actions as well. In other words, when prosecuting a man for dishonoring a youth by sexually using him "as a woman" (to use Aeschines' and Xenophon's category), the fact of the degrading behavior and not the consent would be primary. This is clearly indicated by the foregoing discussion of consensual hubristic relations. Moreover, in cases where the victim was well below the age of legal consent, his acquiescence would probably have been even more insignificant. That is, in a prosecution brought by the boy's father for the damage to the boy's reputation and honor, the boy's consent would no more negate the hubristic quality of the sexual intercourse than did the consent of Timarchus to the degrading conduct which men were thought necessarily to have demanded of him. Presumably, the younger the *eromenos*, the more difficult it would have been to construct a valid defense to the aggrieved father's accusation. At the same time, however, there would be powerful disincentives to bringing such prosecutions which would publicize the dishonor of one's son. Of course, in the absence of actual prosecutions (except for the case of *hubris* against the boy referred to by Dinarchus), much of this discussion must remain speculative.

University of California, Berkeley

Seduction and Rape in Greek Myth

MARY R. LEFKOWITZ

In this paper I will attempt to challenge the common assumption that Greek mythology effectively validates the practice of rape and approves of the violent mistreatment of women. Instead, I will argue that in the case of myths involving the unions of gods and goddesses with mortal men and women, we should talk about abduction or seduction rather than rape, because the gods see to it that the experience, however transient, is pleasant for mortals. Moreover, the consequences of these unions are usually glorious for the families of the mortals involved, despite and even because of the suffering that individual members of the family may undergo.

Stories about abduction of women play a central role in the "canon" of ancient Greek literature: the Trojan War was fought to bring back Helen from Troy, after the Trojan prince Paris had abducted her from her husband's home in Sparta. The fifth-century Greek historian Herodotus begins his history of the dissension (διαφορή) between the Greeks and the barbarians by recounting myths of how they abducted (ἁρπάζειν) each other's women (1–2.2).[1] According to these myths, after Phoenicians abducted (ἁρπάσαι) Io, Greeks abducted the princess Medea from Colchis; then the Trojan prince Paris decided he could get away with abducting Helen from Sparta (3.1). The Greeks showed that they took such matters seriously by sending an expedition to Troy. But the Persians, although they acknowledged that abductions were "the

[1] Cf. J. Gould, *Herodotus* (New York, 1989), 64.

work of unjust men," nonetheless refused to take action, because (as they said), "it's clear that the women wouldn't have been abducted if they hadn't been willing" (εἰ μὴ αὐταὶ ἐβούλοντο, 1.4.2).

As Herodotus makes clear, by contrasting the attitude of the Greeks toward abductions with those of the barbarians, Greeks, in responding to or avenging a case of rape, are not interested in whether or not the women gave their consent, so much as with the question of *honor.*[2] The Greek attitude toward women is both more strictly moralistic and more protective: Persians adopt a laissez-faire attitude, letting the women do what they want, without attempting to get revenge; Greeks not only take revenge, but (at least in the case of Helen) seek to retrieve the women. The difference emerges clearly in the case of the first of the abductions in Herodotus' list, that of Io. According to the traditional Greek version, which Herodotus does not tell because his audience knew it (2.1), Io's lover was the god Zeus. Instead, Herodotus first tells the Persian version of the story, that Io was carried off by Phoenician merchants.[3] A little later he gives what he calls the Phoenician version: they agree that they took Io to Egypt, but deny that they abducted her, claiming instead that she had had sexual relations with the captain of the merchant ship and decided to go away with the Phoenicians when she discovered she was pregnant, out of respect for (αἰδεομένη) her parents (5.1–2)—in other words, they didn't bother to take revenge because she had consented to her "abduction."

In contrast to these pragmatic barbarian versions, the Greek accounts of these same abductions emphasize the involvement of the gods: Io was seduced by Zeus; in the *Iliad,* although Helen regretfully admits that she "followed" Paris to Troy (ἑπόμην, 3.174), she puts some of the blame for her

[2] Such confrontations are a typical Herodotean device for conveying abstract ideas; whether they have any historical basis is another question. Cf. S. West, "Herodotus' Portrait of Hecataeus," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991), 151.

[3] Although the point of such rationalization is to give human beings full responsibility for their actions, S. Flory, *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus* (Detroit, 1987), 25–28, conjectures that Herodotus may be making fun here of rationalizing historians such as Hecataeus. For contemporary criticism of myths of seduction by gods, cf. Euripides (*Heracles* 1341–46), with precedents in Xenophanes (21A32.24–25 I 122 Diels-Kranz [hereafter D-K]), Antiphon the sophist (87B10 II p. 340 D-K, cf. Anaxagoras 59B12 II p. 37). Cf. M. R. Lefkowitz, "Commentary on Vlastos," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1991), 239–46.

seduction by Paris on the goddess Aphrodite, who brought her to Paris in fulfillment of her vow to give him the most beautiful woman in the world.[4] Even though it is clear in the *Iliad* that Helen gave her consent and feels guilty about it (3.172–76), the Greek generals, like the Greeks in Herodotus' account, insist on talking about it as if it were abduction or rape. Nestor says that the army cannot return to Greece "before one of us has slept with a Trojan man's wife, in order to avenge Helen's struggles and groans" (τείσασθαι δ' Ἑλένης ὁρμήματά τε στοναχάς τε, 2.356).[5] For rhetorical purposes, if not for the sake of Menelaus' honor (cf. 2.590), the generals must imply that Helen was abducted by force, against her will, and that her abduction was a crime against her husband and his allies.

