

Male Belligerence and Female Pacificism: Homer's and Euripides' Trojan women and Ovid's Sabine women (*Fast.* 3.167-234)

1. The abduction of the Sabine women

'intumuere Cures et quos **dolor** attigit idem:
tum primum generis intulit arma socer.
iamque fere **raptae** matrum quoque nomen habebant,
tractaque erant longa bella propinqua **mora:**'

Ov. *Fast.* 3.201-204

'Cures swelled with rage, and those whom the same pain afflicted. That was the first time a father-in-law made war on sons-in-law. And now the women who had been more or less abducted were bearing also the name of mothers, and the war between neighbours dragged on and on.'

2a. Virgil's Trojan war

'obsedere alii telis angusta uiarum
oppositis; **stat ferri acies** mucrone corusco
stricta, **parata neci**; uix primi proelia temptant
portarum uigiles et caeco Marte resistunt.'

...

... alii **strictis mucronibus** imas
obsedere fores, has seruant agmine denso.

Virg. *Aen.* 2.332-335, 449-450

'Others with confronting weapons have barred the narrow ways; a standing line of steel, with flashing point unsheathed, is ready for the slaughter. Scarce do the first guards of the gates essay battle, and resist in blind warfare.'

...

Others with drawn swords have beset the doors below, and guard them, closely massed.

2b. Ovid's Roman-Sabine war

'iam **steterant acies ferro mortique paratae**,
iam lituus pugnae signa daturus erat,
cum raptae veniunt inter patresque virosque,
inque sinu natos, pignora cara, tenent.

...

inde †diem quae prima† meas celebrare Kalendas
Oebaliae matres non leve munus habent,
aut quia committi **strictis mucronibus ausae**
finierant lacrimis Martia bella suis;
vel quod erat de me feliciter Iliia mater
rite colunt matres sacra diemque meum.'

Fast. 3.215-218, 229-232

'Already the battle lines had stood prepared for death by the sword, already the trumpet was about to give the battle signal, when the abducted women come between their fathers and their husbands, and hold in their arms their children, pledges of love.

...

Hence the Oebalian mothers hold it as no light duty to celebrate the day which is first, my Kalends. Either because by daring to risk themselves before drawn sword-points they had put an end with their tears to the wars of Mars.'

2c. Livy's Roman-Sabine war

Tum Sabinae mulieres, quarum ex iniuria bellum ortum erat, crinibus passis scissaque veste victo malis muliebri pavore, **ausae se inter tela volantia** inferre, ex transverso impetu facto dirimere infestas acies, dirimere iras ...

Liv. 1.13.1-2

Then the Sabine women, whose wrong had given rise to the war, with loosened hair and torn garments, their woman's timidity lost in a sense of their misfortune, dared to go amongst the flying missiles, and rushing in from the side, to part the hostile forces and disarm them of their anger ...

3a. The assembly of Ovid's Sabine women

'**conveniunt** nuptae dictam **Iunonis in aedem**,
quas inter mea sic est nurus ausa loqui
"o pariter raptae, quoniam hoc commune tenemus,
non ultra lente possumus esse piaae.
stant acies: sed **utra di sint pro parte rogandi**
eligite; hinc coniunx, hinc pater arma tenet.
quaerendum est viduae fieri malitis an orbae.
consilium vobis forte piumque dabo."

Ov. *Fast.* 3.205-212

'The wives gather in the temple dedicated to Juno. Among them my daughter-in-law was bold enough to speak like this: "Women who were snatched like me, since we have this in common, no longer can we be slow to do our duty. There stand the battle lines— but choose which side we should ask the gods to favour! The weapons are held by a husband here, a father

there. The question is whether you'd rather be widows or orphans. I shall give you a plan which is brave and dutiful."

