, with one other addition. Along with their family members and significant others, all characters have a fourth commitment: to themselves. The connection to the self as well as others explains self-preservation as well as mindfulness of community well-being. While Persephone has a responsibility to her parents and husband, she also has to protect and care for herself.



So, what makes this graph special? How is it an illustration of a point? With five interconnected nodes, the above is a $k=5$ graph. What makes $k=5$ graphs special is that they are nonplanar. Compared to how a $k=4$ graph can be manipulated so that no two edges cross, a $k=5$ graph cannot be untangled to lie on a single plane. As previously mentioned, the construction of the graph is more important than the

actual appearance. Just as the nodes cannot be arranged so that no edges cross, the characters in the myth cannot untangle their relationships to one another.

Sacrifices and compromises had to be made in order to create peace. Like in the relational triangles, stabilizing the graph by removing a character is not an option because they are bound by blood. Zeus cannot disregard his status as Persephone's father in order to punish her mother. Hades cannot surrender Persephone because that would require a sacrifice of the power that defines him. The interconnected nature of the graph coupled with the impossibility of separating all connections perfectly represents the necessity of cooperation and the affection that, at the end of the day, rules this dysfunctional family.

Through these six adaptations of the Persephone myth, themes of power, choice, and gender can be analyzed and understood in the myth's context. This myth is more than the sum of its parts, or even the sum of its adaptations. This story and others like it beg to be retold, resituated in new contexts. Creators are drawn to stories that promote both connection to the old and development of the new. Persephone and her story is more complex than this thesis could ever capture, but I hope that it told a small part of it well. Embarking on this thesis was now easy feat; I wanted to do well by the creators I had grown to love and respect. I wanted to represent a community and thank them for inspiring me and countless others. The best I could hope for is that people continue to return to these stories; like Persephone, we can always come back.

Appendix A

Illustrations

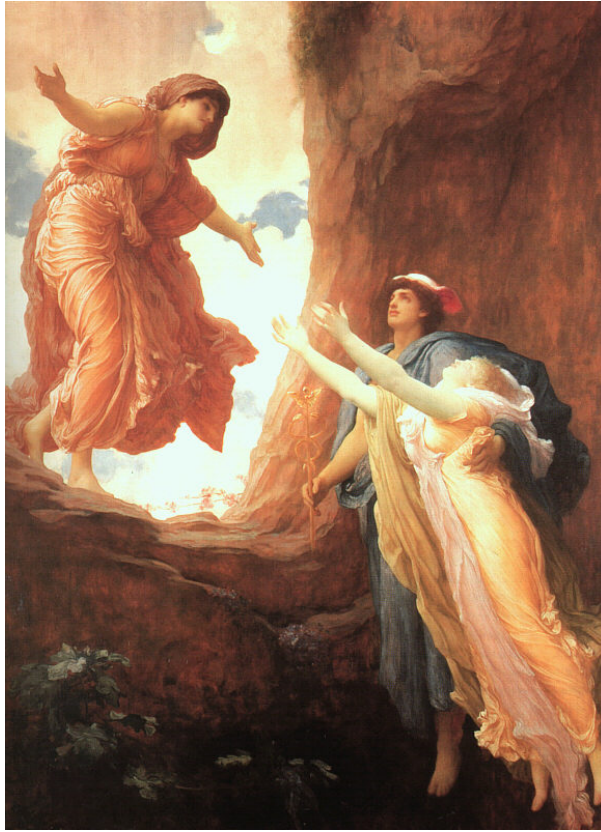


Figure 1. Frederic Leighton's "The Return of Persephone"



Figure 2. Christy Tortland's "Hades and Persephone"

Appendix B

Poems

Persephone Lied

The truth is, I was bored.
 My mother blissing ahead of me, rosebuds rising in her footsteps,
 And I skulking behind, thinking,
 Oh look. She walks in beauty.
 Again.

Her power could boil rivers, if she chose.
 She doesn't choose. She scatters
 Heliotrope behind her.

And me, I've no powers. I think she'd like
 A decorative daughter. A link to the humans
 She feeds with her scattered wheat.
 A daughter wed to a swineherd's just the thing
 To show that Demeter's a down-to-earth
 Kind of goddess.

Do you know what swineherds talk about?
 Swine.
 Diseases of, ways to cook;
 "That 'un's got no milk for 'er shoats;
 Him, there, he's got boggy trotters."

And when he leaned in, smiling,
 While we sat in a bower sagged with Mother's honeysuckle,
 When he said, "Now,
 My herd's growing and I'm thinking I could feed a wife—"
 That's when I snapped, I howled, I ran.

And when a hole opened up, a beautiful black, in all the pastels of my mother's
 sowing.
 Let me fix the lie: Nobody grabbed, nobody pulled.
 I jumped.

I thought it was a tiny earthquake,
Thought I was killing myself,
Starting a long journey to Hades.
It was a more direct trip
Than I'd imagined—
I landed in his lap.

He just looked at me, said "Well,"
And kept driving his chariot down,
Flicked his leather reins near my face.
He did not give me flowers.
He never spoke of pigs.