In Greek myth, apparently, seduction was regarded as a serious crime, if (and this distinction is important) the seduction occurred in the house of the woman's husband or a male relative. In that case, the seduction or abduction from the house was taken as seriously as murder, since the relatives of the victim sought to kill the seducer. According to legend, the poet Hesiod was killed by two brothers who believed that Hesiod had seduced their sister while he was staying in their house; when the charge later proved to be false, the brothers themselves were sacrificed to the gods of hospitality and the sister hanged herself.[6]

But if in myth and legend Greek men were determined to avenge abduction and seduction from the woman's home, how can it be that the Greeks condoned or even applauded such behavior on the part of their gods? As I will now try to show, the gods do not rape or abduct mortal women from their

[4] Cf. *Il.* 3.401, where Helen asks Aphrodite where she will take her next (ἄξεις); Paris' gift from Aphrodite was "painful lust" (μαχλοσύνη ἀλεγεινή, 24.30). On Boston skyphos 13.186, Paris leads her off by the wrist (see below, note 27), in the presence of Aphrodite and Peitho (holding a flower, cf. below, note 40); cf. R. G. A. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho* (Cambridge, 1982), 45–46.

[5] Aristarchus preferred to understand the line as meaning that the struggles and groans were undertaken by the Greeks on behalf of Helen (i.e., as an objective rather than subjective genitive). Cf. G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1985), ad loc.

[6] *Contest of Homer and Hesiod,* ed. T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* V (Oxford, 1912; repr. 1969), 224–46; cf. M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore, 1981), 7.

father's or husband's homes. Rather, women are *seduced* by gods, usually outside of their homes; and the women give their consent, at least initially.

The distinction between rape (or forcible abduction) and voluntary seduction needs to be made with some care and emphasis, since these seductions by gods are often classified as "rape" in modern literature. E. Keuls in her provocative book, *The Reign of the Phallus,* speaks of male gods going on "raping expeditions."[7] P. M. C. Forbes Irving, in his book on metamorphoses, observes that "women are continually being punished in myth for being raped."[8] In a volume of essays devoted to the subject of rape in literature, F. Zeitlin, in an interesting article on "Configurations of Rape in Greek Myth," includes in her discussion of rape the myths of erotic pursuit by the gods.[9] But natural as it might seem in our own time to classify as rape all acts of sexual aggression by males (mortal or immortal) against females and younger males, the Greeks in their law codes distinguished between rape and seduction. As the founding myth of the court of the Areopagus suggests, rape provided sufficient justification for homicide: according to the story, it was there that the god Poseidon prosecuted the god Ares for the murder of his son Halirrhothius. Ares had killed Halirrhothius because he had raped Ares' daughter Alcippe, but the court acquitted Ares.[10]

Rape and seduction are regarded as equally serious crimes in Athenian law and in the Gortyn code.[11] In Lysias' speech about the murder of Eratosthenes, the defendant, Euphiletus, argues that seduction is the more serious crime; but this is a case of special pleading to help justify murder in the case of adultery that took place with the wife's full consent.[12] Rape, as defined in

[7] E. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus* (New York, 1985), 50.

[8] P. M. C. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth* (Oxford, 1990), 69.

[9] F. Zeitlin, "Configurations of Rape in Greek Myth," in *Rape,* ed. S. Tomaselli and R. Porter (Oxford, 1986), 122–51.

[10] Apollodorus 3.14.2, Suda s.v. Ἄρεως πάγος (I 348 Adler); cf. R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford, 1983), 378.

[11] Cf. Demosthenes, *Against Aristocrates* 23.53, 55, where motive is not a factor; if someone kills a man having intercourse with his wife (ἐπὶ δάμαρτι) or mother or sister or daughter, or with a concubine kept for the purpose of bearing legitimate children, the homicide is justifiable.

[12] Cf. esp. E. M. Harris, "Did the Athenians Regard Seduction as a Worse Crime Than Rape?" *Classical Quarterly* 40 (1990), 370–77, with addendum by P. G. McC. Brown, "Athenian Attitudes to Rape and Seduction," ibid. 41 (1991), 533–34, *contra* (e.g.) C. Carey, ed., *Lysias: Selected Speeches* (Cambridge, 1989), 80.

the Gortyn code (ii.4), explicitly involves violence (κάρτει οἴπειν, i.e., κράτει οἴφειν).[13] The fine for rape of a free woman is the same as that for seduction in the house of a father, brother, or husband, 100 staters, whereas the fine for seduction in another man's house is only 50 staters (ii.21–24). The scale of fines in the code suggests that rape and seduction are equally serious crimes if the woman in question is married; but if she is not, the seriousness of the crime depends upon whether or not she gives her consent.[14]

But violence is not a characteristic of female mortals' encounters with the gods, at least in the heroic age; gods do not usually violate the laws of hospitality of a male relative's home; nor do they concern themselves with married women, unless the marriage has not been consummated. Instead, the encounters between gods and mortal women usually take place in beautiful settings, outside of the woman's home, while she is unmarried. Even though the encounters between gods and mortal women are almost always of short duration, they have lasting consequences not only for the females involved but for civilization generally, since the children born from such unions are invariably remarkable, famous for their strength or intelligence, or both. Whether we moderns choose to approve of it or not, most women in archaic Greek epic, perhaps because they believe that the gods exist and do not question the historicity of their mythology, tend to cooperate in their seduction.

Epic audiences clearly enjoyed hearing genealogies of heroes and races that derived from the unions of a god with a mortal woman; naturally any descendant would boast of such an origin. Like Achilles himself, two of his captains both have gods as fathers. In *Iliad* 16 the story of one of these, Eudorus, is told in some detail:

> a girl's child (παρθένιος), whom Polymele bore, beautiful in the dance, the daughter of Phylas; strong Argeiphontes (i.e., Hermes) fell in love with her (ἠράσατο) when he caught sight of her among the girls performing the choral dance to Artemis of the golden arrow, of the hunting cry, and straightway Hermes went into the women's quar-

[13] Cf. also κάρτει δαμάσαιτο, "deflower," ii.10–11. οἴφειν is "forthright," but perhaps not quite so offensive as Attic βινεῖν; cf. D. Bain, "Six Greek Verbs of Sexual Congress," *Classical Quarterly* 51 (1991), 72–74.

[14] R. Sealey, *Women and Law in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1990), 71–74.

