**HERA, THE PERFECT WIFE? FEATURES AND PARADOXES OF THE GREEK GODDESS OF MARRIAGE**

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**Abstract**

In the ancient Greek polytheistic religion, Hera was considered the wife of Zeus and she was worshipped as the goddess of marriage. This paper analyses pre-Olympian references to Hera as an unmarried Great Goddess related to nature and fertility, and it explores from a critical perspective the origins and contents of her cult as Hera *Teleia*, the ‘perfect wife’. Mythological tales about her fights with Zeus, their conflictive relationship and his continuous love affairs with goddesses and women show us that the divine Greek model for human marriage was far from being a state of marital bliss.

**1. Introduction: Hera, a paradigmatic wife**

According to many scholars from different fields (Philosophy, Literature, Arts, Maths, Natural Sciences, etc.), Greek culture is one of the main roots of Western culture. As a result of this great influence, its mythological characters have become archetypes of human behaviour and that they still contribute today to shape our personalities and our relations with one another. The world of mythical gods and goddesses, as a mirror of the human level, represents the great spiritual and moral powers that operate in our lives[[1]](#endnote-1). Mythology is a point of view, and the mythical tales, which follow a peculiar logic combining empiric facts with imaginary elements, have succeeded in creating their own reality to explain the deeds and facts with which we humans are engaged in our ordinary life.

This paper explores one of those Greek mythological figures, Hera, queen of heaven and wife of Zeus, and one of the main Olympian deities. This analysis has been based on references from classical Greek and Latin literature, including quotations from well-known authors such as Homer, Hesiod, Apollodorus, Ovid, Virgil and Pausanias, combined with contemporary reflections by a few scholars specialising in Greek religion, archaeology, psychology, feminist theory, and related fields, thus enabling a thorough interpretation of the different layers of meaning connected with this goddess. Gathering miscellaneous readings and interpretations about Hera and the myths in which she is mentioned gives an account of the complexity and density of this mythological character.

Taking the risk of presentism, this Greek character is examined from a contemporary perspective. This is made on purpose, as an attempt to bring into discussion some issues related to marriage, maternity, marital subjugation, or gender-based violence, taking Hera as a starting point for all these reflections.

As the legitimate wife of Zeus, Hera is the most powerful among the Olympian goddesses, but we will see that, since they are in a marriage that might be defined as ‘patriarchal’ from a contemporary, feminist perspective, there is a lack of total symmetry and equality between them. According to the mythological tales by Homer and Apollodorus, among others, Hera is reluctant to accept Zeus’s authority, and this means that their relationship is marked by constant quarrels and fights. They are far from being a happy couple, but despite that they were worshipped in ancient Greece as the paradigmatic married couple, and Hera was considered the goddess protector of human marriage. In this article we will be exploring the details of this relationship from a critical perspective, pointing at the areas of light and shadow of this mythological couple, and also looking at other aspects related to the figure of Hera, such as the origins of worship of her as a virgin goddess and some of the stories about her parthenogenetic maternity and her monstrous offspring, which gives an opportunity to problematize some issues of motherhood and its controversies.

**2. Hera and her ‘maiden life’ as a Great Goddess**

According to classical authors, Hera was one of the daughters of Rhea and Cronus. Her sisters were Hestia and Demeter, and her brothers were Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus[[2]](#endnote-2). This was the main version of the myth, widely spread by Hesiod, Homer and other authors from the seventh century BC onwards, by which Hera is a sister of Zeus and later becomes his wife. But archaeological and cultural evidences show that the cult of Hera, or at least of an old goddess closely linked to her, was present in several places in Greece well before the Olympian Zeus became the leader of the Greek pantheon. For instance, Joseph Campbell claims that the cult to the goddess dates to early Neolithic planting traditions and relates to Mother Earth as the main provider of life and nourishment. Ancient Greece also shared in worshipping her, mainly on the islands of Crete and Thera (currently Santorini) and other areas, where the Minoan, Aegean culture was prevalent up to the fifteenth century BC[[3]](#endnote-3). Marguerite Rigoglioso shares this thesis when she affirms that in pre-Greek antiquity Hera was worshipped as a goddess of the sky, earth and underworld and had no male consort. The main evidence for this can be found in Hera’s two oldest religious centres, Samos and Argos, where this goddess was seen in her earliest cult as a Virgin Mother[[4]](#endnote-4).

Even though reputed scholars such as Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti have criticized this idea of the ‘great Goddess’, supported by Campbell and Rigoglioso among others, we consider that this is an interesting approach which helps to understand the importance of some main goddesses within the classical Greek context[[5]](#endnote-5). The two French authors above mentioned -Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti- have analysed themselves the mythological character of Hera from a structural, semiotic approach, and their interesting works on this topic are quoted in different sections of this paper, but a more holistic approach to this myth, including secondary sources from psychology, feminist theory or philosophy, can be useful to enrich the understanding of this myth and its re-readings in a contemporary context.

Back in Greece, in Samos, both at the Heraion and in other locations nearby described in detail by Pausanias[[6]](#endnote-6), Hera was worshipped mainly as Hera Tonaia (roping) between the tenth and sixth centuries BC. Her sanctuary on the island dates from the tenth century BC and suggests an important goddess without links to Zeus or other Olympian deities of the Archaic period. As a single goddess she represented the fertility of Samos, and on many coins she was portrayed with bands crossing her womb, suggesting ‘an earth goddess bound so that her fertility would not escape’[[7]](#endnote-7). Seen within this frame, the annual procession of Hera’s cult statue to the banks of the river Imbrassos and its binding to the *lygos* (willow) tree may be understood as a ritual ensuring both new vegetation and human fertility[[8]](#endnote-8).

Hungarian philologist Karl Kerényi poses a complementary interpretation of this rite that connects the Samian cult with women’s menstruation and with the phases of the moon. According to his explanation, Hera had resolved to set a divine example for the periodicity of mortal women. She went before them into that secluded spot in the *lygos* bushes where the women of Samos originally had to pass the time of their *katamenia* (period), and for a few days the goddess was invisible. This was thought to coincide with the new moon, when she was secluded. Afterwards she was released, and this also had a double meaning: the period was over, and the crescent moon was visible again[[9]](#endnote-9). Marguerite Rigoglioso, also commenting on this Samian tradition, considers that this annual ritual of taking Hera’s statue back to the willow tree where she was supposed to be born symbolised a yearly return to her origins as a Virgin Mother[[10]](#endnote-10).

In Argos and other cities in the Peloponnese such as Corinth, Olympia or Nafplio, the worship of Hera was also widespread, as Pausanias shows in his description of this Greek region[[11]](#endnote-11). Hera *Argeia* was linked with the Seasons, her mythological nurses, and also with the heroes, mainly the Argonauts. According to classical authors, Hera supports Agamemnon, Achilles or Jason, even if, as the psychologist Philip Slater points out, her motives for favouring these men are grounded on personal narcissism: she wanted Agamemnon and Achilles to destroy Troy to avenge the insult of the lost beauty contest on Mount Ida, and Jason was supported to punish Pelias for having insulted Hera[[12]](#endnote-12).

