



## Emotion, Nature, and Myth: A Critical Study of Louise Gluck's *Averno* as Post-Confessional Poetry

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### ABSTRACT

*This study demonstrates how mythical narrative constructs a post-confessional tone in Louise Gluck's Averno (2006) through her personal experience of love, memory, liberty of mind and body, morality, and freedom of gender identity. Averno is a prolonged mourning; its lengthy, frenetic compositions are equally fascinating, while traditional climaxes or solace are equally magnificent despite being violent and heartbroken. Averno presents an autobiographical narrative, the terrific eternal reality, and juxtaposes the link between myth and narrative of personal experiences into a universal context. The myth of Demeter, Persephone, and Hades brings Gluck's infatuation with death to relate to the nature of the underworld and earth. Persephone's image in Averno symbolizes Gluck's disappointment in love, individual journey of survival, and hope. Gluck's uses of mythical allegory challenge the notion of patriarchy, and the standard of female as an object of violence by providing a voice to the powerless victim, which conflates mythical past and contemporary reality by transcending the biography and avoiding Gluck's direct self-confessionalism. Thus, this study explores Gluck's self-proclaim confessionalism through her poetic expression of mythical narrative, emotional memory, and experiences of personal suffering in Averno.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Averno, Nature, Myth, Freedom, Confession, Post-confession, and Persephone*

American poet Louise Gluck (1943-2023) is well-known for her twelve poetry volumes. Gluck is regarded as one of the best modern lyric poets. Her verses thrive best when performed as part of a book-length compilation of songs, recited by multiple perspectives in a genuine dialogue, or when read to give them a narrative quality. The Academy of American Poets awarded Gluck the Firstborn Prize in 1980 for *The Triumph of Achilles* (1985). Gluck also won the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Library of Congress Prize (1990) for the Poetry collection *Ararat*. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her book *The Wild Iris* in 1993. She received The PEN Award for the First Nonfiction collection *Proofs and Theories* in 1994. She served as the United States Poet Laureate from 2003 to 2004 and has won several awards most notably Noble Prize in Literature in 2020. She writes a variety of poetry, from persona poems to harsh confessionals, dialogue, and even a mock epic that views the author's life through an ironically Homeric framework. The best example of this genre is *Averno* (2006). Gluck has triumphed over the reviewers from many, sometimes at odds communities from interpretations because she builds her poetry from a mosaic of multicultural elements. Her other notable works are *Meadowlands* (1996), and *A Village Life* (2009). This paper explores and explains the viewpoints that express the elements of emotion, nature, and myth in *Averno* (2006) as

portrayed in the collection. The first argument is the post-confessional interpretation of Persephone and Demeter. Her tumultuous connections with her mother, her husband, and the male-dominated culture are taken into consideration when reading this volume. The poetry of *Averno* also exhibits another characteristic that reveals the poet's interesting perversion of the classic Homeric tale. Another element that enables the contemporary woman, poet, romantic partners, and daughter to express their uniqueness, often through brutal, scathing remarks and other times by choosing silence, is the deceit of Persephone's battle with the inner and the outer world. However, the persona's fluctuation through despair and optimism, life and death, representation of spring and winter, enticing the ground, and the underworld's riddle might be regarded as the final feature.

The challenge of separating confessional poetry from post-confessional poetry is brought up by Jeffrey McDaniel, according to him, Confessional poetry, has a "born-out-of-necessity feel, or if not drenched in, then at least tinged with experience" (1). They are working for emotionally committed objectives. However, those verses have to possess artistic merit that drives the poem to transcend an ordinary perception. The poetry of a post-confessional writer has smooth, composed surfaces to the touch, yet it can sense the reducing emotional core between each word; on the



other hand, they have a mixture of heat and coolness. The decisions that are the most emotionally raw just will not allow themselves to be put into words, causing the artist to briefly remove themselves from the situation and eventually see it as a poem before returning to it with increasingly malicious intent. Post-confessional poetry explores a fractious setting, typically including relatives, and develops or elaborates on the strategies utilized by confessional poets. They differ from autobiographical poetry by approaching familial or mental pain from a unique aspect or point of view. According to Daniel Morris,

Perhaps Gluck's most important contribution to post-confessional American poetry, since the mid-1970s, has been to find a way to negotiate a kind of middle ground between the ambitious but often forbidding strains of High Modernism, on the one hand, and sensitivity to the distinctiveness of individual experience that was characteristic of the confessionalist (23).