> ters and slept with her in secret, and he gave her a glorious son Eudorus, an excellent runner and swift fighter. (*Iliad* 16.180–86)

Polymele was not disgraced by her association with Hermes, even though the seduction took place in her father's house; on the contrary, after Eudorus was born, she was married to Echecles, who gave many wedding gifts for her, and her father raised Eudorus as his own child. It is significant that when the god falls in love with her "among the girls performing the choral dance"—that is, at a time when she would be on display for mortal suitors—one of these in fact marries her after the birth of her son by the god.[15]

Homer does not say whether or not Polymele invited or eagerly received Hermes' attentions; the god "catches sight of her," literally, "sees her with his eyes" (ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδών, 182); did they exchange glances? When on vase paintings gods are portrayed in pursuit of mortal women, there is emphasis on the persuasive power of the god's glance; the woman moves away from him but looks back, as if drawn to him.[16] Since there is no mention of violence, and Hermes and Polymele made love "in secret" (λάθρῃ) in the women's quarters, the implication is that she did not strenuously resist the god's attentions. There is, however, an explicit case of eagerness on the part of the mortal woman in the catalogue of women in *Odyssey* 11; this is the story of Tyro, the first woman Odysseus sees after he speaks to his mother:

> she was said to be the daughter of blameless Salmoneus, and she said that she was the wife of Cretheus son of Aeolus. She fell in love with (ἠράσσατο) divine Enipeus who was the most beautiful of rivers flowing on the earth, and she frequented the beautiful streams of Enipeus. But the Holder of the Earth, the Shaker of the Earth Poseidon made himself resemble Enipeus, and slept with her in the mouth of the eddying river. And a dark shining wave stood over them like a mountain, arched over them, and it hid the god and the mortal

[15] Cf. the discussion in S. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play* (Baltimore, 1993).

[16] On the importance of eye contact, cf. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 84, 112–13, and on the meeting of the glances of male and female on vase paintings depicting erotic pursuit, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture* (Oxford, 1991), 69. Cf. also NY 06.1021.149/ARV 523., 2, characterized by Keuls, *Reign of the Phallus*, 50, as "Poseidon and Hermes on a raping expedition together." See also the Niobid painter's Boreas and Oreithyia, Brunswick 1908.3 = S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou, *Die Liebe der Götter in der Attischen Kunst des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Bern, 1979), 38, no. 364.

> woman. And when the god had completed his acts of love (φιλοτήσια ἔργα), he took her hand (ἐν δ' ἄρα οἱ φῦ χειρί) and spoke and called her by name: "rejoice, lady, in our love (φιλότητι), and as the year comes round you will bear glorious children, since the beds of the gods are not infertile; and you must care for them and cherish them. Now go home and keep this to yourself and do not tell my name; but I am Poseidon the Shaker of the Earth." And with these words he went down under the swelling sea. And she became pregnant and bore Pelias and Neleus. (236–54)

Tyro in this story clearly feels intense physical passion (ἠράσσατο) for the god Enipeus, and wants to attract his attention. But because she spends so much of her time beside him away from her home, where she would be protected, she attracts the attention of a more powerful god, Poseidon. Poseidon does not use force to compel her to have intercourse with him; rather, he assumes the form of the god whom she explicitly desires, Enipeus.[17] Then he takes her into the river's stream and creates a setting that offers not only privacy but a magical splendor, with a dark shining wave like a mountain.[18] He touches her hand,[19] calls her by name, and speaks to her—the poet uses a formulaic line that introduces speech to a close associate (so Ares to Aphrodite in *Odyssey* 8.291). He tells her who he really is and that she will bear twin sons. Again, as in the case of Polymele's tryst with Hermes, Tyro's encounter with Poseidon brings no disgrace, because afterwards she is married to her uncle, the hero Cretheus.

In the cases of both Polymele and Tyro, the god has only this one encounter with her, and then disappears. Heartless as this may seem, it is characteristic of every kind of encounter mortals have with gods, no matter how close their relationship. A god will send a dream; he/she will appear in disguise and give instructions to a mortal, as Aphrodite does to Helen in *Iliad* 3 or Athena to Telemachus in *Odyssey* 1. Even Thetis does not linger in conversation with her son Achilles. In Homer, at least, the gods' female consorts

[17] Cf. the story of Demeter Fury at Thelpusa in Arcadia. Poseidon wanted to have intercourse with Demeter, who turned herself into a mare; when he saw that she had tricked him, he turned himself into a stallion and mated with her (Paus. 8.25.5).

[18] On the translation of πορφύρεος as "dark, shining" rather than "purple," cf. O. J. Schrier, "Love with Doris," *Mnemosyne* 32 (1979), 316–22.

[19] Like eye contact (cf. above, note 16), the touching of hands is a sign of consensual intimacy; cf. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture*, 68–69.

do not complain that the gods behaved like gods. Even as a ghost in Hades, two generations after her death, when Tyro explains to Odysseus who she is, it is her encounter with the god that makes her remarkable. The next woman Odysseus sees is Antiope, "who boasted that she spent the night in the arms of Zeus, and bore two sons, Amphion and Zethos" (*Odyssey* 11.261–62). Homer does not tell the rest of her story; but even though we know from other sources that she suffered great hardship because of her liaison with Zeus, what she boasts of to Odysseus is the one night that she spent with the god and the two sons she bore as a result of it.[20]

Liaisons between gods, heroes, and mortals appear to have been the subject of an entire epic, which was attributed to the poet Hesiod but was almost certainly written more than a century after his death. Only fragments of this poem survive, but we know that Tyro's story was told again in this so-called *Catalogue of Women,* this time with emphasis on Tyro's beauty and a much longer speech by Poseidon about her children and their descendants (frags. 30–42 Merkelbach-West [hereafter M-W]). A long papyrus fragment relates the story of another of Poseidon's liaisons, this time with Mestra, the daughter of Erysichthon: "the god took (ἐδάμασσε) her in Cos," having brought her, although she was capable of turning herself into the shape of different animals, "far away from her father across the wine-dark sea" (fr. 43a.55–57 M-W). After she bears a son she marries a mortal, Glaucus, and the catalogue of her descendants is given.

