



**MARRIAGE AND ABDUCTION MYTHS OF
THE ANCIENT GREEKS: A MEANS OF
REINFORCING THE PATRIARCHY**



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Abstract

Greek mythology is filled with stories of abduction and marriage, which played an important role in reinforcing patriarchal societal structures. My Honors thesis will analyze these myths through a feminist lens and examine how they functioned in Greek literature and visual culture. I will be observing how these narratives seem to have acted as guides in a girl's ritual transition to adulthood and advocated the virtues of an ideal wife by reminding women of their expected place in society. Specifically, I will look at representations of women in Homeric epics and Greek plays as well as focus my visual sources on painted vases, taking into account the context in which these objects would be found. Of particular interest are the narratives of three mythological women. First, Persephone, the daughter of the goddess Demeter who was forcefully abducted by Hades, god of the underworld. Second, Helen, who was abducted by Athenian Hero Theseus as a girl and more famously known as the woman who sparked the Trojan War. Third, Thetis, a Nereid prophesied to give birth to a child greater than their father and thus forced to marry a mortal. In addition, I will examine myths about women like the Amazons who refused to conform to expectations set upon them and form cautionary tales for Greek women.

Key Words

Art History, Ancient Greece, Athens, Women, Greek Mythology, Abduction, Marriage, Domestication, Socialization, Persephone, Thetis, Helen, The Amazons

Introduction

“We women are the most unfortunate creatures.
Firstly, with an excess of wealth is required
For us to buy a husband and take for our bodies
A master; for not to take one is even worse.
And now the question is serious whether we take
A good or bad one; for there is no easy escape
For a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.
She arrives among new modes of behavior and manners,
And needs prophetic power, unless she has learned at home,
How best to manage him who shares a bed with her.
And if we work out all this well and carefully,
And the husband lives with us and lightly bears his yoke,
Then life is enviable. If not, I’d rather die.
A man, when he’s tired of the company in his home,
Goes out of the house and puts an end to his boredom
And turns to a friend or companion of his own age.
But we are forced to keep our eyes on one alone.
What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time
Living at home, while they do the fighting in war.
How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand
Three times in the front of battle than bear one child.”
(Euripides, *Medea*, 231-251)¹

Gender heavily determined one’s life in ancient Greece. Most women had few freedoms and were expected to fulfill just two roles in life – becoming a wife and a mother. Ancient Greek legal proceedings, medical treatises, poetry and visual culture testify to the societal oppression experienced by women, emphasizing the importance of legitimate heirs, outlining acceptable behaviors, and insisting that women *needed* to be controlled by men. This control began with a girl’s male guardian, who selected her future spouse when she was around fourteen and her spouse was approximately thirty years old.² The marital ceremony was a multiday event and important transitional rite for a girl that signified her maturity and the fulfillment of her

¹ Euripides, *Medea*, lines 231-251 from *Euripides I: The Complete Greek Tragedies*. Edited by Richmond Lattimore and David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

² Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 64.

predetermined role as a wife. As a girl had no say in when or whom she married, it is expected that she may have felt reluctant, and myth may have played a key role in socializing girls to accept these arranged matches and their future role as mothers.³

Greek mythology is filled with narratives of abduction and marriage that reinforced patriarchal ideals by emphasizing the inferiority of women and their necessary domination by men. Literary sources, such as *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, and narratives from the Trojan Cycle, like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, contain stories involving Persephone, Thetis, Helen and the Amazons that perpetuated patriarchal ideals.⁴

The message of female subservience in these narratives was visually reinforced by sculptures, plaques, and painted terracotta vases, which were seen by Greek men and women. Of particular interest are the vases decorated in the black-figure and red-figure techniques that were ubiquitous throughout society and used in the domestic, sacral, and funerary spheres. The black-figure technique was invented in the city of Corinth around 720 BC. This technique involved applying decoration in slip that when fired in a three-stage process would chemically bond to the surface of the vase and turn black, while the untouched surface would remain the color of the clay. Prior to firing, the details would be added to the painted silhouette figures through incision and the addition of different colors of clay, usually a purple-red or creamy white. The red-figure technique was the negative opposite of black-figure, in which the slip was painted around the figures to create a solid black ground as well as the figure's interior details. Over time, red-figure, which was invented in Athens around 530 BC, began to replace black-figure as it allowed for greater control over details and the creation of more realistic figures.⁵ By the mid-6th century

³ Tyrrell, William Blake, and Frieda S. Brown. *Athenian Myths and Institutions: Words in Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 103.

⁴ Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 16-31.

⁵ Beth Cohen, *The Colors of Clay: Special Techniques in Athenian Vases* (Los Angeles, CA:

BC painted vase production in Athens had grown to become a sustainable industry, and these pieces were exported widely across the Mediterranean world, particularly to central and southern Italy. The vase shapes selected for myths that reinforced patriarchal ideals are those used in the home, where they would have been easily seen and used by women.

Women were treated differently in various city-states and settlements of the Greek world, and this paper focuses on Athenian women, particularly those of the upper class, because of the abundance of evidence that survives from this prominent city-state. As nearly all extant literary sources and presumably most manufactured goods were created by men – as culture-shaping occupations such as authors and artists were not typical female roles – it can be challenging to understand the experiences of half the population in Classical Athens.⁶ However, with careful research we find evidence of the treatment of women and their societal roles. This study aims to understand what life was like for freeborn Athenian women and how their exposure to mythological narratives may have led them to comply with oppression.

Women in Ancient Greece

In Ancient Greece, the ideal woman was one who married and bore children, especially, a male child that would continue the patriarchal family line. Families were headed by a male *kyrios*, who was the guardian of his wife, daughters, and sons, until they came of age. A woman was always under male guardianship, first under her father, then husband and upon death of her husband, her son.⁷ Perhaps the most important ideal in Greek society was the continuation of a

Getty Museum, 2006), 150-51; Department of Greek and Roman Art, “Athenian Vase Painting: Black- and Red-Figure Techniques,” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002.

⁶ Ellen D. Reeder, ed. *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 20; Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 16.

⁷ Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995), 70; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 62.

family or *oikos*, demonstrated by Athenian law from the Classical Period regarding the severities of adultery and rape. Adultery, or *moicheia*, was “unauthorized sex with an Athenian woman who came under the guardianship of another Athenian citizen.”⁸ In homicide legislation, the killing of the *moichos*, adulterer, was justifiable, while there is no evidence for the same in the case of a rapist.⁹ A court proceeding involving the defense of a husband, Euphiletus, who killed his wife’s lover, Eratosthenes, illustrates this justification: “Thus, members of the jury, this man met the fate which the laws prescribe for wrongdoers of his kind.”¹⁰ The law referred to here is The Law of Solon, which stated an adulterer could be murdered by the man who caught him. The justification for killing an adulterer and not a rapist is directly related to paternity and the male fear of raising a child that is not one’s own. If a woman participated in adultery, the paternity of all her children would be called into question; with rape, a woman would abstain from sex with her husband for a month to determine if she was pregnant. For this same reason, women of childbearing age had restricted access to men other than their husbands. Without the paternity tests we have today, these practices were the only way to ensure that a man was the biological father of his children.

The ideal behavior of a woman was comprised of *adikos*, which translates to “respectful modesty and sexual shame,” and *sophrosyne*, which translates to “discretion and dignity.” In other words, a woman must be modest, virtuous, and submissive.¹¹ In depictions of women, body language and gestures play an important role in establishing proper female behavior. A woman was to lower her eyes and head when in the presence of a man to show her submissiveness and

⁸ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 125.

⁹ C. Carey, “Rape and Adultery in Athenian Law,” *The Classical Quarterly*. 45, no. 2 (1995): 413.

¹⁰ Lysias, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* 6-33 from Lefkowitz, Mary R. *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome: a Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 66-70.

¹¹ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 123.

modesty, as a woman's gaze was tied to her sexuality.¹² This averted gaze can be seen in a detail from a *stamnos*, a vessel for serving and storing liquid, by the Kleophon Painter dating to 440 BC (Figure 1). This departure scene depicts a man heading off to war, gazing directly at his wife while holding a *phiale* (offering bowl) filled with wine. The wife's line of sight is directed downward, exemplifying her respect and submissiveness towards her husband.

Additional examples of a woman's expected body language are exhibited by Archaic statues of young women called *korai*. These statues typically depicted women with closed and static silhouettes, with their arms pulled close to the body to signal respect. *Korai* statues were always clothed to emphasize the importance of chastity, and sometimes their gestures draw attention to reproductive features, such as in a Kore statue from Attica dating to the early 6th century BC (Figure 2). Here she holds a pomegranate which, with its many seeds, was seen as a fertility symbol in ancient Greece. Also alluding to fertility are the gestures she makes towards her breasts and genitalia. On another Kore statue dated to ca. 510-500 BC and from the Athenian Acropolis, her clothes are pressed tightly to her body to emphasize her attractiveness but in a modest fashion as she is fully covered (Figure 3). With their allusions to respect, fertility, and attractiveness while still maintaining modesty, these *korai* statues reinforced the expected social roles of women.¹³ These roles become even clearer by comparing them to their male counterparts called *kouroi*, which are nude young men often engaged in a walking movement, as seen in an example now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 4). Through examining both *korai* and *kouroi* statues, it is clear that male members of society had less restrictions placed on them as they were able to move freely and were not ridiculed for exposing their bodies. However, public male nudity was acceptable only in athletic contexts, although in visual culture, it was an

¹² Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 124.

¹³ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 92.

elevating trait associated with gods and heroes. *Kouroi* statues came to represent the Greek ideal man during the Archaic period (ca. 650-480 BC) – youthful, brave, heroic, and even divine.¹⁴ This idealized image shows that men, too, had their own high societal standards to meet. They had to be handsome, athletic, cultured, assertive and dominant. Boys grew up being taught that it was shameful to be controlled by women and that they must be a dominant force over them – “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior.”¹⁵

Women’s activities primarily included caring for their children and weaving. Lower class women would also be washer-women, wet nurses, and midwives.¹⁶ Inscriptions from 4th century BC Athenian gravestones provide insight into the types of jobs lower class women would have: “good Paideusis, wet-nurse,” “Elephantis, cloak-seller,” and “Melitta, salt-vendor.”¹⁷ Their time in the public sphere was limited to protect their purity and prevent their association with men besides their husbands. The only events women could attend were weddings and funerals, where most of the men in attendance were relatives, as well as certain religious festivals. Religion was the only facet of public life in which women were allowed.¹⁸ In funerary services, women would prepare the body for the funeral and burial by washing, anointing, and dressing the dead as well as provide offerings and keep the grave clean.¹⁹ A typical *prothesis* scene, or the laying out of the deceased, features women as mourners, tearing at their hair in a gesture of grief as seen on a terracotta funerary plaque dated to ca. 520-510 BC (Figure 5).