Also in the Peloponnese, Pausanias mentions a fountain near Nafplio, called Canathus, and he explains that ‘the Argives report that Juno, by washing every year in this fountain, becomes a virgin: and this narration belongs to the arcane discourses’[[13]](#endnote-13). After the goddess was ‘married’ to Zeus, her annual bath in this place and her subsequent revirginisation may be understood as an interruption of her marriage and, somehow, an act of defiance against Zeus’s authority[[14]](#endnote-14). In the new context in which Hera was subjugated to her husband, this bath symbolised her return to her original condition as a Virgin Goddess and constituted a reminder of the ancient worship of her as a goddess of earth and nature.

In Olympia, Hera was a very powerful goddess, in many ways superior to Zeus, and the first temple in the city, which dates from the second half of the seventh century BC, was devoted to her: there, the goddess was represented as sitting on her throne, with Zeus standing beside her. She also had an altar in the city stadium, probably because, from time immemorial, races for Hera had been held among the women every four years, even before the men’s races became an institution[[15]](#endnote-15).

Nearby, the city of Stymphalus had three temples of Hera, each one referring to one stage of her life: Hera *Pais* (child), Hera *Teleia* (fulfilled, married) and Hera *Chera* (widow)[[16]](#endnote-16). Kerényi also thinks that these three epithets expressed a threefoldness and a periodicity that recalls the phases of the moon[[17]](#endnote-17). In any case, the most interesting piece of this cult is the first one, where the goddess was considered as a virgin maiden, not linked to a male consort, as this evokes an older image of Hera as a singular and powerful deity.

Once explored, these ancient myths and rites related to the cult of Hera and its widespread presence in different regions under the influence of the Minoan culture, it must be concluded that Zeus was a foreign, Indo-European god who came to Greece with the invaders around 4000–2000 BC, and that he became absorbed into the older tradition of the Mother Goddess. Classical Olympian mythology claimed that Hera was Zeus’s wife, but in fact she is a much older goddess, independent of and more powerful than Zeus at the time of that mythology’s appearance[[18]](#endnote-18). In contrast with the biblical tradition, where the old goddesses were simply eliminated, the Greeks married the god to the goddess, or made the god the protector of the goddess, or made the goddess the protector of the god, according to Campbell’s interpretation[[19]](#endnote-19). This is what happened to Hera, and thus she made a shift from being a Great Goddess to becoming the wife of Zeus, the king of gods. In the following section we will explore the mythologems related to this transition.

**3. The *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) between Hera and Zeus**

Hesiod, among others, claims that Hera was not the first wife of Zeus, but instead he mentions Metis, an Oceanid, and Thetis, a Nereid, as his two first spouses[[20]](#endnote-20). Kerényi also refers to a myth that was widespread in the region of Dodona, north of Greece, by which the first wife of Zeus was called Dione[[21]](#endnote-21). Anyway, even if Hera is not the first, and of course not the only one with whom Zeus had a love affair, in classical Greek mythology she was identified as the legitimate wife and the queen of heaven, sitting next to the great ruler of Olympus. Some secondary mythical tales affirm that Hera herself had other divine ‘husbands’ apart from Zeus, including a king from the race of Giants, but still she is far from being as promiscuous as him, and she does not have any link with mortal men, although she was coveted by Endymion, Ixion and Porphyrion[[22]](#endnote-22).

An old Samian tradition said that the siblings Zeus and Hera went to their marriage-bed secretly, without the knowledge of their elders, and that their union took place on their island and lasted in complete secrecy for three hundred years, before Zeus established his supremacy on Olympus and their relationship became publicly acknowledged[[23]](#endnote-23). In the *Iliad*, Book XIV, Homer also refers to their secret affair: when Zeus sees Hera he feels desire ‘as in those days when they had first slipped from their parent’s eyes to bed, to mingle by the hour in love’[[24]](#endnote-24).

Still another version of the love story between Hera and Zeus, by the British writer Robert Graves, says that he courted her at first unsuccessfully, but that she finally took pity on him when he adopted the disguise of a cuckoo. Zeus had sent a terrible storm, and the goddess wandered alone up the mountain and sat down. When the cuckoo saw her, he descended trembling into her lap. The goddess took pity on the bird and covered him with her robe. When she was warming him, Zeus resumed his true shape and ravished Hera, so she was shamed into marrying him[[25]](#endnote-25). In his description of the region of Argolis, Pausanias also recalls this episode and refers to the place where this metamorphosis was supposed to have happened: near Argos there was a place formerly called Thornax, and in consequence of Jupiter’s mutation into a cuckoo, it came to be called Coccygius[[26]](#endnote-26). This whole story can be understood as a metaphor for Zeus’s imposition of his power over Hera. The older name of the place, Thornax, means the ‘throne footstool’ under Hera’s feet, for she was enthroned there. Hera allowed the half-frozen cuckoo to alight on her knees and covered it with her robe, and then Zeus revealed himself as her suitor. This tale shows Zeus as the intruder in the matriarchal domain in which Hera was enthroned as ruler[[27]](#endnote-27) since, as Kerényi explains, the Greeks were acquainted with the cuckoo’s trick of laying eggs in other birds’ nests. By this unique mythological creation Zeus was inserted into the history of the Hera religion in Argos[[28]](#endnote-28).

After their first love affair, which has many versions, they became officially married, and several mythological tales describe the magnificent wedding of Zeus and Hera in Olympus, where all the gods and goddesses were invited. Other ancient sources claimed that the sacred wedding of Zeus and Hera occurred on Mount Cithaeron, in Boeotia.

In any case, as noted by Pierre Brulé, the divine copulation between Zeus and Hera

formed the model for the *hieros gamos*, the ‘divine coitus’, or ‘sacred marriage’, a mythical motif of which the Greeks were extremely fond: husband and wife take their pleasure and are fruitful. In many places in Greece people delighted in commemorating the event. Hera was represented by a statue dressed as a bride, drawn along in a procession similar to that of a human wedding, to the sanctuary, where she came to a nuptial bed. Zeus’ sexual partner was also his ‘legal’ spouse[[29]](#endnote-29).

This kind of celebration took place in many locations all over Magna Graecia. In Samos, this can be found in the second stage of Hera’s cult, when she was no longer related to the fertility of the island and became a goddess of marriage. In the city of Argos there was also a sacrifice in honour of Hera *Lecherna*, related to *lechos*, the bed, which had to do with the nuptial bed and the commemoration of the moment when Hera became Zeus’s wife. In Athens and other places there were sacrifices in honour of Zeus *Heraion*, the ‘Zeus of Hera’, hence the *hieros gamos* of this pair worked as a divine model for human unions.

