*Connotations*
Vol. 12.2-3 (2002/2003)

# The Making of a Goddess: Hardy, Lawrence and Persephone[1]

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## I

In the sunless fog preceding the dawn in Chapter 20 of Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1890), Angel Clare mobilises the decorative rhetoric of late-Victorian Hellenic paganism to manufacture the eponymous heroine as "Artemis" and "Demeter":

> The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which pervaded the open mead impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve. At this dim inceptive stage of the day Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness both of disposition and physique, an almost regnant power—possibly because he knew that at that preternatural time hardly any woman so well-endowed in person as she was likely to be walking within the boundaries of his horizon [...]. The mixed, singular, luminous gloom in which they walked along together to the spot where the cows lay, often made him think of the Resurrection-hour. He little thought that the Magdalen might be at his side. Whilst all the landscape was in neutral shade, his companion's face, which was the focus of his eyes, rising above the mist-stratum, seemed to have a sort of phosphorescence upon it. She looked ghostly, as if she were merely a soul at large [...]. It was then [...] that she impressed him most deeply. She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter and other fanciful names, half-teasingly—which she did not like because she did not understand them. (*Tess* 134-35)

Richard Carpenter contends that this scene provides irrefutable evidence of Hardy fashioning Tess as a primitive fertility figure: "at Talbothays Hardy shows his heroine as sometimes much more impressive than a simple country lass ought by rights to be [...]. In her naturalness, in her unsophisticated simplicity, and in her innocence

[...] the peasant girl is at this point as complete an image of the archetypal earth-goddess as modern literature can show" (Carpenter 134-35). However, the opening extract does not comprise Hardy's unflinchingly honest appraisal, but rather the misleading impression attributed to Angel Clare, and it is far from being an example of "uneducated vision" (Krasner 97). If "the two lovers inhabit an Edenic world of unrestrained natural instincts" (Wright 113), it is one glibly fabricated by Clare himself, imposing a literary, counterfeit picture of god-like status on the protagonist (it is bitterly ironic that he calls her Artemis, the cold chaste deity of the hunt, who destroyed with her arrows men who attempted to rape her[2]). Demeter was also a goddess of chastity in some versions of the myth, but because of her ties with agriculture as a goddess of ripe grain, she was a fertility divinity too. Clare fancies in his casual love-play that Tess combines the unsullied innocence of Artemis with the exuberant fruitfulness of Demeter. As the very embodiment of "the great passionate pulse of existence" (*Tess* 161), Tess must be "fresh and virginal" like Artemis, but without losing the generous productiveness of Demeter.

Hardy implements a double perspective throughout this crucial episode: though the whimsical inventions mediated through Clare's perceiving consciousness are problematised, Tess's palpable presence is not. What this extract chronicles is the *breaking*, rather than *making* of an earth-goddess. This stems from Hardy's anguished awareness of a deep and genuine loss, or perversion, of what is natural. Angel Clare's trivializing dilettantism is disastrous: his visual strategies and recurrent posturing make it impossible to entertain traditional mythological representation as a means of invigorating a desiccated late-Victorian milieu. He converts Tess's sensuous reality into the abstract essence of a tritely mythologized Nature. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* enacts the sacrifice of "a goddess figure of immense stature" (Stave 101) in whom exist genuinely profound and mysterious forces, mediated and glimpsed on occasions that involve a process akin to transfiguration. But from the moment Tess is distinguished by her white muslin dress at the May-time Marlott "Cerealia" until she is "unfurled" as a

black flag over Wintoncester gaol after her execution, Hardy's Persephone figure never transcends the traumatic consequences of her "underworld" experiences with Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville:

> The forests have departed, but some old customs of their shades remain. Many however linger only in a metamorphosed or disguised form. The May-Day dance [...] was to be discerned [...] in the guise of the club-revel, or 'club-walking', as it was there called. [...] Its singularity lay less in the retention of a custom of walking in procession and dancing on each anniversary than in the members being solely women [...]. The club of Marlott alone lived to uphold the local Cerealia. It had walked for hundreds of years, if not as benefit-club, as votive sisterhood of some sort; and it walked still. (*Tess* 18-19)

Both the title of *Tess*'s First Phase, "The Maiden," suggesting Persephone's virginal status before her abduction by Pluto, and Hardy's description of the Marlott festivities as a "local Cerealia," referring to the Roman celebrations held in honour of Ceres during eight days in the month of April, alert us to a telling link between Tess and the figures of Demeter and Persephone. Although there is scant evidence to suggest Hardy scrutinised John Ruskin's principal work on mythology, *The Queen of the Air* (1869), the *Literary Notebooks* indicate that he did read the second part at least of Walter Pater's impressionistic account of "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone" (1876). An obstructive critical prejudice dismisses Hardy's mythological framework in *Tess* as little more than the faltering display of classical scholarship by a self-educated vulgarian.[3] However, from the moment when Hardy modified the description of the Marlott club-walking from "Vestal rite" in the manuscript to "local Cerealia" for the *Graphic* serialization, he was convinced that the Demeter-Persephone myth, far from being an ornamental detail, would be seamlessly woven into the imaginative fabric of his narrative. With the replacement of the Roman goddess of fire, Vesta, by Ceres/Demeter, goddess of the corn-bearing earth, as the tutelary deity of the festivities, Hardy brings a more unsettling note into the "May-Day" event. His final substitution of "local Cerealia" for the earlier amendment may have

been connected to the stimulus provided by reading Frazer's *The Golden Bough* during the early months of 1891. A darkly prophetic undercurrent imbues the revised club-walk episode, foreshadowing the fierce polemical purpose of later chapters in which Hardy addresses the relationship between virginity, fecundity and purity; and life, death and rebirth. His placing of the mythological motif near the start of the novel creates an expectation that Tess, like Ceres the Italo-Roman goddess of agriculture identified with the Greek Demeter, will suffer traumatic loss and grief; and, like Persephone, in her overall aspect of unblemished maidenhood, will endure physical violation at the hands of a sexually predatory stranger (Alec d'Urberville), and make a symbolic visit to the underworld. From an early period of composition then, Hardy was using pointed and pungent allusions to the Demeter-Persephone story so as to craft an intricate network of symbolic correspondences.

Hardy was alert to the stinging ironies and incongruities he could use by an extended parallel between the traditional ballad narrative of the ruthless exploitation of female innocence and the abduction and rape of Persephone by Pluto, the Underworld Lord. His classical allusions underpin the searching social critique that becomes increasingly strident in the mature novels, which all brood over the legal and physical relations between the sexes. Hardy incorporates some of the emblems of Demeter and Persephone—flowers and a basket of fruit—to link his young heroine to the unified goddess. Tess's most distinctive trait is her "flower-like mouth," and she carries a "bunch of white flowers" (*Tess* 19) in her left hand during the Marlott procession. After visiting Alec d'Urberville she suddenly blushes at the spectacle of "roses at her breast; roses in her hat; roses and strawberries in her basket to the brim" (*Tess* 47). In most accounts of the abduction of Persephone, including Walter Pater's, the divine maiden is picking roses as well as poppies when Hades or Pluto transports her off to the Underworld. Hardy modifies this flower scene by having Alec take Tess to the "fruit-garden" where he feeds her strawberries of the "British Queen" variety and then adorns Tess's hat and basket of fruit

with roses. The "British Queen" strawberries symbolically doom Tess to return near the end of the novel as Alec's Queen, his paid mistress, at the meretricious Sandbourne resort, recalling the pomegranate seeds that Hades tricks Persephone into eating to guarantee that she will revisit the Underworld and rule as his 'Queen' for one-third of the year.

