

Gender Roles, Time and Initiation in *Pan's Labyrinth* and the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*

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ABSTRACT

This article identifies and analyses significant Classical mythological archetypes which underlie *Pan's Labyrinth* by comparing its characters and narrative patterns with those in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*. It shows how Ofelia, Carmen and Mercedes share multiple identifications with Demeter, Persephone and Hekate and how Vidal, the Faun and Ofelia's brother can similarly be identified with the characters of Zeus, Hades and Demophon. Motifs and themes common to both film and hymn are also explored, including issues of choice and disobedience and the struggles of women against an authoritarian and controlling patriarchy. Notions of gendered time, not only in the hymn but also in other Classical myths such as that of Cronos, are analysed in order to gain deeper insight into the complex interplay of mythic, cyclical time and historic, linear time within the film. Finally, a comparison is drawn between the initiate's experience within the Eleusinian Mysteries (of which the hymn provides the earliest written testimony) and the viewer's experience in watching the movie; it is shown how an altered perspective on time contributes to both initiate and viewer emerging with a new way of seeing the world and interpreting one's place in the cycle of life and death.