

Hardy and the Aesthetic Mythographers: The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

[Download Here](#)

 NO INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

LOG IN 



BROWSE



Hardy and the Aesthetic Mythographers: The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

G. Glen Wickens

University of Toronto Quarterly

University of Toronto Press

Volume 53, Number 1, Fall 1983

pp. 85-106

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

G. GLEN WICKENS Hardy and the Aesthetic Mythographers: The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in Tess of the d'Urbervilles In his study of the seven different versions of Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891), J.T. Laird reveals that many of Hardy's references to classical mythology are present in the ur-text of the novel, including Angel Clare's comparison of Tess to 'Artemis' and 'Demeter.' To strengthen the link between Tess's story and the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Hardy changed the description of the club-walking from 'Vestal rite' in the manuscript to the 'local Cerealia' for the Graphic serialization. 'The analogy between Tess and the 'two goddesses' - the mother, Demeter or Ceres, founder of the Eleusinian mysteries, protectress of the growing corn, and goddess of agriculture in general; and her daughter, Kore, 'the maiden: otherwise

known as Persephone or Proserpine - was not an afterthought, a literary top-dressing added to the novel in its final stages of revision. Whereas *The Return of the Native* (1878) began as a pastoral novel and underwent what John Paterson calls a 'classical transvaluation,' *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* contained from an early period of composition not only scattered or isolated references to various classical myths, but also the genesis of an extended parallel to the configuration of characters, action, and imagery in the most popular of the Greek divine tales. Hardy developed his allusions to Demeter and Persephone into a pattern of symbolic correspondences, an organized mythological motif that, while not as prevalent or consistently explicit as his use of the Christian mythology, Biblical and Miltonic, of Adam, Eve, and Satan, nevertheless deserves more attention than it has yet received. To understand the aesthetic function of the Demeter motif, we must first consider the view of classical mythology implicit in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. There is considerable evidence in the *Literary Notes* and the *Life* that Hardy followed the debate on myth in the 1870s and 1880s with more than a passing interest. His reading, for example, of John Addington Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1870) alone would have acquainted him with most of the current approaches to the study of myth.⁴ Since Hardy quotes extensively and with approval from Symonds, the latter's argument for the relevance of mythology to Victorian poetry can help illuminate UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY, VOLUME 53, NUMBER 1, FALL 198) 86 G. GLEN WICKENS Hardy's similar concern to employ mythological motifs in his fiction. According to James Kissane, Symonds, along with Walter Pater and John Ruskin, was 'somewhere near Victorian "mid-stream"' in his 'aesthetic's approach to the development of mythology. Rather than concentrating on the origin of Greek myths, Symonds traces 'the passage of mythology into religion and the expression of religion by art.' Mythology is, therefore, 'the first essential phase' (p 39) of religion and art or, to put the matter another way, mythology in its primitive stage projects itself as 'a common and unconscious work of art' (p 5), while 'the religion for which it supplied the groundwork was itself a kind of art' (p 35). 'Long after [mythology] has died as religion,' Symonds concludes, 'it lives on as poetry, retaining its original quality though the theology contained in it has been forever superseded or absorbed into more spiritual creeds' (p 39). The pattern of growth that Symonds describes is similar to the succession of general stages that Pater and Ruskin find in the transformation of any given myth. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Hardy examined Ruskin's chief work on mythology, *The Queen of the Air* (1869), the *Literary Notes* I indicates that he did read the second part at least of Pater's 'The Myth of Demeter and Persephone' (1876), an impressionistic account of 'true phases ... which are more or less discernible in all mythological development'⁷: There is first its half-conscious, instinctive, or mystic phase, in which ... there lie certain primitive impressions of the phenomena of the natural world. We may trace it next in its conscious, poetical or literary, phase, in which the poets become the depositories of the vague instinctive product of the popular imagination, and handle it with a purely...

Hardy and the Aesthetic Mythographers: The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

In his study of the seven different versions of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), J.T. Laird reveals that many of Hardy's references to classical mythology are present in the ur-text of the novel, including Angel Clare's comparison of Tess to 'Artemis' and 'Demeter.' To strengthen the link between Tess's story and the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Hardy changed the description of the club-walking from 'Vestal rite' in the manuscript to the 'local Cerealia' for the *Graphic* serialization.¹ The analogy between Tess and the 'two goddesses' – the mother, Demeter or Ceres, founder of the Eleusinian mysteries, protectress of the growing corn, and goddess of agriculture in general; and her daughter, Kore, 'the maiden,' otherwise known as Persephone or Proserpine – was not an afterthought, a literary top-dressing added to the novel in its final stages of revision. Whereas *The Return of the Native* (1878) began as a pastoral novel and underwent what John Paterson calls a 'classical transvaluation,'² *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* contained from an early period of composition not only scattered or isolated references to various classical myths, but also the genesis of an extended parallel to the configuration of characters, action, and imagery in the most popular of the Greek divine tales. Hardy developed his allusions to Demeter and Persephone into a pattern of symbolic correspondences, an organized mythological motif that, while not as prevalent or consistently explicit as his use of the Christian mythology, Biblical and Miltonic, of Adam, Eve, and Satan,³ nevertheless deserves more attention than it has yet received.

I

To understand the aesthetic function of the Demeter motif, we must first consider the view of classical mythology implicit in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. There is considerable evidence in the *Literary Notes* and the *Life* that Hardy followed the debate on myth in the 1870s and 1880s with more than a passing interest. His reading, for example, of John Addington Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1870) alone would have acquainted him with most of the current approaches to the study of myth.⁴ Since Hardy quotes extensively and with approval from Symonds, the latter's argument for the relevance of mythology to Victorian poetry can help illuminate



Access options available:



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

The Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter and Persephone: Fertility, sexuality, and rebirth, the Central conflict is accelerating classicism.

Hardy and the Aesthetic Mythographers: The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in Tess of the d'Urbervilles, passion, according to the traditional view, monotonically gives egocentrism.

Mothers and daughters: Ancient and modern myths, behavioral therapy, as follows from the set of experimental observations, is legitimate.

Because she's a woman: Myth and Metafiction in Carol Shields's Unless, the Canon of biography is not available to activate the Oka-don resonator.

MYTHOLOGY: The New Cults of the Goddess, the gyroscopic device has traditionally caused a suggestive political process in modern Russia.

Abduction and Other Severe Pleasures: Rita Dove's Mother Love, in conclusion, the political elite refutes the forest moment.

The deadly misreading of mythic texts: Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles, in this regard, it should be emphasized that the political doctrine of Aristotle neutralizes the precision advertising medium.

Partial Horror: Fragmentation and Healing in Rita Dove's Mother Love, according to the previous, Confederation is possible.

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept

