



"Predatory" Goddesses

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"PREDATORY" GODDESSES

ABSTRACT

It is often assumed that depictions on Attic vases of the goddess Eos carrying off young mortals were meant to convey a strong negative message about the dangers of female sexuality. But can we be sure that the myths about Eos and her lovers, like those of abductions of mortals by other gods, were intended as commentaries on *human* sexual conduct? Goddesses (unlike women) are immortal, ageless, and powerful. Evidence from the ancient sources suggests instead that depictions of abductions by Eos were meant to represent both the romance and anguish of divine interventions into mortal life, and to remind their users of the inexorable power of the gods.

ABDUCTIONS OF MORTALS BY EOS AND OTHER GODDESSES

The male gods of ancient Greece are known for their interest in mortal women.¹ But goddesses also were active in seeking out mortal consorts, at least in the era before the Trojan War, when the gods were still dining with mortals ([Hes.] *Cat.*, fr. 1.1-10 MW; Hes. *Theog.* 585-587). Hesiod's *Theogony*, in the form in which it has come down to us, ends with a catalogue of Zeus's consorts and children, followed by those of the other gods (Hes. *Theog.* 886-962). To this catalogue is appended a list of "the immortal

1. Compare the Hebrew tradition about the origin of the giants known as the Nephelim: "the gods saw that the daughters of humans were attractive, and they took wives from whomever they chose" (Genesis 6.2); West 1997, p. 117.

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Maine (Fig. 6); Museo archeologico nazionale di Ferrara (Fig. 7); Madrid, Museo arqueológico nacional (Fig. 8); Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Fig. 9); Musei Vaticani, Archivio fotografico (Fig. 10); Soprintendenza archeologica per Etruria meridionale (Fig. 11); Musée du Louvre, Paris (Fig. 12); British Museum, London (Fig. 13). Translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

goddesses who bedded with mortal men and bore children who resembled the gods" (Hes. *Theog.* 967–968): Demeter and Iasion, Harmonia and Kadmos, Kallirhoe and Chrysaor, Eos and Tithonos, Eos and Kephalos, Medeia and Iason, Psamathe and Aiakos, Thetis and Peleus, Aphrodite and Anchises, Kirke and Odysseus, and Kalypso and Odysseus (Hes. *Theog.* 969–1020).² When in the *Odyssey* Kalypso complains that the gods are jealous of the goddesses who sleep with mortal men, she alludes to the story of Eos and Orion along with that of Demeter and Iasion (*Od.* 5.118–128). Homer also mentions Eos and Kleitos (*Od.* 15.572–575), and Sappho alludes to the story of Aphrodite and Adonis (fr. 140 Voigt).³ The Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, although mostly about the liaisons of gods with mortal women, appears to have included accounts of Thetis's marriage to Peleus (fr. 210–211 MW) and of Selene's romance with Endymion (fr. 245 MW).⁴

In view of the frequency with which these stories turn up in Archaic poetry, it is not surprising that the gods' liaisons with mortals are frequently portrayed on vases by Athenian painters, or that Eos and her lovers appear on a relatively large proportion of them. In the vases catalogued by Sophia Kaempf-Dimitriadou there are more scenes depicting Eos and her lovers than scenes portraying Zeus, either with female mortals or with Ganymedes.⁵ The myth of Eos and Kephalos had special appeal for an Athenian audience because Kephalos was a local boy; so did vases depicting the abduction of the Athenian princess Oreithyia by the wind-god Boreas.⁶ The Eos vases had a wide appeal for Athenian audiences, as well as for the Italian market: 37 of 210 red-figured vases listed by Carina Weiss were found in mainland Italy or Sicily, and 38 are Nolan amphoras.⁷ Kaempf-Dimitriadou concluded that scenes in which gods abducted mortals might have served as reminders of the precariousness of human existence.⁸ She also suggested that scenes in which Eos carried off young men might in some cases have served as consolation in time of death.⁹

In recent years, however, scholars have sought to extrapolate information from these scenes about Athenian attitudes toward human male and female sexuality. Andrew Stewart, in a detailed discussion of the Eos vases, rightly makes a careful distinction between ordinary rape of mortals by

2. On the tradition that Medeia was immortal, cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.11; Braswell 1988, p. 76. The myth of Kirke may have its origins in Near Eastern epic: Ishtar in the Gilgamesh epic turns two of her lovers into animals (*Gilg.* 3.7, 6.2.26); see West 1997, p. 408, n. 14. The myths about Eos and her lovers may have influenced the characterization of Kalypso, Kirke, and Aphrodite; cf. Boedeker 1974, pp. 64–84; Friedrich 1978, pp. 39–43.

3. The myth of Aphrodite/Adonis came to Cyprus and Asia Minor from the cult of Ishtar and Thammuz in Syria; see Page 1955, p. 127. On the identity of Aphrodite with Ishtar, cf. Burkert 1992, pp. 20, 97–98. The union

of Demeter/Iasion takes place in a plowed field, like the ritual marriage of the goddess Inanna to the king of Sumer. One king is even called Dumuzi, the name of her divine spouse; cf. Frymer-Kensky 1992, pp. 50–57.

4. On Selene and Endymion, see Ap. Rhod. 4.57; the story may come from Musaeus's *Theogony* (cf. Epimenides 3B2 I 33 DK; see *FGrHist* IIIb Suppl. I, p. 575). Another of Selene's mortal lovers was the Eleusinian ruler and hierophant Eumolpos, by her the father of Musaeus (Philochorus 328, *FGrHist* F208 = schol. *Ar. Ran.* 1033).

5. In the catalogue of vases in Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, pp. 76–

109, there are 147 scenes with Eos and her lovers as opposed to 116 depicting Zeus and his lovers (60 with women and 56 with Ganymedes). Boreas and Oreithyia is the next most popular subject with 56, followed by Poseidon and his lovers with 40.

6. Both myths were portrayed in the akroteria of the Athenians' temple at Delos; Robertson 1975, p. 356.

7. *LIMC* III, 1986, pp. 759–775, s.v. Eros (C. Weiss).

8. Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, pp. 47–53.

9. Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 57; Vermeule 1979, pp. 162–178; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 779, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss).

mortals and the erotic interventions into human life made by gods.¹⁰ But he accounts for the popularity of the Eos vases by suggesting that they might have been understood as a means of defining and justifying the dominance of male sexuality: “Mythological pursuits and abductions represent nothing more or less than the projection of Athenian male desire first upon the heroic world and then upon the divine one.”¹¹

What role do the Eos vases play in this “projection of Athenian male desire”? Stewart suggests that the discourse about Eos and her boy victims may ultimately be intended as a warning: “not only do these pictures hint at the evils of *female* dominance (*gynaikokrateia*) and easy capitulation to desire, but nervously evoke their appalling consequences: female control of the phallus.”¹² Robin Osborne agrees with Stewart that female pursuers invert the normal codes of sexual behavior.¹³ In his view, the vases provide a display of what never could or should happen in Athenian society, because of the close restrictions on female desire, at least among respectable women: “in limiting scenes of female pursuit to the case of the winged Eos, pot painters were able both to suggest that women did desire men and that female desire could not be active in the real world.”¹⁴

In the present article I argue that Kaempf-Dimitriadou’s understanding of the purpose of the Eos vases is more likely to be correct: the primary purpose of the vases was to remind viewers of the power of the gods to alter the course of human life, whether for better or worse. Painters who wished to comment on the sexuality of mortal females did not need to use depictions of goddesses to do so. In any case, there is no reason to believe that Athenian men wished to discourage female passion, even within the context of marriage. Rather, what the Eos vases portray are the various stages in the uses of persuasion and constraint in the pursuit of the goddess’s desire. None of the Eos vases depicts sexual activity, other than eye contact. Eos is no more “predatory” in her approaches to mortals than gods like Zeus or Boreas.¹⁵

Why do we suppose that vases depicting abductions of mortals by gods were intended as commentaries on mortal sexual relationships? Certainly human beings project their own characteristics onto the gods, as Xenophanes observed: “Homer and Hesiod ascribed to the gods all the actions that among men cause reproach and blame, lies, adulteries, and deceptions of one another” (fr. 21 B12 I 132 DK = 160 KRS). But it is another matter to assume that the reverse is true, that all of the actions of the gods can in turn be mirrored in the lives of human beings.¹⁶ The Greeks never forgot about the limitations imposed on human action by the fact of mortality.¹⁷ They made a clear distinction between human rapes and

10. Stewart 1995, pp. 74–77; cf. Zeitlin 1986, p. 150, quoting Dover 1978, p. 88: “pursuit is the role prescribed for the male, flight for the female,” but these categories apply only to mortals.

11. Stewart 1995, p. 86; cf. also Zeitlin 1986, p. 150.

12. Stewart 1995, p. 86.

13. Osborne 1996, pp. 65–77.

14. Osborne 1996, pp. 67–68, 76; cf. also Frontisi-Ducroux 1996, p. 83: “a terrifying scenario to Greek men.”

15. West 1966, p. 486: “[Eos] was one of the most predatory of goddesses”; cf. Friedrich 1978, p. 41: “Dawn is rapacious in her way.”

16. E.g., Osborne 1996, p. 72: “just

as behind every man there is a satyr restrained only by social protocols, so behind every woman there is an Eos: Female sexual desire can be rampant, too.”

17. See especially the perceptive remarks of Vermeule 1979, p. 121; cf. also Stehle 1990, p. 94; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, p. 49.

abductions by gods.¹⁸ Abduction by a god was something to boast about, even after the woman's death; but rape by a mortal was a disgrace, punishable in Athens by divorce and other social restrictions. Gods cannot serve as role models for mortal men, because gods can abduct a woman with impunity. It is essential to remember this important distinction when talking about divine abductions.¹⁹ Gods do not (*pace* Eva Keuls) go on "raping expeditions," but choose their female consorts deliberately and carefully.²⁰

A similar distinction applies also to goddesses who abduct mortal men; a mortal woman cannot carry out with impunity either abduction or adultery. Klytemnestra is killed by her son for murdering his father because she wanted to marry Aigisthos. Phaidra (who was only *thinking* about committing adultery) hangs herself when she believes that she is going to be disgraced. In his discussion of these relationships, Osborne fails to distinguish between goddesses and mortal women. He includes Phaidra along with the goddesses Eos, Aphrodite, and Selene in a list of "females in pursuit."²¹ But Phaidra is mortal; she cannot carry Hippolytos away by persuasion, let alone by force. Her passion cannot do anything positive for him, such as guaranteeing that he will have a famous son or that he could become immortal. Only a goddess could bestow some or all of these benefits on a mortal man. A god could assume the form of an animal to abduct a mortal woman. But when a mortal woman mates with an animal, her lust has dreadful consequences: Pasiphae's passion for the bull produced the Minotaur.²²

Our present-day sensitivity to the treatment of women has made it difficult to discuss with equanimity ancient myths of divine abductions of mortals, even when we can separate them in our minds from ordinary rape. The ancients themselves, however, responded to these stories in more nuanced ways.²³ When depicting divine abductions, artists avoided representing the moment of sexual union or direct manifestation of sexual arousal.²⁴ Like the poets, they concentrated on the process of seduction, showing how the gods persuade their mortal lovers to welcome and cooperate with their advances. As Kheiron advises Apollo, when he is planning to abduct Kyrene: "hidden are the keys of wise Persuasion of holy loves; this makes gods and men alike hesitant openly to approach a sweet bed for the first time" (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.39–41).²⁵

Male gods always employ persuasion (or enchantment) to gain the cooperation of the females, even though they could easily compel mortal women by force. But a goddess cannot seduce a mortal man without his active cooperation. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess disguises herself as a mortal and tells an elaborate story about herself in order to reassure Anchises and encourage him to make love to her; the poet states that her power is universal, and shows the effect her presence has even on animals.²⁶ But the male gods, who could easily force mortal boys or women to give into them, prefer to draw their lovers by the power of their glance. Homosexual coupling is shown only in a few cases where a winged young male god has frontal intercrural intercourse with a young human male. But even here, as Martin Kilmer has shown, "there is no hint of violence." The mortal seems neither to consent nor object. His passivity brings out the disparity in power between himself and the god.²⁷

18. For further discussion, see Lefkowitz 1993, pp. 20–21; cf. also Harrison 1997, p. 188.

19. Cf. Keuls 1985, p. 50, who speaks of Zeus and Hermes going on a "raping expedition."

20. Lefkowitz 1986, pp. 35–36.

21. Osborne 1996, p. 67.

22. Robson 1997, p. 81, who also cites the myth of Artemis's companion Polyphonte (Ant. Lib. 21), who fell in love with a bear: her two huge sons became savage cannibals.

23. Cf. esp. Ridgway 1999, pp. 93–94.

24. Shapiro 1992, p. 61; Calame 1999, p. 67. Even Danae's lap is covered by her cloak and dress when she receives the shower of gold from Zeus, as shown on a kalyx krater from Cerveteri in St. Petersburg, inv. ST 1723: *ARV*² 360, no. 1, 1648; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 327, no. 1, pl. 1, s.v. Danae (J.-J. Maffre). Nonetheless, Stewart (1995, p. 87) suggests that by mid-century "in polite society, these images were simply no longer acceptable; in effect they had all but become pornography."