Despite the promise of a life to come implicit in Persephone's return from the underworld, Hardy is more interested in the myth's tragic implications. Acceptance of a sacrificial communion and the attainment of new vitality will not work in *Tess*, which signals the death of a figure traditionally associated with the blossoming organic fecundity of an agricultural milieu. This interpretation is borne out by Tess's capture at Stonehenge in the novel's memorable finale. The foreboding conceit of Hardy's Henge, its shape rendering the black sky blacker, offers no hint of enlightened change for it has crumbled and fossilized into the Hebraic orthodoxies against which *Jude the Obscure* rails with unprecedented and despairing satire. The arrest of Tess at the pagan temple of Stonehenge, once home to a religion older than almost any other, implies the ruined character of the mythical past in a contemporary society moving unalterably towards spiritual suicide. This feeling is accentuated by the fact that Tess receives sentence in a court not even represented in the narrative. Tess approximates to a Persephone figure that simultaneously incorporates two warring states of nature: asexual forces (which stop her joining the orgiastic Chaseborough dance) and sexual ones; the Christian and the pagan (her ancestor is called Pagan d'Urberville), the wantonly destructive (her murder of Alec d'Urberville) and the luxuriantly fecund. This combination is sacrificed at the ancient temple that recalls the Proserpine of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866): a personification of nature as mortality and sleep. At sunrise Tess awakens to find herself surrounded on the altar stone by dark figures of the law who seem as if they are wearing ritual masks: "in the growing light, their faces and hands [...] were silvered, the remainder of their figures dark" (*Tess* 381). That Hardy refuses to offer any compensating vision

of redemption is underlined by Stonehenge, a forbidding image of stony circularity, a stark emblem of narrative closure.

## II

To D. H. Lawrence, re-reading *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* prior to composing his *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1914), Hardy's bleak interpretation of the Demeter-Persephone myth was yet another glaring instance of his predecessor's unrelenting concentration on the intractability of loss and deprivation in the Wessex world.

> [Hardy] cannot help himself, but must stand with the average against the exception, he must, in his ultimate judgement represent the interests of humanity, or the community as a whole, and rule out the individual interest.
>
> To do this [Hardy] must go against himself. His private sympathy is always with the individual, against the community [...]. Therefore he will create a more or less blameless individual and, making him seek his own fulfilment [...] will show him destroyed by the community, or by that in himself which represents the community. (Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy* 49)

Lawrence deplores Hardy's intensely pessimistic rendering of Tess Durbeyfield who, after the night of her rape/seduction under the "Druidical" oaks of The Chase, is unable to rise from the ashes of her ruined reputation. For Lawrence, the sacrifice of Tess Durbeyfield is seen not as a triumphant demonstration of a lingering pagan mythology, but as its deathstroke. Her execution by hanging marks the failure of a dignified conception of a natural divinity. And Angel Clare's facile imaginings of Tess at Talbothays as "Artemis" and "Demeter" only confirm the futility of trying to resurrect an authentic sense of primitive god-like potency. The *Study of Thomas Hardy*, offering a deeply personal and intuitive analysis of the Wessex Novels, contends with blustering verve that Hardy permits his moral "judgement" to outweigh his spirited support for venturesome characters like Tess, who fails to combat the corrosive cant of the wider "community." Tess, in Lawrence's opinion, "cannot separate" herself "from the mass

which bore" her, and so she becomes a "pathetic rather than tragic" figure (Lawrence, *Study* 45-46). In his review of *Georgian Poetry, 1911-12* Lawrence almost venomously positioned Hardy, along with Ibsen and Flaubert, as one of "the nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people" who represent "a dream of demolition" (Lawrence, *Selected Literary Criticism* 72) from which his own war-ravaged generation must awake.

Whatever his reservations, Lawrence's highly-strung *Study of Thomas Hardy* reveals a deep appreciation for his predecessor's use of the Persephone tale as an imaginative "lens" through which to gauge late-Victorian England and its discontents. However, Lawrence's revisionist story of Persephone refuses to repeat Tess's grim fixation on the abridgement of women's control over their own words, bodies and destinies. Lawrence's most bracing riposte to Hardy's *Tess* is *The Lost Girl* (1920), a novel which illustrates how the Persephone myth, as a focus of the fractured but resurgent union of mother, daughter and the earth's prodigal fecundity, cannot be altogether effaced by the tale of brutish male dominance superimposed upon it. Lawrence's Alvina Houghton, encountering the Plutonic, undergoes a process of being mythicized; instead of studiously cultivating conscious social or personal identity, as in traditional novelistic treatment, she is divested of it, assuming the role of a primordial archetype.

Until very recently, seminal studies of Lawrence's fiction have passed over *The Lost Girl* in almost embarrassed silence. As Ann L. Ardis notes, "*The Lost Girl* has had the dubious distinction of being the lost text in Lawrence's canon, even though it is the only book for which Lawrence received a major award during his lifetime" (Ardis 80). That this novel should be a "lost text" is all the more surprising and unjust given the sophistication with which Lawrence employs the Persephone myth as a partially concealed pattern shaping his narrative into a ritual sequence (see Hyde; Donovan; Viinikka; Franks 29-44). Lawrence's sources for this interest in the goddess figure range from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings of *Proserpine* to the turn-of-the-century studies of comparative religion by Sir James Frazer, Jane

Ellen Harrison and Gilbert Murray. Lawrence's first explicit references to the findings of this "Cambridge School" date from 1913. In a letter to Bertrand Russell on December 8, 1915, Lawrence remarked that he had been looking at both Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910). In the following year, he read Gilbert Murray and Frazer's distinguished mentor, E. B. Tylor. Lawrence reacted ebulliently to Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), and its sober, stringent examination of the mythopoeic consciousness of archaic man. To two different correspondents he expressed his preference for it over *The Golden Bough,* with its tedious multiplication of examples and lack of a firm theoretical framework. Lawrence's ardent enthusiasm for Tylor's research convinced him that by exploring the elemental energies enshrined in the Persephone myth he could overhaul the hidebound, humourless conventions of his modern moment and refresh them with potencies drawn from a dateless past. In *The Lost Girl,* Lawrence employs an ancient story illustrating the seasonal decay and revival of vegetation to address the mysteries of identity and the phenomenon of war.

