

Fate and the Astrological Pluto: Their Role in Women's Development

“Hades [Pluto] is the God presiding over our descents, investing the darkness in our lives, our depressions, our anxieties, our emotional upheavals and our grief with the power to illumination and renewal.” (*Arianna Stassinopoulos, The Gods of Greece taken from Jean Shinoda Bolen's Gods in Every Man pg 98*)

Christina Becker
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I. Introduction

Astrology has a lot to say about the path of the individuation throughout our lives. It is a discipline that shares a common lineage with the ancient art of alchemy. Both involve the projection of unconscious contents into matter, and they share the same world view – a vision of a unified cosmos where “what is above is like what is below and what is below is like what is above; and thus the miracle of the One is accomplished”¹ that is, where outer and inner realities reflect each other as part of one whole.

The underlying theme of alchemy is transformation of the raw substance of human nature and releasing its potential for inner divinity through confrontation with and integration of the dark and alien elements in the personality. The alchemists also believed in “Kairos”², that for the alchemical work to be successful, the right transits needed to be involved. Within this view of reality, the concept of Kairos suggests that there are optimum moments for conscious efforts of development. It is therefore possible that with the co-operation of the right transits, the alchemical work can be accomplished toward fashioning the Philosopher’s Stone, individuation, the goal of wholeness. It is as if the transit opens a liminal space providing the right atmosphere to undertake the work.

Pluto is the furthest planet in our solar system and its effects on the psyche have only recently been added to the astrological lexicon. It was discovered in 1930 and therefore it was not known by the ancient astrologer/alchemists. It is considered to be a “higher octave” of Mars and rules the sign of Scorpio. Like Uranus and Neptune, it is considered a transpersonal planet because it moves so slowly. It takes approximately 250 years for Pluto to travel once around the zodiac. Its influence is therefore largely associated with broad collective movements and cultural trends.

Many astrologers believe that this distant planet has a direct bearing on the individual’s spiritual journey and purpose. Indeed, Pluto does, in a very real sense, symbolize an individual’s fate because it

¹ Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas. "Alchemical Symbolism in the Horoscope" In *Dynamics of the Unconscious, Seminars in Psychological Astrology, Volume 2*. (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1988) pg 260.

² Kairos is a Greek word meaning opportunity, the right moment when the timeless or eternal realms intersect with our human time unlocking or opening a door to insights and new possibilities.

is the time of our birth that determines the house in which Pluto will reside, and its journey by transit through the other areas of our lives. Jungian Analyst and Astrologer Liz Greene in her book *The Astrology of Fate* believes that where ever we meet Pluto astrologically, we are "confronting something feminine, primordial and matriarchal"³ Where we meet Pluto individually, in a particular house or in aspect to personal planets, is where we meet fate i.e. that area of life in which we meet archetypal power. She writes:

"Thus, with Pluto placed in a given house of the horoscope, some sphere of life becomes the place where one meets the retributive justice connected with ancestral sin, the limitations of nature visited congenitally upon the individual through what appears to be 'my problem', 'my incurable wound'".⁴

" . . . a quality of chronic and repetitious suffering or restriction, which circles back again and again just when one thinks one is free of it, is something I associate with Pluto's effect on the spheres of life presented by the astrological houses."⁵

"I have come to feel that when Pluto is strongly marked in the birth horoscope, the individual is faced with the task of redeeming or carrying something for the larger collective, which only he is able or equipped to do; or, put another way, he is faced with the expiation of ancestral sin, and must become a bridge over which something ancient and undifferentiated and outcast must walk to find a welcome in consciousness"⁶

During the course of a life time, Pluto will only travel through 4 or 5 of the 12 astrological houses initiating many descents into the Underworld, descents which will constitute "a gradual loss of everything which one has previously defined one's identity, and the bowing low of humiliation, humility and eventual acceptance of something greater and more powerful than oneself" ⁷. The myth that appears to mirror this process is The Homeric Hymn to Demeter. The most complete version of the myth dates from 650 BCE and portrays one of the oldest and most common mythological motifs -

³ Liz Greene. *The Astrology of Fate* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser,1988) pg 39.

⁴ IBID., pg 54.

⁵ IBID., pg 56.

⁶ IBID., pg 59.

⁷ IBID., pg 39

descent into the underworld, the dark night of the soul or night sea journey. It depicts death as a separation from a life or an aspect of life that is known, descent into the underworld, and a subsequent rebirth. This Greek myth is the only one where Pluto plays an active role as the rapist and abductor of Demeter's daughter Kore/Persephone.

Although Pluto transits effect men and women with equal tyranny, I believe that the myth of Demeter and Persephone has particular relevance to the psychological development of women, and consequently, the astrological Pluto has a particular role in this development. This shall be the focus of this paper. This myth is likely the most important myth to focus on the lives and initiation of women. It presents the bond between two women, mother and daughter that is severed when Persephone is abducted into the underworld. The myth also reveals a young woman's initiation and it is likely that the myth was tied to women's rites around the age of puberty.⁸ For it is the feminine that is transformed by Pluto's act of rape and abduction. From this point of view, therefore a Pluto transit presents an opportunity for a woman to connect with some aspect of the repressed feminine and an opportunity to reclaim a part of her feminine Self that remains locked in the unconscious. I say opportunity for it is possible to undergo a descent into the underworld, or a Pluto transit, without any transformation.

II. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Kore, the maiden, was picking fragrant flowers in a meadow. She reached for the narcissus, and the earth suddenly opened wide. Out of the depths came a golden chariot drawn by black horses and driven by the faceless Lord of the Underworld. "Mother, Mother," she screamed, "help me!" But Demeter, her mother was far away. No one heard her cries except for old Hecate in her cave, who hurried to the rescue but could find no sign of Kore.

Demeter sought Kore for nine days and nights. She dressed in mourning and called out for her daughter, ceaselessly, refusing to eat, drink or rest. On the tenth day, Demeter came in disguise to the

⁸ The Mysteries of Eleusis are the most famous ritual associated with this myth and were open to both men and women. According to Bruce Lincoln, the Mysteries of Eleusis were a different type of ritual although likely were a descendant of certain rites of women's initiation.

city of Eleusis, appearing to be an old woman. The King and his wife welcomed her into their household, and she offered to nurse their infant son, Demophoon. The children and servants of the house exerted themselves to bring the old nurse (as they saw her) out of her sadness, eventually coaxing her to laugh and to drink barley-water. Demeter tried to reciprocate by making Demophoon immortal but was interrupted in her spell and the baby died. Thwarted in her effort to keep him from death, she was enraged.

Soon after Demophoon's death, the swineherd of the King's household told Demeter of a great split in the earth that swallowed his swine. A chariot appeared from the direction of Eleusis and dashed down the chasm. The chariot driver's face was invisible and he has a shrieking girl clasped in his right arm. Armed with this evidence, Demeter and Hecate confronted Helios, the sun, who sees all, and forced him to admit that Hades was the villain, doubtless with the connivance of his brother Zeus, King of the Gods. Even though Zeus was Demeter's brother and Kore's father he was ignoring Demeter's grief and Hades's crime.

Demeter continues to wander the earth, forbidding the trees to yield fruit and the herbs to grow, until the human race stood in danger of extinction and there were no sacrifices for the Gods. Only one course of action remained for Zeus. He sent Hermes with a message to Hades, telling him to restore Kore to her mother. He sent a message to Demeter, saying, "You will have your daughter again, provided she has not tasted the food of the dead."

However, Hades's gardeners had seen Kore eat seven seeds of a pomegranate. Based on this, Hades claimed Kore as his own, and Demeter prepared to continue blighting the Earth. Zeus asked Rhea, the Mother of Hades, Demeter, and himself, to mediate and at last a compromise was reached. Kore would spend three months of the year with Hades, reigning as Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. During that time, the earth would be barren, mourning the loss of Persephone. The remaining nine months of the year, Persephone dwells with Demeter and the earth is fertile. Hecate agreed to oversee the arrangement, making sure that it was kept, and watching over Persephone while she resides in the Underworld.⁹

⁹ This version of the myth was taken from an adaptation in Tanya Wilkson's *Persephone Returns. Victims, Heroes and the Journey from the Underworld*. Berkeley, California: Pagemill Press. Pg 21-23.

III. The Triple Goddess: Kore/Persephone, Demeter and Hecate

Introduction

The central characters in the myth represent images of the Goddess - Kore, the young maiden who is abducted by Hades, Demeter her mother, and Hecate, who in her cave hears Kore's cries and who then watches over Persephone when she resides the Underworld. This image of the "Triple Goddess" symbolizes the powerful transpersonal trinity of Maiden, Mother, Crone which mirrors the stages of a woman's life of girlhood, maturity and aging. The number "three" has a rich symbolism. It is a sacred number of the Goddess and reflects the fundamental characteristics of the archetypal feminine - the moon, the grain and the realm of the dead. It is also a dynamic number suggesting movement and psychological growth. The image of the Goddess is a symbol of feminine Self. For Jung, the Self represented an individual's fullest potential and wholeness. It is the unifying principle within the psyche and occupies the central authority in relation to the psychological life and destiny of the individual. In a woman's psyche, the image of the Goddess represents the archetypal core at the centre of her personality.

"Thus the Triple Goddess can be said to symbolize the feminine Self as a three-in-one wholeness or as a dynamic, ever repeating cycle; women who become conscious of her presence in their psyches can catch glimpses of a multifaceted Self that embraces and gives values to their entire lives and expresses itself as sequential, predictable energies that continually cycle and recycle in the innermost soul."¹⁰

Hecate as Crone

Hecate is in her cave when Hades seduces Kore. Along with Demeter, she hears Kore's cries but is unable to find her, and like Demeter, she is powerless to prevent the abduction. She can therefore be interpreted as a double of Kore's mother Demeter in her lunar aspect. Hecate is associated with the moon, and the sickle moon is her symbol. Many cultures in antiquity celebrated the cave mysteries of the Hecate and she symbolizes the dark side of the Great Mother. Indeed, in some myths, she is the

¹⁰ Kathie Carlson. *Life's Daughter/Death's Bride. Inner Transformations through The Goddess Demeter/Persephone*. (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1997) pg 142.

guardian of Hades which connects her to an earlier incarnation as the Death Goddess. By the time of the Homeric Hymn, Hecate was not seen as the Death Goddess but as a witch. As a spirit mother, she is the mother of witchcraft, witches, and the primitive world of ghosts. She is a “real spook goddess of night and phantoms, a nightmare. . . . She is the one who sends the horrible and fearful night-time apparitions.”¹¹ She is said to cause madness or lunacy characteristic of an invasion of the unconscious. The fact that her presence in the myth is brief alludes to Kore's transformation into Persephone, Queen of the Underworld in which she incorporates some of Hecate's earlier attributes as death and rebirth aspects of the Great Mother.

