[Persephone's Relevance: Missing a Mythic Woman Breaking Boundaries](https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2022/2762Persephone%27sAutonomy.pdf)

118th CAMWS Meeting: March 23-26, 2022

First Paper Session — Section E

Amy K. Vandervelde • amykv2@illinois.edu

*Translations of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and Claudian's De Raptu Proserpinae are my own. The translations I read in my paper from Sophocles' Antigone are by Paul Woodruff and those from Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis are by David Kovacs, as cited in my bibliography below.*

**Passage A: Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* I.32-36 & I.67, transl. Vandervelde**

Dux Erebi quondam tumidas exarsit in iras

proelia moturus superis, quod solus egeret

conubiis sterilesque diu consumeret annos,

impatiens nescire torum nallasque mariti

inlecebras nec dulce patris cognoscere nomen.

...

["]Posce Iovem: dabitur coniunx." [Lachesis speaking]

At one time the leader of Erebus raged in exasperated anger, intending to provoke fights with the gods, because he was alone without a wife and lost since wasting the barren years, unable to endure not knowing the marriage bed and none of its charms nor know the affectionate name of father.

...

[Lachesis called out] "Ask Jove: a wife will be granted."

**Passage B: Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* II.247-254 transl. Vandervelde**

Interea volucri fertur Proserpina curru

caesariem diffusa Noto planctuque lacertos

verberat et questus ad nubila tendit inanes:

"Cur non torsisti manibus fabricata Cyclopum

in nos tela, pater? Sic me crudelibus umbris

tradere, sic toto placuit depellere mundo?

Nullane te flectit pietas? Nilhilumne paternae

mentis inest? Tantas quo crimine movimus iras?"

Meanwhile Proserpina is carried off with the notorious flying chariot spreading out her hair and she strikes her arms with lamentation, and she extends complaints to the hollow rain clouds: "Why do you not hurl us your weapons designed by the hands of the Cyclops, father? Thus is it pleasing to you to surrender me to the unmerciful shades, thus is it pleasing to you to expel me from all the heavens? Does no loyalty soften you? Is there nothing of a father's intention? Have we provoked such great anger with guilt?"

**Passage C: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* lines 445-447, transl. Vandervelde**

νεῦσε δέ οἱ κούρην ἔτεος περιτελλομένοιο

τὴν τριτάτην μὲν μοῖραν ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα

τὰς δὲ δύω παρὰ μητρὶ καὶ ἄλλοις ἀθανάτοισιν.

But he [Zeus] nodded in truth that the maiden [Persephone] annually would spend

one-third of the year in the Underworld beneath the earth [with Hades],

while for the remaining two-thirds she would be beside her mother and other immortals.

**Passage D: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* lines 19-21 & 30-32, transl. Vandervelde**

ἁρπάξας δ᾽ ἀέκουσαν ἐπὶ χρυσέοισιν ὄχοισιν

ἦγ᾽ ὀλοφυρομένην· ἰάχησε δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ὄρθια φωνῇ

κεκλομένη πατέρα Κρονίδην ὕπατον καὶ ἄριστον.

...

τὴν δ᾽ ἀέκαζομένην ἦγεν Διὸς ἐννεσίῃσι

πατροκασίγνητος πολυσημάντωρ πολυδέγμων

ἵπποις ἀθανάτοισι Κρόνου πολυώνυμος υἱός.

Seizing the girl against her will, [Hades dragged her] upon the golden chariot

as she was wailing; then she cried in a high-pitched tone,

calling to her father Kronos' son the most supreme and best.

...

Her father's brother, commander-to-many, the All-receiver,

the son of Kronos having many names with his undying horses

led her unwilling at Zeus' suggestion.

**Bibliography**

Claudius Claudianus. *De Raptu Proserpinae.* Cavalier Classics, 2016.

Euripides. *Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus.* Edited and translated by David Kovas. *Loeb Classical Library*. Harvard University, Cambridge, 2002.

Goff, Barbara. "Improvising on the Athenian Stage: Women's Ritual Practice in Drama." *Finding Persephone: Women's Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean*, edited by Maryline Parca and Angeliki Tzanetou, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2007, pp. 79-91.

Louis, Margot Kathleen. *Persephone Rises, 1860-1927: Mythography, Gender, and the Creation of a New Spirituality*. Ashgate, 2009.

Sophocles. *Antigone.* Translated by Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing Company, 2001.

*The Homeric* Hymn to Demeter: *Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays.* Edited by

 Helene P. Foley, Princeton University Press, 1994.