3b. The assembly of Homer's Trojan women

Αἰ δ' ὅτε νηὸν ἴκανον Ἀθήνης ἐν πόλει ἄκρη,
τῆσι θύρας ᾤξε Θεανὸ καλλιπάρῃος,
Κισσηίς, ἄλοχος Ἀντήνορος ἵπποδάμοιο·
τὴν γὰρ Τρῶες ἔθικαν Ἀθηναίης ἰέρειαν.
αἰ δ' ὄλολυγῆ πᾶσαι Ἀθήνη χεῖρας ἀνέσχον·
ἡ δ' ἄρα πέπλον ἐλοῦσα Θεανὸ καλλιπάρῃος
θῆκεν Ἀθηναίης ἐπὶ γούνασιν ἠυκόμοιο,
εὐχομένη δ' ἠρᾶτο Διὸς κόυρη μεγάλιοι·
"πότνι Ἀθηναίη, ῥυσίπτολι, διὰ θεάων,
ἄξον δὴ ἔγχος Διομήδεος, ἡδὲ καὶ αὐτὸν
πρηνέα δὸς πεσέειν Σκαιῶν προπάροιθε πυλάων,
ὄφρα τοι αὐτίκα νῦν δυοκαίδεκα βούς ἐνὶ νηῶ
ἦνις ἠκέστας ἱερεύσομεν, αἴ κ' ἐλεήσης
ἄστου τε καὶ Τρώων ἀλόχους καὶ νήπια τέκνα."
ὥς ἔφατ' εὐχομένη, ἀνένευε δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
Hom. *Il.* 6.297-311

When they came to the shrine of Athene in the citadel, the doors were opened for them by fair-cheeked Theano, Cisses' daughter, wife of Antenor, tamer of horses; for her had the Trojans made priestess of Athene. Then with ecstatic cries they all lifted up their hands to Athene; and fair-cheeked Theano took the robe and laid it on the knees of fair-haired Athene, and with vows made prayer to the daughter of great Zeus: "Lady Athene, you who guard our city, fairest among goddesses, break now the spear of Diomedes, and grant also that he himself may fall headlong before the Scaean gates, so that we may now immediately sacrifice to you in your shrine twelve year-old heifers that have not felt the goad, if you will take pity on the city and the Trojans' wives and their little ones." So she spoke praying, but Pallas Athene denied the prayer.

4a. The intervention of the Sabine women

'iam steterant acies ferro mortique paratae,
iam lituus pugnae signa daturus erat,
cum raptae **veniunt** inter patresque virosque,
inque sinu natos, pignora cara, **tenent**.'

Ov. *Fast.* 3.215-218

'Already the battle lines had stood prepared for death by the sword, already the trumpet was about to give the battle signal, when the abducted women come between their fathers and their husbands, and hold in their arms their children, pledges of love.'

4b. The meeting of Hector and Andromache

... ὃ δ' ἀπέσσυτο δώματος Ἔκτωρ
τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν αὐτὶς εὐκτιμένας κατ' ἀγυίας.
εὐτε πύλας ἴκανε διερχόμενος μέγα ἄστου
Σκαιάς, τῆ ἄρ' ἔμελλε διεξιμέναι πεδίονδε,

ἐνθ' ἄλοχος πολύδωρος ἐναντίη ἦλθε θεούσα
Ἀνδρομάχη, θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Ἡετίωνος

...
ἦ οἱ ἐπειτ' ἦντησ', ἅμα δ' ἀμφίπολος κίεν αὐτῆ
παῖδ' ἐπὶ κόλπῳ ἔχουσα ἀταλάφρονα, νήπιον αὐτῶς,
Ἐκτορίδην ἀγαπητόν, ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῶ,
τόν ῥ' Ἔκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
Ἀστυάνακτ'· οἷος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἔκτωρ.
ἦ τοι ὁ μὲν μείδησεν ἰδὼν ἐς παῖδα σιωπῆ·

Hom. *Il.* 6.390-395, 399-404

Hector hurried from the house back over the same way down along the well-built streets. When he had passed through the great city and come to the gates, the Scaean gates, by which he was about to go out to the plain, there came running to meet him his wife, wooed with many gifts, Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion

...
She now met him, and with her came a handmaid holding to her bosom the tender boy, a mere babe, the well-loved son of Hector, like a fair star. Him Hector was used to call Scamandrius, but other men Astyanax; for only Hector guarded Ilios. Then Hector smiled as he glanced at his boy in silence.

5a. The supplication of the Sabine women

'consilium dederat: parent, **crinesque resolvunt**
maestaque **funerea** corpora **veste** tegunt.

...
ut medium campi **scissis** tetigere **capillis**,
in terram **posito procubere genu;**'

Ov. *Fast.* 3.213-214, 219-220

'She had given them the plan. They obey, and loosen their hair and cover their sorrowful bodies in mourning-clothes.

...
When they reached the middle of the plain, their hair torn about, they went down on the ground on bended knee.'

