

APHRODITE/PARIS/HELEN: A VEDIC MYTH IN THE *ILIAD*

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It is stating the obvious to say that important relationships exist between Paris and Aphrodite and between Paris and Helen in the *Iliad*. Within the Iliadic text, Paris is the husband of Helen, and this relationship is the cause of the Trojan War and, in a sense, of the glory that the heroes gathered to fight at Troy are seeking.¹ This relationship is also the source of Paris' own fame, and of the poem itself which confers that fame.

Paris' relationship with Aphrodite is less formally defined, and its origins are not described. He is clearly one of her favorites, however. At *Iliad* 3.374² she notices his plight in the duel with Menelaos and saves him from certain destruction. Hektor refers at 3.54 to the δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης (gifts of Aphrodite) which are Paris', and Paris replies:

μή μοι δῶρ' ἐρατὰ πρόφερε χρυσέης Ἀφροδίτης·
οὐ τοι ἀπόβλητ' ἐστί θεῶν ἐρικυδέα δῶρα (3.64–65)

Outside the text of the *Iliad*, stories are told which make Helen herself the gift of Aphrodite to Paris: the Judgment of Paris, as a result of which Aphrodite arranges for him to have Helen as his wife. There is no explicit reference to the Judgment in the *Iliad*;³ the first full version is in the *Kypria*. Within the *Iliad*, the only hint given of the reasons for Aphrodite's concern for Paris is in her scene with Helen beginning at 3.383. Helen seems to take Aphrodite's love for Paris as a given; when Aphrodite orders her to join Paris

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¹ For a discussion of the function of Helen in the *Iliad*, see Linda Lee Clader, *Helen: the Evolution from Divine to Heroic in Greek Epic Tradition* (Leiden 1976) 6 (hereafter cited as "Clader 1976").

² All references are to the *Iliad* unless otherwise noted.

³ This does not mean, of course, that the story of the Judgment did not exist at the time the *Iliad* was composed. The passage at 24.25–30 may refer to the Judgment, but the matter is disputed. See Karl Reinhardt, *Das Parisurteil* (Frankfurt 1938); T. C. W. Stinton, *Euripides and the Judgement of Paris* (London 1965); Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, "Lese Früchte", *Hermes* 65 (1930) 241–42; H. J. Rose, "De loco Homérico male intellecto", (*Humanitas* 1950) 281–85.

in their bedchamber, Helen rebelliously suggests that Aphrodite go instead. Aphrodite replies with threats. Helen obeys, but the scene implies that Helen's and Aphrodite's roles towards Paris are in some way equivalent, that one may be substituted for the other.

The origins of the relationships among these three within the story of the Trojan War must remain obscure. However, the narrative sequence in which they take part, beginning in Book 3 with Aphrodite's transfer of Paris from the battlefield to his bedchamber and ending at the end of Book 6 when he emerges to join Hektor and return to the fighting, has a model in myth which informs the roles they carry out in the *Iliad* narrative. This mythical narrative pattern has been examined in detail by Deborah Boedeker and Linda Clader, utilizing the work of Gregory Nagy.⁴ Nagy's work argues the existence of traces of a Vedic myth in Homer by uncovering cognate diction and narrative patterns in Homer and the Rig Veda. Boedeker and Clader, as part of their larger studies of Aphrodite and Helen, show the cognate nature of the parts these two play in the reflexes of the myth found in the *Iliad*. I propose to examine the third and last role in the pattern, that of Paris, and show how the diction and narrative theme of the traditional story have been used to characterize the Trojan prince in the secular, epic story. The use of the myth in this narrative sequence is in one way a substitute for the Judgment story, in that it serves to establish the close relationship between Paris and Aphrodite, and the erotic nature of the prince.

The myth is that of the Dawn goddess who mates with the Sun god, with whom she produces the next day's light. The light is in fact the sun, so that Dawn is both lover and mother of the Sun god. In Greek epic the pattern has undergone some changes: the Dawn goddess' function as lover/mother has been maintained, but the Sun god is now a beautiful youth. In the Greek tradition, Eos (and Aphrodite) abduct youths in order to mate with them, and this relationship renders them immortal.

A closer look at the abduction pattern within early Greek poetry shows how the pattern proliferated. The abductions included in the following chart⁵ share both narrative pattern and diction.