Gluck specifically aims to do this by transitioning from the legendary to the contemporary from ancient customs to a rebellion, and from distancing to vicious rage. There is little question that Gluck's idiosyncratic dissatisfaction with her failed marriage affected her interpretation of the text. She may have developed paradoxical manifestations of obsession, dependence, desire, rebellion, and most importantly, an association between love and death as a result of her unsuccessful romantic relationships. The poet provides the usually quiet protagonist with a distinct, rebellious voice. The speaker in "October" may be Gluck herself or Persephone. Despite her seeming candor and compassion for Persephone, the issue emerges as to whether this obvious love will be sufficient to prevent her from harm. In addition, one doubts if the poet herself is comparing stability with death. The reality is that Gluck purposely confounds her reader with her multifaceted interpretation, even though she oscillates between rejecting an autobiographical tone and acknowledging no pain in sharing intimate experiences. As Deifies points out,

Not a single author openly prescribes any codes of conduct that must be followed. On the contrary, the reader may create their individual interpretation of the narrative, its characters, and their interactions and get their own significance through its contents (42).

It may be claimed that the poet, perhaps deliberately or unintentionally, accomplishes two objectives in this section of poetry. On the one hand, she may be remarking on the fabricated assurance of happiness at the beginning of every failed romantic relationship. Gluck herself, in contrast, may be indicating empathy at having lost her freedom, independence, thought, and individuality as a result of descending into the darkness of toxic love. According to El Bakary's study,

The way Gluck interprets the Persephone tale is rather perplexing. It undoubtedly forms a component of modern female poets', serious, engaged, and formally satisfying encounter with classical myth (130).

Gluck progresses from the traumatic circumstances of her upbringing to philosophizing toward the divine surviving a tough divorce, and then embracing demise. The poet shows how poetry aids her psychological rehabilitation and life redemption during her excursion. The title of this book, *Averno*, refers to an expedition to the bottom of a volcanic crater in Italy and is considered an entrance to the realm of the unconscious, which is a metaphor for the underworld. It serves as a place of recollection where Gluck remembers and comes to terms with the horrific events in her family's past. In *Averno*, Gluck transitions from the traumatic childhood circumstances to her reflections on the divine, her struggle to get through a tough divorce, and eventually her thoughts about eternity. The poet shows how poems encourage her psychological rehabilitation and life redemption during the expedition.

*Averno's* post-confessional tone is about the journey of a woman from infancy and all the philosophical and spiritual truths she learns through the way to the end of her life. It has an intimate but passionately overarching sketch of an individual's quest for finding oneself and mental recovery. By the end of this voyage, the speaker discovers how to take advantage of life without relying on rigid ideas about divine Providence, elegance, or the essential value of life. It is a poetic story that also acts as a metaphorical reflection of the person's own analogous, individual experiences. As a result, the reader and the artist develop confidence and compassion, and the audience can apply the speaker's hard-learned insights to their own life. *Averno* is a collection of *memento mori* poetry that exhorts both poet and reader to keep in mind their mortality. "I wake up thinking" Gluck writes in the poem's first line,

You have to prepare.

Soon the spirit will give up (60).

In a crater lake called Averno, or Avernus in Roman times, West of Naples was what ancient Romans believed to be the gateway to the underworld. *Memento mori* paradoxically demands us to remember death, which transcends our human remembrance. We're supposed to remember something which won't happen until later. The poet goes to other people's deaths to "remember death." Classical myths and the story of Persephone are referenced by Gluck. Persephone is characterized as an "expert" at dying since she frequently travels between the world and the underworld. She has seen death and rebirth as its essence. In addition, the poet explores mortality and death desire as a natural element of existence. In *Averno*, mythological and allegorical characters start to show up in the stories to provide explanations for problems or reflect the speaker's fears as well as to act as

mirrors for audiences to see themselves. Such lyric poems are concerned with the potential of self-healing or reconciliation following a loss experience and existential doubt. Along with the appearance of these legendary creatures, the speaker also starts to incorporate more allusions to contemporary sociocultural realities. In *Averno*, for example, she compares the mythical character Persephone to the modern girls and portrays her as a drug-using rape victim. She often incorporates everyday, blunt conversation into her poetry. This type of reality has an instantaneous, snatched feeling of contemporaneity. According to Tara Jenkins, "Demanded a belief in the authenticity of lived experience as a social truth" (129). In the talk show's production of realism in which participants engage in "popularized psychoanalytic notions of trauma, working-through and recovery are embedded in the presentation of these programs" (Biressi and Nunn 111). It may enhance the sense of validity and genuineness. By evoking such a type of relatable, modern reality, the speaker grounds the mythological and supernatural elements of her poems in a sense of deeper ubiquity, allowing the listener to identify with the struggles of these individuals and perhaps join in the speaker's emotional release and self-discovery. This challenging posture of ethical, psychological, and artistic harmony is particularly striking in a poet whose tragic autobiographical serves as almost her main focus. While avoiding the pitfalls of cheap emotionalism and exhibited behavior, the aesthetic and cognitive components here are part of a wider machinery that allows the brutally personal to be tackled honestly, frankly, and repeatedly. But Gluck's asceticism goes well beyond her adherence to a popular 1970s aesthetic. It's also one of the ways she modulates her "confessions" by wrapping them in a metaphysical and psychological framework. Comparing and contrasting mythical or biblical sequences and parallels between lyrical discourse and the memory output generated by the field of psychoanalysis are two further distance-creating techniques that match the non-emotional austere style.

The overarching themes and patterns provided by Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis are of particular relevance to Gluck. A psychoanalytic predisposition can only be natural for a poet whose main innate motif is the Freudian "family romance", an elaborate system of emotional links with people dealing with their cognitive responsibilities as parents, spouses, children, and siblings. Surely, Gluck is more influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis. As her poetic speaker sings in the first "Persephone the Wanderer"

Three parts: just as the soul is divided,  
Ego, superego, id. Likewise  
The three levels of the known world  
A kind of diagram that separates (Gluck 16).

The psychological argument of this study is Jung's theory of archetype. Archetypes, according to Jung, originate in the collective unconscious. These models, according to him,

are innate, common, unlearned, and inherited. Archetypes categorize our experiences that involve specific things. It is Gluck's unconscious turns to focus on the premature morality that turns into the collective unconscious in *Averno*. So, the archaic and mythic characters in *Averno* make up the archetypes, and they symbolize basic human motivations, values, and personalities including an individual's cultural influences and uniquely personal experiences of Gluck's poetic speaker. The highly heated daughter-mother relationships and the ensuing techniques for psyche-aggression that develop in the growing female subject are discussed in many poems from an early age. The Freudian paradigm has placed a lot of emphasis on these processes. It is evident in "Persephone the Wanderer" while the poetic speaker sings,

You are allowed to like  
No one, you know. The characters  
Are not people.  
They are aspects of a dilemma or conflict.  
Three parts: just as the soul is divided,  
Ego, superego, id. Likewise  
The three levels of the known world  
A kind of diagram that separates  
Heaven from earth from hell (Gluck 17).

In *Averno*, the poet's appearance disappears into figurative language, and the speaker's focus turns from premature mortality and suicide to what occurs beyond death. Even though the book's main storyline is around Persephone, who is compelled to reside in the underworld, there is a more subtle uncertainty over who is speaking in the verses written in *Averno*. The speaker's uniqueness is occasionally more masked in the poems to portray the inner life of Persephone to take the spotlight in *Averno*. Gluck's ability to build up in the sphere of symbols and allegory, control sadness with a fair amount of happiness, and willingness to embrace the world, thus ending her battle with the meaning of existence, maybe one reason for this, rather than suffering to heavily rely on memories. The natural world has always served as an inspiration for Gluck as a poet. Her poetry frequently discusses such significant physiological events as delivering formation, engaging in sexual activity, watching her father perish, and burying his body in a Jewish cemetery on Long Island. Her lyrical language may convey the impression that she is emotionally detached from life. However, Gluck challenges the biological presumption of the author's existence by elevating cultural backgrounds, or the inscription of nature and voice, as a means of transcending corporeal experience. Gluck is a poet who conveys concerns for nature and the significance of the body of an individual.