5b. Andromache's supplication

Ἀνδρομάχη δὲ οἱ ἄγχι παρίστατο **δάκρυ χέουσα**,
ἐν τ' ἄρα οἱ φῶ χειρὶ ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·
"δαμόνιε, φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος, οὐδ' ἐλεαίρεις
παῖδά τε νηπίαχον καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον, ἡ τάχα χήρη
σεῦ ἔσομαι· **τάχα γάρ** σε κατακτανέουσιν Ἀχαιοὶ
πάντες ἐφορμηθέντες..."

...
ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐλέαιρε καὶ αὐτοῦ μίμν' ἐπὶ πύργῳ,
μὴ παῖδ' ὄρφανικὸν θήης χήρην τε γυναῖκα·
λαὸν δὲ στήσον παρ' ἐρινεόν, ἔνθα μάλιστα
ἀμβατός ἐστι πόλις καὶ ἐπίδρομον ἔπλετο τεῖχος."

Hom. *Il.* 405-409, 431-434

Andromache came close to his side weeping, and clasped his hand and spoke to him, saying: "Ah, my husband, this might of yours will be your doom, and

you have no pity for your infant child or for unfortunate me, who soon will be your widow; for soon will the Achaeans all set on you and slay you.

...

Come now, have pity, and stay here on the wall, lest you make your son fatherless and your wife a widow. And as for your army, station it by the wild fig tree, where the city may best be scaled, and the wall is open to assault.

6. The widow-orphan motif

a. "... hinc coniunx, hinc pater arma tenet.
quaerendum est **viduae** fieri malitis **an orbae**.
consilium vobis forte piumque dabo."

Ov. *Fast.* 3.205-212

"The weapons are held by a husband here, a father there. The question is whether you'd rather be widows or orphans. I shall give you a plan which is brave and dutiful."

b. 'Si adfinitatis inter vos, si conubii piget, in nos vertite iras; nos causa belli, nos vulnere ac caedium viris ac parentibus sumus; melius peribimus quam sine alteris vestrum **viduae aut orbae** vivemus.'

Liv. 1.13.3-4

'If you regret,' they continued, 'the relationship that unites you, if you regret the marriage-tie, turn your anger against us; we are the cause of war, the cause of wounds, and even death to both our husbands and our parents. It will be better for us to perish than to live, lacking either of you, as widows or as orphans.'

c. ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐλέαιρε καὶ αὐτοῦ μίμν' ἐπὶ πύργῳ,
μὴ **παῖδ' ὀρφανικὸν** θήγης **χήρην** τε **γυναῖκα**·

Hom. *Il.* 6.431-432

Come now, have pity, and stay here on the wall, lest you make your son fatherless and your wife a widow.

7a. The Sabine men and their grandsons

'cum raptae veniunt inter patresque virosque,
inque sinu natos, pignora cara, tenent.

ut medium campi scissis tetigere capillis,
in terram posito procubuerunt genu;

et, quasi sentirent, **blando clamore** nepotes

tendebant ad avos **brachia** parva suos.

qui poterat, clamabat avum tum denique visum,
et, qui vix poterat, posse coactus erat.

tela viris animique cadunt, **gladiisque remotis**

dant soceri generis accipiuntque manus,

laudatasque tenent natas, scutoque **nepotem**

fert avus:'

Ov. *Fast.* 3.213-228

'When the abducted women come between their fathers and their husbands, and hold in their arms their children, pledges of love. When they reached the middle of the plain, their hair torn about, they went

down on the ground on bended knee, and the grandchildren, as if they realized, with engaging cries began to stretch out their little arms to their grandfathers. The child who could began calling his grandfather, seen at long last. The child who hardly could was forced to be able to. The men's weapons and anger fall, and putting aside their swords, fathers-in-law give their hands to sons-in-law and receive theirs in return. They praise their daughters, and hold them, and on his shield the grandfather carries his grandson.'