¹⁴ Larissa Bonfante, "The Naked Greek." *Archaeology* 43, no. 5 (1990): 30.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254b2 from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome*, 38; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 26-28.

¹⁶ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 141.

¹⁷ *Occupations of women, from inscriptions on gravestones*, Athens 4th century BC, 12387, 11254, 12073, from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome*, 221.

¹⁸ Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 75.

¹⁹ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 72 and 162.

Women also participated in religious festivals like the *Thesmophoria* in Athens. This celebration for the wives of Athenian citizens was held to honor Demeter. It was a three-day event that allowed women a rare opportunity away from their homes and children. The first and second days of the festival included bringing sacred objects to the festival location and fasting, most likely reminiscent of Demeter's grief at the loss of her daughter. The last day celebrated fertility with feasting and sacrifices to Demeter.²⁰

Marriage in Ancient Greece

A woman's most important role in Ancient Greek society was becoming a wife and even more importantly, a mother. In his *Theogony*, Greek poet Hesiod states that if a man did not need children to "tend him in old age," there would be no need for the "race of female women."²¹ In the Ancient Greek male mind, women's only purpose was to have children, and if men could find another way to get children, there would be no need for women. The emphasis on legally legitimate heirs led to marriages not based on finding a soulmate or falling in love, as is typical in many modern societies, but rather about the continuation of the *oikos*.²²

From a young age, girls were prepared for marriage, exemplified by the *Arrephoroi* who served Athena on the Acropolis and by the Little Bears in the cult of Artemis at Brauron. The *Arrephoroi* were two or four aristocratic Athenian girls between the ages of seven and ten selected to serve Athena on the Acropolis. During their tenure, they learned about textile production and assisted in weaving Athena's sacred *peplos*, or robe, to be presented to the cult

²⁰ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 164; Eva Stehle, "Women and Religion" in Sharon L. James, and Sheila Dillon, eds. *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2012), 192-196.

²¹ Hesiod, *Theogony* 590-612 from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, 25.

²² Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 121; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 64.

statue of the goddess during Athena's birthday celebration, the *Panathenaia*.²³ On the final day of their service, the *Arrephoroi* were tasked with bringing baskets from the Acropolis to the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and back. The contents of the baskets, which were unknown to the *Arrephoroi*, were exchanged at the Sanctuary of Aphrodite. The *Arrephoroi*'s responsibilities prepared them for marriage through complex textile production, a skill set of a mature woman, and through their willing transportation of baskets with unknown contents. Their unwavering acceptance of the rite's mystery foreshadowed future acceptance of the societal responsibilities of marriage and motherhood.²⁴ In addition, the girl's obedience in not opening the baskets came to represent their chastity, especially if the box contained male genitalia in the form of phallus-shaped cakes, as some theories propose.²⁵

The service of the *Arrephoroi* directly related to two mythological stories that condemned a girls' sexual exploration – the myth of Erichthonios and the myth of Pandora.²⁶ Erichthonios was a child born from the earth of Athens and given to the goddess Athena. The myth explains that Athena placed the child in a basket and bestowed it upon the three unmarried daughters of Kekrops, the first king of Athens. She instructed the girls – Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos – not to look inside, but two of them did, resulting in their deaths when they leapt off the Athenian Acropolis.²⁷ The remaining obedient daughter, Pandroso, was rewarded with the gift of weaving.²⁸ Pandora, the first woman, also had a vessel that she was instructed not to open, but

²³ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 134.

²⁴ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 247-248.

²⁵ Kaltsas, Nikolaos, and Alan Shapiro. *Worshipping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens* (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in collaboration with the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, 2008), 36.

²⁶ For more on the connections between Erichthonis and the *Arrephoroi* see H.A. Shapiro, "The Cult of Heroines: Kekrops' Daughters" in Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 41.

²⁷ Shapiro, "The Cult of Heroines: Kekrops' Daughters," 41.

²⁸ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 250.

did, and thus released havoc on the world.²⁹ Much like with the *Arrephoroi*, the opening of containers by Kekrops' daughters and Pandora has metaphorical connotations to the dangers of premarital sexual exploration.³⁰

The Little Bears were pre-adolescent girls selected once every four years to participate in the *Arkteia* ritual, which, when completed, readied them for marriage. The girls dressed in garments dyed with saffron, an herb associated with women and menstrual cycles, and ran in a foot race called "playing the bear." This race mirrors both hunting and a male mythological erotic pursuit, which typically resulted in the capture and domestication of a woman through marriage. Thus, the *Arkteia* could be viewed as a practice meant to symbolically subdue a girl's wild and untamed nature in preparation for her wifely role.³¹ As with the *Arrephoroi*, allusions to the preservation of virginity for marriage are present in the *Arkteia*. The etiological myth of this ritual involves a girl at Brauron who teased a male bear living in the sanctuary. The bear scratched her and in retaliation was killed by her brothers. Artemis became angry and demanded service from the girls at Brauron. Some scholars hypothesize that the teasing of the bear was a metaphor for the sexual exploration and, the bear's scratch was equivalent to the loss of virginity. Artemis's discontent with pre-marital sex established the *Arkteia*'s purpose in subduing the wild or sexual nature of a young girl.³² In Aristophanes' comedy, *Lysistrata*, the chorus references both the *Arrephoroi* and Little Bears, singing "At the age of seven, I served as one of the *arrephoroi*...then, shedding my dress of saffron, I served as a Bear for Artemis at the Brauronia festival..." as a sequence of rites of passage preparing young women for adulthood.³³

²⁹ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 277; see also Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

³⁰ Froma Zeitlin, "The Economics of Hesiod's Pandora" in Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 51.

³¹ Eva Stehle, "Women and Religion," 199; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 321-322.

³² Eva Stehle, "Women and Religion," 199; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 321-322.

³³ Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 642-645 from *Four Plays by Aristophanes: the Clouds, the Birds, Lysistrata*,

A girl on the verge of marriage and subsequent motherhood (around the age of fourteen) was called a *parthenos*. It was during this phase of her life that a woman was most sexually attractive to both gods and mortals. Most Greek heroines – characterized as beautiful, intelligent, and strong – are *parthenoi*, like Pandora and Antigone.³⁴ Many of the qualities that made a *parthenos* so alluring, such as their independence and acumen, were traits that must be suppressed or eliminated in an ideal wife. This taming or “domestication” of a woman was done by her husband through marriage.

A look at ancient Greek literature provides further insight. In *Works and Days* (ca. 700 BC) Hesiod outlines “how to pick a wife,” explaining that a man should marry when he is “not much less than thirty, and not much more,” while his wife should be “four years past puberty.” Hesiod also insists that a man “marry a virgin, so you can teach her good habits.”³⁵ Hesiod’s concept of a good wife is one that is young and malleable. Greek poet Semonides used animal metaphors to explain different “types” of wives in terms of service to their husbands, with the “bee” wife being the best because of her constant industriousness.³⁶ These animal metaphors play into the concept of young women as wild creatures needing to be tamed for the benefit of mankind. In fact, the ancient Greek verb for taming animals, *damazein*, refers to men taming women against their will.³⁷ Additionally, the verb *agein*, used to express the action of a man leading his bride, can also be used in reference to the dragging of a resistant animal.³⁸

the Frogs. Translated by William Arrowsmith, Richmond Lattimore, and Douglass Parker (New York, NY: Penguin Books USA, 1994), 405.

³⁴ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 32-33.

³⁵ Hesiod, *Works and Days: How to pick a wife*, 696-705 from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome*, 24-25.

³⁶ Semonides, *On Women* from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome*, 25-27; for more animal metaphors in poetry see Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 79.

³⁷ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 75.

³⁸ Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 12.

Further underscoring the necessity of “domesticating” wild young girls through marriage and motherhood is *The Hippocratic Corpus*, a collection of works associated with the teachings of famed doctor Hippocrates. In a section called “Hysteria in Virgins,” Hippocrates discusses female diseases, most of which are due to problems of the womb that can be cured by sex and pregnancy. He explains how “virgins who do not take a husband at the appropriate time for marriage” experience visions and insanity. His rationale is that without sex, blood collects in the womb and builds up to the heart and lungs, resulting in insanity and suicidal actions, i.e., “girls try to choke themselves.” The prescribed treatment for this deviant behavior is marriage because, “if they become pregnant, they will be cured.”³⁹

The Marriage Ceremony

The marriage ceremony was a three-day event that functioned as a transitional ritual for a girl, consisting of the *proaulia*, *gamos* and *epaulia*. The *proaulia* was the day before the wedding when preparations were made, the most important of which were sacrifices to ensure a successful future for the bride and groom. Many of the sacrifices and offerings were directed towards Artemis as the brides began a transition from her sphere to that of Aphrodite’s, a journey that culminated with the birth of their first child. To mark the end of her childhood, the wife-to-be would dedicate her toys and a lock of her hair to Artemis. Sacrifices were also frequently made to Hera and Aphrodite.⁴⁰ Ritual baths were taken by both the bride and groom to cleanse themselves of their lives before marriage.⁴¹ Similar to modern wedding preparations was the bringing of adornments to the bride, including her dress, jewelry, veil, crown and sandals.⁴²

³⁹ Hippocrates, *On Virgins* from Leftkowitz and Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome*, 242-243.

⁴⁰ John Howard Oakley, and Rebecca H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 10-14; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 126.

⁴¹ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 15.

⁴² Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 16.

The next day of the ceremony was the *gamos*, the wedding, which consisted of a procession and a feast with meat from animal sacrifices and cakes that symbolized fertility. Also alluding to the fruitfulness of the union was the presence of the *pais amphithales*, a young boy symbolic of the hope for a future son.⁴³ Following the feast, a procession brought the bride to her husband's home where she was given to the groom by her father. An example of a wedding procession occurs on a red-figure *pyxis* by the Marlay Painter dating to 440-430 BC (Figure 6). The bride and groom ride in a chariot, leaving the bride's house and heading towards the husband's. Two women at the back of the procession appear to hold the bride's gifts. Another woman next to the bride is likely the bride's mother who symbolically protected her daughter with a torch during the transition to her new home and life. At the front of the procession is the leader, or *proegetes*, gesturing to the door of the groom's home, another significant transition point for the bride that signified her entrance into womanhood.⁴⁴

The final day of the marriage ceremony featured further celebrations with more feasting, music, and dancing. The most important part of the day was the presentation of gifts to the bride called the *epaulia*. Typical items given to the bride were clothing, sandals, combs, perfumes, and cosmetics, all meant to beautify the bride for her new husband.⁴⁵ The completion of the *epaulia* signified that the bride had now transitioned into her husband's household and family.⁴⁶

A vessel that provides a perfect visual summary of a bride's transition from childhood to adulthood through marriage is the Eretria Painter's *epinetron* from the late 5th century BC (Figures 7a-7c). An *epinetron* was an object used by women when working wool and spinning thread. It has a distinctive half-cylindrical shape and was worn to protect the upper leg. This

⁴³ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 127.

