Ovid Fasti 4.417-620 Proserpina episode (loeb):

The subject requires that I should narrate the rape of the Virgin: in my narrative you will read much that you knew before; a few particulars will be new to you.[420]

The Trinacrian land[a] got its name from its natural position: it runs out into the vast ocean in three rocky capes. It is the favourite home of Ceres: she owns many cities, among them fertile Henna[b] with its well-tilled soil. Cool Arethusa[c] had invited the mothers of the gods, and the yellow-haired goddess had also come to the sacred banquet. Attended as usual by her wonted damsels, her daughter roamed bare-foot through the familiar meadows. In a shady vale there is a spot moist with the abundant spray of a high waterfall. All the hues that nature owns were there displayed, and the pied earth was bright with various flowers. As soon as she espied it, “Come hither, comrades,” she said, “and with me bring home lapfuls of flowers.” The bauble booty lured their girlish minds, and they were too busy to feel fatigue. One filled baskets plaited of supple withes, another loaded her lap, another the loose folds of her robe; one gathered marigolds, another paid heed to beds of violets; another nipped off labels of poppies with her nails; some are attracted by the hyacinth, others lingered over amaranth; some love thyme, others corn poppies and melilot; full many a rose was culled, and flowers without a name. Persephone herself plucked dainty crocuses and white lilies. Intent on gathering, she, little by little, strayed far, and it chanced that none of her companions followed their mistress. Her father’s brother[d] saw her, and no sooner did he see her than he swiftly carried her off and bore her on his dusky steeds into his own realm. She in sooth cried out, “Ho, dearest mother, they are carrying me away!” and she rent the bosom of her robe. Meantime a road is opened up for Dis; for his steeds can hardly brook the unaccustomed daylight. But when the band of playmates attending her had heaped their baskets with flowers, they cried out, “Persephone, come to the gifts we have for thee!” When she answered not their call, they filled the mountain with shrieks, and smote their bare bosoms with their sad hands.[455]

Ceres was startled by the loud lament; she had just come to Henna, and straightway, “Woe’s me! my daughter,” said she, “where art thou?” Distraught she hurried along, even as we hear that Thracian Maenads rush with streaming hair. As a cow, whose calf has been torn from her udder, bellows and seeks her offspring through every grove, so the goddess did not stifle her groans and ran at speed, starting from the plains of Henna. From there she lit on prints of the girlish feet and marked the traces of the familiar figure on the ground. Perhaps that day had been the last of her wanderings if swine had not foiled the trail she found. Already in her course she had passed Leontini, and the river Amenanus, and the grassy banks of Acis. She had passed Cyane, and the springs of gently flowing Anapus, and the Gelas with its whirlpools not to be approached. She had left behind Ortygia and Megara and the Pantagias, and the place where the sea receives the water of the Symaethus, and the caves of the

Cyclopes, burnt by the forges set up in them, and the place that takes its name from a curved sickle,[a] and Himera, and Didyme, and Acragas, and Tauromenum, and the Mylae,[a] where are the rich pastures of the sacred kine. Next she came to Camerina, and Thapsus, and the Tempe of Helorus, and where Eryx lies for ever open to the western breeze. Already had she traversed Pelorias, and Lilybaeum, and Pachynum, the three horns of her land. And wherever she set her foot she filled every place with her sad plaints, as when the bird doth mourn her Itys lost.[b] In turn she cried, now "Persephone!" now "Daughter!" She cried and shouted either name by turns; but neither did Persephone hear Ceres, nor the daughter hear her mother; both names by turns died away. And whether she spied a shepherd or a husbandman at work, her one question was, "Did a girl pass this way?" Now o'er the landscape stole a sober hue, and darkness hid the world: now the watchful dogs were hushed. Lofty Etna lies over the mouth of huge Typhoeus, whose fiery breath sets the ground aglow.[c] There the goddess kindled two pine-trees to serve her as a light; hence to this day a torch is given out at the rites of Ceres. There is a cave all fretted with the seams of scolloped pumice, a region not to be approached by man or beast. Soon as she came hither, she yoked the bitted serpents to her car and roamed, unwetted, o'er the ocean waves. She shunned the Syrtes, and Zanclaean Charybdis, and you, ye Nisaean hounds,[d] monsters of shipwreck; she shunned the Adriatic, stretching far and wide, and Corinth of the double seas.

502 Thus she came to thy havens, land of Attica. There for the first time she sat her down most rueful on a cold stone: that stone even now the Cecropids[a] call the Sorrowful. For many days she tarried motionless under the open sky, patiently enduring the moonlight and the rain. Not a place but has its own peculiar destiny: what now is named the Eleusis of Ceres was then the plot of land of aged Celeus. He carried home acorns and blackberries, knocked from bramble bushes, and dry wood to feed the blazing hearth. A little daughter drove two nanny-goats back from the mountain, and an infant son was sick in his cradle. "Mother," said the maid—the goddess was touched by the name of mother—"what does thou all alone in solitary places?" The old man, too, halted, despite the load he bore, and prayed that she would pass beneath the roof of his poor cottage. She refused. She had disguised herself as an old dame and covered her hair with a cap. When he pressed her, she answered thus: "Be happy! may a parent's joy be thine for ever! My daughter has been taken from me. Alas! how much better is thy lot than mine!" She spoke, and like a tear (for gods can never weep) a crystal drop fell on her bosom warm. They wept with her, those tender hearts, the old man and the maid; and these were the words of the worthy old man: "So may the ravished daughter, whose loss thou weepest, be restored safe to thee, as thou shalt arise, nor scorn the shelter of my humble hut." The goddess answered him. "Lead on; thou hast found the way to force me"; and she rose from the stone and followed the old man. As he led her and she followed, he told her how his son was sick and sleepless, kept wakeful by his ills. As she was about to pass within the lowly dwelling, she plucked a smooth, a slumbrous poppy that grew on the waste ground; and as she