Kore as Maiden/Persephone as Queen of the Underworld

Kore simply means “maiden”, “a young girl of initiatory age” or “virgin”. Kerenyi suggests that she is called Kore at this point in the myth because she “embodies the connection with her mother and with her husband as two forms which are carried out to their extremes”¹² She is the spring goddess, her mother's daughter, the flowering of the Feminine Self. Kore is a figure of elemental virginity, and she is always imaged in the purest of white which alludes to her intense vulnerability. In this form, Kore is young, innocent and naive, and she is powerless and helpless to prevent her own rape. She represents the young girl who does not know who she is and is unaware of her desires or her strengths. This is shown at the beginning of the myth in the image of Kore picking the flower narcissus in the field suggesting that, in her innocence, she lives an uninitiated flower-like existence of self-absorption, passivity, dependency, and unawakened sexuality.

Kore is unique among the maiden Goddess of ancient Greece because her relationship to her Mother is preeminent in the myth. The Demeter and Persephone constellation is a common mother-daughter pattern where the daughter is so close to the mother that she is unable to have a strong sense of her own independence and individuality. It is a pattern that can be constellated again in an analysis between two women. Psychologically, Persephone could be symbolic of “the female ego [which] remains

¹¹ C.G. Jung. *Symbols of Transformation*. Vol 5 of *The Collected Works*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) para 577.

¹² C.G. Jung and Carl Kerenyi. *Essays on a Science of Mythology*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949) pg 107.

bound to the maternal unconscious and the Self. It is a relationship based on a mutual identification between mother and daughter.”¹³ Erich Neumann in his paper “The Psychological Stages of Feminine Development” suggests that a woman who remains in a primal relationship with her mother is not estranged from primary identity as a woman but she will remain psychologically undeveloped.

“ . . . a woman can continue in the primal relationship, expand in it, and come into her own without having to leave the circle of the maternal Oroborus and the Great Mother. In so far as she remains in this realm she is, to be sure childish and immature from the point of view of conscious development, but she is not estranged from herself.”¹⁴

In this state of consciousness, she will experience a sense of alienation from men and from her own inner masculine which will be viewed as alien, foreign, a hostile subjugator, and rapist.

Yet in this image of Kore can be found the Divine Child of the Archetypal Mother, that is the seed of new life and beginnings. However, it is the victimization, abandonment, and the betrayal of the innocent child which is necessary for this sense of identity, uniqueness and specialness to be developed and matured.

“The Divine Child within, which holds the potential for complete realization of the Self, is split off from the Upperworld of consciousness, enclosed in an unreachable hell with her abductor, refusing to take nourishment. . . Initially, this hell is the unconscious, a personal Underworld in which the child's trauma lives in a repressed form together with the part of the Self that identified with the aggressor”¹⁵

The transformation of Kore into Persephone is dramatic in which the image of innocence and naivety is turned into a figure of death, destruction and someone to be feared. Kore undergoes a death experience, the rape which symbolizes her loss of maidenhood and the descent into hell. Psychologically, this might also be seen as the death of narcissistic personality structures and ego

¹³ Erich Neumann. The Psychological Stages of Feminine Development, in *The Fear of the Feminine*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)

¹⁴ IBID., pg 9.

¹⁵ Tanya Wilkinson. Op. Cit., pg 39.

defences of grandiosity, exhibitionism, and extreme vulnerability¹⁶ to a position where a woman begins to feel some sense of authority and effectiveness in her life no longer a victim of life and its trials and tribulations. The eating of the pomegranate seeds represent the fateful moment when part of her identity assumes the role of Pluto's wife. This is the point when Kore becomes Persephone, when she integrates the Hades' seed and assumes rulership over what had originally overwhelmed her. As Hades' consort, she becomes an underworld side of her Mother bringing the feminine qualities of graciousness and mercy, and connects her with a feminine penetrating power. Her greatest strength is the ability to "gestate death"¹⁷ in doing so, she becomes a psychopomp with the ability to transcend both worlds. At home in the Upperworld living on the surface level of life where she can retain a certain amount of innocence, and in the Underworld where she has contacted the darker intimate emotions that live in the unconscious.

The abduction and the rape of Kore represents her fate. At first, she is a victim of her fate and the betrayal by her father, Zeus, as Hades tears her away from the feminine matrix symbolized by the Mother-Daughter union. However, it is a necessary process, one that is needed for her psychological development. She is torn from the protection of the mother who both shelters her but who also denies her the possibility of her own womanhood. The original Mother Goddess as a unity is differentiated where the daughter is reborn with a new identity that is separate from her Mother's. The maiden is doomed to die for to do otherwise hinders the individuation process and the maturation of the personality whereby a woman acquires a sense of her own individuality and personality. In her transformed state as Persephone, she represents the endlessly repeated drama of death and rebirth. In this form, she assumes the character of Hecate and has dominion over the powers of death where death and marriage are combined. The power of Hades as the Lord of the Underworld becomes subordinate to hers and her subsequent journeys into the underworld no longer represent the victim descending into the world of trauma, but becomes ritual. The split off aspects of the feminine Self can be redeemed. Persephone is in the domain of her natural birthright, the earth. This is the instinctive feminine Self which is part of her quest for real feminine identity and which is ultimately linked to the Goddess.

¹⁶ Nathan Schwartz-Salant. *Narcissism and Character Transformation. The Psychology of Narcissistic Character Disorders*. (Toronto, Inner City Books, 1982).

¹⁷ Kathie Carlson. Op. Cit., pg 85.

