

fairytale?” (58). The answer is not clear as the narrator feels revitalized when she divorces her husband and embraces her lesbian identity. However, she also finds herself becoming the dreaded guilty, shameful, and grieving mother for not staying with her children and being more emotionally involved with their lives. The narrator begs the question about how she can pardon her choices: “How to forgive each one by one by one?” (147).

By the end of the text, the narrator’s fairytale comes to an end and she closes the book. By reconciling her definition of mothering, she has assuaged her guilt and anguish for dismantling her familial dynamics and leaving her sons. The narrator also finds forgiveness from her children and the opportunity to recover their close relationship when one of her children calls her. This parting scene is vividly heartfelt; it is a moving reminder that Paré’s work is a powerful read that will leave readers looking forward to her subsequent texts.

A Pomegranate and the Maiden

Tamara Agha-Jaffar

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REVIEWED BY CASSIE PREMO STEELE

This is an engaging novel in which the characters from the myth of Demeter and Persephone come alive in ways that speak to current relations between mothers and daughters and between men and women. In chapters narrated by such figures as Demeter, Zeus, Hades, Hekate, and Persephone, readers are given diverse—and opposing—points of view about the abduction of Demeter’s daughter by the god of the underworld. Perhaps the most interesting and innovative part of the novel is the way human society is woven into the narrative. By incorporating characters from the palace at Eleusis, such as Queen Metaneira and King Keleos, we are given an opportunity to see the allegorical nature of the abduction parable as something that is strikingly closer to reality than myth, even today.

From the very first chapter, Demeter tells her daughter, “Listen to me, my child....[Y]our father, your uncles, all the gods—they are capable of doing terrible things, especially to women” (17). And in the next chapter, Persephone admits to Hekate that she finds her maturing body “awful” (21). Thus the young woman is portrayed as refusing to eat as a way of both rebelling against her mother and attempting to ward off puberty.

This is bookended when, near the end of the story, Metaneira tells her hus-

band, “You don’t know what we go through as women. We are denied access to the public life outside our homes. So the only source of meaning available to us comes from our personal relationships. And when those are gone, we have nothing” (156). So once puberty and marriage can be resisted no longer, motherhood is set up as patriarchy’s consolation prize for women who hold no other power.

While most narratives about Demeter focus on her mourning the loss of her daughter, what makes this novel unique is the vision revealed to readers about Persephone’s time in the underworld. In the midst of this critique of motherhood, we learn that Persephone, although at first resentful and rebellious, ends up having a choice to make. As Hades says to her, “Understand that your power comes from being here. If you deny yourself access to the Land of the Dead, you would be denying yourself access to your power.”

Persephone, then, is portrayed as providing an alternative path for women. Rather than gaining affection and a semblance of power through motherhood, Persephone chooses to retain her own power by maintaining an alliance with Hades and a separation from her mother. As she says, “Our roles had been reversed; our relationship had changed. Or perhaps it was just me who had changed. For the first time in my life, I found myself talking to mother as her equal and not her subordinate. Gone was my feeling of inadequacy in her presence. Gone was my fear of making her angry. Gone was my resentment at her attempts to stunt my development. Gone was the power she once wielded over me” (138).

This would be a thought-provoking novel to teach at the undergraduate level when students are contending with many of the same issues that Persephone faces. An even more interesting discussion might occur among women from different backgrounds and generations, however, as the problem of whether women today are able to wield true power outside of motherhood is still an open question.