*The Lost Girl* exploits with mischievous relish the irony of Lawrence's central protagonist Alvina Houghton having to evade the stultifying conventionality of a Midlands town not by rising above it but by travelling below its thick, ugly crust of railways and roads. By delineating Alvina as a Persephone figure who stoically endures the unrelieved sterility of imaginative and intellectual life in her "wintry" provincial town and who journeys to the "springtime" of the Italian countryside, Lawrence implicitly demonstrates how Hardy's treatment of the myth fails to confront the positive aspects of the youthful goddess's return from the gloomy underworld. Although the crucial reference to Persephone towards the end of *The Lost Girl*'s first chapter is couched in terms of exultant ascent—"Dame Fortune would rise like Persephone out of the earth" (*LG* 17)—Lawrence is more excited by the concept of movement downwards into atavistic darkness so as to achieve sharpened consciousness or multiplied perception. In fashioning this notion of invigorating and fecund darkness, Lawrence

may have had in mind the remorseless logic of public entrapment exposed by Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), a novel *The Lost Girl* superficially resembles in its opening stages (see Norton 171-90):

> But she [Anna] continued to think of Mynors. She envied him for his cheerfulness, his joy, his goodness, his dignity, his tact, his sex. She envied every man. Even in the sphere of religion, men were not fettered like women. No man, she thought, would acquiesce in the futility to which she had already half resigned; a man would either wring salvation from the heavenly powers or race gloriously to hell. Mynors—Mynors was a god! (*Anna* 75)

Alvina Houghton in *The Lost Girl* will not be choked by "envy" for the unfettered freedoms that her male counterparts blithely take for granted in her hometown of Woodhouse. Like the smug Sydney suburbia in Lawrence's Australian novel *Kangaroo* (1923), Woodhouse is "sprinkled on the surface of a darkness into which it never penetrated" (*K* 13); it is Alvina who will "race gloriously to hell" in order to savour the atavistic darkness that is a purgative release from crippling social constraint. This is in sharp contrast to Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady* (1923), whose Persephone figure, Mrs Forrester, dies defeated by the hypocritical and malicious pretences of a community that will not brook her youthful vivacity and poise: her ghost is invoked from the underworld of Niel Herbert's bitter memories:

> He would like to call up the shade of the young Mrs. Forrester, as the Witch of Endor called up Samuel's, and challenge it, demand the secret of that ardour; ask her whether she had really found some ever-blooming, ever-burning, ever-piercing joy, or whether it was all fine play-acting. Probably she had found no more than another; but she had always the power of suggesting things much lovelier than herself, as the perfume of a single flower may call up the whole sweetness of spring. (Cather 175)

It is Lawrence's goal in *The Lost Girl* to illustrate with vivid detail how Alvina salvages a source of "ever-piercing joy" from her seemingly unpromising surroundings, while resisting "the elements of a young ladies' education" (*LG* 11).

Like Thomas Hardy and Arnold Bennett before him, Lawrence portrays the smothering of the creative by an intolerant urban bourgeoisie, whose crass manners and mores are the object of much satirical gusto in *The Lost Girl*'s abrasively self-reflexive opening chapter (see Alcorn 78-89; Daleski 17-28; Ross 5-16):

> In Woodhouse, there was a terrible crop of old maids among the [...] tradespeople and the clergy. The whole town of women, colliers' wives and all, held its breath as it saw a chance of one of these daughters of comfort and woe getting off. They flocked to the well-to-do weddings with an intoxication of relief. (*LG* 2)

Alvina and her father cannot fulfil their dreams of a more rewarding existence given that their Midlands neighbours are unapologetically Philistine and censorious. Nor can Alvina gain sustenance from her own mother Clariss Houghton, whom Lawrence depicts as a desperately enfeebled Demeter, a "heart-stricken nervous invalid" (*LG* 11) compelled to cede maternal control to the redoubtable governess Miss Frost. Clariss Houghton is a scalding contrast to the "Good Mother" described by Melanie Klein, "the omnipotent and generous dispenser of love, nourishment and plenitude" (Moi 115). She is banished to a shadowy back-bedroom in Manchester House—marginalized, querulous and tormented by neurotic dread:

> At half-past six in the morning there was a clatter of feet and girls' excited tongues along the back-yard and up the wooden stairway outside the back wall. The poor invalid heard every clack and every vibration. Every morning alike, she felt an invasion of some enemy was breaking in on her. And all day long the low, steady rumble of sewing-machines overhead seemed like the low drumming of a bombardment upon her weak heart. To make matters worse, James Houghton decided that he must have his sewing-machines driven by some extra-human force. He installed another plant of machinery —acetylene or some such contrivance—which was intended to drive all the little machines from one big belt. Hence a further throbbing and shaking in *the upper regions*, truly terrible to endure. (*LG* 10; my italics)

Against the positive unfolding of selfhood and sudden expansion of sympathy that Alvina will achieve in Throttle-Ha'Penny coalmine,

Lawrence reveals here with a complex mixture of bitterly sardonic wit and genuine pathos, a "truly terrible" site of female disempowerment. The mystical resonances and reverberations so redemptive for the daughter in the mine are measured against the incessant din generated by the sewing-machine girls employed by James Houghton.

## III

*The Lost Girl* differs markedly from Hardy's *Tess* in the degree to which it stresses the immeasurable worth of Alvina's subterranean experiences over the stifling social and moral prohibitions that worry her invalid mother. Unlike Tess Durbeyfield, who in Lawrence's opinion, ultimately "sided with the community's condemnation of her" (*Study* 46), Alvina will not allow herself to be "destroyed" by the pernicious mainstream majority, and she is liberated from the shackles of "herd-instinct." If we borrow Lawrence's terms in the *Study of Thomas Hardy*, Alvina is "individualist", "beyond the average"; she 'chooses to rule" her own life to her "own completion." In Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *Lolly Willowes* (1926), Laura Willowes, with a shrug of weary resignation, accepts "the inevitable. Sooner or later she must be subdued into young-ladyhood" (Warner 18). But Alvina chafes against this dreary etiquette of "lady-like" submission to conventional decorum. She prefers the rich possibilities of relationship obscurely encoded in sensory and affective experience; ultimately evading the multiple pressures of place and history that Hardy presented so despairingly in *Tess*. Lawrence's vehement drive to portray a convention-breaking character, innately distrustful of attitudes that dictate presumptuously to experience, whose rebellion against the "community" largely succeeds, is indicated in the original working title *The Insurrection of Miss Houghton*. In *The Lost Girl*, the daily frustration of English middle-class living, epitomised by the "incarceration" of Clariss Houghton in the shop-soiled recesses of Manchester House, need not be an insurmountable obstacle to Alvina's ambitions.

Though, as one commentator observes, "for Hardy, Lawrence's sense of freedom would be delusion" (Kinkead-Weekes 102).