“The feminine that is reborn and embodied is one that is closely connected to its dark aspect. It does not forget its rape. . . . The Goddess suffers rape, for only in that way does she become transformed by her own mysteries. A woman connecting with her own inner Persephone gains her penetrating power. Her male companion is now Dionysus far more than Apollo, and her existence is rooted in the feminine archetypal depths of the Goddess”¹⁸

Demeter as Mother

Following the title of the myth, Demeter's pain and grief is followed as she searches for her lost child. Transformation is as much a part of Demeter's journey as it is Kore's for she mirrors Kore's transformation through an initiation into the world of primal loss, grief and rage. Her journey offers us a portrayal of the ego's response to the loss of innocence and betrayal. Before Kore's abduction, Demeter is portrayed as a tender, gentle, and nurturing aspect of the Great Mother. She is the Goddess of the Grain who presides over the harvest, and is worshipped as a Mother Goddess. She symbolizes the fruitfulness of Nature as Mother for she symbolizes maternal instinct, nurturing, nourishment, and the ability to bring the seeds of life to harvest. In giving the gift of agriculture to man, she provides the means of self-sufficiency. This would seem to suggest that for the masculine, she encourages self-sufficiency, separation and independence.

It is not until after the rape that the dark aspects of the Great Mother are revealed. Demeter's initial response is intense grief as she mourns for 9 days without eating and sleeping in a solitary frantic search for her daughter. Nothing grows and a famine threatens to destroy humankind. Demeter is consumed with longing and mourning and is in the grip of “total immersion in wandering grief ceaselessly calling for that which is lost, never reaching out for the connection and sustenance that is available in the here and now.”¹⁹ Nine is a symbol of completion and of gestation and successful search, and at some point, she must emerge from this isolation and reconnect to the world of relationship. She reaches out when she goes to Eleusis and enters into life of a mortal family where she offers her services as a nurse to the King. This emergence from despair and grief awakens her anger,

¹⁸ Nathan Schwartz-Salant. Op. Cit., Pg 151.

¹⁹ Tanya Wilkinson. Op. Cit., Pg 32-33.

rage and wrath when she discovers Kore's location and is prepared to use her power to get her daughter back. Tanya Wilkinson describes this part of the process when she writes:

"When people feel the wrath of Demeter in themselves, it is both a liberating and devastating experience. The ego comes to full awareness of the betrayal of the innocent child. A part of the Self experiences the Great Mother's willingness to cause any amount of suffering to the other in order to rescue the lost Divine Child. This ruthlessness on behalf of love is absolutely necessary and extremely challenging to handle. It is a ruthless mobilization of all available power and resources to regain connection with the imprisoned Divine Child"²⁰

Demeter represents the chthonic power of the Earth. She seeks amends and in the process experiences intense emotions. It is through the process of experiencing these emotions that Kore can be transformed into Persephone who always returns from the Underworld. It is this process that is symbolized by Demeter's journey, that is realizing the "universal principle of life which is to be pursued, robbed, raped, to fail to understand, to rage, to grieve but to get everything back and be born again."²¹

IV. Hades/Pluto

Introduction

As was explored in the previous section, it is the feminine that is transformed in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. Both mother and daughter are changed forever by Pluto's act of violence. Pluto could therefore be seen an active masculine agent of transformation of the Great Goddess. This section will explore the different facets of this symbol including mythological God of the Underworld, Hades, Hades as a place, and other manifestations of the archetypal principle of transformation such as The Horned God and the snake. Finally, I would like to discuss Pluto as a symbol of the patriarchal Oroburos from Erich Neumann's psychological stages of feminine development. The last section of this paper will involve a discussion of the astrological Pluto.

²⁰ IBID., Pg 35-36.

²¹ C.G. Jung and C. Kerényi. Op. Cit., pg. 125.

Pluto/Hades God of the Underworld

Hades/Pluto was the son of Cronos and Rhea and brother of Zeus and Poseidon. Like his siblings, he was swallowed by his father, Cronos who feared that one of his children would seize power from him in the same way that he had seized power from his own father Uranus. Hades was therefore separated from his mother and enclosed in the stomach of his father almost from birth. Zeus with the help of his mother, eventually overthrew Cronos and became the new King of Olympus. The brothers - Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, divided the world among them. Hades was given the underworld, and became its ruler, the place where the dead reside. He was also called the unseen one, the invisible one because of the cap of invisibility given to him by the Cyclopes.

For most of Greek Mythology, Pluto/Hades remains unseen in the underworld leaving it only twice: once to get aid when Heracles wounded him with an arrow and the other to abduct Persephone. He was much feared by the Greeks and on Mt Olympus, and is referred to by many names. It was believed that mentioning his name would arouse his anger. Therefore, the Greeks sought to sublimate their terror of the underworld god by invoking him with other more euphemistic names, such as Trophonios, the nourisher, Polydegmon, the receiver of many guests, Euboulus, the good counsellor, or Ploutus, wealth-giving.²² The name Pluto derives from the "Pluton" which means the rich one and therefore, as the God of riches, he is portrayed with a cornucopia or horn of plenty. One of his names was Aidoneus. This is likely his oldest name but it was rarely used by the Greeks because it evoked such terror. It is important to note that these names reflect Pluto/Hades' role not only as the God of Death and the Underworld but also as the God of Wealth and of fruitful harvest. This suggests that the unconscious is also the place where treasure can be found.