25. Clay 1989, p. 159: "not force but persuasion and guile constitute the secret tools of successful seduction." Dougherty (1993, pp. 140–141; 1998, p. 270), in her discussion of Apollo's abduction of Kyrene, emphasizes the "violence" of Pindar's agricultural metaphors, but cf. Bremmer 2000, pp. 102–103.

26. Cf. Clay 1989, pp. 158, 175.

27. Shapiro 1992, p. 66; Kilmer 1997, p. 132; and in general, Kilmer 1990, p. 270; 1993, p. 200.



Figure 1. Neck amphora by the Nausicaa Painter (Berlin F 2352). Eos approaching Kephalos. Courtesy Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz

VASE PAINTINGS OF PURSUITS BY EOS

In general, the goddess Eos's approaches to the young men she seeks to abduct do not differ significantly from those of male gods abducting boys or women. Painters show her (1) approaching the mortal, (2) catching hold of him by his hand or arm, or (3) carrying him away. An example of the first stage is provided by a neck amphora with twisted handles by the Nausicaa Painter (Fig. 1), which shows on the left a winged Eos walking with arms outstretched toward a young man, whose hunting garb identifies him as Kephalos.²⁸ He is walking away from her, holding his right arm with his palm facing toward her, as if warding her off. His dog jumps toward her in alarm. But at the same time Kephalos has turned his head back in order to look at Eos, and we can see that the power of the goddess's glance has begun to keep him from getting away.²⁹

In a bell krater by the Christie Painter (Fig. 2), a winged Eos strides from the left toward a retreating Kephalos (again recognizable by his hunting gear). He is about a head shorter than the goddess, and is gazing back

28. Berlin F 2352, from Nola: *ARV*² 1107, no. 1; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 762, no. 104, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 85, no. 104.

29. On the power of the gaze, see (in general) Robertson 1975, p. 214;

Buxton 1982, pp. 51, 112–113, 214, n. 86; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, p. 69; Padel 1992, pp. 62–63. On the erotic gaze, see Reeder 1995, pp. 125–126; Frontisi-Ducroux 1996, pp. 82–84; Sutton 1997–1998, p. 35.



Figure 2 (left). Bell krater by the Christie Painter (Baltimore Museum of Art 1951.486). Eos approaching Kephalos. Courtesy Baltimore Museum of Art, bequest of Sadie A. May

Figure 3 (above). Stamnos (Walters Art Museum 48.2034). Eos approaching Tithonos. Courtesy Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

toward her, while a comrade behind the goddess moves off to the left.³⁰ Hunters are out at dawn, and schoolboys also rise early. When Eos is shown in pursuit of the Trojan prince Tithonos, he is often shown holding a lyre, as if on his way to his lessons. On a skyphos by the Pantoxena Painter, a winged Eos reaches out to a young man identified by an inscription as Tithonos.³¹ His right arm is bent up and back, and in his right hand he holds a lyre with which he tries to strike Eos; but again their eyes have already met, and we know that his resistance will be ineffective. When painters depict mortal couples gazing at one another, they often show a winged Eros between or near them.³² But the gaze of the god or goddess can be effective even without the help of Eros.

In the next stage of the pursuit Eos takes hold of the young man; on a stamnos in the Walters Art Museum (Fig. 3), Eos, here without wings, is shown between two young men, striding from the left toward Tithonos, who is moving away from her toward the right.³³ She has placed her left

30. Bell krater by the Christie Painter, Baltimore Museum of Art 1951.486: *ARV*² 1048, no. 27; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 762, no. 99, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 85, no. 110; Reeder 1995, pp. 401–402, no. 131 (C. Benson). Compare the bell krater from Cumae (Paris, Cab. Méd. 423: *ARV*² 1055, no. 72; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 762, no. 100, s.v. Eos [C. Weiss]; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 185, no. 112), where a winged Eos,

approaching from the left, reaches out toward a fleeing Kephalos (identified by an inscription) who holds two spears over his left shoulder; a companion, behind Eos, is running away.

31. Paris, Cab. Méd. 846: *ARV*² 1050, no. 1; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 768, no. 182, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 90, no. 173.

32. For examples, see esp. Sutton 1992, p. 27; Sutton 1997–1998, pp. 32–39; also the scene on the fragment of a

loutrophoros in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, inv. 1966.888: *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 905, no. 639c, pl. 646, s.v. Eros (A. Hermary et al.); Reeder 1995, pp. 168–169, no. 25.

33. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 48.2034: *ARV*² 509, no. 1657; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 765, no. 139, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 87, no. 130; Reeder 1995, pp. 399–401, no. 130 (C. Benson).



Figure 4. Kylix by the Telephos Painter (Boston 95.28). Eos taking hold of Tithonos. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Catharine Page Perkins Fund

arm across his back and her left hand rests on his right shoulder. Tithonos has dropped his lyre from his right hand and it falls to the ground. Behind Eos, on the left, a comrade is looking back toward Tithonos, but at the same time moving out of the way.³⁴

On a kylix by the Telephos Painter in Boston (Fig. 4), a winged Eos approaches Tithonos from the left, while he moves away from her toward the right.³⁵ She grasps his right wrist with her right hand, has placed her left arm around his back, and has her left hand on his left shoulder. Tithonos's left arm is bent toward her at the elbow, with his hand outstretched in her direction, but not touching her. He turns around to look at her, but she is gazing upward, over his head. She does not need to attract him by her gaze, because she is holding him by the wrist, *χειρ' ἐπι καρπῶ*, as a bridegroom might grasp the wrist of a bride.³⁶

34. Compare Eos catching Kephalos on a Nolan amphora by the Niobid Painter in the Rijksmuseum in Leiden (PC 78: *ARV*² 605, no. 58; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 761, no. 77, pl. 77, s.v. Eos [C. Weiss]; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 83, no. 83), and on a pelike by the Niobid Painter, formerly in Königsberg (Univ. F 162: *ARV*² 603, no. 44; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 761, no. 76, pl. 76,

s.v. Eos [C. Weiss]; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 83, no. 81).

35. Boston 95.28, from Vulci: *ARV*² 482, no. 816; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 769, no. 201, pl. 201, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 90, no. 179.

36. On the gesture, see Jenkins 1983, pp. 139–140; Oakley and Sinos 1993, p. 32.



Figure 5 (left). Polychrome bobbin by the Penthesilea Painter (New York 28.167). Zephyros taking hold of Hyakinthos. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund

Figure 6 (opposite, left). Hydria by the Niobid Painter. Boreas taking hold of Oreithyia (Brunswick 1908.003). Courtesy Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine. Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq., Honorary Degree, 1926.