If, according to H. D. in *Bid Me to Live* (1960), the "past had been blasted to hell" in 1917 and "the old order was dead" (Doolittle 24), then Lawrence ensures that his references to Persephone are imbued with intimations of hopeful metamorphosis in *The Lost Girl*. He does not consider the danger of deploying timeless archetypes that may work to naturalize gender oppression, and he lacks H. D.'s thoroughly defined sense of the political implications of classical reference in relation to the contemporary woman question. Lawrence's primary concern is to convey Alvina progressing towards a keen apprehension of how awesome beauty and shocking violence form essential parts of the world she lives in. To know the comfortless grandeur of the "Plutonic earth," Lawrence implies, is to register it according to sensuous awareness, the "blood," or the unconscious. This awareness allows a resilient Alvina to keep her unique powers fresh in a moribund Midlands milieu, cutting against the prevailingly sombre and pensive tone of Hardy's *Tess*. This is exemplified in Chapter 4 of *The Lost Girl*.

When Alvina visits the Throttle-Ha'Penny pit operated by her quixotic father James, she registers for the first time the condition of "underneathness" as a creative augmentation of selfhood, with its manifold and elliptical promptings of feeling. Throttle-Ha'Penny represents that stratum of primitive energy normally overlaid by moral and social conditioning. A startling shift of perception takes place, from a grimly everyday mode to a much less definable and dislocating mode, free from the strictures of logic, in which Alvina is both dumbstruck onlooker and avid participant. The "downwardness" invokes a different, more dynamic form of temporality from the merely chronological, which it holds in abeyance. The pit and the colliers—a realm of male physical industrial work—give Alvina a sense of the currents flowing beneath the surface of her cheerless petit bourgeois life. Lawrence gains from the vitality of existing mythologies to make enigmatic and arresting myths of his own, evoking new "mysteries."

Lawrence captures a note of excited confusion as Alvina is immersed in an utterly unfamiliar element.

> The working was low, you must stoop all the time. The roof and the timbered sides of the way seemed to press on you. It was as if she were in her tomb forever, like the dead and everlasting Egyptians. She was frightened, but fascinated. The collier kept on talking to her, stretching his bare, grey-black, hairy arm across her vision, and pointing with his knotted hand. The thick-wicked tallow candles guttered and smelled. There was a thickness in the air, a sense of dark, fluid presence in the thick atmosphere, the dark, fluid, viscous voice of the collier making a broad-vowelled, clapping sound in her ear. He seemed to linger near as if he knew—as if he knew—what? Something forever unknowable and inadmissible, something that belonged purely to the underground: to the slaves who work underground: knowledge humiliated, subjected, but ponderous and inevitable. (*LG* 47)

This scene reassesses the "darkness" of mere moral and intellectual bewilderment that assails Tess on the night of her rape/seduction among the primeval oaks of "The Chase." When a collier stretches "his bare, grey-black, hairy arm across her vision" a sensual energy impinges on Alvina's consciousness. By granting her chthonic surroundings precedence over the unsmiling custodians of demure gentility in the upper world, Alvina finds herself caught deliriously between fear and fascination, pleasure and pain, liberation and suffocation. Her initiatory ordeal is into a secret knowledge of occult significance that all the colliers apparently share. The adroit mixture of Alvina's breathlessly rapt perspective ("you must stoop all the time"), and the coolly objective point of view ("It was as if she were in her tomb forever"), makes the "you" involve the reader's sense in this richly textured imaginative descent. Lawrence also exploits the multiple meanings of "purely", recalling Hardy's controversial subtitle to *Tess* that defiantly declares his 'Pure Woman' is "faithfully presented." That "something forever unknowable and inadmissible," belonging "purely to the underground," Lawrence links to Alvina's shocked rediscovery of the primal roots of her being.

Roger Fowler argues that the pit and the colliers offer Alvina "a sexual awakening" (Fowler 63). But Fowler's interpretation oversim-

plifies Alvina's multi-faceted reaction to the seemingly oppressive environment. It is difficult to reconcile Fowler's notion with Alvina feeling entombed like "the dead and everlasting Egyptians." The instinctual life, with all its excitations and commotions of feeling, glimpsed by Alvina in the second-rate mine cannot thrive in the mechanised English setting of *The Lost Girl*. She is trapped among social beings whose lives are consecrated to upholding an ideology of decorous conduct that demands joyless abstention from worldly pleasure. Alvina's urgent struggle against the toils of high-mindedness is provided with an absurdly comic counterpoint: her father's persistent efforts to make his commercial ventures profitable in a town whose inhabitants are generally myopic, mundane and bigoted. That Alvina inherits some of her father's haughty aloofness shows in her unwavering opposition to the precepts of the community that has reared her. This is Lawrence's pointed response to what he judges as Hardy's abject negativity in his use of the Persephone myth in *Tess*.

Throttle-Ha'Penny is for Alvina a bizarre mode of emancipation from the severely restricting ideology of Woodhouse gentility. She yields to the chthonic powers of the netherworld by temporarily surrendering lucid self-awareness. This is Alvina's first step towards merging with a series of cosmic and elemental locations so that "Hades" can be viewed both as a chthonic deity and as a specific, scrupulously realised physical locale:

> And still his voice went on clapping in her ear, and still his presence edged near her, and seemed to impinge on her—a smallish, semi-grotesque, grey-obscure figure with a naked brandished forearm: not human: a creature of the subterranean world, melted out like a bat, fluid. She felt herself melting out also, to become a mere vocal ghost, a presence in the thick atmosphere. (*LG* 47)

Alvina consorts with the unseemly troupers of James Houghton's vaudeville theatre, thus *sinking* to the bottom of "polite" society—a movement that mirrors her exhilarated descent into the mine. Yet she maintains a peculiar gift: "her ancient sapience went deep, deeper

than Woodhouse could fathom. The young men did not like her for it" (*LG* 35). She repudiates all the suitors who would be considered appropriate and offends the sanctimonious superiority of her neighbours by marrying the obtuse Italian peasant Ciccio Marasca. Her insurgency against the inflexible protocol and expectations of Woodhouse existence is a far cry from the sense of parochial inevitability which Lawrence finds so disheartening in Hardy's *Tess*, where finer feelings are repeatedly subject to crushing extinction on the part of social custom. Indeed, Lawrence records in the *Study of Thomas Hardy*: "This is the theme of novel after novel: [...] be passionate, individual, wilful, you will find the security of the convention a walled prison, you will escape, and you will die" (Lawrence, *Study* 43).