⁴⁴ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 31.

⁴⁵ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 38.

⁴⁶ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 42.

epinetron depicts three Greek brides, one on each side of the vessel. The scene most visible when it was worn would have been the *proaulia* of the bride Harmonia, goddess of harmony (Figure 7a). Harmonia is in the center of the scene, surrounded by her friends, one of whom she turns towards. Harmonia's body language indicates that she is nervous about her impending wedding and looks to her friend for support.⁴⁷ The scene on the front of the vessel, running over the top of the knee, shows Thetis struggling against her soon-to-be husband Peleus, whom she was forced to marry by Zeus (Figure 7b). Thetis does eventually submit and marries Peleus, signified by her raised veil.⁴⁸ The scene features other wedding elements including the presence of Thetis' father, Nereus, at the far right, who would have given her away. Thus, this scene could be representative of the *gamos*. The last scene on the *epinetron* features the bride Alcestis, a mythological princess, at home after her wedding, surrounded by women from her and her new husband's family (Figure 7c). This scene is more intimate and relaxed, signifying that her transition into adulthood has been completed with the *epaulia*.⁴⁹ Taken together, the scenes on the Eretria Painter's *epinetron* encapsulate the transition of a girl from the wild, untamed world of Artemis to the sexually mature world of Aphrodite.

The circumstances that young girls faced in their marital transition to womanhood resemble those circumstances encountered by mythological women in myths of abduction. Abduction, or *harpage*, was a common and appealing subject to the Greeks because it legitimized the taming of women and showed that resistance to male domination was futile. Many 5th century Athenian vases depict a man pursuing a woman, often grabbing or carrying her

⁴⁷ Rachel Kousser, "The World of Aphrodite in Late Fifth Century Vase Painting." Essay. In *Greek Vases: Images, Contexts, and Controversies*, edited by Clemente Marconi (New York: Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, 2004), 104-105.

⁴⁸ Kousser, "The World of Aphrodite in Late Fifth Century Vase Painting," 106 -107.

⁴⁹ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 41.

off (Figures 8 and 9).⁵⁰ Abduction myths like those of Persephone, Thetis, and Helen mimic the stages that a young girl would experience on the cusp of marriage. In fact, these myths seem to socialize unwilling *parthenoi* into accepting their fate as wives and mothers. Abducted women, most notably Persephone and Thetis, are resistant brides who eventually accept their new roles and are in turn rewarded for their acquiescence.

The Greek word for wedding, *gamos*, could refer to any type of sexual union, including an abduction, and many features of the marriage ceremony can be connected to abduction narratives and their visual representations, such as the “lifting of a bride.”⁵¹ In wedding iconography, the bride is repeatedly lifted by the groom onto a chariot, as seen on an Attic red-figure *loutrophoros* dating to 430-420 BC (Figure 10). However, some scholars interpret “bride-lifting” as a metaphor for a bride in “mid-transition,” where she is neither part of Artemis’s world nor Aphrodite’s, but in-between.⁵² Another nuptial tradition, the “leading of a bride,” is generally thought to draw direct parallels between marriage and abduction. An Attic red-figure *loutrophoros* dated to 425 BC depicts a wedding procession in which the groom clearly grabs the bride’s wrist and leads her to his home (Figure 11). The identical gesture, called *cheir’epi karmo*, appears in a scene of Paris abducting Helen on a red-figure *skyphos* from 490 BC (Figure 12).⁵³ This gesture, a common feature in both marriage and abduction imagery, demonstrates both control and possession of the person whose wrist is held.⁵⁴

As discussed before, a girl had no choice in whether she married nor whom she married – her willingness generally was not considered in the making of a match. The apprehension brides

⁵⁰ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 74 -75.

⁵¹ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 13.

⁵² Ian Jenkins, “Is there life after marriage? A study of the abduction motif in vase paintings of the Athenian marriage ceremony.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 30 (1983): 137-138, 140.

⁵³ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 126.

⁵⁴ Jenkins, “Is there life after marriage? A study of the abduction motif in vase paintings of the Athenian marriage ceremony,” 140.

felt is evident in the songs sung by the bride's friends from outside the bridal bed chamber to reassure her as she consummated her marriage with her husband. On the wedding night a gatekeeper or *thyroros* was posted at the door in case the bride's friends attempted a rescue, his job was to "prevent the women from helping the screaming bride."⁵⁵

Persephone

Persephone's abduction by Hades is told principally through a text called *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, written between 650-550 BC. Persephone, also called Kore, was the daughter of Zeus, king of the gods, and Demeter, goddess of the harvest. It occurred in a meadow where she was picking flowers with a group of water nymphs. The meadow's fertility implies Persephone's state as a *parthenos*, on the cusp of marriage, and most desirable to men.⁵⁶ As Persephone reached for a flower, the earth opened and Hades arose in a chariot and carried her off. Two accounts of the abduction occur in the *Hymn*, one from an on-looker's standpoint and the other from Persephone's while she later recounts the event to her mother. Both versions are provided below:

The lord Host-to-Many rose up on her
With his immortal horses, the celebrated son of Kronos;
He snatched the unwilling maid into his golden chariot
And led her off lamenting. She screamed with a shrill voice,
Calling on her father, the son of Kronos highest and best.⁵⁷

As I joyously plucked it, the ground gaped from beneath,
And the mighty lord, Host-to-Many, rose from it
And carried me off beneath the earth in his golden chariot
Much against my will. And I cried out at the top of my voice.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ According to Pollux 3.42 in Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 37; Kousser, "The World of Aphrodite in Late Fifth Century Vase Painting," 105; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 126.

⁵⁶ For more on the significance of the meadow see Susan Deacy, "From 'Flowery Tales' to 'Heroic Rapes': Virginal Subjectivity in the Mythological Meadow," *Arethusa* 46, no. 3 (2013): 399-401.

⁵⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 17-21 in Helene P. Foley ed. *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Both versions emphasize Persephone's unwillingness and helplessness. The fresco painting in the Tomb of Persephone at Vergina in Macedonia (4th century BC) depicts the abduction of Persephone as described in the *Hymn* (Figures 13a and 13b). Hades, in his horse-drawn chariot, violently grabs a naked Persephone and sweeps her away. In the lower right, Persephone's nymph companion looks on in horror. Persephone clearly struggles to escape with her arms outstretched, as if reaching for help, and her hair blowing uncontrollably in the wind. Persephone's and the nymph's dramatic expressions convey their trepidation in this moment of surprise.

Persephone's terror likely mirrors the fear that young brides felt when forced to marry a complete stranger. Other parallels between this mythological abduction and ancient Greek marriages include Zeus's involvement as the father of the bride and the presence of a chariot. Zeus approved of the abduction, as explained in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, "against her will Hades took her by the design of Zeus."⁵⁹ Zeus's arrangement of his daughter's marriage is like the promise or contract of marriage made between the father of the bride and future groom, called an *engye*. The bride did not have to give her consent nor be present when the *engye* was made.⁶⁰ Persephone was unaware that her father had arranged for her marriage to Hades, just as an ancient Greek bride may not have consented to hers. The use of a chariot connotes a marriage ceremony as the bride and groom are often shown riding a chariot in procession to the bride's new home in nuptial imagery. The "snatching" of Persephone onto the chariot is reminiscent of the "lifting of the bride" during a marriage ceremony (Figure 10). Additionally, Persephone's

⁵⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 429-432 in Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

⁵⁹ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 30.

⁶⁰ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 9; Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 108.

alternate name, Kore, signifies a girl who is about to be married, thus implying that she is the quintessential young bride.⁶¹

After the abduction, Demeter wandered the earth for nine days in search of her daughter, carrying a torch that parallels the one carried by the mother of the bride to protect her daughter when transitioning to her new life. When Demeter finally learned what had happened, she was furious with Zeus and left Mount Olympus, home of the gods. She traveled to Eleusis in disguise, where she became a nurse to the royal family and attempted to make the king's infant son immortal before she was caught by the boy's mother. Offended by the disruption, Demeter demanded a temple be built and rites be performed in her honor.⁶²

Demeter's despair caused crops to die, and famine broke out. With many humans dying and no sacrifices being made to the gods, Zeus intervened. He sent Hermes to the Underworld to inform Hades that Persephone must be set free. Hades complied, but not before giving her a pomegranate seed to eat, thereby condemning her to spend a third of each year with him in the Underworld. When recounting to her mother how she came to eat the pomegranate seed, Persephone explains:

The Slayer of Argos [Hermes] came to bring fortunate news
From my father, the son of Kronos, and the other gods
And lead me from Erebos [the Underworld] so that seeing me with your eyes
You would desist from your anger and dread wrath
At the gods. Then I leapt up for joy, but he stealthily
Put it in my mouth a food honey-sweet, a pomegranate seed,
And compelled me against my will and force to taste it.⁶³

⁶¹ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 288.

⁶² Hugh Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26-27; also see *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 268-274 in Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

⁶³ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 407- 413, in Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

A typical wedding ritual in ancient Greece involved the bride eating food from her husband's home as a symbol of her inclusion into the household, just as Persephone's consumption of the pomegranate seed bound her to her husband's realm. Another possible symbolic implication of the pomegranate seed is the consummation of Hades and Persephone's marriage as pomegranates had associations with blood, death, fertility, marriage, and sexuality in ancient Greece.

Additionally, pomegranates had connections to male divinities with its many seeds and female deities with its womblike shape, forming a union of a male and female – Persephone and Hades.⁶⁴ When Hades compels her to eat the pomegranate seed, it connotes sexual seduction and even rape, as Persephone explains this action was against her will.⁶⁵ In later, alternate versions of the story, Persephone eats the seed voluntarily, perhaps symbolizing her acceptance of Hades as her husband.⁶⁶ In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Zeus “agreed that his daughter would spend one-third of the revolving year in the misty dark, and two-thirds with her mother” because she had eaten food from the underworld.⁶⁷ Demeter and Persephone accepted this arrangement and Demeter allowed crops to grow once again.

An Attic red-figure bell-krater dated to 440 BC and attributed to the Persephone Painter depicts the moment when Persephone returns to earth (Figure 14). She emerges from a crevice in a rock and is led by Hermes, who wears a winged helmet and carries a staff. His frontal position signifies he is between worlds. Hekate, a goddess associated with transitions and crossroads, lights the way with her torches. Demeter stands to the far right of the scene holding a scepter. Persephone appears much like a Greek bride with her dress, diadem, and jewelry. The bridal

⁶⁴ Marilyn Arthur, and Helene P Foley. Essay. In *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 237.