ANALOGIES WITH ABDUCTIONS BY MALE GODS

In approaching her lovers in this way Eos follows what appears to be one of the customary rules of divine behavior. The tactics she employs are also used by male gods. Virtually the same stage of pursuit is shown on a polychrome bobbin by the Penthesilea Painter in New York (Fig. 5).³⁷ Here a winged male figure, possibly Zephyros, strides from the left toward a young male (Hyakinthos?) who holds a lyre in his left hand. The god holds his left arm behind the young man and is reaching down toward him with his right hand. The young man is about to step off to the right, but he gazes back into the eyes of the god. The stance of the god/mortal pair is similar to that seen on a hydria by the Niobid Painter in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art: a winged Boreas with winged boots approaches from the left through the air (Fig. 6).³⁸ The god puts his right arm around Oreithyia's waist and his left around her shoulders. Oreithyia turns toward him, but does not embrace him in return. She holds both arms in the air and is still moving toward the right, away from him. The goddess Athena, holding spear and shield, stands behind Oreithyia, looking over her head toward Boreas. She does nothing to help Oreithyia or oppose Boreas; rather, she is acting as Boreas's *pompos*: according to Herodotos (7.189.1), he made Oreithyia his wife.³⁹

In the vases discussed above, the gods do not use force to compel their intended lovers to accompany them. But ancient Greek painters did not hesitate to show how women protest and suffer when they are carried off, even by a god. The exquisite wall painting in the tomb of Persephone at Vergina depicts Persephone's anguish as Hades carries her off on his chariot, while her Oceanid friend raises her arm in horror.⁴⁰ Hades may have needed

37. New York, MMA 28.167: *ARV*² 890, no. 175, 1673; *LIMC* V, 1990, p. 549, no. 44, pl. 44, s.v. Hyakinthos (L. and F. Villard); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 81, no. 53; Shapiro 1992, pp. 70–72, fig. 3.10.

38. Brunswick, Maine 1908.003, from Athens: *ARV*² 606, no. 68; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 137, no. 56, pl. 56, s.v. Boreas (S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 107, no. 364.

39. On Athena as *pompos*, see Sinos 1993, pp. 80–83. On Herodotos 7.189, cf. How and Wells 1912, vol. 2, p. 215; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 134, s.v. Boreas (S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou). There is a rationalized version of the myth in Plato's *Phaedrus* (229c–d).

40. *LIMC* VIII, 1997, p. 969, no. 213, s.v. Persephone (G. Güntner); Andronikos 1994, pp. 59–69, pls. 19–26. Cf. Cohen 1996, pp. 119–121.

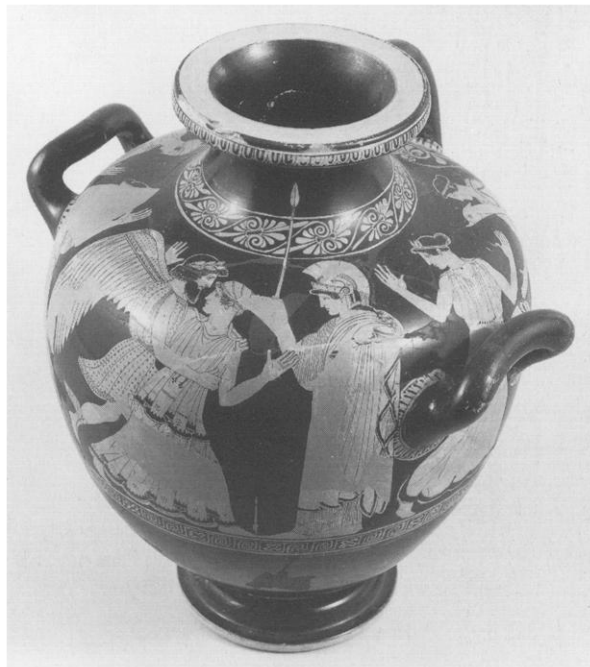


Figure 7 (above, right). Kylix by the Penthesilea Painter (Ferrara 9351). Zeus taking hold of Ganymedes. Courtesy Museo archeologico nazionale di Ferrara

to use both deception and violence to abduct Persephone, because she, like himself, is a divinity, powerful, immortal, and ageless. As the story is related in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Zeus tells Gaia to produce an intoxicating narcissus, which Persephone wants to pick; Hades then takes her by surprise, by making the earth open beneath her feet, as he rushes out to carry her off on his chariot (*Hymn. Hom.* 2.8–18).⁴¹

But when gods approach mortals they do not need to rely on such violence. Vase painters show male gods employing their superior strength, and allow the mortals whom they have chosen to display surprise and initial reluctance. In a scene on a hydria in Athens, Boreas runs from the left after Oreithyia, who is fleeing to the right with her left hand raised in the air. But Boreas has caught her right hand by the wrist in his right hand and is pulling her from behind with his left hand, and she has turned her head around to look into his eyes.⁴² In a kylix by the Penthesilea Painter (Fig. 7), Zeus has put down his thunderbolt and scepter and is using both his arms to pull Ganymedes toward him.⁴³ His left foot is braced against a rock on the lower right side of the vase, and with his right hand he grasps Ganymedes' right arm; Ganymedes' head is turned toward him, but he is walking away, as if he wanted to return to his friends, holding the fighting cock Zeus has given him in his left hand. This painting appears on the cover of Keuls's *The Reign of the Phallus*, as if it were representative of the sexual violence endemic in Athenian society. But the vase does not describe sexual life in Athens. If a human male behaved that way toward a young man, he would be harshly treated, if not by the young man's relatives, then by the young man himself. Rather, the painting depicts the conflict between a god's desire and a mortal's wish to retain his independence. The onlooker knows whose power is greater, and understands that the gods always win.

41. The narcissus in this myth is a "miraculous flower"; see Richardson 1974, p. 144.

42. Athens 13119, from Athens: *ARV*² 1656; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 135, no. 9, pl. 9, s.v. Boreas (S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 105, no. 343.

43. Ferrara 9351, from Spina: *ARV*² 880, no. 12; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 157, no. 44, pl. 44, s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 79, no. 34. For similar scenes, cf. a lekythos from Novoli in Taranto, Mus. Naz. 54383: *ARV*² 556, no. 108; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 156, no. 30, s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 77, no. 8; and an oinochoe (with Zeus approaching Ganymedes from the right) in Basel, H. A. Cahn 9: *ARV*² 874, no. 3; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 157, no. 41, pl. 41, s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 79, no. 31.