Alvina's subterranean trial shows how it is feasible, in a moment of unguarded rapture, to apprehend the rich darkness flowing beneath the "walled prison" of Woodhouse mediocrity. Alvina's selfhood fuses with the environment as she melts bat-like into the thick, vital atmosphere. Her perceptions are greatly accentuated when she emerges from the pit, out of her "swoon":

> She blinked and peered at the world in amazement. What a pretty, luminous place it was, carved in substantial luminosity. What a strange and lovely place, bubbling iridescent-golden on the surface of the underworld. Iridescent-golden—could anything be more fascinating! Like lovely glancing surface on fluid pitch. But a velvet surface. A velvet surface of golden light, velvet-pile of gold and pale luminosity, and strange beautiful elevations of houses and trees, and depressions of fields and roads, all golden and floating like atmospheric majolica. Never had the common ugliness of Woodhouse seemed so entrancing [...]. It was like a vision. Perhaps gnomes and subterranean workers, enslaved in the era of light, see with such eyes. (*LG* 47-48)

Alvina's epiphany clashes with Mrs Moore's experience of the Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India* (1924) where Forster depicts the fragility of the social self when assailed by unconscious impulses. In the Caves Mrs Moore might be seen as a Demeter figure engulfed by an apocalyptic vision when searching for the pallid, passionless Per-

sephone Adela Quested. But whereas Mrs Moore cannot cope with the crisis of identity that the cave induces—she loses all sense of metaphysical unity underlying the phenomenal world—Alvina is almost painfully alert to what is happening to her in the subterranean realm. She begins to rediscover her true identity through a willed, even exultant surrender to the instinctual self.

Alvina's descent into and return from the Woodhouse "underworld" is of an altogether more enabling intensity than that described by Forster in the Marabar Caves. Our sense of the "human" (Alvina and the colliers) is replaced first by the "animal" (bats), then by the striking colour and shapes of tangible objects. The forlorn contours of the industrial landscape—which normally choke and enervate Alvina—are now suffused with a shimmering haze of golden light. She unlocks the sensuous realities of a region in which the natural and the artificial ("velvet-pile of gold") have coalesced beautifully. Alvina, unlike Tess Durbeyfield and Forster's Mrs Moore, preserves vitality in the underworld and brings it back to the surface, creating a dynamic and dazzling new locale. "Bubbling," "glancing," "elevations," "floating" catches the exuberant buoyancy felt in Lawrence's memorable scene. To the habitually dreary Woodhouse topography Alvina donates a visionary force discovered in the drugged absorption of the darkness below. Tess cannot achieve the same effect when labouring on the bleakly inhospitable Flintcomb-Ash farm (the name suggesting burnt-out matter). Flintcomb-Ash, with its barren soil and machines that obliterate human identity, becomes for Tess "pandaemonium" (*Tess* 324), the location of all demons and the capital of Hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Tess languishes at Flintcomb-Ash but Alvina, by contrast, apprehends the fecundity within herself. Her ability to metamorphose her wintry landscape is a type of quickening, underlined by the fact that Alvina's name is related to the Italian *alvo*, which can be used to designate "the womb."

In the next paragraph Lawrence elaborates the notion of the colliers as the devitalised and warped descendants of timeless chthonic powers:

> Slaves of the underworld! She watched the swing of the grey colliers along the pavement with a new fascination, hypnotized by a new vision. Slaves—the underground trolls and iron-workers, magic, mischievous, and enslaved, of the ancient stories. But tall—the miners seemed to her to loom tall and grey, in their enslaved magic. Slaves who would cause the superimposed day-order to fall. Not because, individually, they wanted to. But because, collectively, something bubbled up in them, the force of darkness which had no master and no control. It would bubble and stir in them as earthquakes stir the earth. It would be simply disastrous, because it had no master. There was no dark master in the world. The puerile world went on crying out for a new Jesus, another Saviour from the sky, another heavenly superman. When what was wanted was a Dark master from the underworld. (*LG* 48)

The passage is the deadly *reverse* of the creative *obverse* when Alvina emerges from Throttle-Ha'Penny and bequeaths new potency to the shabby, unfinished uniformity of her Midlands town. Now she images an apocalyptic eruption of the suppressed underworld force. Lawrence's version of the Plutonic "Dark master" (contrasting with the "Plutonic master" (*Tess* 315-16) of the steam-threshing machine at Flintcomb-Ash), located in the realm of wisdom that is intuitive and instinctual, embodies a subversive element whose tremors threaten to shatter the uncomprehending upper world, the debased "day-order." The passage shows Alvina in a place of "gnomes" and "underground trolls," deftly shifting emphasis from Classical to Nordic legend and myth. When Alvina travels to Italy, a more unnerving experience of self-dispossession envelops her, without any consoling reference to quaint, fey images of fairytale creatures. Her first subterranean adventure is revised into a more brutal and bruising encounter in the Italian section of *The Lost Girl*; the facile gnomes become frightening Lemures and Furies.

Alvina's response to the grey colliers streaming past her is termed "nostalgia," which modulates into an unconsciously sexual "craving": "As it always comes to its children, the nostalgia of the repulsive, heavy-footed Midlands came over her again [...] the [...] dark, inexplicable and yet insatiable craving—as if for an earthquake" (*LG* 48). Lawrence repeats "nostalgia" once Alvina has settled in Italy: "The terror, the agony, the nostalgia of the heathen past was a constant

torture to her mediumistic soul" (*LG* 315). Alvina's capacity to grasp things not with her intellectual faculties, but with her instinctual awareness, has outlasted the Midlands tedium and the imposition of rationality. Nevertheless, her intricately developed sensual responsiveness requires the highly charged atmosphere of southern Italy, a locale sufficiently removed from the modern tendencies of mechanical industrialisation. That these traits damage the human gift for potentially joyous, involuntary and unconscious activities of thought is stressed by Lawrence's caustic description of the "alternative" underworld: James Houghton's "Pleasure Palace" (*LG* 105), a rickety picture-house and the last of his breathtakingly botched business ventures (Cowan 95-114). This nickelodeon vaudeville theatre, featuring both short films and music hall "turns," is an abortive effort on Houghton's part to replicate for a paying public Alvina's subterranean episode in Throttle-Ha'Penny. The Palace provides a threadbare form of 'darkness' in which bizarre celluloid "visions" flicker to the clattering accompaniment of a second-rate piano: "The lamps go out: gurglings and kissings—and then the dither on the screen: 'The Human Bird,' in awful shivery letters. It's not a very good machine, and Mr May is not a very good operator. Audience distinctly critical" (*LG* 110). Houghton's ramshackle picture-house duplicates the mine adventure only in its 'red-velvet seats' at the front (*LG* 106): an impish glance at the "velvet-pile" on the surface of Alvina's underworld (*LG* 47-48).