"The Night Migrations", *Averno's* opening poem, acts as a short, philosophical prelude to the action that will follow. Gluck laments that the dead won't be able to relish watching

'the red berries or the nighttime migrations of birds in this first poem, but he also suggests that perhaps the soul won't miss such pleasures:

Maybe just not being is simply enough,  
hard as that is to imagine (Gluck 1).

The poetic speaker is getting the readers ready for a different perspective on death, one in which we shouldn't fear it. Though it is difficult to fathom, the poet will show in *Averno* that it is not beyond possibility. "October", the second poem, captures the severity of this problem. As an anonymous speaker expresses the approaching "terror and cold" of winter, death is borne by the metaphor of winter. The poetic speaker states,

didn't the night end,  
didn't the melting ice  
flood the narrow gutters  
wasn't my body  
rescued, wasn't it safe  
didn't the scar form, invisible  
above the injury  
terror and cold,  
didn't they just end, wasn't the back garden  
harrowed and planted— (Gluck 5)

The speaker of the poem "October" in *Averno* might be a variety of people, including Demeter, Persephone, Gluck, or an anonymous individual dealing with a personal loss and a disappointing shift in the weather. The speaker, who was traumatized by the winter previously, cannot face this truth once since it is recurring wintertime. It is due to get cold yet again, and this time it could be the end of life. If Persephone speaks at the moment, the winter may stand in for the compulsion to sojourn in the "terror and cold" of hell that she would experience as a consequence of the agreement between Demeter and Hades. The mother of Persephone, if the speaker is Demeter, the terrible winter since she understands she will lose the baby once more. Part 2 of "October" introduces the idea that winter is connected to both violence and a violent disruption:

Summer after summer has ended,  
balm after violence:  
it does me no good  
to be good to me now;  
violence has changed me...  
you can't touch my body now  
It has changed once, it has hardened,  
don't ask it to respond again. (Gluck 7)

A significant number of Gluck's speakers are posthumous; or, to be more accurate, they reside in a spectral world that allows them to reflect on and remember life as well as death. They are simultaneously drawn to and disgusted by the act of remembering as they perform it; gazing both forward and backward as they expect something happened previously. In this approach, Gluck ignores the screams of both the victim and the person who witnessed the incident; instead, she occasionally witnesses the pain of a variety of individuals revealing what it is like to not be physically hurt but just "changed" in her words, by "violence". As Gluck's speaker states in *Averno*,

Once more, the sun rises as it rose in summer;  
bounty, balm after violence.  
Balm after the leaves have changed, after the fields  
have been harvested and turned (7)

The speaker in "October" asserts that "violence has changed me" (7) even as she describes the "balm after the violence" as the existence of an imagined "Summer after summer has ended". However, she later admits that this illusion of recovery "does me no good", prompting her to state once more that "violence has changed me" (7). In reality, Gluck describes how the balms themselves made it possible for a violation to be both tossed off and recalled, rather than forcing the reader to choose between the sensual consolation of the sun and the past experiences of violence. The main contention of the poem addresses Gluck, an existential humanist writer, whether to continue existing or die in the postmodern classical wilderness, either a place to end in the apocalypse or a place to reconstruct, through an aporetic debate 'everything that was taken away' (Gluck 7). According to Azcuy,

She uses mythology, persona, prosopopoeia, and silence to explore past and present trauma in the postmodern void. This void is such as Jean Baudrillard observed and prophesied a place where America has 'come to the end' (Baudrillard 98), and where Gluck questions her role in recreating the myth and representing the historical (32).

