

# *Moschus' Hymn to Europa*



## Moschus' Hymn to Europa

Translated by MJ Chapman<sup>1</sup>

Cypris, when all but shone the dawn's glad beam,  
To fair Europa sent a pleasant dream;  
When sleep, upon the close-shut eyelids sitting,  
Sweeter than honey, is eye-fetters knitting,  
The limb-dissolving sleep! When to and fro  
True dreams, like sheep at pasture, come and go.  
Europa, sleeping in her upper room,  
The child of Phoenix, in her virgin bloom,  
Thought that she saw a contest fierce arise  
Betwix two continents, herself the prize;  
They to the dreamer seemed like women quite,  
Asia, and Asia's unknown opposite.  
This was a stranger, that a native seemed,  
And closer hugged her — so Europa dreamed;  
And called herself Europa's nurse and mother,  
Said that she bore and reared her; but that other  
Spared not her hands, and still the sleeper drew,  
With her good will, and claimed her as her due,  
And said that Zeus Ægiochus gave her,  
By Fate's appointment, that sweet prisoner.

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<sup>1</sup> M.J. Chapman. *The Greek Pastoral Poets, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus*. London: James Fraser, 1936; pp. 289-97. Frontispiece: The Rape of Europa (c 1640) Simon Vouet, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Note by the Series Editor: Modern Greek has two words for rape: *αρπαγή* (arpagē) or ravishment, and *βιασμός* (viasmōs) or violation. Yet in Ancient Greece the semantics of rape were much different than today, complicated by the use of *ατιμία* (atimia) or dishonour, and *ὕβρις* (hubris) in its meanings of lust, lewdness (opp. *σωφροσύνη*), and outrage against the person, especially violation and rape. In occult terms, however, "violence" is untainted by phallic connotations. Dr. Robert W. Baldwin, in his scholarly paper "Mythological and Historical Rapes in Early Modern Europe," narrows down rape to four major categories: Empire and Good Government, Genealogy and World History, Divine Love and Marriage, and Male Fantasy. It is an article worth reading.

The bestiality implied in the title of this and of other European paintings is an affront to the Law of Compassion that underpins, sustains, and inspires True Love, *i.e.*, harmonization of the two Opposing Forces, in this case, Spirituality and Animalism. (See *The Kingdom of Heaven is mastered by violence*, in: "From the stronghold of your Soul, chase all your foes away," pp. 13-17, in our Constitution of Man Series.) A "marriage made in heaven" is neither myth, nor sentimentality. It is a promise that humanity's inner potential can, and will, be fulfilled in the fullness of time. The bridegroom is ONE or Christos-Consciousness, ever invisible; his brides-to-be are MANY, veiled as Sophia-Nature, though visible and "knowable" by the profane.

Up-started from her couch the maiden waking,  
And felt her heart within her bosom quaking;  
She thought it true, and sat in hushed surprise —  
Still saw those women with her open eyes;  
Then to her timid voice at last gave vent;

“Which of the gods to me this vision sent?  
What kind of dream is this that startled me,  
And sudden made my pleasant slumber flee?  
Who was the stranger that I saw in sleep?  
What love for her did to my bosom creep!  
And how she hailed me, as her daughter even!  
But only turn to good my vision, Heaven!”

So said, and bounded up, and sought her train  
Of dear companions, all of noble strain,  
Of equal years and stature; gentle, kind,  
Sweet to the sight, and pleasant to the mind;  
With whom she sported, when she led the choir,  
Or in the river's urn-like reservoir  
She bathed her limbs, or in the meadow stopt,  
And from its bosom odorous lilies cropt.  
Her flower-basket in each maiden's hand;  
And to the meadows near the pleasant shore  
They sped, where they had often sped before,  
Pleased with the roses growing in their reach,  
And with the waves that murmured on the beach.

A basket by Hephæstus wrought of gold,  
Europa bore — a marvel to behold;  
He gave it Libya, when a blooming bride  
She went to grace the great Earth-shaker's side;  
She gave it Telephassa fair and mild,  
Who now had given it to her virgin child.  
Therein were many sparkling wonders wrought —  
The hapless Iö to the sight was brought;  
A heifer's for a virgin's form she wore;  
The briny paths she frantic wandered o'er,  
And was a swimming heifer to the view,  
While the sea round her darkened into blue.

Two men upon a promontory stood,  
And watched the heifer traversing the flood.  
Again where seven-mouthed Nile divides his strand,  
Zeus stood and gently stroked her with his hand,  
And from her horned figure and imbruted  
To her original form again transmuted.  
In brass the heifer — Zeus was wrought in gold;

Nile softly in a silver current rolled.  
And to the life was watchful Hermes shown  
Under the rounded basket's golden crown;  
And Argus near him with unsleeping eyes  
Lay stretched at length; then from his blood did rise  
The bird, exulting in the brilliant pride  
Of his rich plumes and hues diversified,  
And like a swift ship with her out-spread sail,  
Expanding proudly his resplendent tail,  
The basket's golden rim he shadowed o'er.  
Such was the basket fair Europa bore.