⁶⁵ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 56-57.

⁶⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 5.533-539 from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Translated by Rolfe Humphries, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955).

⁶⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 463-465, in Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

imagery alludes to her future return to the Underworld as Hades' bride.⁶⁸ The gaze between mother and daughter highlights yet another link between Persephone's abduction and ancient Greek marriage – the separation of daughter from mother. When a girl married, she would essentially leave her family behind and join a new family with a new mother, her mother-in-law. Demeter's grief over Persephone's loss might have paralleled that of real mothers who "lost" a daughter to marriage. In addition, Persephone's longing for Demeter while in the Underworld would represent how a new bride would miss her mother.

Eventually, Persephone came to terms with her marriage to Hades, and, as a result of her acquiescence, she was not only reunited with her mother for most of the year, but also became Queen of the Underworld. As such, Hades granted Persephone powers over the earthly realm, the divine realm and the Underworld saying:

You will have power over all that lives and moves,
You will possess the greatest honors among the gods.
There will be punishment forevermore for those wrongdoers
Who fail to appease your power with sacrifices,
Performing proper rites and making due offerings.⁶⁹

Persephone's position in the Underworld is indicated by her frequent appearance enthroned next to Hades. An example is on a fragmentary limestone relief dating from the 4th to 3rd century BC that most likely part of a funerary monument in the Greek settlement of Taranto in southern Italy (Figure 15). Persephone and Hades can be found at the left of the scene while Hermes guides a woman from a cave-like entrance to the Underworld towards the enthroned couple.

Another depiction of Persephone reigning as Queen of the Underworld is on an Apulian volute krater (mixing vessel for wine and water) dated to 330BC that depicts Dionysus' trip to the underworld (Figure 16). Here, Hades shakes hands with Dionysus, god of wine, while

⁶⁸ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 290.

⁶⁹ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 365-369, in Foley *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

Persephone stands in a prominent position beside her husband. Other figures in this scene represent the male and female followers of Dionysus, satyrs and maenads, as well as various other mythological beings including Hermes. A similar scene occurs on another Apulian volute krater attributed to the Underworld Painter dating to the late 4th century BC (Figure 17).

Persephone again stands next to Hades, but this time the visitor to the Underworld is Orpheus, there to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydike. Orpheus played his lyre for the rulers of the dead in hopes that they would free his wife. In many versions of this story, it is Persephone who took pity on Orpheus and convinced her husband to let Eurydike go, demonstrating the influence she gained in becoming Hades' wife.⁷⁰

The previous examples illustrate the popularity of Persephone and her abduction story outside of mainland Greece. Persephone worshiped as Queen of the Underworld was particularly prevalent in the south Italian Greek city of Locri, where numerous votive terracotta plaques dedicated to the goddess have been discovered. These *pinakes*, produced between the 6th century BC and ca. 470 BC, depict Persephone's abduction, Persephone enthroned with Hades, and scenes of young girls "playing" Persephone in their own abduction narratives.⁷¹ At Locri, Persephone was regarded as a protector of marriage, thus these *pinakes* likely functioned as an offering in exchange for the goddess' blessing. With these plaques, Locrian girls on the cusp of marriage equated themselves to the goddess by immersing themselves in her abduction story. Perhaps, likening themselves to Persephone provided them with comfort despite their fears upon entering a new phase in life, as she offered them a satisfactory model for life as a wife and would protect them in their transition. So-called "homage *pinakes*" depict Persephone and Hades enthroned while accepting offerings. In these scenes, Persephone is shown prominently in front

⁷⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.1-111.

⁷¹ Ellie Mackin, "Girls Playing Persephone (in Marriage and Death)," *Mnemosyne* 71, no. 2 (2017): 3-4.

of Hades (Figure 18).⁷² Like the abduction *pinakes*, homage *pinakes* may have provided solace to young Locrian girls as they illustrate that Persephone's life after marriage brought her great honors. Additionally, Persephone is mentioned on gold lamellae (thin tablets) that have been discovered in southern Italy. These tablets, particularly ones from the ancient Greek settlement of Thurii, were found buried with the deceased and portray Persephone as the principal deity addressed in pleas for a pleasant afterlife, referring to her as "Queen of the Chthonian Ones."⁷³

On mainland Greece, the story of Persephone and Demeter was disseminated through a popular mystery cult, the Eleusinian Mysteries.⁷⁴ The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells us that while in Eleusis, Demeter ordered the citizens to build a temple in her honor and instructed them on the rites they were to perform. She "taught her Mysteries to all of them, holy rites that are not to be transgressed, nor pried into, nor divulged."⁷⁵ Initiates of the cult were strictly forbidden to discuss the rites that were performed, but theories propose that suffering and reunion played a role and perhaps there was even a reenactment of Persephone's abduction and Demeter's subsequent grief.⁷⁶ To be fully initiated, one would have to experience the mysteries twice, once as a *mystes*, one who keeps their eyes closed or mouth shut, and once as an *epoptes*, the one who sees.⁷⁷ The secret rites were part of a larger celebration, the Festival of Great Mysteries, where sacrifices were performed and a procession from Athens to Eleusis with sacred objects of Demeter occurred.⁷⁸ The celebration was linked to the agricultural cycle and was held just before the autumn plowing. The rationale for this connection to agriculture and the changing of the

⁷² Mackin, "Girls Playing Persephone (in Marriage and Death)," 8.

⁷³ Fritz Graf, and Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 8-13.

⁷⁴ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 65.

⁷⁵ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 477-479, in Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*.

⁷⁶ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 68.

⁷⁷ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 66.

⁷⁸ Bowden, *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*, 32.

seasons was that when Persephone was in the Underworld the earth died due to Demeter's grief, and when she returned, the earth was fertile.⁷⁹

A young girl on the verge of marriage familiar with Persephone's abduction may have felt a connection to the goddess as their experiences paralleled each other. Additionally, the grief experienced by both Demeter and Persephone at their separation must have reflected emotions experienced by Greek brides and their mothers. Persephone and Demeter's eventual acceptance of the marriage brings about rewards: Persephone became the powerful Queen of the Underworld and crops grew once more. The story taught Greek women that accepting their societal role as a wife would not only allow a prosperous future for themselves but a flourishing society as well.⁸⁰

Thetis

As a goddess, Thetis, daughter of sea god Nereus, would have been expected to marry someone of her status. However, a prophecy foretold that Thetis' child would be greater than his father, meaning that if Thetis bore a divinity's child, it would be more powerful than a god. For this reason, Zeus ordered that Thetis marry a mortal hero named Peleus. She resisted the match, so Peleus decided to sneak up on her and subdue her by refusing to let her go. Thetis struggled to escape by shapeshifting into various wild animals like a snake, a lion, and a dolphin, but Peleus held on tight until she conceded.⁸¹ This encounter can be seen in a Melian relief found in a tomb on Rhodes and dated to ca. 470-490 BC (Figure 19). Here, Peleus takes a stance reminiscent of a wrestler with his arm wrapped securely around Thetis' waist. Her breasts are accentuated, implying that she is mature and ready for marriage. Emphasizing her resistance to Peleus is her

⁷⁹ Foley, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays*, 71.

⁸⁰ Elaine H. Fantham, Alan Shapiro, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Helene Peet Foley, and Sarah B. Pomeroy. *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 33.

⁸¹ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 340.

raised arm, a typical symbol of distress for female figures in Greek art. A lion on the right alludes to Thetis' transformations into wild creatures. Interestingly, Thetis is in a frontal pose traditionally used to represent liminal figures, perhaps referencing Thetis' eventual acceptance of her union and her martial transition. She has begun the transition from *parthenos* to wife but has not yet completed it.⁸²

Another depiction of Peleus grabbing Thetis is on a *kylix* (shallow wine cup) signed by Peithinos and dated to ca. 500 BC (Figure 20). Peleus, as in the previous example, is in a stable stance with his arms wrapped around Thetis. Thetis exhibits minimal signs of distress with her outstretched right hand. However, the animals representing her transformations clearly attack Peleus. The snakes bite his face and leg while the lion's open mouth signifies its readiness to attack. The snake biting Peleus' ankle may foreshadow Thetis' acceptance of her marriage and their future son, Achilles, whose only vulnerable point was his heel.⁸³

It is common in Classical Greek vase painting to see men with weapons pursuing a female figure. This association between courtship and hunting relates to the concept that women were wild animals that needed to be tamed and "domesticated." Thetis's transformations into various creatures represents her wild nature that Peleus is eventually able to subdue through marriage. An interesting depiction of Peleus' pursuit of Thetis is found on a *lebes gamikos* or nuptial *lebes* (a vessel used during wedding ceremonies), dated to ca. 440 BC (Figure 21). The lower portion of the vessel depicts Peleus chasing Thetis with a spear as he reaches his arm out to her. Thetis runs away but looks back at her pursuer, signaling her future acceptance. This scene differs from most depictions of Peleus and Thetis in that the two are not in a wrestling match, but rather a pursuit. The phallic positioning of Peleus' spear implies male dominance and

⁸² Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 346.

⁸³ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 341.

the use of sexual assault as a weapon to control women. Differing greatly from this scene is the one in the top portion of the vessel that features a docile wedding scene in which a bride prepares for her wedding with the aid of two companions. The pairing of this nuptial tableau with a pursuit implying sexual violence and male control was likely meant to remind brides of Thetis' story and that resistance to marriage is pointless, as not even Thetis could prevent her marriage, despite her shapeshifting powers.

Thetis' acceptance of her union with Peleus led to a grand wedding with all the gods in attendance. The most elaborate depiction of their wedding is on the Francois Vase (ca. 570 BC), an Attic volute-krater potted by Ergotimos and painted by Kleitias (Figure 22a and 22b). The central register shows the procession of gods, all labeled, going to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis (Figures 22c-22f). The event took place on Mt. Pelion, where Peleus stands in front of the house, greeting the guests while Thetis inside lifts her veil in a gesture called *anakalypteria*, identifying her as the bride (Figure 22c). The distinguished guests include Demeter and Dionysus followed by seven chariots, each with a pair of gods including: Zeus and Hera, Poseidon and Amphitrite, Ares and Aphrodite, Apollo and his mother Leto, Artemis and Athena, and Hermes and his mother Maia (Figure 22c-22f).⁸⁴ In addition to her opulent wedding, Thetis' compliance with her marriage resulted in the birth of an extraordinary hero – Achilles.⁸⁵

Throughout Achilles' life, he had a very close bond with his mother, differing from the typical mother-son relationship where, after the age of six or seven, a boy would not spend much time with his mother. Evidence of this connection can be found in *The Iliad*:

she came and sat beside him as he wept, and stroked him
with her hand and called him by name and spoke to him: 'Why then,
child, do you lament? What sorrow has come to your heart now?