In Boeotia, on Mount Cithaeron, there was also an annual festival of Hera to commemorate her union with Zeus. Fourteen wooden statues of the goddess (one from each city of the region) were carried in a wedding procession, and at the end of the festival they were burnt on the top of the mountain[[30]](#endnote-30). Also in Paestum (currently Italy), archaeological findings show that the wedding of the divine couple was celebrated in some of the greatest temples of the region[[31]](#endnote-31). It is important to highlight the singularity of these celebrations, since they were the only ones of this kind: ‘The only ritual in Greece which was brought into any association with human marriage, and which we may regard in some sense as the divine counterpart to it, was the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera’[[32]](#endnote-32).

So the story goes that, although the first love-making of Zeus and Hera started when they had to love in secret, without their parents’ knowledge, they finally become a legitimate couple, and this legitimation is obtained precisely by means of that *hieros gamos*, which works not only for them, but for the humans as well, as a divine reference for marital engagement. The correspondence between both realms is attested, for instance, in Athens, where the weddings of all young couples were celebrated at the same time, in the winter month of Gamelion – equivalent to our January. The month was sacred to Hera who, following Homeric and Hesiodic tradition, came to be known as the ‘goddess of marriage’. During these ancient ceremonies Zeus received sacrifices as well under the epithet Zeus *Heraios*, clearly related to his status as official husband of the goddess Hera[[33]](#endnote-33).

For Greek women, marriage meant the transition from *parthenos* (unmarried, virgin) to *gune* (married). There were two phases in this change, and different rites and ceremonies related to them: a phase of separation, of saying goodbye to *parthenos* life, symbolised by the goddess Artemis, and a phase of integration into a new home, watched over by Hera. Metaphorically, the girl was quitting Artemis’ savage world and entering the domain of Hera *Teleia* (fulfilled); this fulfilment was achieved through legal marriage, hence Hera was a symbol of the accomplishment awarded to women when they turned into wives[[34]](#endnote-34).

It is relevant that the protection of these goddesses was specially aimed at women and not at men. This may be because in a patriarchal society, such as the one in ancient Greece, men did not go through such a big change by getting married: the bridegroom was usually much older than the bride, and he had the chance to choose his wife and negotiate the wedding with her family. On the contrary, marriage for a Greek maiden was somewhat traumatic, as she moved abruptly from the life of childhood and the security of her family into the seclusion of a stranger’s house. Moreover, she was not allowed to decide about her partner, because her husband was chosen by her father[[35]](#endnote-35). It must be noted that, in Ancient Greece, women’s rights did not exist, and they were never considered as citizens even though they belonged to wealthy families. In fact, aristocratic young women were used as a commodity, a good to exchange with other families to obtain power, money, or other privileges. In his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss has referred to this general fact as “the rule of exogamy”, which means that men exchange women with other groups, thus creating new alliances.

Hera’s marriage was a bit different, anyway. Through her strong bond with Zeus – as his sister and his wife – she occupies a privileged position among the Greek gods, defined mainly by marriage and sovereignty. This explains why in so many classical mythological tales, and in the religious ceremonies and rites related to those tales, she was usually presented as *Teleia* (married) and *Basileia* (queen)[[36]](#endnote-36). In Hera, the wife and the queen are the same thing.

The *thalamos* (bedchamber) has an important symbolic role in this relationship, as their sharing of the bed presents Hera as ‘a legitimate wife, a wife so definitive that she can be the royalty of Zeus’[[37]](#endnote-37). Their common bed also symbolises their sexual life as a couple, as Hera is not just his wife, but Zeus’s only legitimate sexual partner as well[[38]](#endnote-38). This can be traced, for example, in Homer’s *Iliad*, Book I, when Zeus goes to bed to rest with Hera when the feast of the gods is over: ‘The lord of storm and lightning, Zeus, retired and shut his eyes where sweet sleep ever came to him, and at his side lay Hera, Goddess of the Golden Chair’[[39]](#endnote-39), and in Book XIV, when Hera tries to seduce Zeus to keep him away from the Trojan war and she refers to their *thalamos*. In this episode Hera, who has carefully planned her approach to Zeus and is ready for love in the open, pretends to resist it and refuses to consummate marriage outside their bedchamber. She says that she fears being seen while making love on Mount Ida, then she suggests that they should go to their *thalamos*. In order to make her feel comfortable, Zeus veils her in a golden cloud so they can have privacy, and she accepts[[40]](#endnote-40).

Regarding this tale, it is obvious that a bed, apart from being the place for sleeping, is also the place for sex, and this is why Hera insists on going there with her husband. But Zeus is so overwhelmed by desire that he cannot wait to return to their bedchamber, and he therefore creates its equivalent in a grassy meadow he magically causes to grow on the mountain, and he ensures their privacy with a golden cloud around them[[41]](#endnote-41). Homer, like other classical authors, was aware that the *lechos* was not just a piece of furniture, but also had an institutional meaning, especially for a woman, as it was the basis of her legitimate status as a wife, and this applied for this goddess as well as for women.

*Telos* (fulfilment), with respect to *gamos* (marriage), became intelligible through Hera *Teleia* and Zeus *Teleios*. They are the archetypal couple whose two components belong to one another like the halves of a unity[[42]](#endnote-42), and the fact of being brother and sister reinforces this interpretation. Since they are two sides of the same reality, they are meant to be together, and their divine wedding represents the strong bond that they share.

The kind of completion achieved by Zeus through their union, according to the Greek philosopher Proclus of Athens -fifth century AC-, had to do with an intellectual communion between the god – who represented Intellect in its purest essence – and the goddess, for the generation of subordinate entities. Their marriage is a metaphor of their cooperation for the purpose of creation[[43]](#endnote-43). On the other hand, Hera is the lawful wife and, with the cooperation of Zeus, De

miurge and Father, this goddess produces from herself all the classes of souls. Proclus supports his interpretation in the fact that Hera is considered the queen of the air (*aer*) under the moon, and the air is a symbol of soul[[44]](#endnote-44).

In her condition of Hera *Teleia*, the goddess represented the seeking of fulfilment through marriage, that is, by means of becoming a wife and engaging in a relationship with a husband to whom she was devoted. Under this epithet, she was a metaphor for the changes brought about by marriage: a young girl becomes a wife, and she must adapt to the husband’s *oikos* (house). Hera *Teleia* symbolised the achievement of this difficult process[[45]](#endnote-45), but from a wider perspective, Hera’s ‘trajectory from Great Goddess to whining wife represents the most dramatic transformation in this regard of all of the Greek goddesses’[[46]](#endnote-46).

Considering her ancient cult as a cyclical earth goddess, related to animals, sky, moon, fertility and underworld, her transformation into a faithful wife constantly cheated by her husband represents a loss of her former power, as she becomes subjected to the authority of Zeus. As a result, in the Homeric Olympus we see mirrored a family group of the ordinary patriarchal type, with Zeus, Father of Gods and men, as the supreme leader and Hera occupying the subordinate place of a wife, whereas the rest of the Olympians are grouped about Zeus and Hera in the relation of sons and daughters[[47]](#endnote-47). The following section will focus on the divine couple and their marital relationship.