plucked, ’tis said she tasted it forgetfully, and so unwitting stayed her long hunger. Hence, because she broke her fast at nightfall, the initiates time their meal by the appearance of the stars. When she crossed the threshold, she saw the household plunged in grief; all hope of saving the child was gone. The goddess greeted the mother (her name was Metanira) and deigned to put her lips to the child’s lips. His pallor fled, and strength of a sudden was visibly imparted to his frame; such vigour flowed from lips divine. There was joy in the whole household, that is, in mother, father, and daughter; for they three were the whole household. Anon they set out a repast curds liquefied in milk, and apples, and golden honey in the comb. Kind Ceres abstained, and gave the child poppies to drink in warm milk to make him sleep. It was midnight, and there reigned the silence of peaceful sleep; the goddess took up Triptolemus in her lap, and thrice she stroked him with her hand, and spoke three spells, spells not to be rehearsed by mortal tongue, and on the hearth she buried the boy’s body in live embers, that the fire might purge away the burden of humanity. His fond-foolish mother awoke from sleep and distractedly cried out, “What dost thou?” and she snatched his body from the fire. To her the goddess said: “Meaning no wrong, thou hast done grievous wrong: my bounty has been baffled by a mother’s fear. That boys of yours will indeed be mortal, but he will be the first to plough and sow and reap a guerdon from the turned-up soil.”

561 She said, and forth she fared, trailing a cloud behind her, and passed to her dragons, then soared aloft in her winged car. She left behind bold Sunium,[a] and the snug harbour of Piraeus, and the coast that lies on the right hand. From there she came to the Aegean, where she beheld all the Cyclades; she skimmed the wild Ionian and the Icarian Sea; and passing through the cities of Asia she made for the long Hellespont, and pursued aloft a roving course, this way and that.[b] For now she looked down on the incense-gathering Arabs, and now on the Indians: beneath her lay on one side Libya, on the other side Meroe, and the parched land. Now she visited the western rivers, the Rhine, the Rhone, the Po, and thee, Tiber, future parent of a mighty water. Whither do I stray? ’Twere endless to tell of the lands over which she wandered. No spot in the world did Ceres leave unvisited. She wandered also in the sky, and accosted the constellations that lie next to the cold pole and never dip in the ocean wave. “Ye Parrhasian stars,[c] reveal to a wretched mother her daughter Persephone; for ye can know all things, since never do ye plunge under the waters of the sea.” So she spoke, and Helice answered her thus: “Night is blameless. Ask of the Sun concerning the ravished maid: far and wide he sees the things that are done by day.” Appealed to, the Sun said, “To spare thee vain trouble, she whom thou seekest is wedded to Jove’s brother and rules the third realm.”

585 After long moaning to herself she thus addressed the Thunderer, and in her face there were deep lines of sorrow: “If thou dost remember by whom I got Persephone, she ought to have half of thy care. By wandering round the world I have learned naught but the knowledge of the wrong: the ravisher enjoys the reward of his crime. But neither did Persephone deserve a robber husband, nor

was it meet that in this fashion we should find a son-in-law. What worse wrong could I have suffered if Gyges[a] had been victorious and I his captive, than now I have sustained while thou art sceptered king of heaven? But let him escape unpunished; I'll put up with it nor ask for vengeance; only let him restore her and repair his former deeds by new." Jupiter soothed her, and on the plea of love excused the deed. "He is not a son-in-law," said he, "to put us to shame: I myself am not a whit more noble: my royalty is in the sky, another owns the waters, and another the void of chaos.[b] But if haply thy mind is set immutably, and thou art resolved to break the bonds of wedlock, once contracted, come let us try to do so, if only she has kept her fast; if not, she will be the wife of her infernal spouse." The Herald God received his orders and assumed his wings: he flew to Tartarus and returning sooner than he was looked for brought tidings sure of what he had seen. "The ravished Maid," said he, "did break her fast on three grains enclosed in the tough rind of a pomegranate." Her rueful parent grieved no less than if her daughter had just been reft from her, and it was long before she was herself again, and hardly then. And thus she spoke: "For me, too, heaven is no home; order that I too be admitted to the Taenarian vale.[c]" And she would have done so, if Jupiter had not promised that Persephone should be in heaven for twice three months. Then at last Ceres recovered her looks and her spirits, and set wreaths of corn ears on her hair; and the laggard fields yielded a plenteous harvest, and the threshing-floor could hardly hold the high-piled sheaves. White is Ceres' proper colour; put on white robes at Ceres' festival; now no one wears dun-coloured wool.