⁸⁴ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 24.

⁸⁵ Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 81.

Tell me, do not hide it in your mind, and thus we shall both know.⁸⁶

Thetis is present during pivotal moments in Achilles' life, including providing him with new armor, readying him to fight to his death. His previous set of armor was taken by Hektor (a Trojan prince) after he had killed Achilles' best friend, Patroklos, who was pretending to be Achilles to rally the Greek warriors.⁸⁷ The moment Thetis and two Nereids present a mourning Achilles with his armor is seen on the central band of a red-figure and white ground *lekythos* used to store oil involved in funerary rites (Figure 23).

Thetis fulfills her ultimate purpose as a woman – getting married and having a son – in an exemplary way by having one of the most extraordinary weddings in Greek mythology and bearing a celebrated Greek hero. Her story likely served as a precedent for young girls, both in showing the triviality of resistance and that good things come to those who submit to men.

Helen

Helen, daughter of Zeus, was the most beautiful woman in the world, which led to two abductions – first, when she was a child by Athenian hero Theseus, and second, when she was a married woman by Paris, a prince of Troy. Helen was dancing with other young girls in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta when Theseus and his friend Pirithous carried her off. Helen's brothers, the Dioscuri, rescued her by invading Attica.⁸⁸ Depictions of this abduction tend to follow the typical pursuit scene pattern, with Theseus chasing after a fleeing Helen who glances back at her pursuer (Figure 24). An interesting depiction of this abduction is on a fragmentary red-figure *krater* attributed to the Talos Painter and dated to 425-375 BC (Figure 25). On this vessel, Theseus and Helen stand near an altar referring to the pre-wedding sacrifices

⁸⁶ Homer, *The Iliad*, Translated by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1.360-364.

⁸⁷ Homer, *The Iliad*, 18. 428-490.

⁸⁸ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 29; Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 12.

that took place as part of the *proaulia*, suggesting an orderly and calm marital context. Helen wears bridal attire as her family stands behind her watching the scene unfold. An important component of this scene is Helen's subtle gesture of raising her hand, as though she is surprised. Perhaps this motion alludes to her unwillingness and thus transforms the scene into a romanticized abduction with nuptial imagery rather than a wedding.⁸⁹

Helen's later abduction by Paris originated at Peleus and Thetis' wedding when an uninvited guest, Eris, goddess of discord, threw a golden apple with the inscription "to her who is most beautiful" into the gathering of guests.⁹⁰ Athena, Aphrodite, and Hera all believed the apple was meant for them. To settle their argument and choose a winner, Zeus enlisted Paris, who at this point was a herdsman and was not aware of his royal birthright. Each goddess attempted to bribe Paris, but ultimately Aphrodite won with her offer of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen.⁹¹ A depiction of this occurrence – The Judgement of Paris – can be seen on an Attic white-ground *pyxis* by the Penthesilea Painter (Figures 26a-26d). Paris sits on a rock with a straw hat hanging down his back and holds a club used to protect his herd from predators (Figure 26a). To the left of Paris is Hermes, identified by his travelers' hat and staff (Figure 26b). Next to him is the queen of the gods, Hera, wearing a bridal crown and carrying a scepter. She looks to Athena who holds her helmet and spear (Figure 26c). Aphrodite appears to the left of Athena in discussion with Eros, god of love, whose presence foreshadows how Aphrodite will win the contest (Figure 26d). After awarding Aphrodite with the golden apple, Paris sailed to Sparta to seduce Helen. Complicating Paris' attempt to woo Helen is the fact that

⁸⁹ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 12-13.

⁹⁰ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 1.

⁹¹ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 1-2.

she already had a husband, Menelaus. However, during Paris' visit, Menelaus took a trip to Crete and left Paris with Helen, enabling her abduction and subsequently igniting the Trojan War.⁹²

Literary sources describing the abduction vary in their representation of Helen; some portray her as an innocent victim and others state that she was a willing agent. The differing interpretations of Helen's role illustrate how the Greeks themselves were unsure whether she left Sparta willingly with Paris or was forced to leave guided by the divine influence of Aphrodite.⁹³ In the *Iliad*, the Greek warrior Nestor advocated for the rape of Trojan woman in retribution for "Helen's longing to escape and her lamentations."⁹⁴ This implies that Helen was forcefully taken by Paris and portrays her as an innocent victim. However, Nestor's proclamation and the rest of the Greek warriors' attitudes towards the abduction may simply be their way of justifying the war.⁹⁵ From the male viewpoint, Helen's unwillingness would have been more acceptable than the alternative of her voluntarily running off and denying her womanly responsibilities.

Additional passages from the *Iliad* imply that Helen did have some agency in her abduction. There are instances where she holds herself responsible for the events that unfolded. When speaking with king Priam, Paris' father, she says: "I wish bitter death had been what I wanted, when I came hither following your son."⁹⁶ Here Helen does not mention the influence Aphrodite had upon her but instead talks about how she wanted and followed Paris. She also dramatically proclaims to Hektor (Paris' brother) how she wished none of the events had happened:

Brother
by marriage to me, who am a nasty bitch evil-intriguing,
how I wish that on that day when my mother first bore me

⁹² Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 33.

⁹³ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 37.

⁹⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*, 2.356.

⁹⁵ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 63.

⁹⁶ Homer, *The Iliad*, 3.173-174.

the foul whirlwind of the storm had caught me away and swept me
to the mountain, or into the wash of the sea deep-thundering
where the waves would have swept me away before all these things had
happened.⁹⁷

By wishing that she had been “swept away” at birth and referring to herself as “nasty” and “evil” she accepts her guilt; however, immediately afterwards, she explains how the “gods had brought it about.”⁹⁸ Thus, the possibility arises that Helen was both, to some degree, compliant with and coerced into her abduction and marriage to Paris.

When Helen appears in *The Odyssey*, years after the Trojan war ended and her reunion with Menelaus, she is portrayed as an ideal wife who hosts guests and produces textiles. She recounts her abduction and implies that it was Aphrodite’s doing against her will:

The Trojan woman raised a cry – but my heart
sang – for I had come round, long before,
to dreams of sailing home, and I repented
the mad day Aphrodite
drew me away from my dear fatherland,
forsaking all – child, bridal bed, and husband –
a man without defect in form or mind.⁹⁹

Another passage in *The Odyssey*, this time spoken by Penelope (Odysseus’ wife), suggests that Helen was purely under Aphrodite’s influence:

Helen of Argos, daughter of Zeus and Leda,
would she have joined the stranger, lain with him,
if she had known her destiny? Known the Akhaians
in arms would bring her back to her own country?
Surely a goddess moved her to adultery.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Homer, *The Iliad*, 6.343-348.

⁹⁸ Homer, *The Iliad*, 6.349.

⁹⁹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, Translated by Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 4.279-285.

¹⁰⁰ Homer, *The Odyssey*, 23.246-250.

The conflicting views of Helen's role in her abduction are also explored in ancient Greek poetry. The poet Alcaeus, active ca. 600 BC, compares Helen to Thetis in his poem about how Achilles became a hero. He praises Thetis for her marriage and the birth of her son but then turns his praise for her into contempt for Helen as he cites her as the reason for Achilles' death:

She bore a son, the [finest] of demigods,
a prosperous driver of tawny [horses].
But they perished over [Helen – the Trojans]
And their city ¹⁰¹

Sappho, also active around 600 BC, takes a differing view of Helen explaining how she was "led astray" by Aphrodite:

Helen, leaving
her most [excellent] husband
went sailing to Troy;
she gave no mind at all to her child
or dear parents, but [Aphrodite] led her astray ¹⁰²

In addition to literary sources, images can be used to explore the ambiguous nature of Helen's abduction. In many depictions of Helen and Paris' meeting as well as the abduction itself, Helen is not violently grabbed or physically forced, but rather she appears calm, usually accompanied by Aphrodite, who appears to influence her actions. A red-figure *amphora* dated to ca. 450-400 BC by the Heimarmene Painter shows the meeting of Helen and Paris (Figures 27a and 27b). Helen sits in Aphrodite's lap with her eyes down cast, symbolizing that she is under her control. Peitho, the personification of persuasion and seduction stands beside them, suggesting Aphrodite's divine influence in Helen's departure from Sparta with Paris (Figure

¹⁰¹ Alcaeus 42, lines 13-16 from Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 98.

¹⁰² Sappho 16, lines 6-11 from Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 112; Eric Dodson-Robinson, "Helen's "Judgment of Paris" and Greek Marriage Ritual in Sappho 16." *Arethusa* 43, no. 1 (2010): 5-7.

27a). Paris is shown with the winged Himeros, the god of sexual desire, who pulls the prince towards Helen (Figure 27b).¹⁰³

The abduction occurs on a *skyphos* (two-handled wine cup) attributed to the vase painter Makron, dated to ca. 490 BC (Figure 12). On the obverse, Paris and Helen appear in the center with Eros flying between them while Aphrodite stands behind Helen, adjusting her veil. Peitho is at the far right, waving farewell. Other than the couple, every other figure witnessing the event, except for Aeneas at the far left, is a divinity, suggesting Helen did not leave of her own freewill but was compelled by the goddess.¹⁰⁴ Helen is not taken violently or pursued, but instead she is treated as a bride, with Paris grasping Helen's wrist like a groom would - the *cheir'epi karmo*. Helen does not seem to be in distress or resistant, most likely due to Aphrodite's powers.

Whether Helen was culpable or not, or a mix of both, her abduction by Paris could have resonated with young girls on the verge of marriage. The very ambiguity of her abduction parallels the uncertainty young brides may have felt towards their approaching wedding, yet at the same time it was a desirable event that facilitated their societal role as wives and mothers. Brides-to-be may have hoped for the presence of Aphrodite, Peitho, Himeros and Eros at their own weddings to ensure a happy future and a fruitful match. Helen may have felt drawn to Paris, but she perhaps would not have acted on those desires without Aphrodite's intervention, just as girls needed the pressure of societal expectations to persuade them into entering a marriage of their father's choosing. Additionally, the various sources describing Aphrodite's "leading" of Helen correlates to the act of "leading the bride," common in nuptial and abduction contexts, that was used to demonstrate the groom's possession of and control over his new wife.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 34-35.

¹⁰⁴ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 123.

