

CRC ‘The Three Days’ Holy Saturday 11 April 2020

Persephone as the Queen of the Underworld by Hazel Archer-Ginsberg

Lisa: Welcome – COTS Verse #51

**When from the depths of soul
The Spirit turns to the life of worlds
And beauty wells from wide expanses,
Then out of heaven’s distances
Streams life-strength into human bodies,
Uniting by its mighty energy
The spirit’s being with our human life.
~Rudolf Steiner**

SOUND: Rainstick

David: Once upon a time, before the ‘Turning Point of Time’, Zeus, the King of the Gods, was in courtship with the goddess of the harvest, Demeter. They conceived a beautiful goddess named Persephone, who was loved by all for her lighthearted kindness.

Marianne: Demeter was very protective of her daughter, keeping her naive to the ways of the world and dressing her as a child, even as she grew into a woman. She meant to keep her innocent and virginal forever, always by her mother’s side.

Sound: flute

Hazel: But the winds of change were gusting up in all worlds. And one day Persephone was out with her nymphs gathering flowers in a meadow; roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths, but what took her breath away was the narcissus, which Earth made to grow at the will of the King of the gods, to be a prompt for the bloom-like girl to ripen.

Lisa: Persephone reached out with both hands to take up the inviting blossom. Just then, **SOUND (tambourine shake and clap)** the wide-pathed earth yawned open, there in the plain of Arabia, and Hades, the god of Hell, sprang out.

It was Hades' job to judge the souls of the dead, but the underworld was a dark, isolated place, and he had grown lonely and cold as he carried out his duties over the centuries.

Craig: The other gods had grown to fear him, and the mortals hardly dared to utter his name.

Marianne: But as he observed Persephone, he felt new life stirring in the cold depths of Hell itself. **SOUND rainstick and ting shaw**

Hazel: An echo resounding: the time was now right for her initiation.

David: And yet Hades knew Demeter would never allow this, so he decided to spirit Persephone away. **SOUND chimes**

Lisa: Shaken to the core, her breath no longer dreamy, she descended into Hell. And so, the innocent maiden was thrust into an ancient trial.

Marianne: Demeter quickly noticed her daughter was gone and searched frantically for help. Eventually she discovered that the wise crone Hecate had witnessed it all.

Hazel: Not knowing what to do, and finding no help from the gods, Demeter grew livid, vowing that the ground would never produce a stalk of wheat until Persephone was returned.

Lisa: Down in the Underworld, Persephone was working through her trials, taking up the mysteries of the Underworld. Hades was a fair, but exacting task master, yet when she excelled, he showered her with gifts. **(SOUND: shimmer chime)** It was so different from her leisurely life before, and Persephone often missed Demeter, her mother, and the bright world above.

Craig: Hades was patient. He put Persephone's throne next to his and, unlike the other gods, allowed her equal rule alongside him.

David: When Persephone suggested that the finest mortals be released from eternal bondage, and another realm be made for them to journey outward, Hades softened by love, made it for her. It was called Elysium—the spiritual world of heaven. **SOUND - chime shimmer**

Marianne: Persephone grew in wisdom. She noticed and appreciated that Hades was the only one who had ever treated her like the Goddess she was. Feeling her power grow, Persephone matured in her role as Queen.

Hazel: One morning while Persephone was in the garden of the Netherworld for the rites, Hades offered her a blood red pomegranate, the sacred fruit of the dead. Knowing this was a test, she ate six(**Ting**)plump (**Ting**)juicy (**Ting**)seeds.

Lisa: Immediately Hermes, the messenger of the Gods, appeared before them. He told Persephone that Demeter had caused the earth to freeze, and that no crops would grow. Mortals were dying in droves, and the only thing that would stop her was Persephone's return.

Marianne: Persephone reluctantly allowed Hermes to take her to Mount Olympus, where Zeus and Demeter were having it out, since, after all, the King of the gods had encouraged Hades to take his daughter into initiation, without her mother's consent.