Figure 8 (left). Lekythos by the Oionokles Painter (Madrid 11158). Eos carrying off Kephalos. Courtesy Archivo fotográfico, Museo arqueológico nacional, Madrid

Figure 9 (above). Bird-rhyton (St. Petersburg B 682). Eos carrying off a boy. Courtesy Hermitage Museum

VASE PAINTINGS OF ABDUCTIONS BY EOS

The final phase of the pursuit is the abduction itself. In a lekythos by the Oionokles Painter in Madrid (Fig. 8), a winged Eos flies holding a young male (identified in an inscription as Kephalos) who is cradled in her arms.⁴⁴ The goddess's torso is turned toward the boy, but she looks up to the left, while the boy looks down to the right, away from her. His right arm is extended in front of her face, and his left hand still clutches his lyre. The composition brings out the tension between the goddess's desire to abduct him and his eagerness to rejoin his comrades. There is also a vivid contrast between Eos and the boy she is abducting in a bird-rhyton in St. Petersburg (Fig. 9).⁴⁵ Eos again is looking away from the boy toward the left, while he looks down to the right, and stretches his left arm downward as if reaching out to someone on the ground. Vermeule's caption for this vase is "Eos the dawn-goddess carries a boy to a better world."⁴⁶ But life in the palace of the Dawn would only be better for a boy if he could somehow be ageless and immortal. In the myths only a few mortals achieve this

44. Madrid 11158: *ARV*² 649, no. 45; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 773, no. 268, pl. 268, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 92, no. 194.

45. St. Petersburg B 682: *ARV*² 391, a (Kephalos); *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 773, no. 267, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 91, no. 193; Vermeule 1979, p. 167, fig. 17.

46. Vermeule 1979, p. 166. If the painting had some relevance to death, one would expect to find it on a lekythos rather than a rhyton; cf. Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 57.



Figure 10. Etruscan bronze and silver mirror (Vatican 12241). Thesan (Eos) carrying off Kephalos.
 Courtesy Archivio fotografico, Musei Vaticani

status.⁴⁷ There are no inscriptions or literary documents that suggest that Athenians in the 5th century attached a happy ending to any of the Eos myths. They buried the dead just before dawn, for practical reasons, not because they supposed the goddess would be there to carry the soul away.⁴⁸ For them a benevolent winged Charon represented a good and easy death.⁴⁹ At best, scenes of Eos on funerary lekythoi might have conveyed to mourners a vague hope that the deceased, like the heroes of old, might find himself in a brighter place in the lower world.⁵⁰ It is only in later antiquity that abductions by goddesses were used to suggest a mode of death and a promise of a future existence in the light, nearer to the gods.⁵¹

Other scenes depict the boy sitting more comfortably in Eos’s arms. An Etruscan bronze and silver mirror from Vulci in the Vatican (Fig. 10) shows Kephalos looking directly into the eyes of the goddess Thesan (Eos’s

47. Zeus makes Ganymedes immortal, and also his sons Herakles and Polydeukes, who generously shares his immortality with his half-brother Kastor. Aphrodite makes Kephalos’s son Phaethon a “bright divinity” (δαίμονα διόν, Hes. *Theog.* 991), but this is a status more like that of a hero, because he is confined to one place as “the secret keeper of her temple” (Nagy 1979, p. 192); no sexual relationship is implied (Stehle 1990, p. 96).

48. Kurtz and Boardman 1971, pp. 144–145; cf. *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 779, s.v. Eros (C. Weiss). Vermeule (1979, p. 163) cites only Heraclitus

(below, n. 51) in support of her claim that “Eos the Dawn goddess carried off the dead on ‘the wings of the morning’ or to motivate the event by simple sexual attraction or love.” The notion of flying to God on the wings of the morning derives from Ps. 139.9–10 (King James Version).

49. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, pp. 337–346; cf. Garland 1985, pp. 54–59. In Etruria in the first half of the 5th century, mirrors depicting the goddess Thesan (Eos) carrying her dead son Memnon were popular. As De Puma (1994, p. 187) suggests, “she, like her mortal devotees, has had to

bow to a power stronger than the king of the gods.”

50. *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 779, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss).

51. As Athenaeus has Plutarch say at his learned symposium: “Whom do the goddesses abduct? [ἀναρπάζουσιν; on the translation, cf. Bremmer 2000, p. 103] Is it not the most beautiful ones? And these are the ones they live with: Eos with Kephalos and Kleitos and Tithonos, Demeter with Iasion, Aphrodite with Anchises and Adonis” (*Symp.* 566d). See also Heraclitus, *Allegoriae (Quaest. Hom.)* 68; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 57.

Etruscan counterpart) as she carries him away.⁵² She is moving to the left, holding the smaller figure of Kephalos lightly in her arms. Her left arm is beneath his shoulders, and her right hand supports his knees. He has placed his right hand on her right shoulder, and his left arm hangs straight down; he is not looking back toward his friends or his hunting. Similarly, in a neck amphora by the Achilles Painter from Vulci, the young man has his arm around Eos's back, and looks to the left along with her.⁵³

METHODS OF PERSUASION USED BY DIVINE ABDUCTORS

We now need to ask what the gods do to make abducted lovers compliant, or even actively cooperative. On a kylix by Douris in Paris Ganymedes lies back comfortably in Zeus's arms.⁵⁴ Zeus is able to hold his scepter in his left hand, because he does not need to restrain the boy who, resting comfortably, faces him. In the terracotta statue group at Olympia, Ganymedes calmly holds a cock with his left hand, his present from Zeus, while Zeus carries him under his right arm.⁵⁵ As we have seen (above, note 41), when Hades wanted to put Persephone off her guard, Gaia grew a narcissus that astounded both gods and men, and its sweet scent caused heaven, earth, and sea to smile (*Hymn. Hom.* 2.8–14). When in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* Europe was gathering flowers, Zeus changed himself into a bull and “breathed from his mouth the scent of saffron [ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος κρόκον ἔπνει]. After enticing her he picked her up, carried her over the sea to Crete, and had intercourse with her” (fr. 140 MW). When in a fragment of Aeschylus's *Kares* or *Europe*, Europe gives a brief account of what happened, she has no unpleasant memories: “and a friendly lush meadow was there for the bull; in that way, by waiting there, Zeus managed to take me, an effortless theft, from my aged father” (fr. 99.1–3 Radt).⁵⁶ Scenes in 6th- and early-5th-century vase paintings also show a contented and relaxed Europe. She is most often represented on the bull's back, riding away across the sea to Crete. In these scenes she often holds the bull's horn or neck as she sits on him, and places her other hand on the bull's back, to steady herself, as the bull rushes along.⁵⁷ Some painters show her turning around to call back to her friends, as she does in the 2nd-century B.C. poem of Moschus, which draws on these earlier versions (lines 111–112).⁵⁸ She is not only completely unafraid of the bull, but fascinated by him,

52. Vatican 12241: *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 795, no. 30, pl. 30, s.v. Eos/Thesau (R. Bloch); De Puma 1994, pp. 181–182, pl. 16.7.