## IV

The resources of explosive aggression suggested by Lawrence's depiction of the "Dark master" in *The Lost Girl*'s Chapter 4 also infuse Francesco Marasca (whose surname means "bitter cherry"—or to the heroine "dark poison fruit" evoking the pomegranate seeds given to Persephone). Ciccio is a member of the Natcha-Kee-Tawaras, a group of continental troupers, and functions in the intricate schema of the

novel as Pluto to Alvina's Persephone. However, this strand of analogy is complicated by Lawrence's refusal to be confined within the limits of a single myth. Ciccio's physical attributes suggest not only Pluto but Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, agriculture and corn (the Roman Bacchus), also associated with the underworld. According to Frazer,

> Dionysus was believed to have died a violent death, but to have been brought back to life again; and his sufferings, death, and resurrection were enacted in his sacred rites. His tragic story is thus told by the poet Nonnus. Zeus in the form of a serpent visited Persephone, and she bore him Zagreus, that is, Dionysus, a horned infant. (Frazer 397)

Dionysus, whose "tragic story" reflected the yearly dissolution and renewal of vegetation, was a late addition to the rites of another Greek deity, Demeter. That Lawrence reveals Ciccio's malevolent energies by repeatedly comparing him to animals is significant: "one met the yellow pupils, sulphurous and remote. It was like meeting a lion" (*LG* 160); "there was a certain dark, leopard-like pride in the air about him" (*LG* 289); "his long, cat-like look" (*LG* 173); his "eyes watched her as a cat watches a bird, but without the white gleam of ferocity" (*LG* 211). "A feature in the mythical character of Dionysus," Frazer explains, "which at first sight appears inconsistent with his nature as a deity of vegetation, is that he was often [...] represented in animal shape" (Frazer 399). The Italian's inscrutable black eyes denote cruel remoteness and predatory acquisitiveness. Ciccio is feline: not only does he possess the sensuous beauty of the cat but also its elusive dexterity and fiercely independent nature. Furtive and inaccessible, the Italian represents a figure of atavistic energy. This atavism is treated not so much as a virtue but as a subjugating force by Mrs Tuke: "'Why not *be* atavistic if you *can* be, and follow at a man's heel just because he's a man. Be like barbarous women, a slave.'" (*LG* 286) Alvina dwells on Mrs Tuke's words: "Was it atavism, this sinking into extinction under the spell of Ciccio? Was it atavism, this strange, sleep-like submission to his being? [...] Would she ever wake out of her dark, warm coma?" (*LG* 288). Ciccio is treated like a traditional

vagabond among the Natcha-Kee-Tawaras troupe and his role in the elaborate dance with Kishwegin (*LG* 141) is that of torturer and killer.

Even as *The Lost Girl* insists on Ciccio's volatility, his character is complicated by Lawrence's celebration of his subtle, sinewy, flower-like embodiment of Italy's seductive beauty, "extraordinarily velvety and alive" (*LG* 140). Even wearing his "terrifying war-paint" for the pre-show procession, he is "like a flower on its stem" (*LG* 141). Alvina first notices his "long, beautiful lashes" (*LG* 125), "slender wrists" (*LG* 128) and "frail-seeming hands" (*LG* 129). Despite the male chauvinism of Ciccio's opinions, Lawrence implies, the Italian is more like one of the flowers Persephone stoops to pick rather than a bullying and wilfully perverse patriarch. It is quiet recognition of his "passional vulnerability" that moves Alvina to devotion (*LG* 291) when she notices that "his face was open like a flower right to the depths of his soul, a dark, lovely translucency, vulnerable to the deep quick of his soul" (*LG* 291). The images of fluid darkness, sacrificial suffering and enslavement connected with Alvina's revelatory vision during and immediately after her visit to the coalmine are evoked again when she succumbs to Ciccio. Lawrence reinvents the rape of Persephone by Pluto:

> The sense of the unknown beauty of him weighed her down like some force. If for one moment she could have escaped from that black spell of his beauty, she would have been free. If only she could, for one second, have seen him ugly, he would not have killed her and made her his slave as he did. But the spell was on her, of his darkness [...]. And he killed her. He simply took her and assassinated her. How she suffered no one can tell. Yet all this time, this lustrous dark beauty, unbearable. (*LG* 202)

In Chapter 4, Alvina had regarded the colliers as "slaves of the underworld [...] tall and grey in their enslaved magic" (*LG* 47); now she acknowledges that the Italian intended her to be "his slave" (*LG* 203). While she has by no means been raped, she is placed in this extreme position by her helpless erotic attachment to Ciccio. And her subjugation in other areas of life is distinctly forced upon her. The final sentences move seamlessly into Alvina's perspective to convey the radi-

cal ambivalence of her visionary episode, which maintains a delicate equipoise between the sumptuously productive and violently destructive. "Black spell" recalls Alvina's "Egyptian tomb" episode in Throttle-Ha'Penny, and anticipates the "downslope into Orcus" that Somers craves in *Kangaroo*, that "sacred darkness, where one was enveloped into the greater god as in an Egyptian darkness. He would meet there or nowhere" (*K* 143). The seismic intensity of these subterranean settings Lawrence transfers to Ciccio; but his elliptical presence is even more destabilising—Alvina is subjected to, and surreptitiously relishes, boorishly unsympathetic sexual behaviour. Lawrence's version of Persephone's ravishment attaches more significance to its vivid religious meaning than to any social debate on the chilling implications of abduction and forced submission.

Alvina's immersion in the underworld atmosphere of Ciccio's presence is a more problematic encounter than Alec d'Urberville's abduction of Tess/Persephone in Hardy's novel. The "thick darkness" (*Tess* 76) that engulfs Tess on this night implies The Chase is a version of the Frazerian underworld, a "gloomy subterranean realm" (Frazer 406), to which Hades forcibly transports Persephone. This event is rehearsed when Alec carries an apprehensive and frightened Tess —again dressed in white—off to his residence, appropriately called "The Slopes," in a manner that grotesquely parodies Hades's seizing of the unwilling Persephone and bearing her away in his chariot to the Underworld. But instead of the Underworld god's "golden car" (Frazer 406), Alec ironically possesses—in a sly allusion to the old anagrammatic reversal of "god" as "dog"—a "dog-cart" (*Tess* 57). Hardy never lets us forget the bitterly incongruous images of a Demeter who in the myth, once realizing that her daughter has been stolen, embarks on a frantic search and does everything in her power to rescue her, including laying waste the upper world which brings humanity to the verge of extinction, and Joan Durbeyfield who actively engineers the union between her daughter and the supposed relative of wealth. Like Pluto, whose name the Romans often translated into *Dis*, the Latin word for "riches," Alec has sufficient funds

(derived from his father's commercial success in the industrialized North) to purchase his pleasure and capitalize on Tess's deep sense of obligation towards her impecunious family. As he drives the heroine downhill, the ground seems to open up like the chasm out of which Hades suddenly arose: "The aspect of the straight road enlarged with their advance, the two banks dividing like a splitting stick" (*Tess* 57). Hardy stresses descent: "Down, down they sped, the wheels humming like a top." Unlike Alec in *Tess* who ruthlessly exploits then spurns Tess, Ciccio is the instrument of Alvina's further development; he releases her from a staid bourgeois life that denies not only passion, but the free expression of individual imagination.