**4. And they lived unhappily ever after**

According to Homeric and Hesiodic traditions, the union of Zeus and Hera formed the nucleus of the Olympian divine family, although she never fitted at all well in this patriarchal group. Several mythological tales give an account of their frequent fights and arguments, showing that their relationship was largely a tense and conflictive one, far from one of comfortable patriarchal control. Hera was reluctant to accept Zeus’s authority, whereas he tried repeatedly to impose his dominion over his wife and turn her into a submissive, quiet companion who did not question his decisions and his behaviour. According to Jane Harrison, it could be said that Hera is forcibly married, but she is never really a wife, and leaves wifely submission to the shadowy double of Zeus, the goddess Dione, who was the real Achaean patriarchal double[[48]](#endnote-48).

Zeus and Hera are engaged in a permanent challenge, in a dynamic of disputes and reconciliations where each one defends his or her status and prerogatives. Following Homer, Hesiod, Virgil or Ovid, *eris* (strife) is an essential feature of the character of Hera, connected to the defence of her role as a wife and of what she understands as an attack on her status when Zeus does not include her in his decisions or in his plans. Hera is the intimate enemy of Zeus, because she is the deity closest to him and she has the ability to find out about his intentions and actions even when he tries to keep them secret. Sometimes Zeus asks her for advice and accepts his wife’s requirements, but most of the times he takes the opportunity to show her and all the gods that he is the strongest and that his will surpasses anyone else’s[[49]](#endnote-49).

In a way, Homeric tradition presents Hera as an honourable goddess proud of her condition of wife-sister of Zeus, as can be seen in a fragment of one of his hymns to Hera[[50]](#endnote-50). Homer’s poems represent the historical context of the nineth and eighth centuries BC in Greece, the Early Iron Age. This was a period of growth and political stability in Mainland Greece, together with colonial foundations in the Aegean and in Italy. Homer’s inspiration comes from this immediate context and, in a way, the *Iliad* pictures the Trojan War as if it was a family affair: Zeus, Hera, and other gods and goddesses engage in a terrible dispute such as the ones that might take place in any Greek *oikos* in that time.

Ovid, the Latin poet who wrote during the firstcentury AC, lived in a cultural, political, and economic context very different from Homer’s, but he also faced a time of political stability in the Roman Empire. He shares with the Greek poet his perspective on Hera, represented as a noble and somehow conceited goddess. In his *Fasti*, Ovid explains the origins of the name of the month of June, devoted to Juno (the Latin equivalent for Hera) and, in their imaginary conversation, the goddess tells the poet that she is extremely proud of being Jupiter’s bride and Jupiter’s sister, and she also emphasises the importance of her marriage and her status as ‘Thunderer’s lady’[[51]](#endnote-51).

But, in spite of these ideal images of Hera as a happy wife, the same classical authors bring together other stories where opposition and conflict between the couple are clearly noticeable. Very often, Hera does not play the role of a quiet wife but, on the contrary, insists on arguing with Zeus about some issue in which she totally disagrees with him. Zeus is aware of Hera’s opposition to his decisions and he also knows that she cannot be easily defeated, so he adopts the strategy of hiding from her or of threatening her. That is the case in *Iliad*, Book 1, when Hera suspects that Zeus has a secret deal with Thetis to help the Trojans and, when she asks Zeus about it, he replies in a very aggressive way:

And now you just sit down, be still, obey me,

or else not all the gods upon Olympos

can help in the least when I approach your chair

to lay my inexorable hands upon you[[52]](#endnote-52).

Homer also mentions a previous punishment that Zeus applied to Hera, hung up on high amid the clouds, suspended from her feet. Apparently, this tale comes from an earlier tradition in which Hera received the punishment of a cosmic slave (bound and fixed in mid-air) for rebelling against Zeus[[53]](#endnote-53). Robert Graves refers to this episode as well: Zeus’s petulance became so intolerable that Hera and other Olympians surrounded him as he lay asleep and bound him with a rope, knotted into a hundred knots, so that he could not move. Thetis the Nereid, afraid of the situation, asked the hundred-handed Briareus to untie Zeus. Once the god was free, he punished Hera, as she had led the conspiracy. Zeus hung her up from the sky, and he prevented the other deities from helping her. In the end Zeus undertook to free her if they swore never more to rebel against him[[54]](#endnote-54).

Back to the *Iliad*, which narrates a few quarrels between the divine couple, Book IV tells how Hera is forced to recognise the superiority of Zeus and bear his decision to support the Trojans, but still shows her disagreement and reminds him of her status as sister and wife, insisting on their equality of rank:

[…] I will not interfere.

I will not grudge you these. And if I should?

Why, balking and withholding my consent

would gain me nothing, since the power you hold

so far surpasses mine.

My labor, though,

should not be thwarted; I am immortal, too,

your stock and my stock are the same. Our father,

Kronos of crooked wit, engendered me

to hold exalted rank, by birth and by

my standing as your queen – since you are lord

of all immortal gods[[55]](#endnote-55).

Hera is obliged to accept the authority of her husband, but she does not feel comfortable at all with her subordinated role and she shows it to him and to the other deities whenever she has the chance. The very few times when Zeus is willing to listen to her, she complains about the way he treats her, but she also talks to other gods and goddesses about the disdain and lack of consideration dispensed by her husband. As an example of that, in *Iliad*, Book XV, Hera is sent by Zeus to ask Poseidon to quit the war, and she must accept the task against her will. Afterwards, she goes back to Olympus in a very bad mood and Themis notices, so she tells her: ‘Oh, how dazed you look! Your husband must have given you a fright!’ At this, Hera replies: ‘No need to ask, my lovely Themis. You know how harsh and arrogant he is’[[56]](#endnote-56). This brief conversation between these two goddesses is very interesting, not only because it reflects their friendship and mutual understanding, but also because it has a powerful symbolism, since Themis, the Greek goddess of justice, knows that Zeus does not treat Hera in a proper, fair way, and she sees the injustice and inequality in their marriage, and somehow warns Hera about it.

The asymmetry between Zeus and Hera can be pictured in the episodes above mentioned, but also in the contrast between Hera’s ‘chastity’ and Zeus’s ‘promiscuity’, if we might use those contemporary terms to refer to these ancient myths. Even in her cult as an Olympian goddess, queen of heaven and wife of Zeus, Hera seems to keep some of her former features as a *parthenos* Great Goddess, and despite her husband’s recurrent love affairs with goddesses and women, she refuses to stain their sacred *thalamos*. The promiscuity of Zeus represents his self-doubt, a kind of Don Juan syndrome by which he achieves emotional distance from women, according to Slater’s interpretation of this myth[[57]](#endnote-57). Hera of course is not happy with the situation, but she is still scrupulous not to dishonour her husband’s bed. As Hera *Teleia*, she protected monogamous marriage, ‘or – as seen from the woman’s point of view – the fulfilment of herself through a single husband, to whom she should be the single wife’, Kerényi claims[[58]](#endnote-58). We consider that Kerényi’s reading of Hera, quite interesting in general terms, provides a very traditional and extremely narrow interpretation of women’s expectations towards marriage at this point, because fulfilment can be reached in different ways even in classical Greece, where women’s freedom was very restricted, and also because we could presume that, given the fact that most women were not allowed to choose their husband, happy and fulfilling marriages in that context were quite a rare exception. The myth around Hera is, in any case, contradictory, as she represents a powerful goddess who defies her husband and, at the same time, she protects the *thalamos* and traditional marriage.