Nothing is said in the poem about whether Mestra consented or desired this union, though her life with her father could not have been easy: he had an insatiable appetite and, to pay for food, would sell Mestra in one of her animal forms, and then she would turn back into human form and escape (cf. 11.31–33). Poseidon's attentions at least provide her with a means of transport to the east, where a husband awaited her, and with additional honor. But the gods have ways of making their approaches welcome.[21] A summary of a

[20] Apollodorus 3.5.5.

[21] Cf. also one of the few surviving lines from Aeschylus' *Amymone*. Amymone, one of the Danaids, had gone out to look for water and was about to be raped by a satyr when she was rescued by Poseidon, who says: "you are fated to be my partner, and I am fated to be your partner (σοὶ μὲν γαμεῖσθαι μόρσιμον, γαμεῖν δ' ἐμοί)" (S. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta,* IV, 2d ed. [Göttingen, 1977], fr. 13 [hereafter *TrGF*]); cf. Kaempf-Dimitriadou, *Liebe der Götter,* 48.

later section of the poem describes how Zeus fell in love with Europa while she was gathering flowers, and changed himself into a bull and "breathed from his mouth the scent of saffron" (ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος κρόκον ἔπνει, fr. 140); thus he was able to deceive her and carry her off on his back to Crete, where he had intercourse with her. After that she had famous children and lived with the king of Crete.

In what survives of the Hesiodic catalogue, the poet does not describe how the women involved in these liaisons felt about the experiences.[22] But since the Athenian tragic poets gave their women characters ample opportunity to speak, we can at least know what the poets imagined that the women might have said in retrospect about their encounters with gods, since of course no such incident could have been presented on the tragic stage. Only scraps of two plays about Sophocles' *Tyro* survive, but we have enough of the prologue of Aeschylus' *Kares* (or *Europa*) to see that Europa was very proud of her relationship with Zeus; she boasts of her fertility, since it is unusual for a woman to give birth to triplets rather than to one child or a set of twins as the result of a single encounter with the god:[23]

> There was a flourishing meadow to welcome the bull; such was the trick that Zeus devised, by staying where he was, to steal me from my father without a struggle. And after that: I shall tell the whole story in a few words. A mortal woman united with a god, I exchanged the honored state of maidenhood, and was joined to the common owner of my children (παίδων δ' ἐζύγη ξυνάονι). In three travails I endured the pains of women, and the noble seed of the father could not reproach the field, that it refused to bring forth. I started with the greatest of these offspring, by giving birth to Minos.

Again, a meadow with flowers proves to be an irresistible attraction for a young girl, and again the god uses a deception (κλέμμα, 2) in order to carry her off.

Although the philosopher Xenophanes complained that Homer and He-

[22] There is no question that the males enjoyed these erotic encounters; cf. Dioscurides' epigram about how, as the result of being in Doris' "garden," he has become "immortal" (ἄνθεσιν ἐν χλοεροῖς ἀθάνατος γέγονα, *Anthologia Palatina* 5.55 = 1484 G-P; cf. Schrier, "Love with Doris," 309–12).

[23] Here I follow the text of H. Lloyd-Jones, ed. and trans., "Appendix," in *Aeschylus,* ed. H. Weir Smyth, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 599–603; cf. *TrGF* fr. 99.1–11.

siod sang about the unlawful actions of the gods, their lying (κλέπτειν), adultery, and deluding of one another (21 F 12 D-K), ordinarily people thought that when gods were involved, the ends justified the means. It was a different, reprehensible matter if a mortal used a ruse or disguise to deceive a young girl: he would be punished. An amusing example of such a case, perhaps based on the plot of a lost comedy, is preserved in a fragment of a novel, probably from the second century A.D. Since in Troy at that time young women who were about to be married dedicated their virginity to the river Scamander, the hero of the story, Cimon, crowned himself with reeds and hid in a bush: when the girl he was after, Callirhoe, asked the river to receive her virginity, he jumped out of the bush and said "I who am Scamander receive it with pleasure and take you, Callirhoe, in order to bestow great benefits on you" (*Epist. Aeschines* 10.4–5, pp. 38–39 Hercher). But when the next day Callirhoe's nurse discovered what had happened, Cimon had to leave town in a hurry.[24]

Why do the gods visit their mortal consorts only once, and never return again, even to offer encouragement or comfort? It is this failure to return, to care about their mortal partners and mortal children, that a chorus of Athenian women complain about in Euripides' *Ion,* when their queen Creusa describes how she has been neglected by the god Apollo, and has lost the son she bore to him and abandoned many years before:

> the son of Zeus [Apollo] shows that he does not remember, and did not beget the common fortune of children for my queen [Creusa] in her household, but produced a bastard child, doing Aphrodite another favor. (1099–1106)

The *Ion* is the only extant play which explicitly scrutinizes, rather than simply accepts, the pattern of divine behavior toward mortal partners.[25] Ion, before he discovers that he himself is Creusa's lost child by Apollo, raises the ques-

[24] Cf. S. Trenkner, *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1958), 133–34; C. Schwegler, *De Aeschinis quae feruntur epistolis,* diss. (Giessen, 1913), 16–17; for analogous *rites de passage,* cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung* (Stuttgart, 1913), 365. My thanks to Prof. Rebecca Hague for the reference to this story.