Though Lawrence views Alvina's "abduction" as necessary, even cathartic, this is not a consistent strategy in his fiction. In Lawrence's first novel *The White Peacock* (1911), Lettie and George clearly need each other but Lettie aspires to move "upward" through the social hierarchy into what she regards as more elegantly refined "higher" society, not downward into the vivid immediacy of George's farm setting, and she is thus sardonically termed "Persephone": "Lettie was on in front, flitting darkly across the field, bending over the flowers, stooping to the earth like a sable Persephone come into freedom" (*WP* 143). Another "Proserpine" in the same novel is, on the other hand, no socially mobile and emotionally complex modern young woman like Alvina but a "big, prolific woman" (*WP* 135), a coarse matron who is preferred by her gamekeeper husband over the high-society "peacock" who had once toyed with the prospect of marrying him. The opposites so strikingly elaborated in *The Lost Girl* singularly fail to harmonise in *The White Peacock*. In his edgier portraits of the Persephone and Pluto figures in his fiction, Lawrence implies the marriage of opposites can generate more instability and dissension than benefit. So in *Sons and Lovers* (1913), the mother Gertrude Morel proudly polices the boundaries of what she regards as the rarefied standards of "enlightened" culture, which merely goads the father Walter Morel to ever more savage hostility after labouring manually all day in the gloomy "underworld" of the Bestwood mine.

With regard to Ciccio's Plutonic power in *The Lost Girl*, Lawrence deliberately makes it difficult for us to distinguish between the darkness as vibrant source of regeneration, and the gloom of merciless annihilation. Ciccio's "terrible" passion provides for emotional rebirth, yet even this salvation is rendered with a sustained ambiguity. At her new home in the Abruzzi Mountains, Alvina is assaulted by more terrifying currents of primeval activity than she could ever have envisaged in the bowels of the English earth. Life with Ciccio means loss of caste, months of solitariness and the penury of peasant Italy; under Italian marriage law Alvina effectively becomes her husband's property. She is distinctly subjugated: Ciccio and one of his male relatives seem to be "threatening her with surveillance and subjection" (*LG* 329). His relatives will not discuss with any woman religious issues, political controversies or any other topic that would feature in Alvina's topical conversation within her more cultivated English coterie of friends. In spite of this dismissive treatment, she is, paradoxically, almost revered as a radiant opposite to the surly, taciturn men of her new home who see in her "a fairness, a luminousness" of soul, "something free, touched with divinity" (*LG* 325). This divinity, we realise, is that of the daylight Persephone, however attenuated in her present circumstances.

In Chapter 15, "The Journey Across," Alvina leaves dismal, dead England behind her. Indeed, it is swept away as an unreal vision, and from the boat it resembles a slowly sinking coffin:

> England, beyond the water, rising with ash-grey, corpse-grey cliffs, and streaks of snow on the downs above. England, like a long, ash-grey coffin slowly submerging. She watched it, fascinated and terrified. It seemed to repudiate the sunshine, to remain unilluminated, long and ash-grey and dead, with streaks of snow like cerements. That was England! Her thoughts flew to Woodhouse, the grey centre of it all. (*LG* 294)

The passage conflicts with the shimmering vision of Woodhouse after Alvina's emergence from the pit: "What a strange and lovely place, bubbling iridescent-golden [...] a velvet surface of golden light" (*LG* 64-65). The colourful, living landscape in Chapter 4 is now an ash-

grey coffin that repudiates "the sunshine, to remain unilluminated" (*LG* 329). Alvina, like her creator, abandons the real and symbolic Old Country, disenchanted by the grim constrictions of bourgeois life, for a supposedly undefiled land. In *The Lost Girl*, Italy signifies both the largely unmapped hinterland of the psyche, and a terrestrial New World of reborn possibilities for Alvina. Approaching Italy in the train, she feels "vaster influences spreading around, the Past was greater, more magnificent [...]. For the first time the nostalgia of the vast Roman and classic world took possession of her" (*LG* 297). Alvina's rapt response betrays a touristic tweeness of which she will be disabused by the tough peasant life awaiting her. Lawrence does not glibly sentimentalise the region to which Alvina is taken by her husband. She feels vulnerable in "the darkness of the savage little mountain town" (*LG* 305). The hill-peasants are "watchful, venomous, dangerous" (*LG* 324); and Alvina, to survive, "must avoid the *inside* of it" (*LG* 325), just as she avoided being ensnared by the Victorian-English centre of Woodhouse.

Alvina's journey, part spiritual and part sexual, is towards the excavation of the pagan elements within, an exposure of unconscious "chords." The austere contours of her new home are both bewitching and deeply distressing. Terror need not exclude the beatific: "she was [...] stunned with the strangeness of it all: startled, half-enraptured with the terrific beauty of the place, half-horrified by its savage annihilation of her" (*LG* 314). This vision of Italy is much crueller than the darker side of her overwhelming experience in the pit. Throttle-Ha'Penny displayed the colliers as victims; now Alvina is the victim, assailed by forces that reach the deepest ground of her being. Her existence has radically shifted from the rigours of high-mindedness to the vitality of spontaneous communion with the cosmos, her newly opened senses energised by elemental natural forces. This metamorphosis is reflected in the verbal texture of the novel, which begins as a carefully calibrated study of manners reminiscent of Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), and ends bordering on lurid gothic melodrama.

## V

In *The Lost Girl*'s Chapter 15, Alvina is stirred by "the grand pagan twilight" of the Italian valleys, "savage, cold, with a sense of ancient gods who knew the right for human sacrifice."

> It stole away the soul of Alvina. She felt transfigured in it, clairvoyant in another mystery of life. A savage hardness came in her heart. The gods who had demanded human sacrifice were quite right, immutably right. The fierce, savage gods who dipped their lips in blood, these were the true gods. (*LG* 315)

In Hardy's *Tess* the protagonist also experiences an individual moment of "transfiguration" when she baptizes her illegitimate child with the help of her younger brothers and sisters. However, Tess does not discover within herself enough potency to prevent the death of her baby, who is born in the spring, the time when Persephone returns to Demeter, and is buried in August during the harvest, when the Romans commemorated Persephone's disappearance. In this dramatically stylized picture of the girl-mother Hardy does not imply any development of Tess's individual thought-patterns. She does not seem aware that she has been invested with a preternatural strength. But Lawrence's Alvina *feels herself* "transfigured" and "clairvoyant in another mystery of life," able to apprehend matters beyond the range of ordinary perception. The writing gains special force from the context of the Great War against which it is played. Ciccio is called up in the final pages, leaving Alvina with grave doubts about her future. The Great War touches, and is touched by, every reference to human sacrifice, annihilation and the spellbinding but merciless chthonic deities in *The Lost Girl*. What is most arresting about the later chapters is how the Persephone myth connects with this cataclysmic event. Persephone was understood to symbolise the seed corn that must descend into the earth so that from apparent death new life may germinate. The Italian section of *The Lost Girl* enables Lawrence to move beyond any superficial use of a sentimentally encouraging myth. There are implications to Alvina unconsciously embracing the

"fierce gods" as she embraces the "assassination" inflicted by Ciccio. The gods who demand human sacrifice, who dip "their lips in blood," are to her "immutably right" (*LG* 315).