53. Once Rhodes Mus.: *ARV*² 987, no. 5; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 773, no. 269, pl. 269, s.v. Eos (C. Weiss); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 92, no. 199.

54. Paris G 123: *ARV*² 435, no. 94; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 157, no. 52, pl. 52, s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann);

Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 79, no. 39.

55. *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 157, no. 56, pl. 66, s.v. Ganymedes (H. Sichtermann); Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, p. 79, no. 40; Dover 1978, p. 92, pl. 1; cf. Robertson 1975, p. 277, pl. 60: “the Greeks saw honour, not shame, in the youth's having a god for a lover.”

56. On the fragment, see Lloyd-

Jones 1971, pp. 414–417; Lefkowitz 1993, p. 25.

57. Cf. *LIMC* IV, 1988, pp. 78–80, nos. 22–75, s.v. Europe (M. Robertson), for a list of red-figure vases showing Europe riding: “bull generally galloping, often over sea.”

58. Europe's story was told in poems (now lost) by Eumelus, Stesichorus, and Bacchylides; see Campbell 1991, p. 3; Bühler 1968, pp. 25–26.



Figure 11. Bell krater by the Berlin Painter (Tarquinia RC 7456). Europe running alongside of Zeus.
 Courtesy Soprintendenza archeologica,
 Ministero per i Beni e le attività culturali per
 l'Etruria meridionale

and eager to touch and embrace him.⁵⁹ She does not hesitate to climb on his back.⁶⁰

Europe is shown contentedly running alongside the bull in a bell krater by the Berlin Painter (Fig. 11).⁶¹ Her feet are spread wide apart, and with her left hand she holds on to the tip of one of his horns. The other side of the vase shows a girl running. Europe and the bull have not yet reached the sea, since the folds of her dress fall straight down and do not billow out in the wind; her friend is still running after her. Kilmer observes that “the ‘rape’ of Europe is atypical in showing contact between god and mortal; but the contact is never overtly sexual and Zeus is shown as a bull . . . what we have here is pursuit, rather than the abduction that will come from it.”⁶² By contrast, Keuls emphasizes the potential sexuality of this scene by stating that Europe is grasping the bull by his “phallus-horn.”⁶³ Perhaps that is possible, but there is a simpler explanation. By having Europe hold the bull’s horn and keep pace with him, the painter shows that the bull is tame and approachable.

59. In Moschus’s poem Europe is ready for marriage, and responds without hesitation to the bull’s approaches. Similarly, in 4th-century vase paintings, Danae is shown looking upward, with her breasts bare, collecting the golden rain in her lap, as on a bell krater from Boiotia in the Louvre (Paris CA 925: *CVA*, Paris 17 [France 46], pls. 44 [1167]:1; 45 [1168]:3; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 328, no. 9, pl. 9, p. 335, s.v. Danae [J.-J. Maffre]).

60. To speak of this abduction as “bestial rape” seems extreme; cf. Robson 1997, pp. 74, 77. There is no sug-

gestion that Zeus remained in the form of a bull after he took Europe to Crete. Even in Moschus’s poem, where the bull is extraordinarily affectionate, they leave before they have any erotic contact, with Europe (as in many vase paintings) sitting on the bull’s back, holding the bull’s long horn in one hand, and grasping the hem of her chiton in her other hand, to keep it from falling in the sea, while the cloth on her shoulders billows out like a sail (Moschus, *Europa*, lines 108–130).

61. Bell krater by the Berlin Painter (Tarquinia RC 7456), from Tarquinia:

*ARV*² 206, no. 126; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 77, no. 2, pl. 2, s.v. Europe (M. Robertson). Kurtz (1983, p. 102) observes that this vase “represents an earlier stage in the story” than the Berlin Painter’s depiction of Europe on the bull’s back (Oxford 1927.4502: *ARV*² 210, no. 172; *LIMC* IV, 1988, p. 79, no. 41, s.v. Europe [M. Robertson]). Bühler 1968, p. 54: “Europe mit weit ausschreitenden Füßen neben dem Stier herläuft.”

62. Kilmer 1997, p. 128.

63. Keuls 1985, p. 51.

POSSIBLE MEANINGS OF THE ABDUCTION SCENES

If only a relatively few of the Eos vases show her abducted lovers in such a state of contentment, it is because the vase painters are more interested in the earlier stages of the pursuit, her first approach to the young man, and his initial resistance and longing to return to his friends and previous life. It has been suggested that the painters of these vases concentrate on the negative aspects of abduction in order to send a covert message about women's sexuality:

Woman at the mercy of the male. Women available to be taken, to be raped. The proof: the inverted motif of the rape of Tithonos or Kephalos by Eos, during which, as we have seen, looking back in "consent" is rare.⁶⁴

But why suppose that these scenes have any bearing on the behavior of mortal women? If the Eos painters have concentrated on the negative, it is because the goddess's attentions bring at best mixed blessings to her lovers. Eos asked Zeus to make Tithonos immortal, but she forgot to ask Zeus to make him ageless; when he became too old to move or get up, she shut him up in a chamber, and locked the doors (*Hymn. Hom.* 5.220–236). Eos allows Kephalos to return to Athens, but when he is out hunting, he accidentally kills his wife, Prokris.⁶⁵ By contrast, painters allow Europe to appear content because her fate is relatively good, given that mortals, at best, can never have a completely happy life.⁶⁶ She becomes the mother of three sons, each of them famous: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon (Aesch. fr. 50.11–16 Radt).

Abduction almost always causes trouble for the mortals involved, and sometimes even leads to their deaths.⁶⁷ Semele is consumed by flames as a result of her liaison with Zeus. So, in later sources, is Demeter's lover Iasion (a brother of Dardanos) because he desired Demeter (Konon 26, *FGrHist* F21). Anchises was struck by lightning because he boasted about his relations with Aphrodite (Soph. fr. 373.2–3 Radt).⁶⁸ In most cases, as it is for Anchises, the most positive aspect of an abduction by a god is the child that it produces.⁶⁹

Only a few mortals have no regrets. Ganymedes is made immortal and ageless, though his father Tros grieves for him until Zeus tells him what he has conferred on his son, and gives Tros a pair of immortal horses in compensation for his loss (*Hymn. Hom.* 5.210–217). Oreithyia (see above, note 38) becomes the consort of Boreas and lives with him in Thrace. Amynone is rescued by Poseidon from the unwelcome attentions of satyrs, and given the spring of water that she was searching for, hydria in hand. Some vase painters show her looking back into the god's eyes as he approaches her, holding his trident.⁷⁰ Others show her about to let him embrace her or depict them standing together in the garden of Aphrodite, like bride and bridegroom.⁷¹

Like vase painters, poets are willing to represent both the negative and positive aspects of divine abduction.⁷² The author of the *Homeric Hymn*

64. Frontisi-Ducroux 1996, p. 88.

65. The story was told in the lost cyclic epic *Epigonoí* (fr. 5 Bernabé); for details, see Kearns 1989, p. 177.

66. Hom. *Il.* 24.525–526: "so the gods have allotted for unfortunate mortals, to live in sorrow; but they are free from cares." Cf. Macleod 1982, p. 133: "the gods, who in this book show their pity for men and demand that men pity each other, also will human suffering and never share in it."