⁴ See Gregory Nagy, "Phaethon, Sappho's Phaon, and the White Rock of Leukas", *HSCP* 77 (1973) 137-77 (hereafter cited as "Nagy 1973"); Deborah Boedeker, *Aphrodite's Entry into Greek Epic* (Leiden 1974) (hereafter cited as "Boedeker 1974"); Clader 1976. In *Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979), chapter 10 (hereafter cited as "Nagy 1979"), Nagy elaborates some of his points.

⁵ This chart is based on the list in Nagy 1973, 157. I have added the Aphrodite/Anchises seduction, and have tabulated as well the descriptions of the young men, the motivation for the abductions, and the result of the abduction for the young men.

The proliferation seems to have clustered around the royal house of Troy: Tithonos, Gany-mede, and Anchises are all Trojan, as is Aeneas, whose rescue by Aphrodite (5.311) follows a similar pattern (see below). Paris, then, would make the fifth member of this family to be involved in the pattern. Is this a reflection of Troy's westernmost geographical position in Asia

<i>Abductor</i>	<i>Abducted</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Motive</i>	<i>Result for Abductee</i>
1. Eos (Eur. <i>Hipp.</i> 455, cf. <i>Theog.</i> 986)	Kephalos	ἀνήρπασεν	ἔρωτος εἵνεκα	not stated
2. Eos (<i>H. Aphr.</i> 218)	Tithonos (ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισι)	ἥρπασεν	n.s.	immortality
3. Eos (<i>Od.</i> 15.250)	Kleitos	ἥρπασεν	κάλλεος εἵνεκα	immortality
4. Eos (<i>Od.</i> 5.121)	Orion	ἔλετο	n.s.	immortality
5. Aphrodite (<i>Theog.</i> 987)	Phaethon (θεοῖς ἐπιεί- κελον ἄνδρα)	ἀνερειψαμένη	n.s.	immortality
6. Aphrodite (<i>H. Aphr.</i> passim)	Anchises (δέμας ἀθανά- τοισιν ἑοικώς; θεῶν . . . κάλ- λος ἔχοντα)	ἀνήρπαξε; ἥρπαξε	will of Zeus	an immortal line of descendants
7. θεοὶ (on behalf Zeus; <i>Il.</i> 20.234)	Ganymede (ἀντίθεος)	ἀνηρείψαντο	κάλλεος εἵνεκα	immortality
8. Zeus; θέσπις ἄελλα (<i>H. Aphr.</i> 202)	Ganymede (ξανθὸν)	ἀνήρπασε; ἥρπασεν	διὰ κάλλος	immortality

The points of resemblance are many between these abductions and Aphrodite's transferral of Paris from the battlefield to his bedchamber (3.373 ff.).⁶ Here, once again, Aphrodite is abducting a beautiful young man and the verb used is, once again, a form of ἀρπάζω (snatch): ἐξήρπαξ' (3.380). Paris' epithet θεοειδής recalls those on the chart: ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισι (Tithonos); θεοῖς ἐπιείκελον ἄνδρα (Phaethon); δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν ἑοικώς (Anchises);

Minor, where Uşas/Eos would naturally find her mate as the sun set? or a repeated effort by partisans of the family to glorify its members? Emily Vermeule (*Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* [Berkeley 1979] 164) remarks on Ganymede and Tithonos' involvement in the rape motif, and suggests it may reflect "elements of Anatolian ritual."

⁶ This theme is present in Aphrodite's abduction of Phaethon where the epithet μύχιος is used of him at *Theog.* 991; and the abduction of Tithonos, where Eos ἐν θαλάμῳ κατέθηκε, θύρας δ' ἐπέθηκε φαεινάς (*H. Aphr.* 236).

ἀντίθεος (Ganymede). The concealment motif is present here also: ἐκάλυψε δ' ἄρ' ἡέρι πολλῇ, / καὶ δ' εἶς' ἐν θαλάμῳ (3.381-382). There is no question of Aphrodite's abducting Paris for her own sexual pleasure, of course, although Helen taunts Aphrodite about her erotic interest in him:⁷

ἀλλ' αἰεὶ περὶ κείνον ὄϊζε καὶ ἐφύκασσε,
εἰς ὃ κέ σ' ἢ ἄλοχον ποιήσεται, ἢ ὃ γε δούλην. (3.408-9)

It is for Helen that she saves him, and to their bedroom that she carries him. The beginning of their love is recalled in Paris' greeting to her,⁸ and the result of their love is immortality in song: . . . ὥς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' αἰδιμοὶ ἐσσομένοισι.