[25] Cf. Aesch., *Dict.* fr. 47a17–20, where Danae claims that although Zeus is responsible, she has paid the penalty, and Eur., *Heraclid.* 718–19, where Alcmene briefly raises the question of Zeus' responsibility to her.

tion of why gods are not held liable for seduction and adultery like mortal men:

> if—though it will not happen, but for the sake of argument—you gods paid the penalty to mortals for violating marriages, you and Poseidon and Zeus the ruler of heaven would empty your temples by paying the fines for your wrongdoing. (444–47)

Creusa makes the charge of irresponsibility even more explicit:

> to this light I shall speak in reproach against you, son of Leto. You came to me, with your hair shining with gold, when I was gathering saffron petals in the folds of my gown, to reflect the golden light in their flowering. You grasped the pale wrists of my arms and you led me to a bed in the cave, while I cried out "mother," a lover god granting a favor for shameless Cypris. And I in my misfortune bore you a son, and out of fear for my mother I threw him on your bed, where you had lain with me in my misfortune, in my sadness on our sad bed. Alas, and now he is gone, stolen, a feast for the birds, my child and yours, you wretch, and you play the lyre and sing your paeans. (881–902)

As mortals, we instinctively sympathize with Creusa. But before we criticize the god, we must be precise about the nature of his crime. First of all, he did not use force.[26] Like Europa, Creusa was away from home, in a meadow, gathering flowers. Like Poseidon when he appeared to Tyro, the god appears to her as she would like to see him, with his hair sparkling with the gold she has sought to collect in her lap with the petals of her flowers. The god takes her by the wrists, employing the gesture used in the marriage ceremony (χεῖϱ' ἐπὶ καϱπῷ) to lead away (ἄγειν) the bride.[27] Again, as Poseidon did for Tyro, Apollo takes Creusa to a private place.

Did Creusa give her consent? Certainly not at first, since she called out to her mother, though it is also true that she does not try to escape. But

[26] It is not "rape"; cf. J. M. Bremer, "The Meadow of Love and Two Passages in Euripides' *Hippolytus,*" *Mnemosyne* 28 (1975), 268–80, 274, also noted by A. P. Burnett, *Euripides: Ion* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), 85–86, rightly; cf. also her "Human Resistance and Divine Persuasion in Euripides' *Ion,*" *Classical Philology* 57 (1962), 89–103, 95–96, unfairly criticized by A. N. Michelini, *Euripides and the Tragic Tradition* (Madison, Wis., 1987), 269 note 166.

[27] On the gesture, see esp. I. Jenkins, "Is There Life after Marriage?" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 30 (1983), 139–40.

certainly afterwards she regrets the encounter; she calls herself unfortunate, sad, and even their bed was "sad." But the reason for her sorrow is not regret that she had intercourse with the god, but that he abandoned her and her son. The god behaved according to the epic pattern, except that he failed to inform his mortal partner fully of what would happen in the future to her child. In the *Odyssey* and in the *Catalogue*, the god tells the women who their children will be and that they will be famous. But Creusa discovers her child's fate and destiny only after many years, and then after much suffering and misapprehension of the facts.[28]

It would have been easier on Creusa if her father, like Polymele's, had been prepared to raise the god's son as his own.[29] But the god sees that all comes out well in the end, and Creusa, once she knows that Ion is her son and will be a famous hero, acknowledges the god has not abandoned them (1609–10). But why didn't the god let her know what would happen? Because, as Creusa begins to realize at the end of the play, and the goddess Athena confirms, acting on Apollo's behalf, the god had planned to let her know her son's identity when they were safely back in Athens. Apollo does not appear himself ex machina at the end of the play, not because he is ashamed of his actions, but in order that "criticism not arise between them about what happened previously" (1558). Whatever Creusa's resentments against him, the god also has reason to complain of Creusa; after all, she nearly murdered his son and ruined his first plans for his future.[30]

So it seems that the encounters between mortal women and gods, however beautiful they seem at the moment and however attractive the attentions of the god, are not only brief and singular, but often followed by a long interval of suffering and neglect. Creusa has been childless for years, and certain that her son by Apollo is dead. When Zeus asked the maiden Marpessa to choose between the mortal Idas, who had abducted her, and Apollo, who wanted to kill Idas and carry her off himself, Marpessa chose the mortal,

[28] M. R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (Baltimore, 1986), 32–33.

[29] Or like Polydore, whose husband Borus raised her son by the river Spercheus as his own, *Il.* 16.175–77, or Evadne, whose father wisely inquired from the oracle of Delphi about his daughter's pregnancy, and so learned that the child was Apollo's (Pindar, *Ol.* 6.35–57). But other women were less fortunate, e.g., Alope (murdered by her father after he discovered she had borne a son by Poseidon), Leucothoe (buried alive by her father), and Danae (confined in a brazen tower, cf. below).

[30] Cf. Burnett, "Human Resistance," 94.

Idas, because Apollo would abandon her in her old age.[31] The other gods treat their women no better: Tyro was persecuted by her husband's second wife, Sidero.[32] Antiope was forced to abandon her twin sons Zethus and Amphion; she married a mortal man, but he was murdered by her uncle, and she was persecuted by her uncle and his wife. Even Europa complains that she never sees two of her sons and lives in fear that she will lose "everything" if her son Sarpedon dies at Troy (*TrGF* fr. 99.14, 23). As the old men in the chorus remind Antigone, "Danae suffered too . . . although she cherished the seed of Zeus that flowed in gold" (Sophocles, *Antigone* 945–50).[33] The moments of glory in these women's lives are memorable but brief: their seduction, the promise of their sons' fame, being reunited with their sons after a long separation. But that is the nature of human life as the ancient Greeks saw it: "in a moment delight flowers for mortals, and in a moment it falls to the ground, shaken by a stern decree"—so Pindar of a (male) victor in the games (*Pyth.* 8.92–94).[34]

Such flowers of delight, even if short-lived, are preferable for mortals to the alternative possibility, which is unrelieved suffering.[35] Why then do some mortal women resist the advances of the gods? In the *Prometheus Bound*, the maiden Io refuses to obey dreams that tell her to go to the meadow where Zeus awaits her (645–54); then for reasons that she does not explain, but which Prometheus attributes to Hera's jealous hatred (592), Io is turned into a cow and tormented by a gadfly. After they have seen Io in her transformed and maddened state, the chorus of the *Prometheus* says:[36]

> never, never, may you see me sharing a bed with Zeus; may I never be approached by a bridegroom who is one of the gods from heaven.

