

Hera by Jennifer Saint

A Missed Opportunity



Background

Hera by Jennifer Saint is a recent addition to the recent boom of feminist retellings of Greek mythology. Saint tells the story of the goddess Hera, who in Western Anglophone culture has been depicted primarily as a spiteful, jealous, nagging wife..

“...an empowering retelling of Hera,
reclaiming her as a feminist Hero”

- Jennifer Saint, *Hera*
back cover copy

Research Questions

- To what extent is the marketing promise and premise of Saint's novel faithful to the content of the book?
- What makes a work of literature *feminist*?
- What does Saint's novel reclaim, and from whom?

What makes a work feminist?

- pointing out bad behavior in men
- women in charge of a vertical hierarchy
- equal access to an oppressive system



"Powerful feminist fairy tales...rattle the foundational cages of the tale where the power structures reside"
Crowley & Pennington

Analysis of Jennifer Saint's Hera

- Obsessed with power and status
- Attacks already victimized women
- Disdainful of women and their occupations
- Values sons over daughters
- Sees children as a means to an end (power)

What does Hera reclaim, and from whom?

The marketing description of Hera as "a feminist reclamation" is inaccurate and incomplete.

Reclaimed
feminist Hera
girl boss
Homer's Hera

From
patriarchy
jealous wife
Western distortion



"I am a god too. My descent the same as yours – crooked-minded Cronus fathered me as well, the first of all his daughters."

- Homer, *The Iliad*

Further Research

- How might historical and philosophical research from time periods before and after Homer (e.g. Minoan civilization, Neoplatonic theology, modern Hellenic polytheistic thought) shape truly feminist reclamations of Hera?
- How much of this feminist retelling trend is driven by Western reception and treatment of ancient Greek mythology rather than the source material itself?
- Does Western distortion of ancient Greek mythology constitute its own tradition?
- Does calling this distorted tradition "Greek mythology" constitute appropriation and misrepresentation of a living culture (modern Greece)

Selected Bibliography

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