The subject's narrative in *Averno* and "October" alludes to various ancient and factual occurrences. Initially, there is the unfathomable anguish of Persephone's murder and the subsequent loss of Demeter's child. The Homeric 'Hymn to Demeter', in which the young daughter of Demeter is abducted by her uncle Hades, stolen to the underworld, raped, and killed before becoming his death-bride, Persephone, is reflected in Gluck's *Averno*. Death comes to all mortals as a result of Demeter's anguish and vengeance. In the end, Zeus the father steps in and convinces Hades to give Persephone to her mother Demeter. Persephone consumes three seeds from pomegranates before her homecoming, which forces her to spend a season in this case, winter in the underworld where her mother is traumatized once again and once

more brings about the extinction of all life on Earth. These mythical creatures join Gluck and encounter contemporary occurrences and traumatic sensations in October of the contemporary twenty-first century. According to the myth, Demeter prepares to say goodbye to her daughter this month, and when Persephone prepares to pass away and enter the underworld. Autumnal tragedy shows the women's early grief. Mary Kate Azcuy offers an alternative interpretation, her study states that,

The subsequent episode, which is mentioned in the subject's narrative, is historical: October 2001 marks the time of the American invasion of Afghanistan and the ongoing search for the victims at the location of Ground Zero in New York City following 9/11 in a site that symbolizes "pure absence". These traumatized ladies perform on this stage: the pit of death (Azcuy 34).

With the individual who spoke in Gluck's poems growing more and more transcendental in its embrace of all potential voices, her poetic personality has progressively faded into the background. Before pointing out that in all of her poems, Gluck appears to be on a voyage of resurrection and personality renewal. A different regeneration occurs in *Averno*, where the poet transforms herself to stand in for everyone experiencing the same crisis of existence as she does. Despite this makes it unclear who is expressing herself at all times, the idea that the speaker could be anyone permits a more open-minded comprehension of the lines of poetry, even as recognizable indications of a poet's lifelong anxieties regarding the terrible consequences of a world without a single certainty are addressed and continue to be ever-present in *Averno's* poems.

*Averno* certainly "emphasizes the immorality of Persephone's abduction and rape and their negative and unalterable effects on her" (Daifotis 17). The narrator of "A Myth of Innocence" bemoans Persephone's loss of innocence following the act of kidnapping. According to Gluck's speaker in *Averno*,

The girl who disappears from the pool  
will never return. A woman will return,  
looking for the girl she was (63)

When Persephone is represented by the water and says in "A Myth of Innocence", the lyrical speaker tells how she comes to startling clarity, from time to time,

I was abducted, but it sounds  
wrong to her, nothing like what she felt.  
Then she says, I was not abducted.  
Then she says, I offered myself. I wanted  
to escape my body. (Gluck 51)

Persephone came to understand her loss of innocence in this scenario. Here, she discusses it in a straightforward colloquial manner that is evocative of public confessors.

For those of us today, who can reconnect to Persephone's situation when she is presented as just an average victim of sexual assault who has started absurdly enjoying sex with her rapist, the poem resonates with a feeling of transparency and emotional realism. She has grown accustomed to being mistreated and losing her independence, and she even finds vicarious pleasure in it. According to Yit Mun's study,

It is a terrible step in the story of Persephone's life that a little girl who had been stripped of her purity has become a lady... this moment of adolescent corruption is also amplified by being told in the present tense and being eerily framed in a timeless present (84).

Therefore, the poet questions if the "victim" may have willfully contributed to her own "abduction" in "Persephone the Wanderer":

did she cooperate in her rape,  
or was she drugged, violated against her will,  
as happens so often now to modern girls (Gluck 22-23).

Thus, the poet's personal divorce and unpleasant affair are echoed in the interpretation of Persephone's kidnapping. The significance of myth for the poet in this situation may lay in her capacity to recreate the mythical figures in ways that promote self-perception without apparent interpersonal or confessional allusion, and the aspects of the myth, as Daniel Morris explains,

self-expression and self-deflection, an irreverent attitude toward the canons of literature, scripture, and myth, an attitude through which she at once expresses herself and deflects her autobiographical impulse (2).

Thus, the poetic speaker employs, according to Morris,

The masks of legendary characters to offer an expanded notion of what constitutes an experimental writing strategy that troubles the border between what we think of as biographically inflected literature and what we think of as commentary and interpretation (31).

Gluck's interpretations of many myths serve as a collection of inspirations that change the scene within the unique, even personal in-nature manifestations that might occur as a collection of disguised presentations. Gluck's poetic speaker introduces Hades in "A Myth of Devotion" to portray the patriarchal violence to take on Persephone's disturbing fate,

When Hades decided he loved this girl  
he built for her a duplicate of earth ...  
...he decides to name it  
Persephone's Girlhood...