[31] Apparently this was a story told by Simonides in one of his poems, 563 PMG = Σ *Il.* 9.557–58 II 518–19 Erbse.

[32] Some aspects of her suffering were vividly described in Sophocles' *Tyro;* cf. frags. 658, 659 Radt.

[33] Cf. Forbes Irving, *Metamorphosis,* 69: "in myth women are continually punished for being raped [sic]," citing Leucothoe, Psamathe, Alope, Arne, Danae, along with Aura, Pelopeia, and Taygete, who commit suicide.

[34] Cf. H. Lloyd-Jones, "Pindar," in *Academic Papers* (Oxford, 1990), 78.

[35] Cf. *Il.* 24.524–33; cf. C. W. Macleod, *Homer, Iliad 24* (Cambridge, 1982), 133.

[36] There are some problems with the text, but the general sense is clear; cf. M. Griffith, ed., *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1983), ad loc.

> I am terrified when I look at the male-hating maiden Io, tormented by Hera in cruel wanderings. (896–900)

Since these fears are expressed by immortal Oceanids, who by definition cannot die or grow old, they must be afraid not so much of male sexuality as of change: "I do not know who I shall turn into" (τίς ἂν γενοίμαν, 905).[37] Will they be persecuted by Hera and metamorphosed into cows? Will they marry and need to leave the familiar environment of their father's home for a strange and hostile place? It is displacement and separation from her mother that Persephone complains of when she is carried off by Hades on his chariot to his realm in the lower world.[38] Persephone went to pick a marvelous radiant narcissus, with a hundred blossoms and the sweetest scent (*HHom* 2.1–15), which Earth made to grow as a lure (δόλος) for her. Modern scholars have suggested in various ways that the scene represents a *rite de passage* from girlhood to womanhood, or even a cruel perversion of the usual marriage ceremony.[39] But what the poet of the hymn has depicted is a particularly appealing setting for a divine encounter: as in the case of Europa, there is a meadow with flowers; like Creusa, Persephone was picking flowers, away from her mother; the narcissus has a scent that makes heaven and earth laugh for joy—Persephone tells her mother that it was like a *krokos*, the saffron flower (428), whose scent attracted Europa to the bull.[40]

But the goddess, unlike Tyro or even Creusa, is unwilling and weeping (ἀέκουσαν . . . ὀλοφυρομένην, 19–20). She calls out first to her father; so long as she can see the earth and the sea and heaven—the familiar surroundings of this world—Persephone still hopes to see her mother and the other gods, and still cries out. When the narrative returns to her again some time later with her husband, in his house, Persephone is still "very reluctant, out of longing for her mother" (πόλλ' ἀεκαζομένηι μητρὸς πόθωι, 344). In obedience to Zeus' command, Hades allows Persephone to return to her mother, but he gives her a seed of a pomegranate to eat, after consecrating it secretly (λάθρηι / ἀμφὶ ἓ νωμήσας), so that she will not stay with her mother permanently. The language suggests that what is involved here is an act of ritual magic rather than a euphemism for sexual intercourse. As in the case of love charms, or the apples that Hippomenes throws to Atalanta, the seed binds Persephone to Hades, since if one eats the food of the dead one must remain among them.[41] Persephone, in her account of the story to her mother, stresses that she was forced to eat it: "he secretly put the seed into my mouth, a sweet morsel, and forced me to eat it against my will" (ἄκουσαν . . . βίηι προσηνάγκασσε, 413). Whether the seed represents a sacrament, or should be regarded as a euphemism for sexual intercourse is not so important as its meaning for Persephone, that she was compelled by force to eat it, so that she cannot remain with her mother but must spend a third of the year with her husband "in the gloomy darkness," away from her mother and the rest of the gods (464).

If the reason Persephone gives for her reluctance to marry Hades is that she must leave her mother and her normal surroundings, it may not be (despite modern theory) the sexual act per se[42] but rather change of ambience and status that makes females complain of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Mortal women married to mortal men complain instead of the transition from their childhood home to a new house and new family. In Euripides' drama Medea complains of the enslavement of marriage, "taking a master for your body" (δεσπότην τε σώματος λαβεῖν, 234), and of needing to be a prophetess when you arrive in a new environment with new customs, which you did not learn at home; unless you are in your own city near your family, you have no protector if your husband mistreats you (238–40, 252–58). Or as Procne describes it, in Sophocles' lost play *Tereus*:[43]

[37] Although Griffith, *Prometheus*, ad loc. thinks here τίς means virtually the same thing as τί, it is probable that the chorus has metamorphosis in mind; cf. M. R. Lefkowitz, *Heroines and Hysterics* (London, 1981), 97.

[38] In the case of most ordinary marriages, transfer to her husband's home would not require the bride to sever ties with her mother; cf. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture*, 73–74.

[39] Cf. most recently W. B. Tyrrell and F. S. Brown, *Athenian Myths and Institutions* (New York, 1991), 106–7.

[40] In vase painting, a flower held in a woman's hand represents this moment of erotic "ripeness"; cf. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture*, 65.

[41] Cf. C. A. Faraone, "Aphrodite's Κεστός and Apples for Atalanta," *Phoenix* 44 (1990), 236–37.

[42] Cf., e.g., W. Whallon, *Problem and Spectacle: Studies in the Oresteia* (Heidelberg, 1980), 57: "[Cassandra's] mood is not of post-coital tristesse, but of nonorgiastic inadequacy."

[43] Cf. Soph., *Trach.* 141–52, esp. 147–50: a young woman leads "an untroubled life in pleasure until she is called a woman instead of a girl (ἀντὶ παρθένου γυνή), and takes on her share of worries in the night, because she is afraid for her husband and children."