Didn't speak much at all. Just took me down in darkness
And did dark things.
I liked them.

I stumbled through his grey gardens, after,
Sore and smiling.
And the gardener said, "Little girl,
Little sunlit flower,
You belong in the world above.
Trust that they'll come for you,
But while you wait
Don't eat the food of the dead, for it will trap you here."
And I said give me the fucking fruit.

But when I ate I could hear her howling,
See her spreading winter on the world.
My poor mother, who missed me after all;
My poor swineherd, starving.
Huddled up for warmth with the few he hadn't eaten.

I spat out half the seeds.

So now I suffer through the summers,
Smile at the swineherd who tells me
Which shoat is off its feed.
Smile at my mother and walk behind her.
My powers have come to me now, and in her candy-colored wake I scatter
Sundew and flytrap, nettles and belladonna.

I smile and wait for November,
 For when I come back to you.
 Your clever cold hands and your hard black boots.
 I don't ask what the leather is made from.
 I don't think I want to know.

Figure 1. Kelly Dalton's "Persephone Lied"

Persephone the Wanderer

In the first version, Persephone
 is taken from her mother
 and the goddess of the earth
 punishes the earth—this is
 consistent with what we know of human behavior,

that human beings take profound satisfaction
 in doing harm, particularly
 unconscious harm:

we may call this
 negative creation.

Persephone's initial
 sojourn in hell continues to be
 pawed over by scholars who dispute
 the sensations of the virgin:

did she cooperate in her rape,
 or was she drugged, violated against her will,
 as happens so often now to modern girls.

As is well known, the return of the beloved
 does not correct
 the loss of the beloved: Persephone

returns home
 stained with red juice like
 a character in Hawthorne—

I am not certain I will
 keep this word: is earth
 “home” to Persephone? Is she at home, conceivably,
 in the bed of the god? Is she
 at home nowhere? Is she
 a born wanderer, in other words
 an existential
 replica of her own mother, less
 hamstrung by ideas of causality?

You are allowed to like
 no one, you know. The characters
 are not people.
 They are aspects of a dilemma or conflict.

Three parts: just as the soul is divided,
 ego, superego, id. Likewise

the three levels of the known world,
 a kind of diagram that separates
 heaven from earth from hell.

You must ask yourself:
 where is it snowing?

White of forgetfulness,
 of desecration—

It is snowing on earth; the cold wind says

Persephone is having sex in hell.
 Unlike the rest of us, she doesn't know
 what winter is, only that
 she is what causes it.

She is lying in the bed of Hades.
 What is in her mind?
 Is she afraid? Has something
 blotted out the idea
 of mind?

She does know the earth
 is run by mothers, this much
 is certain. She also knows
 she is not what is called
 a girl any longer. Regarding
 incarceration, she believes

she has been a prisoner since she has been a daughter.

The terrible reunions in store for her
 will take up the rest of her life.
 When the passion for expiation
 is chronic, fierce, you do not choose
 the way you live. You do not live;
 you are not allowed to die.

You drift between earth and death
 which seem, finally,
 strangely alike. Scholars tell us

that there is no point in knowing what you want
 when the forces contending over you
 could kill you.

White of forgetfulness,
 white of safety—

They say
 there is a rift in the human soul
 which was not constructed to belong
 entirely to life. Earth

asks us to deny this rift, a threat
 disguised as suggestion—
 as we have seen
 in the tale of Persephone
 which should be read

as an argument between the mother and the lover—
 the daughter is just meat.

When death confronts her, she has never seen
the meadow without the daisies.
Suddenly she is no longer
singing her maidenly songs
about her mother's
beauty and fecundity. Where
the rift is, the break is.

Song of the earth,
song of the mythic vision of eternal life—

My soul
shattered with the strain
of trying to belong to earth—

What will you do,
when it is your turn in the field with the god?

Figure 2. Louise Glück's "Persephone the Wanderer"

Works Cited

- Baugh, Albert C. and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. 6th ed. Revised, Routledge, 2012.
- “Color Theory.” *NYU Computer Science*, 2002,
www.cs.nyu.edu/courses/fall02/V22.0380-001/color_theory.htm.
- Elvishness or Liv. “Hades’ Holiday.” *Tapastic*. Tapas Media Inc.,
tapastic.com/series/Hades-Holiday.
- Glück, Louise. “Persephone the Wanderer.” *poets.org*,
www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/persephone-wanderer.
- Leighton, Frederic. *The Return of Persephone*. 1891. Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds.
Leeds Art Gallery Online,
www.leedsartgallery.co.uk/gallery/listings/10033.php.
- Nagy, Gregory. *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard University, Aug. 2016, chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5292.
- Spuffyduds [Kelly Dalton]. “Persephone Lied.” *LiveJournal*, 30 Oct. 2006,
www.spuffyduds.livejournal.com/38351.html.
- Tortland, Christy. “FX Pose: Christy Tortland.” *ImagineFX*, August 2015, 14.