7b. Hector and Astyanax

᾿Ως εἰπὼν οὗ παιδὸς ὀρέξατο φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ·
ἄψ δ' ὁ **παῖς πρὸς κόλπον** ἐυζώνοιο τιθήνης
ἐκλίθη ἰάχων, πατρὸς φίλου ὄψιν ἀτυχεῖς,
ταρβήσας χαλκόν τε ἰδὲ λόφον ἰπιοχαίτην,
δεινὸν ἅπ' ἀκροτάτης κόρυθος νεύοντα νοήσας.
ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ τε φίλος καὶ πότνια μήτηρ·
αὐτίκ' **ἀπὸ κρατὸς κόρυθ' εἴλετο** φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ,
καὶ τὴν μὲν **κατέθηκεν** ἐπὶ χθονὶ παμφανόωσαν·
αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ὄν **φίλον υἴον** ἐπεὶ κύσε **πήλῃ τε χερσίν**

Hom. *Il.* 6.466-474

So saying, glorious Hector stretched out his arms to his boy, but back into the bosom of his fair-belted nurse shrank the child crying, frightened at the sight of his dear father, and seized with fear of the bronze and the crest of horsehair, as he caught sight of it waving terribly from the top of the helmet. Aloud then laughed his dear father and queenly mother; and immediately glorious Hector took the helmet from his head and laid it all gleaming on the ground. And he kissed his dear son, and fondled him in his arms.

7c. Ovid and Mars

'Si licet occultos monitus audire deorum
vatibus, ut certe fama licere putat,
cum sis officii, Gradive, virilibus aptus,
dic mihi matronae cur tua festa colant.'

sic ego. sic **posita** dixit mihi **casside** Mavors
(sed tamen **in dextra** missilis **hasta** fuit):

'nunc primum studiis pacis deus utilis armis
advocor, et gressus in nova castra fero.'

Ov. *Fast.* 3.167-174

'If bards are allowed to hear the secret advice of the gods, as rumour certainly thinks they are, tell me, Gradivus, since you are suited to men's occupations, why do married ladies keep your festivals?' That's what I asked, and this is what Mavors said to me after putting down his helmet (but the throwing spear was in his right hand all the same): 'Now for the first time, a god useful in arms, I am called on for the pursuits of peace, and march my way into a new camp.'

7d. Epic war vs. Elegiac tears

'inde †diem quae prima† meas celebrare Kalendas
Oebaliae matres non leve munus habent,

aut quia committi strictis mucronibus ausae
finierant **lacrimis Martia bella suis;**

Ov. Fast. 3.229-232

‘Hence the Oebalian mothers hold it as no light duty to celebrate the day which is first, my Kalends. Either because by daring to risk themselves before drawn sword-points they had put an end with their tears to the wars of Mars.’

8a. Hector’s patriarchal ideology

Ἦς εἰπὼν ἀλόχοιο φίλης ἐν χερσὶν ἔθηκε
παῖδ’ ἐόν· ἢ δ’ ἄρα μιν κηῶδεϊ δέξατο κόλπῳ
δακρυόεν γελάσασα· πόσις δ’ ἐλέησε νοήσας,
χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ’ ἔφατ’ ἕκ τ’ ὀνόμαζε·
‘δαιμονίη, μή μοί τι λίην ἀκαχίζεο θυμῷ·
οὐ γάρ τίς μ’ ὑπὲρ αἴσαν ἀνήρ Ἄϊδι προΐαψει·
μοῖραν δ’ οὐ τινά φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν,
οὐ κακόν, οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶν τὰ πρῶτα γένηται.
ἀλλ’ εἰς οἶκον ἰούσα τὰ σ’ αὐτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε,
ἰστόν τ’ ἠλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι· **πόλεμος δ’ ἀνδρεσσι μελήσει**
πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ’ ἐμοί, τοὶ Ἰλίῳ ἐγγεγάασιν.’

Hom. Il. 6.482-493

So saying, he placed his child in his dear wife’s arms, and she took him to her fragrant bosom, smiling through her tears; and her husband was touched with pity at sight of her, and he stroked her with his hand, and spoke to her, and called her by name: “Dear wife, in no way, I beg you, grieve excessively at heart for me; no man beyond what is fated shall send me to Hades; but his fate, say I, no man has ever escaped, whether he is base or noble, when once he has been born. But go to the house and busy yourself with your own tasks, the loom and the distaff, and tell your handmaids to ply their work: and war will be the concern for men, all of those who live in Ilios, but especially for me.”

8b. The Sabine men’s feminist outlook

‘laudatasque tenent natas ...’

Ov. Fast. 3.227

‘They praise their daughters, and hold them ...’

