

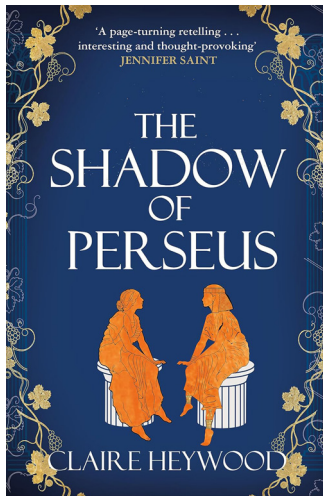
## Book Review

### The Shadow of Perseus

Heywood (C.) Pp. 286. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2023. Cased, £16.99.  
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Heywood continues in the vein of many others who have recently engaged in retelling the myths of antiquity from the perspective of those characters on the periphery of the original version. The value of hearing the voice and gaining the perspective of marginalised characters cannot be underestimated. The focus on heroism and the classical idea of masculine virtue offers a perfect opportunity to round out the story with the perspectives of the women in this hero's life. This is the story of the hero Perseus – the famous slayer of Medusa, the founder of Mycenae, and of course, the son

of Zeus. However, this telling of the story rounds out the typical narrative of the hero tale with the perspective of Perseus the human – the perspective of the women who knew him best. The hero tale gives an idealised perspective of the hero; while this retelling from the perspective of those who knew him best show us the all too human, flawed, authentic Perseus. By removing the illusion of the heroic, Heywood effectively demythologises Perseus and allows us to see the true man behind the hero's mask.

The book is divided into three parts with each part offering the perspective of a particular woman from Perseus' life – his mother, Danae; his wife, Andromeda; and his trophy/victim, Medusa. The plot is largely faithful to the story of Perseus; however, any references to divine intervention or supernatural causation are left out of Heywood's retelling. This leaves the reader grappling with a man who wants to be a hero and who uses violence to achieve his goal. The female voice is fascinating in this work as a response and perhaps even as a foil to the violence and patriarchy of the traditional Perseus story. Heywood does not shy away from the difficulty which women faced in the patriarchal society of ancient Greece. The reader encounters the uncomfortable reality that women were largely viewed and treated as the property of the males in their lives. Each of the women in this work confronts the reality of male control in their lives. This book is largely about how the women in Perseus' life deal with and survive their encounter with him. Perseus is hardly the hero in their lives, but rather the epic challenge that they each must face.

Heywood is a phenomenal storyteller who really brings Danae, Andromeda, and Medusa to life, each in their own cultural and geographical milieu. Each of these women encounters Perseus in a different way, in a different place, and in a different stage of his life. The author effectively brings each of these three characters to life in a compelling way and their varied perspectives make the reader want to know more.

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