Throughout her mythological narrative, Helen is always paired with a romantic partner – first, her capture by Theseus and subsequent return to Sparta, followed by her marriage to Menelaus, and then her abduction and subsequent marriage to Paris. Upon Paris’ death, she married another prince of Troy, Deiphobus, and then finally returned to Menelaus. Her perpetual chain of husbands relates to the idea of taming a woman through marriage. In Greek thought, beautiful women were both desirable and dangerous – *kalon kakon*, a “beautiful evil,” and thus Helen’s constant state of matrimony from one man to the next might have been an attempt to control the dangers of her beauty.¹⁰⁶ Helen functions simultaneously as an ideal bride and a warning of the importance of marital loyalty. She is positioned between a *parthenos* and a wife. In cults of Helen, she was venerated as representing both sides of a girl’s transition through marriage.¹⁰⁷ Her beauty makes her a perfect bride, as she was desired by many men, while her infidelity taught brides that disobeying their husbands brought destruction. This story may also have been used to show men that if they could not control their wives, devastation would follow.

The Amazons

The Amazons were the daughters of Ares (god of war) and the goddess Harmonia. In ancient Greek thought, they lived on the outskirts of the known world, generally around the Black Sea.¹⁰⁸ As a race of female warriors that reversed the Greek female ideal, the Amazons challenged the ancient Greek concept of an orderly civilization.¹⁰⁹ Greek women were expected to be wives and mothers who remained, for the most part, in their homes and under the control of men. Amazons existed beyond these boundaries, characterized as aggressive and untamed. They

¹⁰⁶ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁸ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 58; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 373.

¹⁰⁹ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 62; Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, 131; William Blake Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 40.

warned both women and men of the dangers of not conforming to societal gender expectations. Amazons represent women who failed to transition to adulthood through marriage, and thus were in limbo between girlhood and womanhood.¹¹⁰ Without a husband to subdue a woman's supposed naturally wild and aggressive behaviors, the Amazons never fully mature.

In ancient Greek visual culture, Amazons wear armor, carry weapons, and are frequently on horseback or driving chariots. Battles featuring Amazons first appear on Athenian vases around 570 BC. In these scenes, they either fight against Heracles or otherwise non-descript Greeks. An example is on a black-figure *amphora* dated to ca. 530 BC (Figure 28). Heracles has his typical attributes – a lion-skin pelt and a club. An Amazon attempts to defend herself from the impending blow of Heracles' club as two additional Amazons join the fight. This battle resulted from King Eurystheus of Tiryns' command for Heracles to retrieve the Belt of Ares worn by the Amazon queen, Hippolyte as one of his Twelve Labors. After Heracles explained the reasons for his visit, she agreed to gift him the belt. However, before she could do so, Hera disguised herself as an Amazon and announced that Heracles was abducting their queen. The Amazons grabbed their weapons and headed to rescue Hippolyte. Thinking she had double-crossed him, Heracles initiated a battle with Hippolyte, resulting in her death and his taking of the belt.¹¹¹

Another Greek-Amazon conflict with a similar outcome is that of Achilles and Penthesilea. During the Trojan War, the Amazons agreed to fight as allies of Troy, led by Penthesilea. At first, she killed many Greek soldiers, but was mortally wounded in a duel with Achilles. As she lay dying, Achilles pulled off her helmet to discover that his opponent was a

¹¹⁰ Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, 134.

¹¹¹ Adrienne Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 249-258.

woman, with whom he fell instantly in love with before she died in his arms.¹¹² A *hydria* (water jar) attributed to the Berlin Painter and dated to 500 BC, shows the moment Achilles stabs Penthesilea (Figure 29). Penthesilea holds a bow and reaches out to Achilles in supplication as her wounds bleed and she falls to the ground. Achilles, shown in heroic nudity, holds a spear in one hand and a shield in the other. The phallic positioning of his sword could suggest the ancient Greek ideal of male dominance over women. Penthesilea rebels against traditional female roles and stands toe-to-toe with a man on the battlefield. To reassert male dominance, Achilles kills the Amazon leader who would not submit to him. Both Hippolyte and Penthesilea reject ancient Greek societal ideals and meet their deaths at the hands of Greek heroes, perhaps sending a message to reinforce the patriarchy.¹¹³

Another popular subject involving the Amazons in ancient Greek art is the Amazonomachy, a mythical battle between the Greeks and the Amazons caused by Theseus' abduction of an Amazon named Antiope. The degree of Antiope's willingness in her abduction changes with different versions of the myth, but according to Plutarch, she was invited on Theseus' ship, and when she came aboard, they set sail.¹¹⁴ Greek artists preferred to depict the abduction violently, with Theseus grabbing Antiope and dragging her to his ship. A red-figure *amphora* dated to 500-490 BC shows Theseus carrying Antiope, who struggles to free herself as Theseus' friend Pirithous follows, providing cover (Figure 30). Once in Athens, Antiope is transformed into a domesticated wife upon her marriage to Theseus and even gives him a son. When her Amazon sisters attempt to rescue her by invading Athens, Antiope fought alongside her husband. A possible depiction of this battle is the Amazonomachy on the body of an

¹¹² Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*, 287-298.

¹¹³ Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, 28.

¹¹⁴ Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*, 259-270; Plutarch's *Theseus* 1, 26-27.

Athenian *volute-krater* (a vase used for mixing wine and water) attributed to the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs (Figure 31). The Amazons and Greeks appear evenly matched in the frieze that wraps around the vessel, with some Amazons gaining the upper hand on Greek soldier and vice versa. In the central part of the obverse an Amazon on horseback plunges a spear into a fallen Greek soldier. Next to them, a Greek soldier, probably Theseus, is about to spear an Amazon who is raising her axe in defense. This story does not end happily as Theseus left Antiope for a Greek bride. In her anger, Antiope reverted to her Amazonian ways and crashed the wedding, an act that ultimately ended in her death. The lesson that emerges from this myth is that without a husband, a woman will revert to her wild self like Antiope.¹¹⁵

The popularity of Amazonomachy scenes grew extensively in Athens during the mid-5th century BC, likely in direct relation to the Persian Wars. During this time, the Amazons came to represent Persian warriors, and Amazonomachies depicting the Amazons' defeat at the hands of Greeks may allude to Athenian victories over the Persians at Marathon and Salamis and serve as political propaganda.¹¹⁶ As a result of the Persian Wars, foreigners immigrated to Athens in vast numbers. Due to this influx of outsiders, it is believed that Athenians passed a citizenship law proposed by Perikles in 451 BC. This legislation declared that one could only be a citizen if their father and maternal grandfather were also Athenian citizens, as opposed to just one's father under earlier law.¹¹⁷ The change discouraged Athenian men from marrying foreign women as all of their future descendants would not be citizens.¹¹⁸ Taking into account Perikles' citizenship law

¹¹⁵ Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*, 259-270; Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, 131; Mayor, *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*, 280-82.

¹¹⁷ Josine H. Blok, "Perikles' Citizenship Law: A New Perspective," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 58, no. 2 (2009): 142 and 159.

¹¹⁸ Blok, "Perikles' Citizenship Law: A New Perspective," 149-150; Robin Osborne, "Law, the Democratic Citizen and the Representation of Women in Classical Athens," *Past & Present*, no. 155 (1997): 5-9.

and the prevalence of Amazonomachies in various media including Athenian architectural sculpture, large-scale mural painting, and vase-painting of the mid-5th century BC might imply that the Amazons also came to represent the dangers becoming romantically entangled with foreign women.

Amazons generally rejected traditional marriage and controlled their sexuality. While Amazons were hostile towards men, they liked to arouse and have sex with them, on their own terms. In some ancient sources, Amazons agreed to marry if they could become non-conventional, dominant wives and continue their hunting and military pursuits, as described by Herodotus:

We would find it impossible to live with your women, because our practices are completely different from theirs. We haven't learnt women's work. We shoot arrows, wield javelins, ride horses – things which your women never have anything to do with. They just stay in their wagons and do women's work; they never go out hunting or anywhere else either. We would find it impossible to get along with them.¹¹⁹

Generally, Amazons lived without men, except for brief flings to get pregnant. The paternity of their children was irrelevant to the Amazons as their lineage was traced through the maternal line.¹²⁰ Since their society was matriarchal, female children were valued more highly than males, and boys were sent away or killed.

In their interactions with Greek heroes, Amazons seem to have functioned as a cautionary tale. Their existence illustrated that unmarried girls would not fully mature into women. Emphasizing this point were various eccentric legends about the Amazons, such as their practice of cutting off their right breasts to remove any impediment for using a bow and arrow, a practice said to have been the inspiration for the term “Amazon,” as it sounds similar to the ancient Greek expression for “without breast.” Additionally, the Amazons were thought to have fed their

¹¹⁹ Herodotus. *The Histories*. Edited by Carolyn Dewald. Translated by Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 272.

¹²⁰ Tyrrell, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, 54-55.

female children mares' milk so their breasts would be smaller.¹²¹ The deaths of Hippolyte, Penthesilea and Antiope imply that not only would an unmarried girl not reach full womanhood, but she would, in many cases, die because of it.¹²² Thus, myths involving Amazons, their unusually "unfeminine" activities, and their equation to foreign women made them a perfect portent for Athenian girls reluctant to marry.

Women's Access to Socializing Imagery

How much exposure might Athenian women have had to images of Persephone, Thetis, Helen and the Amazons? Given their limited access to the world outside their homes, it is most likely through domestic objects, such as painted vases, that they would become most familiar with illustrations of these mythical women. Two important factors to consider are the shapes on which these narratives appear and the findspots of vases decorated with this type of imagery. Certain ancient Greek ceramic vessels have close associations with women and their roles in society. For example, the *loutrophoros* was a tall, slender vase used to carry water for bathing.¹²³ It was first used to prepare the dead for burial, an exclusively female task, with early versions often decorated with mourning scenes.¹²⁴ Later, it was used to carry water for the bridal bath from the Kallirrhoe spring in Athens and was often gifted to the bride as a wedding present to be dedicated at the sanctuary of the Nympe on the south slope of the Acropolis, marking the official end of the wedding ritual and ensuring a fruitful and successful marriage.¹²⁵ It became so

¹²¹ Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*, 131; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 23-24; Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 373.

¹²² Ken Dowden, "The Amazons: Development and Functions." *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie* 140, no. 2 (1997): 123.

¹²³ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 6; Mary B. Moore, "Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery," *The Athenian Agora* 30 (1997): 14.

¹²⁴ For an example of a funerary *loutrophoros* see Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number 27.228.

¹²⁵ Oakley and Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, 6 and 15.

closely associated with marriage that marble versions were used to mark graves of unmarried women and men in the late 5th and 4th centuries BC. Another vase possessing strong associations with the feminine sphere was the *lekythos*, a narrow-necked vessel used for storing smaller quantities of olive oil for household and funerary use, in which its contents would be used to anoint corpses.¹²⁶ These vases were also buried with the deceased and placed above graves as offerings. Two other vase shapes having to do with women's responsibilities within the home was a three-handled *hydria* to transport and store water and the *epinetron*, the thigh guard used when combing and spinning wool.¹²⁷

Many of the beautifully preserved vases discussed throughout this paper are shapes associated with the realm of men and used in the context of a *symposium* – an ancient Greek wine drinking party.¹²⁸ Shapes like the *krater*, *skyphos*, and various other cups would have functioned as mixing bowls and drinking vessels for consuming wine. While the women of a household would not have participated in the drinking activities associated with a *symposium*, the tasks of setting and cleaning up the event likely fell on them. These vessels, then, likely functioned to socialize women to be submissive to men and for men to be dominant over women. For example, Amazons appear on many cups and *kraters*, demonstrating to men the importance of controlling their women through marriage.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Moore, "Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery," 45.