9a. Andromache’s farewell to Astyanax

ὦ παῖ, **δακρύεις· αἰσθάνη κακῶν σέθεν;**
τί μου **δέδραξαι χερσὶ** κἀντέχη πέπλων,
νεοσσὸς ὡσεὶ πτέρυγας ἐσπίτων ἐμάς;
οὐκ εἴσιν Ἐκτωρ κλεινὸν ἀρπάσας δόρυ
γῆς ἐξανελθὼν σοὶ φέρων σωτηρίαν,
οὐ συγγένεια πατρός, οὐκ ἰσχύς Φρυγῶν·
λυγρὸν δὲ πῆδημ’ ἐς τράχηλον ὑψόθεν
πεσῶν ἀνοίκτως πνεῦμ’ ἀπορρήξεις σέθεν.

Eur. Tro. 749-756

My child, you are weeping. Do you realize your misfortune? Why do you grasp me in your arms and hold fast to my clothing, falling like some young bird

into the embrace of my wings? Hector will not come, glorious spear in hand, from the depths of earth to bring you rescue, nor will your father’s kinsmen or the armed might of Troy. You will fall from on high, a baleful leap, and break your neck, pitifully cutting short your life’s breath.

9b. The Sabine men and their grandsons

**‘et, quasi sentirent, blando clamore nepotes
tendebant ad avos brachia parva suos.**
qui poterat, **clamabat avum** tum denique visum,
et, qui vix poterat, posse coactus erat.’

Ov. Fast. 3.221-224

‘And the grandchildren, as if they realized, with engaging cries began to stretch out their little arms to their grandfathers. The child who could began calling his grandfather, seen at long last. The child who hardly could was forced to be able to.’

9c. Hecuba’s lament of Astyanax

ὦ **χεῖρες**, ὡς εἰκοὺς μὲν ἠδείας πατρὸς
κέκτησθ’, ἐν ἄρθροισι δ’ ἔκλυτοι πρόκεισθέ μοι.
ὦ πολλὰ κόμπους ἐκβαλὼν, φίλον στόμα,
ὄλωλας, ἐψεύσω μ’, ὅτ’ ἐσπίπων λέχος,
Ἦ μητέρα, ἠῶδας, ἢ πολὺν σοὶ βοστρύχων
πλόκαμον κερουῶμαι πρὸς τάφον θ’ ὀμηλίκων
κόμους ἐπάξω, φίλα διδοὺς προσφθέγματα.
σὺ δ’ οὐκ ἔμ’, ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ σὲ τὸν νεώτερον,
γραυῆς ἄπολις ἄτεκνος, ἄθλιον θάπτω νεκρόν.
οἴμοι, τὰ πόλλ’ ἀσπᾶσμαθ’ αἶ τ’ ἐμαὶ τροφαὶ
ὑπνοὶ τε κοινοὶ φροῦδά μοι.

Eur. Tro. 1178-1188

O hands, how sweet is your resemblance to your father’s hands, but now you lie all slackened in your joints! You often uttered grand promises, dear lips, but now you have perished, and it was a cheat when you used to fling yourself into my bed and say, “Grandmother, I shall cut a great lock of curls for you and bring gatherings of my agemates to your tomb and speak loving words of farewell!” For now you are not burying me but I am burying you, who are younger, I an old woman with no city or children and you an unlucky corpse. Ah me, those countless kisses, my care for you, the slumbers we shared, all are gone for nought!

9d. Andromache brings Astyanax to Priam

Limen erat caecaeque fores et pervius usus
tectorum inter se Priami postesque relictī
a tergo, infelix qua se, dum regna manebant,
saepius Andromache ferre in comitata solebat
ad soceros et **avo puerum Astyanacta trahebat.**

Virg. Aen. 2.453-457

There was an entrance with secret doors, a passage running from hall to hall of Priam’s palace, a postern gate apart, by which, while the kingdom yet stood,

Andromache, poor soul, would often unattended pass to her husband's parents, and lead the little Astyanax to his grandsire.

10a. The shields of the Sabine men

‘... **scutoque nepotem**

fert avus: hic scuti dulcior usus erat.’

Ov. *Fast.* 3.227-228

‘... on his shield the grandfather carries his grandson. That was a sweeter use for a shield.’

10b. Hector's shield

ἀλλ' οὖν πατρώων οὐ λαχὼν ἔξεις ὅμως
ἐν ἧ ταφήσῃ χαλκόνωτον ἰτέαν.

Eur. *Tro.* 1192-1193

Yet though you lost your patrimony, you will still have your father's bronze-backed shield, in which you will be buried.

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