> Our lives are of all mortals the sweetest when we are young in our father's houses, for ignorance always keeps children safe and happy. But when we come of age and can understand, we are thrust out and sold away (ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα) from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this when one night has yoked us (ἐπειδὰν εὐφρόνη ζεύξηι μία), we are forced to praise and say that all is well. (Sophocles, *TrGF* fr. 583)

Since both Medea and Procne had reason to complain of their husbands, they cannot be taken to represent ordinary women who were happily married and well treated. Procne, like most women in myth, was given in marriage to a man picked by her father, in this case a close military ally—in her opinion, she was "thrust out and sold."[44] But Medea, as the nurse says in the play's prologue, fell passionately in love with Jason (7). Apparently even when the woman consents she cannot guarantee that for that reason her marriage will be happy. Whether the choice is deliberate or made on impulse, whether it is herself or her father, whoever makes the choice for the woman must begin by picking the right man.[45]

Perhaps it is because the Greeks believe that human beings do not always (or usually) understand what they are doing that they enjoyed stories about women who were seduced by the gods, where at least (like the victor in the games) the woman will have her moment of glory to remember, and her honor to enjoy throughout her life, and in addition her children to be proud of. In recent years students of Greek mythology have tended to stress that the narrative pattern of myth suggests that marriage is (in effect) death for the individual female, either literally or figuratively.[46] But that, as we have seen, is only the first half of the story; if the choice of consort is right, even if the woman has not made it herself, even if she is only seduced or persuaded to accede to it, she can in fact be recognized and remembered as an individual, even apart from the accomplishments of her sons. That is also the message

[44] In his tirade against women, Hippolytus uses the dowry as evidence that women are evil: "her father offers a dowry to settle her elsewhere, in order to be rid of the evil" (Eur., *Hipp.* 627–29).

[45] As apparently the father seems to have done in a lost comedy, *PDidot* I. 17–18, ed. Sandbach, p. 328: "he is all that I wished with regard to me, and my pleasure is his pleasure, father."

[46] E.g. Lefkowitz, *Heroines*, 93; Zeitlin, "Configurations of Rape," 123.

of the influential myth of Persephone's abduction: however unwilling Persephone has been to be led off by Hades and to remain for some part of the year in his home, through her marriage she gains a new importance and a kingdom of her own.[47]

The positive side of the pattern can perhaps most easily be seen in the many myths of abduction that serve as charters for new colonies. In an ode for a victor from Cyrene, the fifth-century lyric poet Pindar tells how Apollo admired the maiden Cyrene when he saw her in Thessaly wrestling with a lion without her weapons, and asks the centaur Cheiron if it would be "permissible for me to lay my famous hand on her and to cull the sweet flowers of her bed" (ἐκ λεχέων κεῖραι μελιαδέα ποίαν, *Pyth.* 9.36–37). Cheiron tells Apollo that he will carry her beyond the sea to the fine garden of Zeus in Libya, where she will be queen, and bear a son, Aristaeus. Pindar does not say, and Apollo does not ask, whether Cyrene approved of his plan; but not only does the god help her deal with the lion, he gives her a city of her own to rule.

In another ode, Pindar describes how Zeus carried off Protogeneia, the daughter of the king of the city Opous in Elis, had intercourse with her in the mountains of Arcadia, and brought her to Italy to the king Locrus, so that he would not die childless. Locrus was delighted that his wife was pregnant with the god's son and named him for her father, Opous, and it is this second Opous who is the eponymous hero of a new colony in Italy (*Ol.* 9.57–66). Again, the poet says nothing about how Protogeneia felt about the matter. But what are the alternatives to marriage for a woman? She cannot be truly independent or self-sufficient, but must remain under the protection of a male relative, a father or a brother, in households run by their wives. At least if she has her own home she might have children who would be loyal to her, defend her in case of trouble, and look after her in her old age. If she was seduced by a god, she would not only have children, but strong and remarkable children, who could save her life, like Tyro's or Antiope's sons; she would also have lasting fame and perhaps a city or colony named for her.

In many myths the women chosen by the gods get another advantage: a special gift in return for consenting to the god's wishes. Amymone was rescued by Poseidon from the unwelcome attentions of a satyr; he also asked what wish she would like him to grant, and since she had been searching for

[47] Cf. esp. Jenkins, "Life after Marriage," 142.

water, she asked for a fountain.[48] But when Poseidon asked Caenis what he might do for her, she asked to be turned into a man and be made invulnerable. The god complied, and she became the hero Caeneus. In that way she was able to avoid giving birth to the god's child, but in the end her fate as a man seems to have been even less happy than it might have been had she followed the same course as Creusa or Tyro. Caeneus became arrogant, and eventually Zeus arranged that since Caeneus, being invulnerable, could not be killed, he be driven into the ground by Centaurs pounding him with tree trunks.[49]

If these myths have any lesson to teach, it is simply what, in Aeschylus' *Choephoroe,* Pylades tells Orestes when Orestes asks him if he must obey Apollo's command to kill his mother: "count all men your enemies rather than the god" (902). Given that life is by nature difficult for mortals, the gods will do what is best in the end, as Orestes and Creusa discovered. Another example is Cassandra, who refused to have intercourse with Apollo, although at first she consented (ξυναινέσασα), when Apollo, while wrestling with her, "breathed grace" upon her. But then she "played him false" in regard to the "production of children" (τέκνων εἰς ἔργον, 1206–8).[50] As a result of her refusal, she lost both the prospect of famous children and her gift. The god had already given her what she asked for, the gift of prophetic power, and could not take it away again, but he fixed it so that she would not be believed.

It is significant that, despite the gods' undeniably greater power, they ask for the woman's consent and honor her right of refusal, even though that refusal may bring about her death, as it did for Cassandra and Caenis.[51] But the gods, at least as they are portrayed by the poets, wish to persuade mortals

[48] Apollodorus ii.i.4; [Hesiod], *Catalogue,* fr. 122–29 M-W.

[49] Cf. [Hes.], fr. 87–88; Acusilaus 2 *FGrHist* F 22; Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth,* 37, 138.