His position as brother to Zeus, the Sky Father, suggests that he is ranked equally with his brother. In this way, Pluto/Hades might be considered as the shadow side of Zeus, although equally potent. He is

²² Christine Downing. *Gods in our Midst. Mythological Images of the Masculine: A woman's view*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993) pg. 37

likely the dark chthonic side of the bright god of Zeus. - "the unseen side of the all-seeing God"²³ This would tend to be supported by the fact that included in the names given to Pluto were Zeus Chthonios, the underworld Zeus or Zeus Meilichios, the mild and gentle Zeus.

There is very little evidence of his existence and perhaps this is in keeping with his name as the "invisible one" or the "unnamed God". There were no cults where he played an important role, and he was given no alters and virtually no temples. Only two temples were dedicated to him. One at Elis which was open only on one day a year and then only to a priest, and the other at the entrance to the Eleusian temple complex. This temple was quite different from the freestanding marble temples which were dedicated to other Gods and Goddess. This was more like an entrance to a natural cave carved out of the hillside. An opening in the cave floor was considered the opening to the underworld - the gate through which Persephone passed each year and then returned. Further, there is little art or other pictorial depictions of the relationship between Pluto and Persephone, although many of Demeter and Persephone, and of Persephone alone.

As previously mentioned, the Homeric Hymn to Demeter is almost the only myth in later Greek mythology which Pluto/Hades has an active part. His role is as an intruder and as a rapist; a disruptive agent which dislodges the status quo. And yet, he is hardly featured in the myth, and it is unclear about what the episode means to him. He belongs very much to the story but is also only on the periphery. To a large degree, he is virtually ignored. It is likely that he desires Kore as his wife and was given her by his brother Zeus. But otherwise his journey is not known. He seems to be little more than Persephone's shadowy consort, and in her transformation, Persephone, to a large extent, assumes rulership of the underworld although his presence is felt; the place still bears his name.

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IBID., pg 44

Hades as Place

Important in understanding the transformative role that Hades plays in Persephone's development is exploring the concept of Hades as a place. For the Greeks, Hades was more than a God, it was the realm of the dead, the underground world where souls go after death.

"It is a vast abyss and the prison of the overthrown Titans. Its entrance in the far west is reached by Day and Night in turn as they travel across the sky to 'the awful home of murky Night' which never holds both at once. Somewhere near the entrance, 'there is front' standing the echoing halls of Hades, god of the lower world, where he dwells with Persephone. A fearful hound guards the house. Fawning with his tail and ears on all who enter, he never lets them go out again; he devours whoever he catches attempting to leave."²⁴

The image of hell as the underworld place of the dead, or those who have sinned, has a long history and appears in many different cultural traditions. In Christianity, the underworld is called hell and is associated with fire and damnation. This comes from the Norse Queen of the Underworld and Death who was called Hel. The earlier notion of Hel was a cauldron-womb filled with purgative fire. The pre-Christian images of hell were a uterine shrine or sacred cave of rebirth, and the Christian tradition turned this image into a place of punishment where sinners go after death to suffer endless torment. Traditionally seen as the opposite of heaven where God or the gods reigned, hell became the domain of the devil or merciless rulers of the underworld. Hell has long been associated with fire, and this association is extremely important in understanding the psychic effect that a Pluto transit has. (See section on "The Astrological Pluto") This association seems to be derived partly from the sacrifices and burning of garbage in a ravine just outside of Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah describes a place where those who rebel against God burn eternally. The linking of fire and earth also seems to derive from the observations of volcanic phenomena. These were considered by the ancients as proof of the real existence of a subterranean hell.²⁵ In Islam, the fire of Hell is said to be 7 times hotter than any earthy fire. The Aztecs describe Hell as the land of darkness called the Land of the Nine Plains or nine

²⁴ *Encyclopaedia of World Mythology*. (London: Peerage Books, 1975) pg 163.

²⁵ Hans Biedermann. *Dictionary of Symbolism, Cultural Icons & The Meanings Behind Them*. (New York: Meriden Books, 1994) pg 170.

Hells. This culture believed that all but a few returned to the Hells from which they had come. After passing through the first eight Hells, they reached the ninth and last into which they plunged and were annihilated. The Aztecs were a sun-worshipping culture but particularly believed that the number nine was symbolic of things earthly and nocturnal. The appearance of the number nine in this context is interesting given that it echoes Demeter's journey of nine days as she searched for her daughter.

Mythologically, the ruler of the underworld as masculine is a relatively late occurrence. All of the images, symbols and associations presented above link Hell/Hades with the Feminine and the world of The Great Earth Mother Gaia. The underworld is often symbolized in mythology as a cave or cavern of death and rebirth that suggests the innermost womb of the Earth and a return to the primordial chaos which belongs to the Great Mother. Hecate, who appears in the myth, reflects this earlier association to the Great Mother religions where it was the Goddess that ruled the underworld. "The earliest images of the Goddess are those of a phallic mother, a self-fertilizing deity who bears the Moirai without male seed. In the end, the goddess vanishes into her own depths, and the phallic power is presented as a male deity: Hades."²⁶ The change from the feminine to masculine ruler likely originated from the more patriarchal Greek culture.