Human sacrifice of one kind or another occurs in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* and "The Woman Who Rode Away." Yet Alvina's experience is unusual. That the Great War should be endorsed as *necessary* destruction from which a new order may emerge is not perhaps Lawrence's explicit intention. However, in Chapter 14, the England Alvina disavows is likened to a "long, ash-grey coffin, *winter*, slowly submerging in the seas" (my italics). Lawrence may have been anxious that his de-sentimentalised Persephone myth was open to misinterpretation. Alvina, living in an "isolate" state of wonder, imagines what it would be like to turn to the fierce, dark gods as spring gets under way. In this season of overflowing abundance, she finds herself worshipped by Ciccio because she is pregnant. March in the Italian hills brings a "real flowering": the scent of wild narcissus is "powerful and magical" to her (*LG* 335), there are "white and blue violets," "sprays of almond blossom," "peach and apricot," rose-red gladioli and black-purple irises (*LG* 335). Frazer records how magenta anemones, indigo grape hyacinths, rose cyclamens, lavender crocuses, rose-red gladioli and black-purple irises are emblematic of rites of protection against malignant spirits or of ancient fertility deities such as Persephone (Frazer 346). In this riot of natural colour, Alvina "felt like going down on her knees and bending her forehead to the earth in an oriental submission, they were so royal, so lovely, so supreme" (*LG* 335). She seems to blend with her vibrant setting, divested of the incubus of socially constructed, rather than essential, selfhood; even her modern time metamorphoses backwards into mythic time.

Although the "outside world" is "so fair," with corn and maize "growing green and silken" (*LG* 333), Alvina recoils from the hyacinths, which remind her "of the many-breasted Artemis, a picture of whom, or of whose statue, she had seen somewhere. Artemis with her clusters of breasts was horrible to her, now she had come south: nauseating beyond words" (*LG* 333). The ambivalence of Artemis is sig-

nalled by her link here with childbirth, as well as being the chaste goddess of the hunt in Angel Clare's account of Tess at Talbothays. "Nauseating" indicates the psychological complexity of the pregnant Alvina's state: she is frightened, fretful and depressed; yet she longs to see her child. Her fluctuations of mood are a crucial element in the psychological truth of these closing chapters. The figure of Artemis, covered all over with breasts, sickens Alvina because it recalls her fraught encounter with Mrs Tuke in travail, who felt she was being "torn to pieces by *Forces*" (*LG* 334). This image clashes with Angel Clare's facetious evocation of Tess as Artemis or "a visionary essence of woman" (*Tess* 134-35) in the pre-dawn light of Hardy's novel. Lawrence works against Clare's destructive dilettantism by showing the elemental potencies assailing Alvina as genuinely hostile and jarring.

Alvina's retirement from civilised society brings rapport with a rugged natural world that would be alien to Angel Clare's fanciful imaginings of a lush pastoral paradise populated by gallant swains and coy milkmaids. Alvina can throw off "the burden of intensive mental consciousness" (*LG* 238) and enter into the nonhuman world. Alert to the ancient land upon which a new one is being laid, Alvina uncovers a full-bodied presence imbuing the surrounding void: an immense embodiment of unconscious energy. Alvina possesses a tense modernity combined with acute receptiveness to a landscape heavy with the debris of its ancient forebears; she becomes a metaphysical voyager, questioning the moralities and social verities of her cultural heritage, and debunking the orthodox attitudes which inhibit spontaneity and personal growth. Alvina yearns for rapt immersion in the Italian terrain, to be a participant in some larger nonhuman drama. But her withdrawal is not by any means simply life-enhancing. Alvina's regression to the primitive releases inhuman terrors: vestigial remnants of a violent, non-Christian past. Lawrence ruthlessly redefines the "nostalgia" Alvina felt in Woodhouse to exclude any hint of soothing sentimentality. To land, sea and sky she has the ability to respond lyrically, but the site, if it implies an untapped repository of a

primitive unconscious state, causes almost a Gothic shudder:

> She seemed to feel in the air strange Furies, Lemures, things that had haunted her with their tomb-frenzied vindictiveness since she was a child and had pored over the illustrated Classical Dictionary. Black and cruel presences were in the under-air. They were furtive and slinking. They bewitched you with loveliness, and lurked with fangs to hurt you afterwards. There it was: the fangs sheathed in beauty—the beauty first, and then, horribly, inevitably, the fangs. (*LG* 333-34)

To Alvina these entrancing but vengefully destructive spirits are powerfully present. Clipped sentences and clauses, organized to show an emphatic, personal, awed intonation ("They were furtive and slinking"), convey Alvina's awed awareness of a locality "which savagely and triumphantly" refuses "our living culture" (*LG* 370-71). When she is languishing in the Midlands, Lawrence suggests that she possesses "ancient sapience" (*LG* 35) which on the Continent evolves into a "mediumistic" capacity, the exquisite torture of the "neuralgia" in her "very soul" (*LG* 315). Her "clairvoyant" mode of perception, exposing her in Throttle-Ha'Penny to "underground trolls" and various "figures of fairy-lore" (*LG* 65-66), now uncovers the "tomb-frenzied vindictiveness" of Furies and Lemures. Darkness, in large measure a glamorous symbol of metamorphosis in the English section of *The Lost Girl*, acquires a fiendishness and menace as Alvina travels to Italy.

*The Lost Girl* attests Lawrence's courage in addressing what appalled Hardy, in attempting to excavate a vitalizing force, a fecund darkness, in that perception of man divorced from the rhythms governing seasonal change and natural fruition. Lawrence rescues the Persephone figure from the repressive rubble of Hardy's late-Victorian culture and makes the myth resonant again in an era of profound cultural and social ferment. He invokes the ancient tale to illustrate in an increasingly uncompromising way Alvina's reaction to the deep forces of the elemental world and her preservation of their creative and illuminating power in the bitter darkness of her waiting. But Lawrence does not provide a straightforwardly optimistic and

august account of the Persephone myth. As Alvina becomes immersed in the pagan twilight of her Italian home, she feels utterly abandoned and alone, given that Ciccio is called up to serve in the Great War. In the final pages, this "New Woman" as Persephone ponders whether she might make a brief return to the surface world of genteel English manners: "She was always making little plans in her mind—how she could get out of that cruel valley and escape to Rome, to English people" (*LG* 336). She becomes "mute, powerless [...] like a lump of darkness, in that doomed Italian kitchen" as "death and eternity were settled down on her" (*LG* 338). And thus she is left in a version of "Hades." It is a measure of Lawrence's sophistication that *The Lost Girl* ends with this edgy awareness not only of the value but also the cost of Alvina's Plutonic adventures.

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## NOTES

[1]The title is taken from Chapter VI of feminist classicist Jane Ellen Harrison's seminal study of ancient matriarchal goddesses such as Demeter and Persephone in *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903).

[2]See Nancy Barrineau, "Explanatory Notes" to the Oxford World's Classics Edition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: "Artemis, [...] the chaste goddess of the hunt, often slew with her arrows men who tried to rape her" (393).

[3]See, for example, Millgate, *Thomas Hardy*, which surveys, and convincingly rebuts, many of the reductive scholarly assessments of Hardy's classical erudition. See also Wright, *Thomas Hardy*, which also registers Hardy's detailed knowledge of classical literature.

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