Her role as protector of the monogamous marriage has been cited to explain her jealousy and hatred of sons born to Zeus by others, especially when this offspring would entail a menace for her and her power. Dionysus and Heracles are very good examples of that: they are meant to reach immortality, and this places them as a direct target for Hera’s *eris*.

However, it must be noted that Hera’s attitude towards Zeus’s lovers is ambivalent and quite selective, for she inflicts hard punishments and sufferings on some of them – as in the case of Semele, Leto, Alcmene and Io – and does not pay any attention at all to others. The different status of these women may be the criterion for this diversity in Hera’s response to Zeus’s infidelities: she is furious when her husband engages with mortal women, but she does not take it so seriously when he sleeps with other deities.

Apollodorus, in his *Library*, provides some details about Hera’s behaviour and reactions against some of the women with whom Zeus has an affair. For instance, he refers to Latona, or Leto, who, ‘for her intrigue with Zeus was hunted by Hera over the whole earth, till she came to Delos and brought forth first Artemis, by the help of whose midwifery she afterwards gave birth to Apollo’[[59]](#endnote-59). The Homeric *Hymn to Apollon* includes a larger description of this episode, where all the Olympian goddesses are next to Leto while she is giving birth, all but Hera, who stays away from the scene and who also prevents Eileithyia, goddess of labour pains, from helping this woman. The other goddesses send Iris to find Eileithyia and offer her a necklace if she undertakes to assist Leto in her delivery. She receives the gift and then goes to Delos. Hence, after nine days and nine nights of suffering, Leto finally gives birth to Artemis and Apollon[[60]](#endnote-60).

In a similar way, Hera hinders the birth of Heracles, and this story is told by many classical authors. Apollodorus mentions that, when the hero was about to be born, ‘Zeus declared among the gods that the descendant of Perseus then about to be born would reign over Mycenae, and Hera out of jealousy persuaded the Ilithyas to retard Alcmena’s delivery’[[61]](#endnote-61). Diodorus Siculus also accuses Hera of interfering in Heracles’ birth. In his version, an angry Juno sends Lucina, her daughter, to delay the process, so Euristeus, Heracles’ brother, is born first. Jupiter yields to Juno’s anger and, as result, Euristeus is recognised as Jupiter’s son while Heracles is under his command[[62]](#endnote-62).

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* claim that it was Lucina, sent by Juno, who delayed Heracles’ delivery. Alcmene complains about Lucina, who, for seven days and seven nights, sat in front of Alcmene’s door with her legs crossed and her fingers intertwined, and by doing this she prevented the baby’s birth. Galanthis, one of Alcmene’s servants, lied to Lucina and told her that Alcmene had just delivered her new baby. When the goddess of birth stood up in consternation, and her legs and fingers went back to a normal position, Heracles was born. Galanthis was punished for her action and turned into a weasel[[63]](#endnote-63).

Io, a former priestess of Hera, also suffered the goddess’s wrath. According to Apollodorus, Zeus seduced Io and, since Hera was about to find out, he turned the young girl into a white cow. Hera requested her as a present and placed her under the surveillance of one hundred-eyed giant Argos. Afterwards, Zeus sent Hermes to kill Argos and set Io free. She wandered around the world, chased by Hera, until she arrived in Egypt, recovered her human form and gave birth to Epaphus, son of Zeus[[64]](#endnote-64). A similar version appears in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, although the Latin author emphasises Hera’s anger and bitterness when punishing Io[[65]](#endnote-65).

Both Apollodorus and Ovid also mention the story of Semele, another of Zeus’s lovers who had a very sad end. Hera convinced mortal Semele to ask Zeus for a proof of his real identity, so he should appear before her with all his Olympian attributes. He did and, when he entered her house with his thunders and lightnings, the place was set on fire and Semele burnt to death. Zeus had time to rescue Dionysus, the baby she had in her womb, and transferred him to his thigh, so the young god survived[[66]](#endnote-66).

In all these mythologems Hera is portrayed as an aggressive and jealous goddess whose anger and wrath are directed towards other women that she sees as her rivals. From a rational perspective, her behaviour may seem tremendously unfair, as the young girls are severely punished whereas Zeus does not face any consequences for his bad behaviour, even though he is the unfaithful one, and most of the times he plays an active role in seducing, chasing or raping these women. The offspring of these extramarital adventures also suffer Hera’s revenge, as in the case of Heracles, to whose cradle Hera sent two snakes, though the baby survived by strangling them[[67]](#endnote-67).

Zeus, on the other hand, also behaves as a jealous husband, which is nonetheless a paradox considering his recurrent promiscuity. For instance, he punished Endymion for trying to seduce Hera and sent him to Hades[[68]](#endnote-68), and he destroyed the giant Porphyrion with a thunderbolt when he tried to force Hera[[69]](#endnote-69). Ixion, who also suffered Zeus’s jealousy, is a more complex character. Zeus had an affair with Ixion’s wife and, as a revenge, he tried to seduce Hera. Then Zeus created a double of Hera, so Ixion could have sexual intercourse with that double believing he was with the authentic goddess. Then it was proved that Ixion was guilty of desiring Hera, and he was condemned to eternal punishment in Tartarus, chained to a fiery wheel[[70]](#endnote-70).

Having analysed all these mythological episodes, the picture of Zeus and Hera is very distant from one of a happy marriage -as seen from a contemporary perspective-: they do not share the same status, they have frequent fights, they do not trust each other, and Zeus is the prototype of a patriarchal, abusive husband who does not hesitate to threaten or punish his wife if she does not please him. Their marital bond is more a matter of status than a matter of affection, and whenever they feel jealousy, it has to do with being defied by others, and not with a real fear of losing the loved one.

That this couple were, among the ancient Greeks, the main reference for human marriage, reflects the common beliefs and social practices of this society, where women belonged to their father and then to their husband, and they lacked any recognition as citizens or the right to live their life as they wanted. As a stereotypical Greek wife, Hera reminded every woman that it was the relationship with men that marked out the rhythm of a woman’s life. Her ancient cult in Stymphalus, already mentioned in the previous section, was related to that: before marriage, she was identified as *Parthenos* or *Pais*; after her wedding she became *Teleia*, a fulfilled wife whose fulfilment was achieved only and exclusively by her bond with her husband; and in the end of her life cycle she was *Chera*, empty, without a man, that is, a widow or an abandoned woman.