Pluto as Dionysus and as The Horned God

In the Orphic tradition, Hades is considered to be Dionysus - husband/son of Persephone/Hecate. In the Homeric myth, he is considered to be the product of the union between Pluto and Persephone and in other myths, he is considered her husband. In his role as Persephone's son, he is symbolic of the Divine Child, "the new child born out of the terrifying emotions symbolized by the dark aspect of Persephone, a new male consciousness both of the experience of terror and chaos."²⁷ His role is certainly predominant in the Eleusian mysteries where he leads the dance of the initiates, of the dead into the Underworld. Dionysus is the God of Ecstasy and of Dance as well as being the God of death and resurrection. He symbolizes to a large degree lost emotions and affects banished from the early

²⁶ Liz Greene. *Astrology of Fate*. Op. Cit., pg 39.

²⁷ Nathan Schwartz-Salant. Op. Cit., pg 150.

Christian rites. His energy is one that is embodied - sexuality, the instincts, spontaneity, passion, and ecstasy. Living this energy means living an incarnated life - a life in which spontaneous spirit is allowed to transform matter. It means allowing spontaneity to transform outmoded patterns of thought and behaviour. It would suggest that part of the redemption of Persephone's descent is the recovery of the Dionysian dimension of life; this also implies that Dionysian passion resembles initiation into the domain of Hades "in the midst of the passionate fullness of life, a glimpse of a different kind of life, one not constrained by social role or social convention."²⁸ As is explored later, in the process of discovering the feminine Self, a woman often must develop values which are different from those of the patriarchal collective.

Dionysus has his origins in a much earlier manifestation in that of The Horned God of the matriarchal religions. The Horned God is the lord of animals, of the hunt, of death and what lies beyond, and is a masculine figure who is in service to the Goddess. He is a symbol of inner power and potency. He symbolizes a mature masculine image of an undivided self which is not split from body. The horns represent the truth of undisguised emotion which seeks to please no masters. He symbolizes powerful positive male qualities which derive from deep natural sources, the power of feeling and an image of what men could be if they were liberated from the constraints of the patriarchal culture. He is the guardian to the underworld which belongs to the Goddess and he stands between the solar, lunar and the underworld acting as a mediator between the two worlds. He is the dying god who is always in service of the life force.²⁹ He is symbolic of untamed sexuality that has a deep spiritual connection. He possesses the power of feeling. "The Horned God is an embodied incarnate masculine the rightful consort of the Goddess who is also incarnate"³⁰

The energy symbolized by Dionysus and by The Horned God is an energy long repressed by Christianity which turned the Horned God into the Devil, the root of all evil. In a puritanical Christian ethos where instincts, the feminine and the body are denied and repressed, Hades then become the

²⁸ Christine Downing. Op. Cit., Pg 46.

²⁹ Marion Woodman. *Dancing in the Flames*. (Toronto: Knof Canada. 1996) pg. 107

³⁰ IBID., pg 109.

place where those who dare to live this energy are sent to suffer eternal damnation. In Christianity with its emphasis on light, God, solar consciousness and Apollian values of intellect and spirit, the Horned God represents disembodied spirit that manipulates usurping situations for the gratification of its instinctual drives. But as a mature Horned God, he can be a positive role model for the masculine because he remains in relationship to and not separate from the prime of life - the Goddess.

Other Images of Hades/The Underworld

In other images found in mythology, it is the serpent or the dragon that lies in the underworld in which the hero must conquer and overcome. Snakes and Dogs in many Greek tragedies are the guardians and protectors of the treasure in the underworld, and as such these animals are symbolic of the Chthonic God. Jung writes in *Symbols of Transformation*:

"Fear of the maternal womb has become the guardian of the treasure of life. That the snake really is a death symbol is evident from the fact that the souls of the dead, like the Chthonic gods, appear as serpents, as dwellers in the kingdom of the deadly mother"³¹

Much has been written on the symbol of snake or serpent but it is relevant to explore briefly its application to this particular part of the symbol. For many ancient cultures, the snake symbolized the underworld and the realm of the dead because it hides beneath the earth. It is a symbol of death and rebirth also because of its ability to shed its skin. Indeed, Hel the Germanic Goddess of the Underworld mentioned above is the sister of uroboric serpent of the ocean. However, as a cold blooded animal and a representative of the reptile family, it suggests a primitive aspect that touches the lower part of the psyche - lower levels of consciousness and deeper levels of the earth. Of particular significance is the symbol of the Oroborus which is shown as the snake biting its own tail which symbolizes the cycle of the eternal return, and psychologically, a state of unconscious union between mother and daughter, and ego and the unconscious.

Pluto as the Patriarchal Oroborus

In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the original state of unconscious union between Mother and Daughter, or as Neumann suggests 'the matriarchal Oroborus' is overcome by Pluto's abduction of Persephone. This would be equivalent to a woman being "seized by an unknown, overwhelming power that she experiences as a formless numinosum"³² In *The Fear of Feminine*, his thesis is that the psychological development of a woman is quite different from that of a man. It takes place initially by the way of the masculine 'Thou' which he calls an invasion of the patriarchal Oroborus and which, in a woman's psyche, corresponds to the emergence of the Great Father archetype.