¹²⁷ Moore, "Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery," 37 (for more on *hydriai*) and 74 (for more on *epinetra*).

¹²⁸ Joan Burton, "Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World." *Greece & Rome* 45, no. 2 (1998): 143.

¹²⁹ See Athens, Agora Museum P13125 (Beazley Archive Pottery Database 8168); Athens, Agora Museum P13257 (BAPD 8177); Athens, Agora Museum P13969 (BAPD 21887); Athens, Agora Museum P14969 (BAPD 25235); Athens, Agora Museum P19130 (BAPD 29538); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.1777 (BAPD 32381); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.466H (BAPD 16761); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.2156 (BAPD 32329); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.1696 (BAPD 32408); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.1447 (BAPD 32445); Athens, Fetiche Tjami 1959NAK1132 (BAPD 1947).

While many of the painted vases featured previously in this paper were produced in Athens, most do not have a definite provenience (findspot), and when they do, they were found in central and southern Italy. These facts raise the question of whether vases decorated with images of Persephone, Thetis, Helen and the Amazons were viewed by an Athenian audience. The answer is yes. Many vessels whose shapes are closely affiliated with women have been discovered in Athens, its surrounding territory (Attica), and its nearby colonies. They are often heavily damaged, demonstrating their frequent use as opposed to well-preserved goods that many not have functioned in daily life. Thus, it seems highly likely the Athenian women would have been familiar with such objects and utilized them in their daily lives. Fragmentary *lekythoi* found in and closely around Athens depict Persephone with Hades, Peleus abducting Thetis, Helen's abduction by Theseus, as well as Amazons on horseback and in battle.¹³⁰ In addition, fragmentary *loutrophoroi* and *hydriai* have illustrated scenes of Peleus and Thetis, Persephone with Demeter, and Menelaus in pursuit of Helen.¹³¹ Finally, a well-preserved example is the Eretria Painter's *epinetron*, discussed earlier, which was found at Eretria, an Athenian settlement on the island of Euboea, just off the coastline of Attica (Figures 7a-7c). The narratives on this object summarize the marriage ceremony: the first scene, on the outer side of the *epinetron*, illustrating a hesitant bride preparing for her wedding; the central image depicting a struggling Thetis; and the final tableau on the inner side showing Alcestis in her bedchamber during her

¹³⁰ See Athens, National Museum 1301 (BAPD 19896); Athens, National Museum 490 (BAPD 14343); Athens, Agora Museum P24516 (BAPD 31172); Athens, National Museum 404 (BAPD 310490); Athens University 38 (BAPD 9779); Athens, National Museum 1031 (BAPD 14269)

¹³¹ See Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.1173 (BAPD 32148); Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection 1.1209 (BAPD 32139); Athens, National Museum 17297 (BAPD 9394); Athens, National Museum 14983 (BAPD 213443).

epaulia, the day after willingly consummating her marriage. This piece perpetuates the idea that, despite a bride's hesitancy, it is in her and society's best interest that she marry.¹³²

“Rule Breakers”

What happened if a woman did not comply with the “rules” of the patriarchal Athenian society? In short, an unmarried woman would have had a difficult life, especially if they lacked a male guardian. With restricted rights and limited access to jobs other than tasks involving heavy labor, such as a washerwoman, one would most likely become a sex worker. As a prostitute or *hetaira* (courtesan), it was possible for a woman to create a comfortable life for herself. For example, Aspasia became the mistress to Perikles, a prominent salesman and political figure in Athens, and socialized with leading figures like Socrates. However, such societal elevation was unlikely for most prostitutes. With a husband came social stability, societal representation, and legitimate male heirs, all desirable outcomes for the woman herself and Athenian society.¹³³

Conclusion

Stories of women who serve as lessons for young girls on the verge of marriage permeate Greek mythology. Many of these narratives involve an abduction and subsequent wedding – such as those of Persephone, Thetis, and Helen – that illustrate the futility of female resistance, the benefits that come with acquiescence, and the importance of being a virtuous wife. By examining ancient Greek literary and visual culture, these narratives were clearly created to reinforce the patriarchy by defining and honoring female “good” behavior while offering cautionary tales of those who refused to adhere to these expectations. Persephone and Thetis, though unwilling at first, become ideal wives who are rewarded for their compliance – Persephone with great power

¹³² Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 141; Moore, "Attic Red-Figured and White-Ground Pottery," 74.

¹³³ Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*, 148; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity*, 91.

and Thetis with a son venerated as one of the greatest Greek heroes. Their narratives functioned as a guide for hesitant women, asserting that if a resistant young bride accepted her marriage she would be rewarded with a fruitful future. Helen, an ambiguous figure, was a model bride but also served as a warning as an unfaithful wife. Her beauty made her the perfect example of a bride coveted by men, but her infidelity and its subsequent destruction served as a plea for fealty. The Amazons also became a negative example with their reversal of typical Greek gender roles and their “uncivilized” nature, thus exemplifying the dangers of perpetually single women.

These concepts are neatly illustrated on an unusual *lekythos* attributed to the Eretria Painter now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 32). Much of the uppermost band has been lost but what remains – a chariot moving at high speed surrounded by men and women – points to an abduction scene. The central register depicts Thetis and her Nereid sisters bringing new armor to Achilles, while the bottom band contains an Amazonomachy. When considering the combination of these scenes, this elaborate vase contains a succinct message aimed to socialize women into accepting their fate as wives and mothers with the argument that compliance brings about great rewards and prevents personal and societal destruction. Images inspired by mythological narratives, like those on the Eretria Painter’s *lekythos*, reinforced patriarchal rule in ancient Greece, especially those on objects of daily use like painted vases. Together, the visual and literary mythological sources highlight the societal perception of women in Classical Athens, allowing us to better understand the pressures and expectations placed upon them, even though their voices have been poorly preserved.

Figures



Figure 1

Attic Red-figure Stamnos with Warrior's Departure from Home, Kleophon Painter, 440 BC, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich.

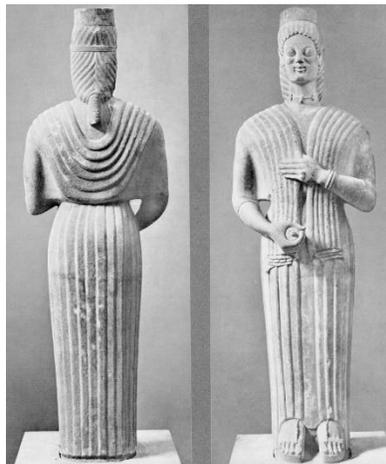


Figure 2

Kore statue from Attica, *The Berlin Goddess*, early 6th century BC, Antikenmuseen, Berlin.



Figure 3

Kore Statue 672 from Acropolis, 510-500 BC, Acropolis Museum, Athens



Figure 4

Marble statue of Kouros, 590-580 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 5

Terracotta funerary plaque, Prothesis Scene, ca. 520-510 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figures 6

Attic Pyxis with Marriage Procession, attributed to The Marlay Painter, 440-430 BC, British Museum, London



Figure 7a

Eretria Painter Epinetron, detail with Harmonia preparing for her wedding, late 5th century BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens.



Figure 7b

Eretria Painter Epinetron, with Thetis wrestling Peleus, late 5th century BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens.



Figure 7c

Eretria Painter Epinetron, detail with Alcestis after her wedding, late 5th century BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens.



Figure 8

Attic red-figure hydria with Apollo in pursuit of a woman, attributed to the Coghill Painter, 440 BC, British Museum, London.



Figure 9

Attic red-figure pointed amphora with Boreas abducting Oreithyia, attributed to the Oreithyia Painter, 470 BC, Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich.



Figure 10

Attic red-figure loutrophoros with bridegroom lifting bride onto chariot, ca. 430-420 BC, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.



Figure 11

Attic red-figure loutrophoros with bridegroom leading bride during wedding procession, 450–425 BC, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 12

Red-figure skyphos with the departure and recovery of Helen, Makron and Hieron, ca. 490 BC, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 13a

Tomb of Persephone, Rape of Persephone, ca. 340 BC, Vergina, Greece.

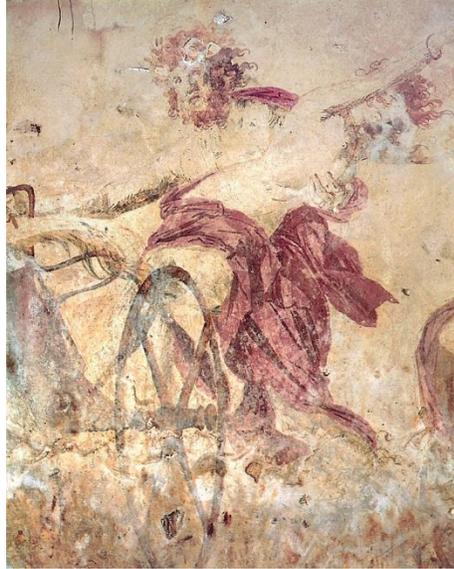


Figure 13b

Detail from Tomb of Persephone, Rape of Persephone, ca. 340 BC, Vergina, Greece.



Figure 14

Terracotta bell-krater with Persephone's return from the Underworld, attributed to the Persephone Painter, ca. 440 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 15

Limestone relief with enthroned couple (Hades and Persephone), 4th- 3rd century BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

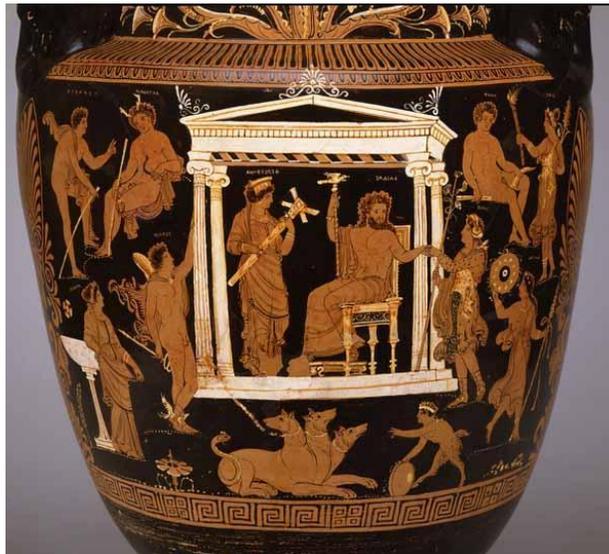


Figure 16

Apulian red-figure volute-krater with Dionysus' trip to the Underworld, 330 BC, Toledo Museum of Art.