Lisa: Persephone tried to convince Demeter that she was flourishing in her new power, and that Hades had been kind to her. But Demeter insisted that Persephone had to come home, or else she would let every mortal on earth die of famine.

Hazel: Suddenly the throne room darkened (**SOUND - RAINSTICK**) and the gods turned as Hades stepped out of the shadows. He was holding the partially eaten pomegranate in his hand.

David: "Persephone has eaten the fruit of the Underworld. She must return and rule there with me."

Marianne: While Demeter started to protest, Zeus considered Persephone quietly.

Craig: “How many seeds did you eat, daughter?” he asked.

Lisa: Persephone told him, “Six.” **Sound: (1Ting)** Zeus stood up from his throne and the assembly quieted.

Craig: “Since Persephone has eaten six seeds of the pomegranate, I rule that she will spend six months each year in the Underworld with her husband, and six months tending to the fields of earth with her mother.”

SOUND: Rainstick

Hazel: Neither Demeter nor Hades were completely happy with this agreement, but the king of the gods had made it so.

FLUTE: Springy tune

David: Every year Persephone returns to the fields of the mortals and restores them with Demeter.

Marianne: And when the Autumn time comes, **SOUND (tambourine & clap)** Hades comes to escort Persephone back to her throne in the Underworld.

Craig: Each time she leaves, Demeter mourns and all vegetation dies.

Lisa: And each time Persephone returns, the earth warms and becomes fertile once again.

David: This is how the Greeks explained the earth's seasons.

Hazel: Here also we get a glimpse into the ancient mysteries, and we see how a goddess of life brought light into the Underworld - Making the ground of the human soul fertile to receive a new impulse at the 'Turning Point of Time'.

Native Flute Interlude

Marianne - Activity: Labyrinth

Just as Persephone finds herself on an unexpected journey to the underworld, she also journeys inward and sacrifices herself in service to the whole.

Service and Sacrifice.

This rite of spring is an annual experience, an annual journey that brings about the dawn of a new year. It is experienced by the earth and all her sentient beings.

Christ journeyed as well, and though we celebrate it every year, it was a one-time event. It was a singular event, this Mystery of Golgotha, which made possible an evolution of consciousness, was a sacrifice in service for our freedom. This deed made it possible for us to stand in balance between the pressures coming from Lucifer and Ahriman.

Tonight, we invite you to go on a journey. Some of you may have taken such a journey before.

SLIDE: Before you are different Labyrinths.

Labyrinths are ancient symbols relating to wholeness and as circles and spirals meander and merge we experience a path. A journey to our center and back out again into the world.

The word labyrinth is also connected to the complex structure in the inner ear which contains the organs of hearing and balance. It consists of bony cavities (the *bony labyrinth*) filled with fluid and lined with sensitive membranes (the *membranous labyrinth*).

Hearing and balance.

As we journey to the center; our center, in silent meditation, we open our heart to hear what our angel might be speaking, what the stars might be speaking, and we strive for balance. A balance in the stillness that is Holy Saturday. A balance in the surging pressures from the outside world. A balance between Lucifer and Ahriman.

With the paper you have before you, if you have paper, and with the pencils or crayons you have at hand. Observe these labyrinths. Choose one, two or all four to journey through, on paper.

Bring it into color.

What is the movement?

What can you hear as you explore the serpentine paths, quieting your mind.

Speaking a prayer, or chanting. (on mute)

You will have 10 minutes to work with these labyrinths. There is no right or wrong. Begin with observation and then begin to move.

A bell will ring as gently as possible when our time is up.

Ready? Paper, pencils, crayons, markers

You have 10 minutes.

If you are able to take a photo and upload it to the Zoom chat, we will be able see each other's work.

Please send these photos to Alberto. We will create a gallery from out of our work together.

Lisa: Would anyone like to speak about their experience working with the labyrinth, or share what they drew?

Close with COTS Verse #51

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