**5. Hera’s paradoxes: guardian of marriage and supporter of Zeus’s sovereignty**

The previous sections have noted that Hera, under the epithet *Teleia*, was considered the goddess protector of human marriage; but her role regarding marriage is even wider, because she was also the protector of divine bonds. In fact, and in contrast with Zeus’s attitude, it seems that she cared more about their marriage than her husband, at least in connection with faithfulness and respect for the sacred *thalamos*.

The important fact here is that Hera shares the conjugal bed with Zeus as his only legitimate wife and partner, and this means that she also shares his power and sovereignty in a way that no other lover of Zeus will be able to achieve. But even though she has an outstanding and very powerful position when compared with other goddesses, deities and human women, Hera’s sovereignty is not as absolute and unrestricted as Zeus’s, and in spite of being the queen of heaven, she is above all the wife of a patriarchal god, hence she is subject to him.

For the classical poets, Hera has her place next to Zeus and, in her role as queen of heaven, she holds a sceptre in her hand and watches from above the actions of the mortals. This image reflects the political dimension of the goddess and of the couple that she constitutes with her husband[[71]](#endnote-71). In a way, Hera *Teleia* and *Basileia* represents the highest level of power allowed to women in ancient Greek society, a power of which she is not the original holder or the main source, but which is instead a sovereignty that is subsidiary and dependant on the status of her male partner. In contrast with her previous cult as a Great Goddess of nature, life and fertility, the transformation of Hera into Zeus’s wife can be interpreted as a dramatic loss of her former strength.

Still, even when she is compelled to act under the shadow of her husband, mythological tales from different authors and different times show that Hera is indeed a woman of action, whose main function is sovereignty[[72]](#endnote-72). Like other Greek goddesses such as Athena, Artemis or Demeter, Hera does not behave as a ‘good Greek woman’ should: she is highly active in public affairs, takes part in warfare, and sees no need to stay confined to domestic life[[73]](#endnote-73). According to Homer’s *Iliad*, she plays a very active role in the war of Troy, and she insists on interfering in human affairs, staying in the middle of the battlefield, and at times disobeying Zeus’s will.

Hera is also a protagonist character in the conflicts and events narrated in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, although in this case her action is portrayed in a more negative way than in the Homeric tradition. This preeminent Latin poet was born in the first century BC near Mantua, a city in northern Italy. He witnessed the First and the Second Triumvirate, always menaced by civil war and internal strife, and the *Aeneid* represents part of this violent context. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that the picture of Hera provided by Virgil is that of an irrational goddess full of anger against the Trojans and with an endless desire for revenge[[74]](#endnote-74). This goddess also plays a major role in the story of Heracles, since some of the twelve labours that the classical hero must accomplish to win his immortality are directly or indirectly related to Hera.

As a divine wife, Hera is the guardian of the divine *oikos*, that is, Olympus, and ‘she supervises its integrity and presides in her way over the integration of new members, thus revealing herself as a real power of legitimation’[[75]](#endnote-75). In fact, any deity aspiring to be part of the Olympian family must count on her approval, and this applies especially to Zeus’s sons and daughters. For instance, Hera tried to punish Leto while she was giving birth to her offspring by Zeus, but the goddess did not show any resistance to recognising the siblings Apollo and Artemis as legitimate members of the Olympian pantheon. This is also the case with Athena: Hera was furious with Zeus when he delivered this goddess from his own head, but afterwards she did not deny her the right to live in Olympus and play a central role as Zeus’s daughter.

In contrast, Dionysus and Heracles, both sons of mortal women, are not entitled at first to access the divine realm, but then Hera, as the guardian of the threshold of Olympus, tests these two sons of Zeus in order to prove their legitimacy. Dionysus’ test is not as hard as Heracles’, and in spite of Hera’s initial rejection he gains his place among the Olympians by helping to release the goddess from a throne-trap created by Hephaistos. Very briefly, the story goes that Hera was ashamed of Hephaistos, her disabled son, and she kept him away from Olympus. Hephaistos was a great craftsman, and he had the task of fashioning thrones for the Olympians. One day, in an act of revenge against Hera, he sent a beautiful throne for her, and as she sat on the throne she was suddenly bound with invisible chains, and none of the gods was able to release her. They asked Hephaistos to come and free his mother, but he refused. Dionysus alone was able to get Hephaistos to Olympus, by intoxicating him with wine. He finally set Hera free, but he asked to marry Aphrodite in exchange[[76]](#endnote-76). The deal was accepted, and Hera recognised Dionysus as a member of the Olympian *oikos*.

Heracles, whose name is etymologically related to Hera – it means ‘the glory of Hera’ – has a more controversial relationship with the goddess, for they are intimately related even before the hero is born, as has already been mentioned, and ‘no one suffered Hera’s wrath so persistently as Heracles’[[77]](#endnote-77). Hera does not want him to become a sovereign in the human realm, and she also hinders some of the labours imposed on Heracles by King Eurystheus[[78]](#endnote-78). But in the end, once he accomplishes the twelve hard tasks, Hera finally accepts him into the Olympian family. Heracles gains immortality and he even marries Hebe, Hera’s own daughter[[79]](#endnote-79), and this may be seen as his full recognition as an equal with the other gods and goddesses.

As a guardian of the divine realm, Hera takes her task very seriously, and this means that she can deny her own sons the right to be members of the Olympian *oikos* if she considers them unworthy. This is what happens with Hephaistos, rejected by his own mother because he does not look as good as he should – although she is reconciled with him when he becomes a fine craftsman – and with Ares as well: in the *Iliad*, he is presented as an extremely aggressive and violent god, to the point that his own father and sister complain about it[[80]](#endnote-80). For Ares, his bad temper and his taste for *eris* prevent him from being admitted as a full member of the divine family headed by Zeus and Hera.

Closely related to her role of protector of Olympus, it must be mentioned that Hera’s episodes of opposition to her husband may also, in a way, work as a means of strengthening and reaffirming his sovereignty. This is the interpretation provided by Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti: they consider that the ancient Greeks privileged an image of Hera as ‘a counter-power which does not cease to challenge her partner, but these challenges have the aim, on the first place, to reinforce Zeus’s sovereignty’[[81]](#endnote-81). In most of their fights, Zeus is the winner, and Hera’s opposition gives him the chance to demonstrate his power to his wife, but also to the rest of the deities and to humans. From his perspective, frightening and threatening Hera, and forcing her to obey him, works as a warning for the others: if he is capable of treating his own sister and wife like that, he will be even tougher towards anybody else who may dare to challenge him.

Hera’s anger seeks confrontation, and it shows her nonconformity with the patriarchal rules that Zeus tries to impose on her. She responds to the challenges and punishes any lack of respect, so her *eris* is ‘a means of affirming her power’[[82]](#endnote-82) and vindicating her rank and sovereignty.