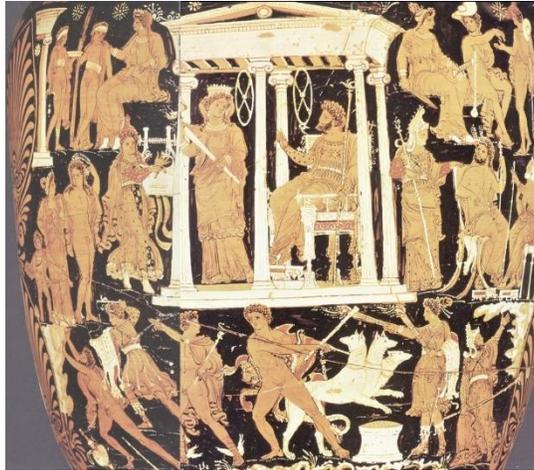


Figure 17

Apulian red-figure volute-krater with Orpheus in the Underworld, attributed to the Underworld Painter, ca. 330-320 BC, Staatliche Antikensammlung, Munich.



Figure 18

Locrian pinax with Hades and Persephone enthroned, 500–450 BC, National Archaeological Museum of Reggio Calabria.



Figure 19

Melian relief with Peleus and Thetis, Greek, ca. 490-470 BC, British Museum, London.



Figure 20

Attic red-figure kylix, with Peleus and Thetis, Peithinos, ca. 500 BC, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.



Figure 21

Attic red-figure lebes gamikos with wedding scene with Peleus' pursuit of Thetis, ca. 440 BC, The David M. Robinson Collection, University of Mississippi Museum.

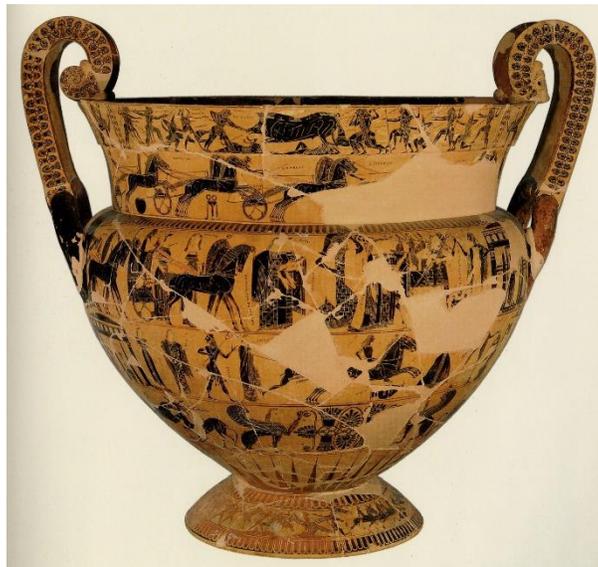


Figure 22a

Attic black-figure volute-krater, The François Vase (Side A), Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC, National Museum of Archaeology, Florence

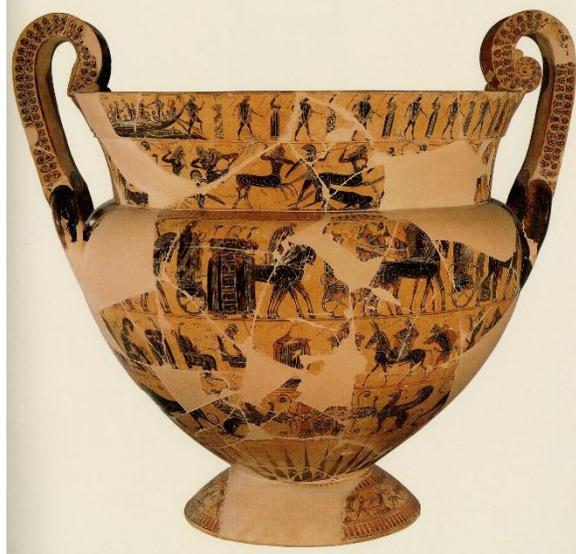


Figure 22b

Attic black-figure volute-krater, The François Vase (Side B), Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC, National Museum of Archaeology, Florence.



Figure 22c

Expanded view detail of The François Vase with Peleus, Thetis, Dionysus, and Demeter, Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC.



Figure 22d

Expanded view detail of The François Vase with Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, and Amphitrite, Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC.

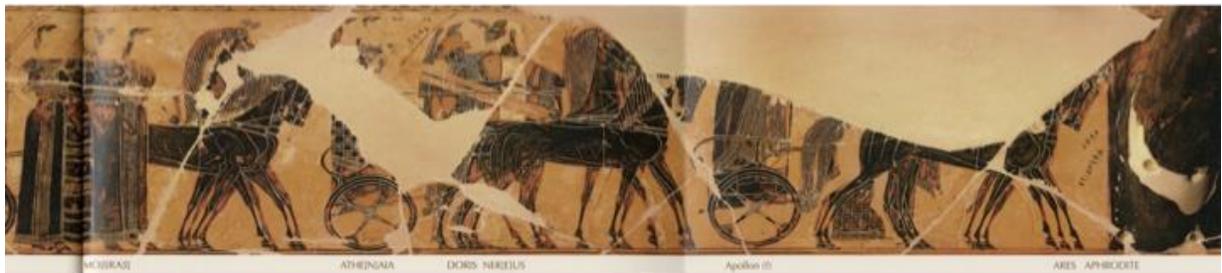


Figure 22e

Expanded view detail of The François Vase with Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, Leto, Athena, and Artemis, Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC.



Figure 22f

Expanded view detail of The François Vase with Hermes and Maia, Kleitias and Ergotimos, ca. 570 BC.



Figure 23

Detail from terracotta lekythos with Thetis and Achilles, attributed to the Eretria Painter, ca. 420 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

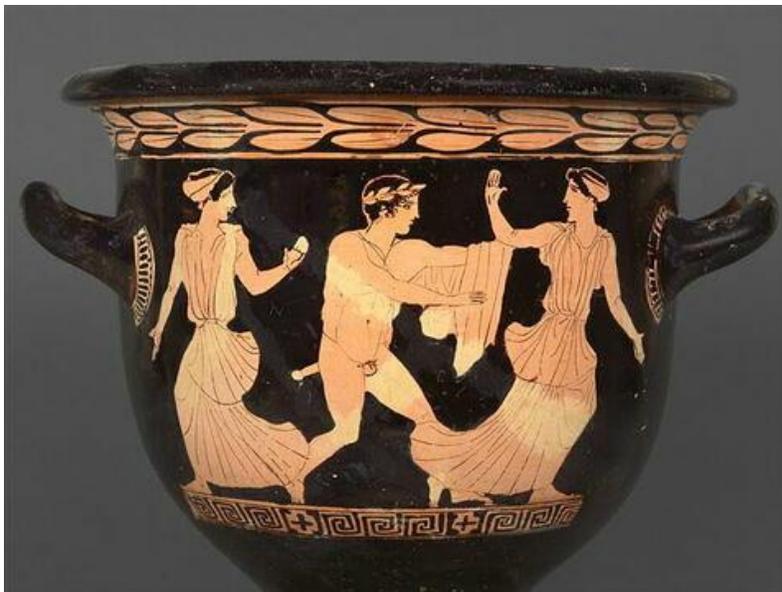


Figure 24

Attic red-figure krater with Theseus' pursuit of Helen, attributed to the Painter of Comaris, ca. 440 BC, Louver, Paris.



Figure 25

Fragmentary Attic red-figure krater with abduction of Helen by Theseus with nuptial imagery, attributed to the Talos Painter, ca. 425-375 BC, Potenza Museo (Image from Greco 1988).



Figure 26a

Attic white ground pyxis (box) with The Judgement of Paris (Side A, Paris), attributed to the Penthesilea Painter, ca. 465-460 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 26b

The Judgement of Paris (Side B, Hermes), attributed to the Penthesilea Painter, ca. 465-460 BC.



Figure 26c

The Judgement of Paris (Side C, Athena and Hera), attributed to the Penthesilea Painter, ca. 465-460 BC.



Figure 26d

The Judgement of Paris (Side D, Aphrodite and Eros), attributed to the Penthesilea Painter, ca. 465-460 BC.



Figure 27a

Attic red-figure amphora with the meeting of Paris and Helen (Side A with Helen on Aphrodite's lap and Peitho), 450-425 BC, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.



Figure 27b

Attic red-figure amphora with the meeting of Paris and Helen (Side B with Paris and Himeros), 450-425 BC, Staaliche Museen, Berlin.

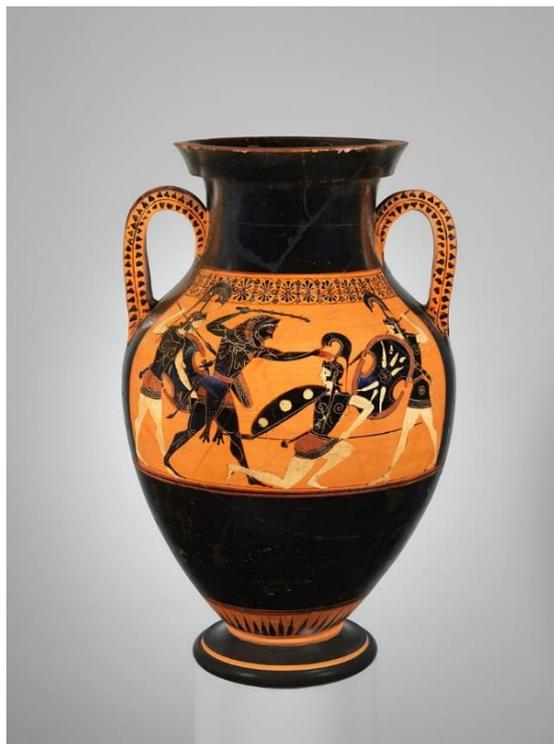


Figure 28

Attic black-figure amphora with Heracles battling Amazons, attributed to a painter of Bateman Group, ca. 530 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 29

Attic red-figure hydria with Achilles and Penthesilea, attributed to the Berlin Painter, ca. 500 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 30

Attic red-figure amphora with the abduction of Antiope by Theseus, 500-490 BC, Louver, Paris.



Figure 31

Attic red-figure volute-krater with Amazonomachy, Obverse (left), Reverse (right), attributed to the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs, ca. 450 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 32

Terracotta lekythos with abduction, Thetis and Achilles, and Amazonomachy, attributed to the Eretria Painter, ca. 420 BC, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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