"In transitional phases, and in situations which transform the personality - whenever a new archetypal situation is constellated and for whatever reasons, - the archetype, as something numinous and undefined, anonymous and transpersonal, overwhelmingly confronts ego consciousness. Consciousness' first reactions, in the individual situation as in collective development, are feeling overwhelmed and defeated. Only gradually does it work out new forms of adaptation to the archetype that, at a subjective level, lead to development, enrichment and extension of consciousness, and on the objective level manifest in ever more differentiated phenotypes or incarnations of the numinous"³³

A woman experiences this overwhelming power as a male divinity that symbolizes the penetrating power of the unconscious as something 'Other' than feminine ego, and which breaks into her personality to take her beyond herself and her experience of the ego's limits. This male figure could be represented by phallic-chthonic gods who are still subordinate to the Great Mother such as Pan, Poseidon, Hades, Dionysus or the masculine energy could appear as a serpent, dragon or monster. This invasion corresponds "an intoxicating experience of being overwhelmed, of being seized and taken by a 'ravishing penetrator' whom she does not experience personally in relation to and projected onto a concrete man but rather as an anonymous, transpersonal numen"³⁴ Neumann calls this stage of feminine development 'Self-surrender' in which a woman enters into a state of surrender and acceptance, and her fear and anxiety is transformed into intoxication and orgasm. This likely explains

³² Erich Neumann. Op. Cit., Pg 15.

³³ IBID., Pg 16

³⁴ IBID., pg 17.

why the figures of Hades and Dionysus are often considered to be the same. Kore, caught in an unconscious union with the Great Mother, is transformed into Persephone as her experience of her Self is expressed in the body. "Her orgiastic emotion has a spiritual character about it that belongs to a specific form of spiritual experience often associated with the symbol of the moon in mythology."³⁵ As Persephone, a woman enters a new way of experiencing spirit and herself as a woman which is felt in the body, for her "spiritual-emotional and physical processes are bound together in a manner quite foreign to the average man."³⁶ The masculine can then become her guide into the unconscious.

However, there is a danger that if she falls under the sway of the patriarchal Oroborus, she can become spirit possessed and so estranged from herself that she loses her relationship to her femininity, to her body, to the earth, and to her identity. This state could be seen as an animus or spirit possession where a woman is unable to differentiate her Self from the masculine and remains locked in an animus psychology. It is a situation in which many modern women who have gone out into the working world, have found themselves where they have become overly identified with patriarchy and consequently become a prisoner of it. In a culture where the archetypal feminine has largely been repressed and women are considered to be naturally inferior to men, women can never be more than an underage daughter of the patriarchy. The woman remains at this stage, underdeveloped because she has lost connection to her values and identity as a woman. This might correspond to a situation if Kore remained the prisoner of Hades unable to return to her Mother. However, she must return to Demeter for at least part of the year and therefore, reconnect to the feminine Self. And, Pluto/Hades can no longer be the Great Father who abducts her away from her Mother, but must become her equal and to some degree subordinate to her power.

A woman at this stage of development enters into the "psychology of the encounter, of surrender, and devotion to the Self" where she begins a discovery of the feminine Self. In this process, she must assimilate the animus. This means consciously developing values which often stand opposed to the patriarchal values. Neumann suggests that this process is different for a woman than it is for a man to

³⁵ IBID., pg 19

³⁶ IBID., pg 19

assimilate his anima. The “patriarchal culture has motivated a woman to develop the opposite side of her psyche from childhood and this has meant a certain amount of self-estrangement for the sake of conscious development.”³⁷ Persephone's return to Demeter at the end of the myth suggests that a woman's development requires that she return to the primal relationship, however in a newer and higher form which now becomes an encounter of her ego and her feminine Self. Neuman writes:

“With the emergence of the higher uroboric image the Self, in which the figure of the Great Mother and that at the patriarchal Oroborus of the Great Father are united, the woman attains to an inner renewal, to a form of spiritual and emotional fruitfulness specific to herself, and to the highest experience she can have of the totality of the psyche.”³⁸

V. The Astrological/Alchemical Pluto

The intent of this paper has been to explore a bridge between the astrological Pluto, the myth of Demeter and Persephone and the stages of feminine development. It is my hypothesis that this planet astrologically has the potential to activate in the unconscious the archetypal descent of Kore into the Underworld to be reborn as Persephone of the Underworld, and that the cycle of descent and rebirth, and for a woman particularly, represents an opportunity for her to reconnect with an aspect of her essential being - feminine Self. This section will focus on how Pluto might be experienced during a transit to a personal planet.

Pluto is a symbol of retributive fate and rules the place where the will no longer has any power. Jung observes:

“My fate means a daemonic will to precisely that fate - a will not necessarily coincident with my own (the ego will). When it is opposed to the ego, it is difficult not to feel a certain power in it whether divine or infernal. The man who submits to his fate calls it the will of God; the man who puts up a hopeless and exhausting fight is more apt to see the devil in it.”³⁹

³⁷ IBID., pg 55

³⁸ IBID., pg 63

³⁹ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. Vol. 12 *The Collected Works*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) Note 16, Page 30.

Thus meeting Pluto in the world has a feeling of powerlessness about it where one meets the power of the unconscious which can overwhelm the ego i.e. those forces in the psyche which are far more powerful and inevitable than one's ego will and choices. During a Pluto transit, an individual is forced to accept the uncivilized face of nature as a necessary part of experience. There is nothing one can do but trust fate. Pluto rules over the domain of turbulent and primitive emotions of the personal and collective unconscious. All of those personality qualities which are too painful, or too unacceptable to be allowed in the Upperworld. However, once the descent is made, there is no returning to innocence.

As an archetype, Pluto represents the principle that rules the deep recesses of the unconscious which cannot be expressed in emotion or in the world. He is the agent of transformation. He acts as an agent of psychological development and of psychological wholeness by breaking down boundaries and attachments to the ego. This transit forces the individual to work on those parts of the personality that have remained infantile i.e. those parts of ourselves that represent both our untapped potential or our repressed demons or complexes.