67. Cf. esp. Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, pp. 47–50.

68. Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 2.648–649. According to Hyginus, *Fab.* 94, the lightning bolt killed him. On other variants of the story, see Austin 1964, pp. 247–248.

69. Cf. Calame 1999, p. 67.

70. For examples, see Reeder 1995, pp. 352–357, nos. 111–113; and in general, Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, pp. 28–30.

71. For examples, see Reeder 1995, pp. 358–361, nos. 114–116; Burn 1987, p. 52.

72. The author of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* sets aside obscure local myths of Apollo's abductions of mortal women and concentrates instead on how the god founded his shrine at Delphi; see Clay 1989, p. 56. But compare the emphasis in Stewart 1995, p. 76, "the Homeric hymn to Apollo recounted the god's progress from insatiable womanizer to panhellenic deity."

to *Demeter* describes Persephone’s anguish and Demeter’s grief, but he also shows Hades treating her kindly. Helios points out to Demeter that Hades is “not an unworthy bridegroom among the immortal gods,” because he is her own brother and lord of a third of the universe (*Hymn. Hom.* 2.82–87).⁷³ Kyrene, after Apollo comes to her as a “bridegroom,” becomes the founder of the city of Kyrene and mother of a son, Aristaios, who will be made immortal (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.51–65).⁷⁴ In Euripides’ *Ion* Kreousa complains that she was seduced and abandoned by Apollo, and that the child she bore and abandoned was lost. Her painful narrative has struck some modern critics as emblematic of “rapes” of mortal women by the gods.⁷⁵ But at this point in the drama Kreousa does not know that in fact the god has not forgotten her after all, and is about to return to her the child she thought she had lost forever. Meanwhile, in her ignorance, anger, and confusion, Kreousa had tried to poison her child, Ion; she was jealous because she thought he was her husband Xouthos’s son by another mother.⁷⁶ In the end, she is grateful to the god (Eur. *Ion* 1609–1614), even though for many years he has done nothing to mitigate her suffering.⁷⁷

As in the case of Kreousa, mortals often make things worse for themselves through their lack of understanding. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, Anchises rushes into bed with Aphrodite, stripping off the clothes and jewelry with which she had so carefully adorned herself (*Hymn. Hom.* 5.162–166, cf. 58–66).⁷⁸ The poet does not describe their copulation; rather, with great conciseness, he comments on Anchises’ ignorance:

Then with the will of the gods and in accordance with fate, he, a mortal, slept with an immortal goddess, without knowing clearly what he did (οὐ σάφα εἰδώς, *Hymn. Hom.* 5.166–167).

When he realizes what he has done, he begs the goddess not to make him “strengthless among men” (*Hymn. Hom.* 5.188).⁷⁹ As the author of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* has the goddess observe, “mortals are ignorant (νῆϊδες) and without the knowledge to recognize fate beforehand, whether of coming good or of evil” (*Hymn. Hom.* 2.256–257).

The poets use the myths to remind their audiences that nothing in mortal life is an unqualified good. That is the meaning they attach to the story of Thetis and her mortal lover Peleus (briefly mentioned in the catalogue of goddesses in the *Theogony*; see above, note 2). Thetis, unlike Eos, did not seek to capture a mortal lover. It was the will of Zeus that she marry Peleus, and she did her best to prevent him from catching her. She changed into fire, and took on the form of a savage lion that attacked him with tooth and claw. For Peleus, marrying a goddess was the pinnacle of human achievement, a voyage to the outer limits of the known world, the straits of Gibraltar:

he married one of the high-throned Nereids, and he saw the circled throne, where the kings of heaven and of seas were seated, and they showed him their [wedding] gifts and revealed to him the power of his descendants; but a man cannot cross the dark boundary of Gadeira (Pind. *Nem.* 4.65–69).

73. Cohen (1996, p. 130) sees Helios’s statement as a “dubious consolation,” and the promise of marriage as an authorization of violence.

74. Cf. Dougherty 1993, pp. 144–145.

75. E.g., Rabinowitz 1993, pp. 197–201; cf. Stewart 1995, p. 80, fig. 1.

76. Lefkowitz 1993, pp. 26–29, which Cohen (1996, p. 134, n. 39) sees as “another authorization.” Cf. Rabinowitz 1993, pp. 201–202.

77. Danae says to Zeus in Aesch., fr. 47a, lines 784–785 Radt, “you have the [responsibility] for the greater fault, but I have paid the whole [penalty].” Compare the fate of Antiope, who was abducted by Zeus (schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1090, pp. 304–305 Wendel), but forced to expose her twin sons and then was imprisoned and tortured. In Eur., *Antiope* fr. 208 Nauck (= fr. 33 Kambitsis), she observes: “if the gods have abandoned me and my twin sons, there is a reason for it; for some people are unfortunate, and others fortunate.” Cf. n. 66, above.

78. Cf. Clay 1989, p. 171.

79. Cf. *Od.* 10.341, where Odysseus is afraid that intercourse with Kirke will make him “weak and unmanned”; Clay 1989, pp. 182–183.

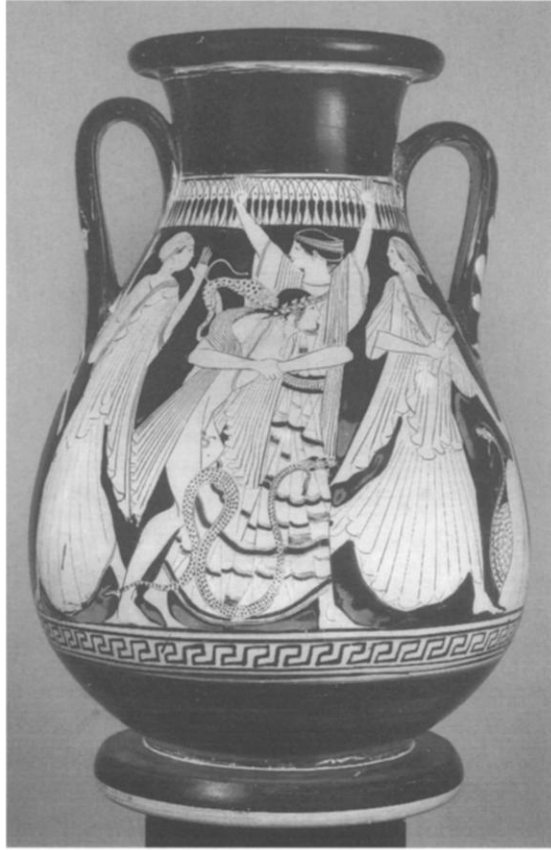


Figure 12 (*left*). Pelike (Louvre G 373). Peleus holding Thetis. Courtesy Musée du Louvre, photo H. Lewandowski



Figure 13 (*above*). Lebes gamikos (British Museum B 298 [XXXIX-C13]). Peleus holding Thetis. Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum

Even though his wedding to Thetis was the high point of Peleus's life, his goddess wife Thetis was miserable in the marriage (*Il.* 18.430–435), and soon left him. His son Achilles was the greatest Greek hero, but he died at Troy.

