

Several themes strongly resonate with me in the story of Persephone: the powerlessness of a maiden, the strength of a mother, and the role played by powerful men in this narrative.

While the story bears Persephone's name, it often feels as if it's about everything but her. Throughout the tale, she never truly gets the chance to express her feelings about her own tragedy. Her mother, Demeter, is the one who can vent her anger and sorrow by withholding fertility from the earth (Buxton, pp. 73). As the victim, Persephone can only recount how Hades abducted her while she was playing and reluctantly accepted her role as Hades' bride (Homeric Hymns 2d). Ironically, she even refers to the person who took her against her will as "the mighty prince" (Homeric Hymns 2d). This portrayal of the powerlessness of a maiden deeply resonates with me. It seems that ancient Greeks held a stereotype that maidens should be vulnerable and submissive, even when coerced into unwilling actions. They were expected to accept whatever was arranged for them and, carefreely, engage in play.

Today, things have evolved considerably. While regrettably, some individuals still cling to outdated notions of female obedience, an increasing number of women recognize the importance of taking control of their own lives. Maidens should no longer be synonymous with innocence and vulnerability; there are diverse types of maidens, some of whom wield significant power.

Another aspect that resonates with me is the strength of a mother. Despite the story being named after Persephone, it is Demeter who takes center stage. The narrative emphasizes Demeter's relentless search for her daughter across the entire earth and her eventual compromise with the gods by withholding fertility. We witness a determined mother willing to go to any lengths for her child. In Apollodorus, we read, "Demeter wandered over the whole earth in search of her by day and night with torches" (Apollodorus C). When no one, divine or mortal, bird or soothsayer, was willing to help, Demeter took matters into her own hands, forsaking her divine status, appearance, and nearly everything else except her daughter.

This portrayal of Demeter's unwavering commitment to her child is profoundly moving. The bond between a mother and her child remains one of the most precious connections we share as humans. A mother's strength is unparalleled, and I am grateful for my own mother, who has

patiently guided and nurtured me throughout my life. Without her love and guidance, I would not be the person I am today.

Lastly, I observe the role that powerful men play in this narrative. At first glance, it might appear that Zeus and Hades are inconspicuous characters because they are almost as silent as Persephone. However, this is far from the truth. These men are the puppeteers behind the scenes, treating Persephone as an object rather than a person. Persephone's own father, Zeus, gifts her to Hades, as described in the Homeric Hymns. She is used to "please the lord of many guests," and Hades "kidnapped her with Zeus' help" (Homeric Hymn 2). Persephone's marriage to Hades is an arranged political union where powerful men manipulate women as pawns in their power games. Even the mighty Demeter falls victim to this manipulation, as her prolonged withdrawal results in a compromise where her daughter must spend one-third of the year with Hades (Buxton, pp. 72).

Unfortunately, even today, some women remain victims of male-dominated political games, reminiscent of the narratives of ancient Greece. However, with increasing awareness of issues such as sexual objectification, we hope to combat these harmful phenomena.

In summary, the story of Persephone portrays women as largely powerless victims sacrificed for the political machinations of men. This situation persists today, but societal awareness is growing. Additionally, Demeter serves as a symbol of a powerful mother willing to do anything for her child, a timeless representation of maternal strength. These are the elements that deeply resonate with me in this story.

References:

Apollodorus C

Homeric Hymns 2

Buxton pp 72-73