By transit, the Pluto is usually experienced as a rape - an energy that feels like a violation although one that we are powerless to resist. Pluto transits astrologically often bring the individual face to face with death which corresponds to some psychological death or 'ego death', that is, the death of a part of the personality. Where ever this planet is transiting the chart, the existing ego-identity is in danger of being destroyed through the affairs of that house or through the principle symbolized by the planet that is aspected by the transit. Despite any attempt to forestall his effects, Pluto will find a way to force changes in that particular area of life. As the herald of death, Hades/Pluto brings death in many forms: death of a relationship, of a way of being, of a purpose, or hope or of meaning. Many times, our entry into his world is involuntary likely through being a victim. It is through this victimization that the abduction occurs as was Persephone's fate. Anything from which we derive our identity could collapse and break down. Pluto is particularly difficult to work with unless one has some trust in fate. While Pluto transits are usually full of darkness, rage and powerlessness, there is the potential to release a great deal of energy 'the treasures of the unconscious'. The principles of new life and rebirth are as much a part of the Pluto experience as suffering death, and grief.

Alchemically, a Pluto transit can be experienced as the nigredo; the first stage⁴⁰ of the alchemical work related to blackening. This stage is associated with images of melancholia, decay, death, and depression, and involves the breakdown of the old substance into its essential components. This could equate with Demeter's experience symbolized by the fallowness of the land, or as someone who withdraws into seclusion, having lost what once had meaning for them and not caring or noting what is going on in the world. Conscious introversion can also be an expression of Pluto's realm.

In the nigredo, the individual is plunged into the dark world of the shadow, into the prima materia involving the regression of the individual's psychic energy. C.G. Jung describes this regression "when the libido immerses itself in the unconscious, thereby provoking infantile reactions, affects, opinion and attitudes from the personal sphere but at the same time activating collective images (archetypes) which have a compensatory and curative means . . ."⁴¹ A Pluto experience is the night sea journey, the descent into the dark world of the unconscious of the Mother and of the child. This journey is part of a necessary process to separate out of the unconscious bond with the mother so that it can realize a soul and identity of its own. The purpose of the journey "is to show that only in the region of danger (watery abyss, cavern, forest, island, castle, etc) can one find the treasure hard to attain (jewel, virgin, life-potion, victory over death)"⁴² Images which might suggest this approach to Pluto include: caves, fissures, cracks in the earth as the instinctive drives first appear "in a disturbed form in the earth"⁴³ that is in the form of a projection into the prima materia.

It is not surprising that Hell or Hades has had a long association with fire in the earth, and that an individual often experiences the alchemical operation of Calcinatio during a Pluto transit where one roasts in hell. Calcinatio in the alchemical texts describes a process of burning of intense emotions to the point where they eventually burn themselves out while transforming the individual in the process.

⁴⁰ The ancient alchemists describe 4 stages of the alchemical opus; the nigredo (black), albedo (white), yellowing, and the rubedo (red).

⁴¹ C.G. Jung. *Symbols of Transformation*, Op. Cit., para 655.

⁴² C.G. Jung. *Psychology and Alchemy*. Op. Cit., para 438.

⁴³ Marie-Louise Von Franz. *Alchemy. An introduction to the Symbolism and the Psychology*. (Toronto,. Inner City Books, 1980) pg 221.

Marie-Louise Von Franz describes this as “cooking the basic instinctive drives in their own affect.”⁴⁴ The volcano has been described often as appearing in the psyche during a Pluto transit for it can release of a great gush of molten emotions of rage, jealousy, hatred or fear. The more instinctual blind and archaic drives are often associated with Pluto and indeed my own dream of the half-wolf/half man presented at the beginning seems to support this hypotheses. A Pluto transit can also be experienced through frustrated desire or love that is expressed by the demanding emotions of passion, hunger, pride, rage, and arrogance and symbolized by the lion, an ego centric power drive of ‘I want it NOW’ or the ‘devouring hunger and greed’ of the wolf . Passion and frustrated desire become the greatest catalyst for transforming primitive passions into the capacity for individual relationship, creative expression, and true individuality. All of these are symbolized by the reborn King in the alchemical texts or the return of Persephone as the Queen in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.

“The fire has to burn, one just has to burn in the emotion until the fire dies down and becomes balanced. That is something which unfortunately cannot be evaded. The burning of the fire of the emotion can’t be tricked out of one’s system; there is no recipe for getting rid of it, it has to be endured. The fire has to burn until the last unclean element has been consumed, which is what all the alchemical texts say in different variations. . . if one is filled with 10,000 devils, one can only be burnt up in them until they quiet down and are still.”⁴⁵

VI. Summary/Conclusion

Pluto/Hades symbolizes the overwhelming disintegrating Underworld forces to which we are all vulnerable. He is the dark son, servant and agent of the unseen Great Mother - the world of the womb, unconscious, and the instincts. He cannot be seen in the Upperworld for he wears a helmet that renders him invisible suggesting that he represents a force that operates beneath the level of consciousness - a facet of our psyche that unconsciously attracts situations through which we will fall apart in order to put ourselves back together again a new way. New life and rebirth however often comes with suffering death, fear, and deep grief. But the aim and goal of the “descent into the dark world of the unconscious,

⁴⁴ IBID., pg 222

⁴⁵ Marie-Louise Von Franz. Op. Cit., Pg 253-254.

the perilous journey of the night sea journey . . . is the restoration of life, resurrection and the triumph over death"⁴⁶

⁴⁶ C.G. Jung. *Psychology and Alchemy*. Op. Cit., para 436.