The Homeric portrait of the Olympian family is very traditional and reflects human relations: ‘Zeus, Father of Gods and men, is supreme; Hera, though in constant and significant revolt, occupies the subordinate place of a wife’[[83]](#endnote-83), and this, not jealousy, is the main reason for their frequent disputes. They fight, stay away from each other – according to the main mythological tales, it is usually Hera who quits Olympus and seeks solitude when she is angry with Zeus – but they never go through a definitive breakup, and in the end they always reconcile and come back together. This shift allows ‘the periodic renewal of both the order of Zeus and the sovereign status of Hera’[[84]](#endnote-84) and, in the end, helps to strengthen the stability and durability of their marriage and allows the sharing of divine power to prevail with due measure accorded to each member of the couple.

**6. Areas of light and shadow within Hera’s maternal side**

The classical authors are very inconsistent in whom they refer to as Hera’s offspring. According to Hesiod and Apollodorus, Hera and Zeus had two daughters, Hebe (goddess of Youth) and Eileithyia (goddess of birth), and one son, Ares. Hesiod also says that Hera had Hephaistos by herself, that is, parthenogenetically[[85]](#endnote-85). Homer’s *Iliad*, Book V, refers to Ares as a son of Zeus, although they have a very tense relationship, as already explained in the previous section. Hephaistos is considered a son of Hera and Zeus as well: in *Iliad,* Book I, Hephaistos calls him ‘Father’ and asks Hera to be quiet and avoid arguing with Zeus, otherwise he will be angry and spoil the gods’ feast.[[86]](#endnote-86)

The Homeric *Hymn to Apollon* tells another story: Hera was enraged because Zeus had given birth to Athena and, as a revenge, she asked for the help of Earth and Sky to become pregnant without having sexual intercourse with a male, and have a child stronger than Zeus. The gods listened to her plea, and one year later she gave birth to Typhaon, a terrible monster[[87]](#endnote-87). According to Ovid’s *Fasti*, after the birth of Athena and as a result of Hera’s anger it was Ares, and not Typhaon, who was conceived parthenogenetically, and the Latin author claims that it was the goddess Flora who helped her to achieve her goal, by using a magical flower which caused Hera’s immediate pregnancy[[88]](#endnote-88).

As a mother, Hera resembled Earth and shared her power of bypassing the male and giving birth to a wide variety of children, some of them monstrous but others as perfect as Hebe[[89]](#endnote-89). Her masculine offspring is particularly interesting here, as the different tales about the parthenogenetic sons of Hera share something in common: for this goddess, having a son (be it Ares, Hephaistos or Typhaon) is an act of revenge against her husband and a means of demonstrating her own autonomous power: she can have sons by herself, she does not need Zeus for reproduction. Hera’s reaction to Zeus’s challenge of giving birth to Athena from his own head is bitter and violent: in the milder version she bears Ares, the god of war, and in the wilder one she brings forth Typhaon, a terrifying monster with a hundred dragons’ heads. In all cases, in the parthenogenetic revenges that she plans, ‘Hera does not miss highlighting the sacrality of the conjugal bed, which she will not stain’[[90]](#endnote-90). This shows that her gestations are subordinated to her condition of Hera *Teleia*, and even though she is at times possessed by *eris*, she will not act against the sacred bonds of the institution of marriage, of which she is the guardian.

Hera’s sons are her means of defying Zeus’s power, since they belong to the old matrilineal system represented by the goddess. All the Olympian sons and daughters of Zeus obey him, they are under his command and, very importantly, they are single, so they are not likely to become a menace for him. The danger could only arise from a parthenogenetic son of Hera[[91]](#endnote-91). In fact, Ares and Hephaistos, and Typhaon above all, are aggressive towards Zeus; at different levels they become adversaries of the god, and they aspire to take over his divine power and supreme sovereignty. But Zeus defeats all of them and, in the end, none of Hera’s parthenogenetic sons are capable of entering the patriarchal triangle[[92]](#endnote-92). The case of Typhaon is particularly meaningful in this sense: he engages in a battle with Zeus for the dominant position over gods and humans but is defeated by his adversary in a great battle. With that, Zeus’s way is fully cleared to become the ruler of the cosmos[[93]](#endnote-93).

Nicole Loraux claims, regarding Hera, that ‘the maternal dimension is strangely absent from the character of the goddess’[[94]](#endnote-94), where ‘maternal dimension’ shall be understood as a historical construction related to an attitude of caring, nurturing, and guarding the offspring, traditionally attributed to women. Hera does not play that role with her sons and daughters -Hebe might be an exception of that-, but she is indeed a very prolific mother, at least from a merely biological perspective, only in her case her maternity is subordinated to her status as a wife. Unlike other ‘maternal’ goddesses who protect their offspring – Gaia, Rhea or Demeter among others – Hera does the contrary: she rejects Hephaistos, and she sends Athena to hurt Ares[[95]](#endnote-95). The main reason for this behaviour may be found in her condition of Hera *Teleia*, the perfect wife for Zeus, as the fulfilment of this role makes it impossible for her to be a ‘perfect mother’. In the Olympian realm, she has to choose between being a wife and being a mother, she is neither allowed nor expected to be both, as is the case for human women. It is a tough decision, but she finally allies with Zeus, ‘and she interrupts with the same movement the transmission of power from one divine generation to another’[[96]](#endnote-96). In the divine world where they belong there can be no heir, and this means that she is condemned to be an accomplished mother: she does not, must not give her husband a worthy son who may substitute him, as this would mean the end of Zeus’s eternal sovereignty over the gods and the humans.

**7. Conclusion**

In classical Greek religion, Hera emerges as a powerful goddess with many faces that allow for different layers of interpretation. From being an ancient goddess of nature and fertility, she became the wife of Zeus, the sovereign of the gods, and this added new aspects to her former cult, thus enriching the complexity of this female deity. Hera never was a compliant wife, as it has been noted in this paper, for she was competitive, proud of herself and willing to argue with her husband whenever she disagreed with him. She rebels against Zeus’s disdain and abusive manners, and their marital relationship is trapped in a dynamic of fights and reconciliations. But they always come back together and, even though from a human perspective theirs may be an ‘unhappy marriage’, it seems to work for the divine realm where they belong, and Hera’s opposition, in the end, is a means of demonstrating the prevalence of Zeus’s sovereignty.

At first sight, Hera may not be the ‘perfect wife’ expected by a patriarchal husband, but a second glance shows a totally different picture, as she contributes to the glory and power of Zeus. As Hera *Teleia*, she guards her chastity and never stains the sacred *thalamos*, and she protects the threshold of the divine *oikos,* forbidding access to any unworthy members who may undermine Zeus’s authority. On top of that, Hera does not have any offspring meant to substitute the father, since all her sons are, in one way or another, weaker and inferior to Zeus. What else could a wife possibly do for her husband?