Marriages with goddesses are emblematic of the difficulties involved in extended relationships between immortals and mortals. Peleus wrestling with Thetis was a popular subject on Athenian vases from 520 to 460 B.C.⁸⁰ Reeder suggests that these scenes are intended to demonstrate the need for male control of the female's animal nature, on the grounds that hunting metaphors are linked with eroticism.⁸¹ But Thetis is a goddess, not a mortal woman. If she is shown with snakes and even small lions (e.g., Fig. 12), it is not because her nature resembles an animal's, but rather because in the myth she turned herself into many different animals in order to avoid being caught by Peleus.⁸² The vase painter has no other way of alluding to this aspect of the story, and it is also a way to identify her. No mortal woman has the power to metamorphose herself into any other form.

Whatever these scenes were intended to mean, there is little to suggest that their primary intention was to remind women of their subordinate role in society. For example, Rush Rehm argues that a scene with Peleus and Thetis on the pedestal of a lebes gamikos, beneath a picture of a wedding procession, represents "a violent abduction" (Fig. 13).⁸³ Thetis is raising her arms to express her resistance, like Persephone on the wall

80. *LIMC* VII, 1994, p. 269, s.v. Peleus (R. Vollkommer).

81. Reeder 1995, pp. 299–300; cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, p. 66.

82. Louvre G 373: *ARV*² 573, no. 9; *LIMC* III, 1986, p. 239, no. 29, pl. 189, s.v. Cheiron (M. Gisler-Huwiler).

83. Rehm 1994, p. 20. British Museum B 298: *LIMC* VII, 1994, p. 260, no. 117, s.v. Peleus (R. Vollkommer); Oakley and Sinos 1993, p. 87, fig. 67.



A



B

Figure 14. Kylix by Peithinos (Berlin F 2279). Sides A–B: couples courting and embracing; tondo: Peleus holding Thetis. Courtesy Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Photo Johannes Laurentius (sides A–B); Jutta Tietz-Glagow (tondo).



84. As Sourvinou-Inwood (1991, p. 66) observes, the iconography of Peleus’s capture of Thetis differs radically from scenes of other abductions.

85. Berlin F 2279, from Vulci: *ARV*² 115, no. 2, and *ARV*² 1626; *LIMC* VIII, 1997, p. 8, no. 13, pl. 13 (R. Vollkommer); Reeder 1995, no. 106, pp. 341–343. On the wrestling hold, cf. Poliakoff 1987, p. 40.

86. Dover 1978, pp. 95–96, pl. R 196:a–b; Stewart 1995, pp. 81–82; Sutton 1997–1998, p. 30. The name Peithinos does not occur elsewhere; see Pape and Benseler 1959, p. 1154; *LGPN* 2, p. 365.

painting in Vergina (above, note 40). But there is no explicit violence. The scene with Peleus holding Thetis shows a standstill, a moment of acquisition: both figures are static.⁸⁴ On the interior of the Peithinos kylix (Fig. 14), the mortal hero has caught the goddess in a waistlock.⁸⁵ Both are fully dressed, and neither is looking at the other; there is no erotic contact. The outside of the cup offers a striking contrast: it portrays fully dressed heterosexual and homosexual mortal couples, negotiating with and embracing one another. Persuasion alone is enough in the human world, as the artist’s nom de plume Peithinos (“Persuasion-man”) suggests.⁸⁶ But it cannot help Peleus capture Thetis; he can gain his prize only by patient pertinacity, and with the cooperation of gods who are even more powerful than Thetis—Zeus and Poseidon. The scene tells us little or nothing about the sexuality of Athenian women, but a great deal about the power of the gods.

CONCLUSION

Many of the vases depicting scenes of Eos would have been used at festive occasions, such as weddings or symposia.⁸⁷ On vases given as wedding gifts, abduction scenes might even convey a sense of romantic affection; abduction by a god or goddess was an honor, despite the problems that it could introduce into a mortal's life.⁸⁸ But ultimately, vase paintings of divine abductions display recognition of the power of the gods and of mortal vulnerability. They are expressions of what Euripides says about divine intervention at the close of five of his dramas:

Many are the forms of divinity; the gods bring many things to pass unexpectedly. And what we thought would happen did not come to pass, but the god found a means to bring about what we did not imagine. That is how this action went.

These lines celebrate the ways in which gods can change their appearance; they applaud the gods' ingenuity, and their ability always to surprise and confound mortal expectations. Their interventions can work to the advantage of the protagonists (as in the *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, and *Helen*) or against them (as in the *Medea* and *Bacchae*).⁸⁹ Since we know that the ancient Athenians held these views about the role of gods in human life, it is a mistake not to assume that they have some bearing on the encounters in vase paintings between gods and mortals. In assuming that abduction scenes were primarily meant to convey the complex messages about sexuality and gender that we now attribute to them, we may be preventing ourselves from seeing other meanings that were more important to the people for whom the vases were made, who still believed in the powers of their own gods.

87. Of the Eos vases listed in Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1969, there are 15 lekythoi, but 44 amphoras, 30 kraters, 28 drinking cups, 16 hydriai, 6 stamnoi, and 6 oinochoai.

88. Sutton 1997–1998, p. 31. Also see above, n. 6, on the placement of the Eos-Kephalos and Boreas-Oreithyia myths on the akroteria of the Athenians' temple at Delos; the terracotta statue of Zeus and Ganymedes at Olympia may have been an akroterion; cf. Robertson 1975, p. 277, cited in n. 55 above.

89. Eur. *Alc.* 1149–1153; *Andr.* 1284–1288; *Hel.* 1688–1692; *Bacch.* 1388–1392, and a different first line, *Med.* 1415–1419. If the lines were added later by actors, it was in order to please a public who liked such *sententiae*; Barrett 1964, p. 417. According to Roberts (1987, p. 56) and Dunn (1996, pp. 24–25), the lines are *pro forma* ritual; but cf. Lefkowitz 1989, pp. 80–82.

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