They reached the mead with vernal blossoms full,  
And each begun her favourite flowers to pull.  
Narcissus one; another thyme did get;  
This hyacinth, and that the violet;  
And of the spring-sweets in the meadow found  
Much scented bloom was scattered on the ground.  
Some of the troop in rivalry chose rather  
The sweet and yellow crocuses to gather;  
Shining, as mid the graces Cypris glows,  
The Princess in the midst preferred the rose;  
Nor long with flowers her gentle fancy charmed,  
Nor long she kept her virgin flower unharmed.  
With love for her was Saturn's son inflamed,  
By unexpected darts of Cypris tamed,  
Who only tames e'en Zeus. To shun the rage  
Of Heré, and the virgin's mind engage,  
To draw her eyes and her attention claim,  
He hid his godhead and a bull became;  
Not such as feeds at stall, or then or now,  
The furrow cuts and draws the crooked plough;  
Not such as feeds the lowing kine among,  
Or trails in yoke the heavy wain along;  
His body all a yellow hue did own,  
But a white circle in his forehead shone;  
His sparkling eyes with love's soft lustre gleamed;  
His arched horns like Dian's crescent seemed.  
He came into the meadow, nor the sight  
Fluttered the virgins into sudden flight.  
But they desired to touch and see him near;  
His breath surpassed the meadow sweetness there.  
Before Europa's feet he halted meek,  
Licked her fair neck and eke her rosy cheek;  
Threw round his neck her arms the Beautiful,  
Wiped from his lips the foam and kissed the bull;

Softly he lowed; no lowing of a brute  
It seemed, but murmur of Mygdonian flute;  
Down on his knees he slunk; and first her eyed,  
And then his back, as asking her to ride.  
The long-haired maidens she began to call; —

“Come let us ride, his back will hold us all,  
E’en as a ship; a bull unlike the rest,  
As if a human heart were in his breast,  
He gentle is and tractable and meek,  
And wants but voice his gentleness to speak.”

She said and mounted smiling, but before  
Another did, he bounded for the shore.  
The royal virgin struck with instant fear,  
Stretched out her hands and called her playmates dear;  
But how could they the ravished Princess reach?  
He, like a dolphin, pushed out from the beach.  
From their sea-hollows swift the Nereids rose,  
Seated on seals, and did his train compose;  
Poseidon went before, and smooth did make  
The path of waters for his brother’s sake;  
Around their king in close array did keep  
The loud-voiced Tritons, minstrels of the deep,  
And with their conchs proclaimed the nuptial song.  
But on Jove’s bull-back as she rode along,  
The maid with one hand grasped his branching horn,  
The flowing robe, that did her form adorn,  
Raised with the other hand, and tried to save  
From the salt moisture of the saucy wave;  
Her robe, inflated by the wanton breeze,  
Seemed like a ship’s sail hovering o’er the seas.  
But when, her father-land no longer nigh,  
Nor sea-dashed shore was seen, nor mountain high,  
But only sky above, and sea below —  
She said, and round her anxious glance did throw; —

“Whither with me, portentous bull? Discover  
This and thyself; and how canst thou pass over  
The path of waters, walking on the wave,  
And dost not fear the dangerous path to brave?  
Along this tract swift ships their courses keep,  
But bulls are wont to fear the mighty deep.  
What pasture here? What sweet drink in the brine?  
Art thou a god? Thy doings seem divine.  
Nor sea-born dolphins roam the flowery mead,  
Nor earth-born bulls through Ocean’s realm proceed;

Fearless on land, and plunging from the shores  
Thou roamest ocean, and thy hoofs are oars.  
Perchance anon, up-borne into the sky,  
Thou without wings like winged birds wilt fly!  
Ah me unhappy! who my father's home  
Have left and with a bull o'er ocean roam,  
A lonely voyager! My helper be,  
Earth-shaking Regent of the hoary sea!  
I hope to see this voyage's cause and guide,  
For not without a god these things betide."

To her the horned bull with accent clear: —

"Take courage, virgin! nor the billow fear;  
The seeming bull is Zeus; for I with ease  
Can take at will whatever form I please;  
My fond desire for thy sweet beauty gave  
To me this shape — my footstep to the wave.  
Dear Crete, that nursed me, now shall welcome thee;  
In Crete Europa's nuptial rites shall be;  
From our embrace illustrious sons shall spring,  
And every one of them a sceptred king." —

And instantly they were in Crete; his own  
Form Zeus put on — and off her virgin zone.  
Strowed the glad bed the Hours, of joy profuse;  
The whilom virgin was the bride of Zeus.



## Plutarch on directing love to the soul, not to the beauty.

Another love there is in mortals found;  
The love of just and chaste and virtuous souls.<sup>1</sup>

And yet I think it not improper here to mention withal that saying of Plato, spoken betwixt jest and earnest, that men of great eminence must be allowed to show affection to what beautiful objects they please.<sup>2</sup> I would decide then that parents are to keep off such as make beauty the object of their affection, and admit altogether such as direct the love to the soul; whence such loves are to be avoided as are in Thebes and Elis, and that sort which in Crete they call ravishment (*αρπαγμός*);<sup>3</sup> and such are to be imitated as are in Athens and Sparta.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> From the *Dictys* of Euripides, Frag. 842

<sup>2</sup> See Plato, *Republic*, V, p. 468c

<sup>3</sup> See Strabo X, pp. 483, 484

<sup>4</sup> "A Discourse Touching the Training of Children," in: *Plutarch's Morals*. Translated from the Greek by S. Ford. Corrected and revised by William W. Goodwin with an Introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson. (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1684-1694, London, 5 Vols.) Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1878 (based on the 5<sup>th</sup> ed. of 1718); Vol. I, pp. 26-27