[50] Cf. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1962), II 555: "but from the beginning it is not merely brute force which is here at work; with all her resisting Cassandra is susceptible to the power of the god's χάρις." But does she resist at first or only at the last moment, since it is not simply ἔργον ἀφροδίσιον (cf. Semonides, fr. 7.48 W), but ἔργον τέκνων that is involved? For wrestling as a metaphor for sexual activity, cf. M. B. Poliakoff, *Studies in the Terminology of Greek Combat Sports* (Königstein, 1982), 104–7.

[51] Or metamorphosis (to escape from the god), e.g., Daphne, Dryope, Taygete, Arethusa.

to carry out their will rather than to make them comply by force. At the beginning of the *Odyssey,* Zeus sends Hermes to advise Aegisthus not to murder Agamemnon and to warn him of the consequences of the action he intends. Opportunity for choice and human responsibility are distinctive (and often misunderstood) characteristics of Greek religion, and nowhere are they more evident than in these stories of seduction of women by gods.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the notion that these seductions are beneficial and honorific survives in Alexandrian literature after the status of women had become a subject of debate and women had gained greater rights under the law. Plato's dialogue about the nature of love, the *Phaedrus,* takes place not far from the very spot on the banks of the Ilissus river where the god Boreas was said to have carried off Oreithyia.[52] Poems written far from mainland Greece in space and time and that describe love, both requited and unrequited, like Theocritus' idylls, are set in attractive landscapes.

A short epyllion or "mini-epic," written in Alexandria in Egypt in the second century B.C. by a pupil of the famous Homeric scholar Aristarchus, tells the old story of Zeus' seduction of Europa in much greater detail than even the Hesiodic catalogue would have allowed, and with a different focus: Moschus' poem concentrates not on the god's predictions about the names and accomplishments of her progeny but on Europa's own feelings.[53] It begins with a dream sent to her by Aphrodite: Asia and Europe appear to her as two women. Asia, her homeland, appeals to her as her child; the other female, however, pulls her away with her strong arms and claims that she was Zeus' gift to her, *her* Europa, but she is "not unwilling" (14). She wakes up frightened and interested in the strange woman who claimed her as her own, but hopes for the best. She then goes out to pick flowers, carrying a basket her mother had given her with the story of Io depicted on it; as so often in Hellenistic poetry, the description of a work of art is closely tied to the main narrative, and the story of Io predicts Europa's fate.

We have seen how Procne in Sophocles' *Tereus,* like Euripides' Medea, described the anguish young women experience when they are forced to make

[52] Cf. the meadow where Phaedra hopes to find rest (and Hippolytus; cf. Bremer, "Meadow of Love," 278), and the beautiful setting on the banks of the Ilissus that is the site of Plato's dialogue on the nature of love, *Phaedrus* 229b; cf. A. M. Parry, *The Language of Achilles and Other Papers* (Oxford, 1989), 22.

[53] Cf. W. Bühler, *Die Europa des Moschos* (Wiesbaden, 1960).

the critical transition from girlhood to becoming a bride.[54] The same longing for the innocence of childhood is expressed in a remarkable poem dating from the fourth century, this time by a women poet, Erinna. Although only fragments of her epyllion, the *Distaff*, survive, it is clear that she described her friendship with another girl, Baucis, and the games they played, and regrets that Baucis forgot about her and their pastimes after she married:[55] "you forgot everything that you heard from your mother . . . forgetfulness . . . Aphrodite" (29–30). Even though Baucis is now dead, Erinna seems not to be permitted to leave her house, and "blood-red shame tears . . . me" (34–35). But in Moschus' poem, Europa is curious and even eager to learn about the world outside.

In the meadow Europa encounters a remarkably beautiful bull—it is of course Zeus in disguise hoping both to avoid Hera's jealous anger and to fool Europa. Like Nausicaa in the *Odyssey* when she meets Odysseus, Europa does not run away. The bull is mild and gentle; there is a scent of ambrosia and the sound of music; he kneels before her and she climbs on his back. As the bull carries her off to the sea, she calls to her friends, who cannot come to her (112); but even then she does not despair but speaks to the bull, asks him if he is a god, and prays to Poseidon for help. Finally the god speaks to her and tells her what will happen. The poem ends with the lines "and she who had been a girl became the bride of Zeus, and bore his children, and became a mother" (165–66). It is a transition as swift and painless as Zeus' metamorphosis into animal form: "he hid the god and changed his shape and became a bull" (79).

Whatever modern women might think of this ending, for her it is clearly happy, and almost romantic, with the music, and the flowers, and the scent, and the beautiful Nereids rising from the sea. Perhaps it is wishful thinking on the part of a male poet; certainly it has none of the anguish expressed by Erinna or by Procne about a past happiness that is forever lost after marriage to a mortal man. Perhaps the critical difference between these female and male descriptions of marriage may be accounted for by the nature of the bridegrooms involved. Europa became the hesitant but willing bride (however temporarily) of the greatest god, and for her, as the dream indicates, her seduction marked the beginning of a new and autonomous life.

[54] *TrGF* 583; cf. above, note 43.

[55] Cf. J. M. Snyder, *The Woman and the Lyre* (Carbondale, Ill., 1989), 93–97.

To speak about the "rape" of Europa or Io or other females seduced or abducted by gods gives the wrong impression of what the experience was like for the women involved. In all the stories that have come down to us, the women give their consent before having intercourse with a god. The experience brings them lasting fame, and they do not complain that they were persuaded by the gods to have intercourse with them, but rather lament the consequences of that intercourse, a child born in disgrace or abandoned, and separation from their families and friends.

Although most Greek literature was written by male authors, there is no reason to think that women writers would have condemned these stories or complained more actively of the gods' behavior than the male writers whose works have come down to us. The Greeks did not expect their gods to show sustained concern for mortals, even toward those who were closest to them. Because gods live forever and know the future, they do not intervene as frequently or as forcefully in human life as humans would wish. But at the same time they are not wholly inhumane or careless of the mortals whose lives they have in some way affected directly, and this concern is nowhere more evident than in their attention (however brief and episodic) to their mortal children and the mortal women whom they chose to be their mothers.

Wellesley College

Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies

Edited by Angeliki E. Laiou

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