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1. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Mito y razón*, trans. José Francisco Zúñiga (Barcelona: Paidós, 1997), 21. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Hesiod, “Theogony”, in *The poems of Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, The Shield of Herakles*, trans. Barry B. Powell (Oakland: University of California Press, [2017]), *Theog.* 364–8; and Apollodorus, *The Library*, trans. James George Frazer (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press and London, William Heinemann Ltd., [1976]), Apollod.1.1.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Joseph Campbell, *Goddesses: Mysteries of the feminine divine* (Novato: New World Library, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Marguerite Rigoglioso, *Virgin Mother Goddesses of Antiquity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. This question has already been discussed in a previous work: Olaya Fernández Guerrero, “El hilo de la vida. Diosas tejedoras en la mitología griega”, *Feminismo/s* 20 (2012): 107-125. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Pausanias, *Pausanias’ Guide to Greece*, trans. Thomas Taylor (Dorset: The Prometheus Trust, [2006]), Paus.7.4. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Joan V. O’Brien, *The Transformation of Hera: A Study of Ritual, Hero, and the Goddess in the* Iliad (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1993), 41. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. O’Brien, *Transformation of Hera*, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Carl Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera: Archetypal Image of Father, Husband, and Wife*, trans. Christopher Holme (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 163–4. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Rigoglioso, *Virgin Mother Goddesses*, 73. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See Pausanias, *Paus*.2 and *Paus*.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Pausanias, *Paus*.2.38. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Georges Devereux, *Femme et Mythe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 133–5. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Pierre Brulé, *Women of Ancient Greece*, trans.Antonia Nevill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Carl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, trans. Norman Cameron (London: Thames and Hudson, 1951), 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Campbell, *Goddesses*, 131. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Campbell, *Goddesses*, 135. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Hesiod, *Theogony*, Hes. *Theog.*696–707. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 26–27. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Devereux, *Femme et Mythe*, 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Kerényi, *The Gods*, 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Everyman's Library, [1992]), *Il.*14.260–2. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Robert Graves, *Greek Myths* (London: Cassell & Company, 1958), 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Pausanias, *Paus.*2.36. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Bachofen’s myth of matriarchy has been largely discussed in recent decades and, according to some authors such as Joan Bamberger, this thesis only contributes to reinforce the virtues of chaste love and monogamous marriage. This might be the case with Hera’s story as well. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 123. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Brulé, *Women,* 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Pausanias, *Paus.*9.3. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 179. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, Vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 105. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Louise Bruit Zaidman, “Les filles de Pandore. Femmes et rituels dans les cites”, in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, Vol. 1, L'Antiquite, dirs. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Paris: Éditions Plon, 1991), 387–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Slater, *Glory of Hera*, 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus: Ennemie intime, épouse definitive* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2016), 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti, “La féminité des déesses à l'épreuve des épiclèses: le cas d’Héra”, in *La religion des femmes en Grèce ancienne: Mythes, cultes et société*, ed. Lydie Bodiou and Vèronique Mehl (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 102. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. José Carlos Bermejo Barrera, “Zeus, Hera y el matrimonio sagrado”, *Polis: revista de ideas y formas políticas de la Antigüedad* 1 (1989): 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Homer, Hom. *Il.*1.609–11. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Homer, Hom. *Il.*14.257–377. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1996), 27–8. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 92. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Proclus, *On Plato Cratylus*, trans. Brian Duvick (London: Duckworth, [2007]), Procl. *In Crat.*§146. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Proclus, Procl. *In Crat.*§169–170. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *La féminité des déesses*, 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Rigoglioso, *Virgin Mother Goddesses*, 79. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 260. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Harrison, *Study of Greek Religion*, 316. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *La féminité des déesses*, 105–6. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Homer, *Hymn to Hera* (fragment), in Homer, *The Homeric Hymns*, transl. and ed. Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, [1976], Hom., *Hymn to Hera*.1–5. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Ovid, *Ovid's Fasti: Roman Holidays*, trans. Betty Rose Nagle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, [1995]), Ov. *Fast*.6.25–34. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Homer, *Iliad*, Hom., *Il.*1.501–58. Here we have a mythological episode of gender-based violence, with a patriarchal, dominant husband who threatens his wife in order to keep her under control. He succeeds in his intentions, as she feels fear of him and ends up accepting his will and hiding her disagreement to avoid a potential punishment inflicted by him. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. O’Brien, *Transformation of Hera*, 100. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Graves, *Greek Myths*, 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Homer,*Iliad,* Hom. *Il.*4.10–65. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Homer,*Iliad*, Hom. *Il.*15.12–73. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Slater, *Glory of Hera*, 132. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Kerényi, *The Gods*,158. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.1.4.1. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Homer, “Homeric Hymn to Apollon”, in Homer, *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. and ed. Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, [1976],. Hom. *Hymn. Hom. Ap*. 91–116. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.2.4.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Diodorus Siculus, *The* Bibliotheca Historica *of Diodorus Siculus*, transl. and ed. John Skelton, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, [1956]), Diod. Sic.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Ovid, *The* Metamorphoses *of Ovid*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Books, [1955]), Ov. *Met*.9 [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.2.1.3. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*,Ov. *Met*.1*.* [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Cf. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.3.4.3 and Ov. *Met*.3. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.2.4.8. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Devereux, *Femme et Mythe*, 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.1.6.2. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Devereux, *Femme et Mythe*, 44–8. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Giulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 33–5 [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. . Radek Chlup, “On the Nature of the Gods: Methodological Suggestions for the Study of Greek Divinities”, *History of Religions* 58 no. 2 (2018) 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Virgil, *The Aeneid: A new prose translation*, trans. David West (London: Penguin Books. [1991]). The Latin author refers to the goddess as ‘the savage Juno’ (*Aen*.7.592), or ‘cruel queen’ (*Aen*.10.45).  [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 51. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Kerényi, *The Gods*,157–8. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Slater, *Glory of Hera*, 340. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. The interferences of Hera in Heracles’ labours are explained in detail in Apollodorus, *Library*, Apollod.2. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Hesiod, Theogony, Hes. *Theog.*746–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. These references can be found mainly in the *Iliad*, Hom. *Il.*5, when Athena complains to Zeus about Ares’ behaviour, and later on, when Zeus tells Ares that he hates him the most and accuses him of being violent and truculent just like his mother, Hera. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 52. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 59. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Harrison, *Study of Greek Religion*, 260. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Hesiod, *Theogony*, Hes. *Theog.*723–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Homer, *Iliad*, Hom. *Il.*1.501–58. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Homer, *Hymn Apollon*, Hom. *Hymn. Hom. Ap*. 305–55. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Ovid, *Fasti*, Ov. *Fast*.5.229–58. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Sissa and Detienne, *Daily Life*, 209. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. Devereux, *Femme et Mythe*, 179. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera*, 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. Rigoglioso, *Virgin Mother Goddesses*, 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. Nicole Loraux, “Qu'est-ce qu'un déesse?”, in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, Vol. 1, L'Antiquite, dirs. Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (Paris: Éditions Plon, 1991), 42. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *La féminité des déesses*, 107. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti, *L’Hera de Zeus*, 332. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)