

Motivations behind the abduction passages

“I begin to sing of Demeter, the holy goddess with the beautiful hair.
And her daughter [Persephone] too. The one with the delicate ankles, whom Hadês[1]
seized. She was given away by Zeus, the loud-thunderer, the one who sees far and
wide.

Demeter did not take part in this, she of the golden double-axe, she who glories in the
harvest.

She [Persephone] was having a good time, along with the daughters of Okeanos, who
wear their girdles slung low.

She was picking flowers: roses, crocus, and beautiful violets.

Up and down the soft meadow. Iris blossoms too she picked, and hyacinth.

And the narcissus, which was grown as a lure for the flower-faced girl

by Gaia [Earth]. All according to the plans of Zeus.” (“Homeric Hymn to Demeter” 1-
9, trans. Nagy)

“The huge island of Sicily had been heaped upon the body of the giant, and with its vast
weight was resting on Typhoeus, who had dared to aspire to the heights of heaven. He struggles
indeed, and strives often to rise again; but his right hand is held down by Ausonian Pelorus and
his left by you, Pachynus. Lilybaeum rests on his legs, and Aetna’s weight is on his head. Flung
on his back beneath this mountain, the fierce Typhoeus spouts forth ashes and vomits flames
from his mouth. Often he puts forth all his strength to push off the weight of earth and to roll
the cities and great mountains from his body: then the earth quakes, and even the king of the
silent land is afraid lest the crust of the earth split open in wide seams and lest the light of day
be let in and affright the trembling shades. Fearing this disaster, the king of the lower world had
left his gloomy realm and, drawn in his chariot with its sable steeds, was traversing the land of
Sicily, carefully examining its foundations. After he had examined all to his satisfaction, and
found that no points were giving way, he put aside his fears. Then Venus Erycina saw him
wandering to and fro, as she was seated on her sacred mountain, and embracing her winged
son, she exclaimed: “O son, both arms and hands to me, and source of all my power, take now
those shafts, Cupid, with which you conquer all, and shoot your swift arrows into the heart of
that god to whom the final lot of the triple kingdom fell. You rule the gods, and Jove himself;
you conquer and control the deities of the sea, and the very king that rules the deities of the sea.
Why does Tartarus hold back? Why do you not extend your mother’s empire and your own?
The third part of the world is at stake. And yet in heaven, such is our long-suffering, we are
despised, and with my own, the power of love is weakening. Do you not see that Pallas and
huntress Diana have revolted against me? And Ceres’ daughter, too, will remain a virgin if we
suffer it; for she aspires to be like them. But do you, in behalf of our joint sovereignty, if you
take any pride in that, join the goddess to her uncle in the bonds of love.” So Venus spoke. The
god of love loosed his quiver at his mother’s bidding and selected from his thousand arrows
one, the sharpest and the surest and the most obedient to the bow. Then he bent the pliant bow
across his knee and with his barbed arrow smote Dis through the heart.” (Ov. *Met.* 5.346-384)

“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 [Dis] 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.” (Ov. *Fast.* 4.442-446)

“The leader of Erebus once upon a time blazed forth into swelling anger, intending to stir up
war against the gods above because he alone was unmarried and had long been wasting away

barren years, unable to bear his ignorance of the marriage-bed and the fact that he knew not the allurements of a bridegroom and the sweet name of father. Now all the monsters that lurked in the abyss of the dead rushed to form squadrons and a battle-line, and the Furies swore a joint oath against the Thunderer, and Tisiphone with hair of evil-doing snakes, brandishing a pine-torch of inauspicious gleam, summoned the spirits of the dead in arms to the ghostly camp. The elements, once again fighting with resisting matter, would have almost broken their bond, and the young Titans, their prison torn open within the depths and their chains unloosed, would have seen the light of heaven, and again bloody Aegaeon would have thrown off the knotted ropes from his enlarged body and battered at the thunderbolts hurled at him with the blows of his hundred hands.” (Claud. *DRP* 1.32-47)