It seems that the original Dawn goddess role of mother/lover is split in this version also, with Helen taking the lover role this time.⁹ Perhaps Helen's own inherited connections with Eos are reflected in this split; the numerous factors which suggest these connections are analyzed fully by Clader.¹⁰ On the level of diction which is directly pertinent here, Helen is also Διὸς θυγάτηρ, sharing the epithet which was originally that of Dawn herself in the form of the Vedic Uṣas, that is, the epithet of the Dawn goddess when her person combined the roles of mother and lover. When Aphrodite fetches her from the wall to join Paris, this epithet is not used, for either Helen or Aphrodite. However, Aphrodite is Διὸς θυγάτηρ when she snatches Paris up (3.374), and Helen is Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα (3.418) when she follows Aphrodite to the bed-chamber, and κούρη Διὸς (3.426) when she greets Paris.

Another of Helen's epithets, ἡῦκομος, is directly comparable semantically to Eos' epithet ἐϋπλόκαμος, used in the one explicit attestation in epic diction of Eos' original function as author of the new day's light: ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἡμαρ ἐϋπλόκαμος τέλεσ' Ἡώς (*Od.* 5.390 = *Od.* 9.76 = *Od.* 10.144). Moreover, the epithet ἡῦκομος, when it is used with Helen, appears almost

⁷ Pointed out in Boedeker 1974, 62. These sexual overtones notwithstanding, in this episode, a new split appears: the lover role is divided between abductor and actual sex partner. The nature of the abductor role is described below.

⁸ Quoted below, note 9.

⁹ When Helen returns from the wall to her bedroom at Aphrodite's command, Paris greets her with these words, forcefully recalling Helen's lover role:

“ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ φιλότῃ τραπεῖομεν εὐνηθέντε·
οὐ γάρ πώ ποτέ μ' ὥδέ γ' ἔρωσ φρένας ἀμφεκάλυψεν,
οὐδ' ὅτε σε πρῶτον Λακεδαιμόνος ἐξ ἑρατεινῆς
ἐπλεον ἀρπάξας ἐν ποντοπόροισι νέεσσι,
νῆσῳ δ' ἐν Κραναῇ ἐμίγην φιλότῃ καὶ εὐνῇ,
ὥς σεο νῦν ἔραμαι καὶ με γλυκὺς ἥμερος αἰρεῖ.” (3.441-46)

This description of their elopement may be parallel to the abduction of Paris by Aphrodite. The sex roles of abductor and abducted are reversed, of course, but the use of the traditional vocabulary ἀμφεκάλυψεν and ἀρπάξας suggests the possibility that the poet is casting the elopement into the tradition of the Dawn rapes.

¹⁰ Clader 1976, chapter 3, esp. 53-54 and 62.

exclusively (6x out of 7) within the larger epithet for Paris, 'Ελένης πόσις ἡϋκόμοιο, that is, when she (like the Dawn goddess) has a consort.¹¹

If the Dawn goddess role is split and Helen is now the sex partner, however, then Aphrodite must be cast in the part of the mother.¹² And, in fact, the version of the Dawn rape story which I suggest appears at 3.373 ff., involving Aphrodite and Paris, has close parallels in two more passages which show the maternal aspects of the Dawn figure quite clearly. At 5.311, Aphrodite saves Aeneas from death at Diomedes' hands; and at 4.127, Athena does the same for Menelaos. In all three passages, the goddess is described once again as Διὸς θυγάτηρ. In the episode with Aeneas, Aphrodite is in fact the mother of the hero she saves; in the Menelaos/Athena episode, the maternal aspects of the goddess are conveyed in a simile:

Οὐδὲ σέθεν, Μενέλαε, θεοὶ μάκαρες λελάθοντο
ἀθάνατοι, πρώτη δὲ Διὸς θυγάτηρ ἀγελείη,
ἣ τοι πρόσθε στᾶσα βέλος ἔχεπευκὲς ἄμυνεν.
ἣ δὲ τόσον μὲν ἔεργεν ἀπὸ χροός, ὥς ὅτε μήτηρ
παιδὸς ἔεργη μυῖαν, ὅθ' ἡδέϊ λέξεται ὕπνω (4.127–31)

Apart from the epithet shared by the goddesses with Usas, the traditional diction is not used: in the Aeneas episode, ὑπεξέφερεν is used in place of a form of ἀρπάζω (5.318); Menelaos is not snatched away at all, nor concealed. The concealment motif is present in the Aeneas passage, however:

ἀμφὶ δ' ἔδν φίλον υἱὸν ἔχευατο πῆχεε λευκῷ,
πρόσθε δὲ οἱ πέπλοιο φαεινοῦ πτύγμ' ἐκάλυψεν, (5.314–15)

This “function of the *Dios thugatēr* as a motherly goddess who preserves the hero from mortal harm”¹³ is attested in clear outline in one more story which provides an example linking the motherly aspect of the Dawn goddess and her hypostases with her (their) function as purveyor of immortality to young men. In the epitome of the *Aethiopis* of Proclus, Eos herself procures immortality for her son Memnon:¹⁴

ἔπειτα Ἀχιλλεὺς Μέμνονα
κτείνει· καὶ τούτῳ μὲν Ἡὼς παρὰ Διὸς αἰτησαμένη ἀθανασίαν
δίδωσι.

Aphrodite as Διὸς θυγάτηρ, then, abducts Paris θεοειδής, saving him from death, concealing and transferring him to a θάλαμος to make love

¹¹ These points are not mentioned by Clader. Note also that ἡϋκλοκάμοιο cannot fit into the metrical shape of 'Ελένης πόσις ἡϋκόμοιο.

¹² So the “new” split—the one in the lover role into abductor and actual sex partner (see footnote 7) is in fact not so new. The abductor role is assigned to the mother; the sex partner, to the lover.

¹³ Nagy 1979, 205.

¹⁴ T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* 5 (Oxford 1912) 106.5–7; remarked in Nagy 1979, 205.

to Helen, κούρη Διὸς and Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα, which love gains for him immortality in song.¹⁵ The close parallels of the narrative pattern and diction of this episode to those of the chart are clear. Two more elements of diction remain to be discussed: Aphrodite's comment to Helen at 3.392 that Paris seems to have come from a dance; and the pair of similes at the end of the sequence which describes Paris as he goes to meet Hektor to return to battle (6.506–514).

At 3.392–94, Aphrodite says to Helen:

οὐδέ κε φαίης
ἀνδρὶ μαχессάμενον τόν γ' ἐλθεῖν, ἀλλὰ χορόνδε
ἔρχεσθ', ἥ ἐ χοροῖο νέον λήγοντα καθίζειν.

The connections of the χορός with Aphrodite and its function as the locus from which young girls are often carried off by men and gods are examined thoroughly by Boedeker. Of particular interest to the present argument is her discussion of the evidence for χορός being the place from which Dawn comes, or where Dawn lives.¹⁶ The extensive parallels between the Paris/Aphrodite abduction and those on the chart above suggest that the passage at 3.392 is also evidence for the identification of the χορός as Dawn's home.¹⁷

Paris takes his place, then, as the analogue for the Dawn goddess' consort, and the bedchamber to which Aphrodite conveys him is one for the θάλαμος of Dawn, where she and her consort, on the cosmic level, produce the next day's sunlight. Paris emerges from his θάλαμος at the end of Book 6. Hektor has found him there and urged him to return to the battle; he himself must go to see Andromache. Paris arms himself and goes to meet him:

Οὐδὲ Πάρις δῆθυνεν ἐν ὕψηλοῖσι δόμοισιν,
ἀλλ' ὁ γ', ἐπεὶ κατέδου κλυτὰ τεύχεα, ποικίλα χαλκῶ,
σεύατ' ἔπειτ' ἀνὰ ἄστρῳ, ποσὶ κραιπνοῖσι πεποιθώς,
ὥς δ' ὅτε τις στατὸς ἵππος, ἀκοστήσας ἐπὶ φάτνῃ,
δεσμὸν ἀπορρήξας θεῖῃ πεδίοιο κροαίνων,
εἰωθὼς λούεσθαι ἑὺρρεῖος ποταμοῖο,
κυδιόων· ὕψου δὲ κάρη ἔχει, ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται

¹⁵ 6.357–358 (see above, p. 54). It is noteworthy that, unlike many others who were at Troy (all the major figures, in fact, except Priam), Paris has no recorded cult. Poetry was—and is—his only monument. The Dawn goddess/consort myth provides the pattern for his story but the context of his immortality is the epic tradition itself.

¹⁶ Boedeker 1974, chapter 2 and Appendix 85–91. This is, for example, the locus for Aphrodite's (fictitious) rape by Hermes in her story to Anchises:

νῦν δέ μ' ἀνήρπαξε χρυσόρραπις Ἀργειφόντης
ἐκ χοροῦ Ἀρτέμιδος χρυσηλακάτου κελαδαινῆς. (*H. Aphr.* 116–17)

Boedeker cites other examples also.