He wants to say I love you; nothing can hurt you  
(Gluck 59)

However, this is incorrect since Persephone rises from the ashes, and even if she doesn't remember much of it in this narrative, although death takes away all of her senses, she will still remember you being dragged away against her will and being abused. Persephone is starting to feel strange about the situation, as seen by the preceding verse; she no longer thinks that what has occurred to her is inherently a negative thing. Hades' desire for the girl is driven by cruelty and assault, whether that was intended or not, given that he also professes his love for the girl and refers to their rape sessions as Persephone's Girlhood. The poem contradicts the poet's wish to experience death as a gentle and uplifting experience. The text appears to imply that she could only be able to perform through Hades; death may never be anything beyond a condition of nonsuffering and have no connection with passion at all. In "Averno", the title poem of this book, the poet resumes speaking more openly as herself like in "October", merging Persephone's voice, after presenting Hades' side of the narrative of Persephone. However, the speaker in "Averno" is also sufficiently obscure to double as a modern, pragmatic Persephone. Persephone develops into a more "real" figure that readers can relate to. In all cases, the speaker who is both the depressed poet and Persephone is having a hard time coming to terms with the fact that she will soon have to bid farewell to her life. As Gluck's poetic speaker sings,

...I wake up thinking  
you have to prepare.  
Soon the spirit will give up...  
I know what they say when I'm out of the room.  
Should I be seeing someone, should I be taking  
one of the new drugs for depression...  
They're living in a dream, and I'm preparing  
to be a ghost...  
It's like some new life:  
you have no stake in the outcome;  
you know the outcome...  
To raise the veil.  
To see what you're saying goodbye to (Gluck 60-61)

The speaker attempts to approach the reader here as well, beginning with "you have no stake", implying a larger universality for her situation, much like she did in "Persephone the Wanderer" in the initial section of the book. We also get a sense of how other people could see the speaker's perspective on Persephone's life in this passage. The speaker tries to convince her loved ones that life is nothing more than a fleeting nightmare, yet she does it without seeming unduly cheerful. By the time *Averno* concludes, the poet has been able to acknowledge her existence and is willing to recognize that this will inevitably come to an end and bid farewell.

The concluding poem in the collection featuring Persephone is named "Persephone the Wanderer" on another occasion. In this instance, the tale focuses more on her mother's point of view than on Persephone's. While her daughter gets compelled into the realm of the underworld, Demeter, an empathetic goddess, mourns the loss of her daughter, who is now dead to her. Demeter compares her incapacity to nurture the ground due to winter, while her daughter is away, to a type of burial in the corresponding verse. So, the poetic speaker sings,

I think I can remember  
being dead. Many times, in winter,  
I approached Zeus, tell me, I would ask him,  
how can I endure the earth?  
And he would say,  
in a short time, you will be here again.  
And in the time between  
you will forget everything:  
those fields of ice will be  
the meadows of Elysium (Gluck 76).

Since Demeter is the goddess of the harvest and fertility, perhaps she experiences a type of demise every time her daughter gets stolen from her and winter destroys the earth as a result of an emotional detachment and preserved rigidity. Persephone is probably communicating as well at this moment, her daughter speaking from the grave in a perpetual presence enabled conceivable by the poem's lyric style, as indicated by the poem's abrupt beginning with the word "I" before Demeter can be thought from the perspective of the third person. Alternatively, the poet or anybody who has ever prayed to a god of any faith might be addressing,

How can I endure the earth?  
How can I endure a loss of certainty and purpose in  
the world? (Gluck 62).

By linking with Persephone's tragedy and her eventual incomprehension Zeus promised: "You will forget everything", Gluck "secures her escape" in "Persephone the Wanderer". In such a manner, Gluck is as if both surgeon and patient at once, giving herself anesthesia and then intending to perform the procedure on herself.

According to Morris,

From an autobiographical perspective, the book returns to the family drama enacted most fully in *Ararat*, but this time with an emphasis not on the relationship between the father and the daughter but between the mother and the daughter (13).