¹⁷ Boedeker 1974, 62. Boedeker's very tentative statement, based on the recognition of only a few of these parallels, that "the myth of the Dawn goddess and her lover may underlie some of the narrative patterns in the Aphrodite-Paris episode" is much likelier than her focus on Aphrodite alone permits her to see.

ᾧμοις αἵσσονται· ὁ δ' ἀγλαΐῃφι πεποιθώς,
 ῥίμφα ἔ γούνα φέρει μετά τ' ἥθεα καὶ νομὸν ἵππων·
 ὥς υἱὸς Πριάμοιο Πάρις κατὰ Περγάμου ἄκρης
 τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἡλέκτωρ ἐβεβήκει
 καρχαλῶν, ταχέες δὲ πόδες φέρον· (6.503–14)

The transformation from the Paris who withdrew into the crowd of Trojans with beating heart at 3.31–37 in order to avoid Menelaos is remarkable. Instead of the deer and goat, or the man frightened by a snake, he is compared to a proud and self-confident horse and to—it should come as no surprise—ἡλέκτωρ, the sun itself.¹⁸ In fact, the simile of the horse is within the same metaphorical complex as that of the sun. The concept of the sun's chariot and horses is familiar; but Dawn herself has horses also in epic diction: Λάμπον καὶ Φαέθονθ', οἳ τ' Ἡῶ πῶλοι ἄγουσι.¹⁹ In the Rig Veda, these horses are maintained as aspects of the sun itself, who as "Sūrya the sun-god, is both bridegroom and horse of the dawn-goddess Uṣas."²⁰

This combination of similes used of Paris as he emerges from his chamber puts the finishing touch on an extended use of a mythic model to shape his actions and to delineate his character. I suggest that Homer is using this myth for these literary purposes. The Paris/Aphrodite episode is not a statement of religious belief, but is a secular use of a narrative pattern and diction cluster for purposes of characterization. In its other occurrences (see Chart), the myth is mentioned in passing, as an incidental reference to illustrate some point (Kephalos, Tithonos, Ganymede (#1), Orion) or as part of a genealogy (Kleitos, Phaethon, Ganymede (#2)). The case of Aphrodite/Anchises differs from this norm in that it forms the whole of the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, and is itself, like the Vedic version, a religious hymn. In the Paris/Aphrodite sequence, it is an integral part of the *Iliad*'s narrative, a secularization of the original story. As such, it can be classed also with the larger family of battlefield rescues which are part of the war at Troy.

The poet has used traditional diction to link Paris to this myth, thereby putting Paris into a role which draws analogies between him and other figures. He has used what is sometimes called "the literary device of dis-

¹⁸ The sun simile is used also of Achilles at 19.398. The situation is similar on the narrative level: he is returning to battle also, after the death of Patroklos. I see no connection between Achilles and the Dawn rape motif, however; use of the sun simile here is rather part of the fire imagery which surrounds Achilles in the whole of the *Iliad*. See Cedric Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Ma. 1958) for an analysis of this imagery.

See also Charles Rowan Beye, *The "Iliad", the "Odyssey", and the Epic Tradition* (New York 1976) 27–28 and 148, on the sexual overtones of the horse simile.

¹⁹ *Od.* 23.246. These lines occur, in fact, in an erotic context; they preface Odysseus' invitation to Penelope to go to bed.

²⁰ Nagy 1973, 164–65.

placement,”²¹ achieving this displacement by the use of traditional words and phrases which have come to have specific connotations as well as their surface denotations. Paris is not simply θεοειδής; he is like the love object of the Dawn.²²

²¹ Northrup Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton 1973) 188. “If the hero of romance returns from a quest disguised, flings off his beggar’s rags, and stands forth in the resplendent scarlet cloak of the prince, we do not have a theme which has necessarily descended from a solar myth; we have the literary device of displacement.”

²² A point of drastic divergence in the Paris/ Aphrodite version from the traditional ones comes in the fact that Paris’ snatching results—on the narrative level of the *Iliad*—in blame from both Helen and Hektor, whereas in the traditional pattern, glory and praise result. For a discussion of Paris’ role as object of blame, see my “Paris/ Alexandros: Why Two Names?”, forthcoming. It is worth noting here, however, that in this respect also, this rape pattern is a substitute for the Judgment story (see above), in that it (like the Judgment story) provides the source for both Paris’ characterization as a lover, and as an object of blame.