Although Gluck has begun to write about life at a later age, she maintains that the speaker's attempts to please her mother whilst her age is younger by following the typical narrative

framework for a lady as the mother's next generation falling in love, marrying, holding her beauties, and entertaining a man stay with the speaker's extant viewpoint as a person expanding into another stage of maturation. Greek mythology influences how she sees the intimate encounter; in this instance, the story of Persephone, Demeter, and Hades is at the center but reshaped into a triangle of love, in which Persephone decreases nothing more than the "animal flesh" on that Demeter, the pompous and vindictive mother, and Hades, her lover, compete for authority.

*Averno*'s continually dismal, even sinister lexicon serves as imagery for the speaker's profound melancholy. Nature is either shown in two poems that relate the story of a little peasant girl who starts a fire in a dry field and burns down an entire farmhouse, or it has been charred and disfigured by an unheard-of fire. Gluck places a strong emphasis on the value of rewriting and analyzing well-known tales as a way to get to know oneself about the discursive problem. Morris compares,

The poet's plaintive, evasive, revelatory language to Lowell's shift from "metaphorically armored early poems". Gluck seems to opt for acceptance of the plain speech of the psychological imperative that has helped her give vent to her fear of madness and death (Morris 22).

Gluck's obsession with death, which draws her mind to *Averno*, causes a blending with Persephone in *Averno*, who is perplexingly caught between the two realms. Both of them appear to be "half in love" with Death. Despite the poet's depictions of bright spots in a life that was partially lived in the underworld of the imagination, Persephone's connection with Hades is a tragedy or moral failure and a purposeful plunge into inky blackness. A possible solution wonders if Gluck is thinking about her previous actions and errors of consciously denying herself via unsuccessful romantic engagements or marriage. Gluck reconstructs the seasonal narrative to investigate the connections between motherhood, innovative thinking, disconnection from the natural world, and the pursuit of personal autonomy that she had been addressing in the confessionalist form from a mythological viewpoint. Gluck paid a considerable price to achieve a high aesthetic standard of psychological authenticity. She chooses one of the most traditional subjects for lyric poetry, personal history, despite the many 20th-century doubts about the subject's independence from the excessive linguistic proliferations. She does this in the hope that her strategies for maintaining distance will prevent her from engaging in unnecessary arrogance and that she can elevate the lyrical subject by relating it to standard orders. She highlights how she differs from post-modernists by doing this.

*Averno*, a fresh regeneration occurs as the poet transforms herself to stand in every person experiencing the identical psychological dilemma the way she does. The fact that the person who speaks could be anyone makes it possible for a

more open comprehension of the poetry, yet the poems still bear intimate evidence of the speaker's lifelong concerns about the terrifying consequences of existence without complete trust, which were investigated in this collection. Gluck's *Averno* depicts the poet's meditative, enchanted look on the entrance to death as a means of escaping the warring forces that demolish her world. The poet appears divided between the earthly realm and the realm of the unconscious, and both seem weirdly similar to her, much like Persephone did. According to Estella Ramirez (2014), Gluck's *Averno* forces the reader to wade into what it means to die metaphorically, physically, and spiritually. The verses found in *Averno* are wonderfully braided into extended sections that depict the depressing realities of mutability, aging, and extinction as well as shorter songs that are personal stories of the tale of Persephone and Hades. Bakary's study emphasizes that,

In *Averno*, Gluck raises questions that are far from reassuring or 'pleasant to contemplate'... Death is portrayed as an eminent danger that comes cyclically, as seasons do. Regarding death and silence as a refuge, the poet channels her thoughts into a written voice (Bakary 139).

Across a unifying theme that runs across all of her poems, Gluck's poetry heavily draws on her own experience to trace her journey of recovery and self-exploration. Such a scheme allows the poet's identity to be revealed. By dressing like mythical characters and elevating the individual self in this way, Gluck connects the mundane with the sublime. Gluck employs this technique further to support a personal process of recovery and discovering a fresh meaning for herself, an endeavor that the reader may also engage in while reading the story in *Averno*, although this was more typically an artistically motivated, Modernist tactic. Readers would not be sufficiently migrated by the verses to connect to the ongoing, internal battle that discovers its feeling of motive and progress, as well as a conclusion if they did not recognize the storyline about psychological rehabilitation or the quest for satisfaction and meaning in Gluck's poetry.

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