

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

Was Diana molded from clay by her mother or is she the daughter of Zeus? Dropping her first origin story for the more recent comic books' revisionist history could shape the future of the DC movie universe. **BY DOUGLAS WOLK**

"SHE MUST NEVER KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT what she is."

Hippolyta's words, uttered in a conspiratorial whisper in a scene from *Wonder Woman*, suggest that she's concealing something vitally important from her royal child. The single line of dialogue hints at one of the great questions at the center of the new film—namely, how will it treat Diana's evolving creation myth?

When William Moulton Marston conceived the character, she was born as a miracle of love. Queen Hippolyte (later Hippolyta), longing for a child, molded a baby from clay, and the goddess Aphrodite brought the infant to life. That story stood for decades, until Brian Azzarello and Cliff Chiang dared to radically reimagine her background during their 2011-2014 run on the *Wonder Woman* comics.

Shocked fans discovered that Diana was in fact the illegitimate child of Hippolyta and Zeus, the king of the Greek gods, and plenty viewed the move as something close to a betrayal that robbed Diana of her purely feminine beginnings.

But certain clues suggest that screenwriter Allan Heinberg might be hewing closely to that controversial revisionist history. For starters the lusty god is name-checked onscreen: "I have no father," Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman announces. "I was brought to life by Zeus." What's more, her powers explode with an untamed golden energy reminiscent of lightning, and her costume features an eagle—both symbols traditionally associated with Zeus.

From a storytelling point of view, deviating from the origin of Marston's invention could offer several payoffs. Having Hippolyta betray Diana's trust by lying about her heritage gives Wonder Woman a genuine source of angst and a considerable emotional obstacle to conquer. Learning a difficult truth about one's own past is a time-tested character builder—heroes

from Superman to Luke Skywalker have had to grapple with discovering life-changing news about their parentage and find ways to move forward.

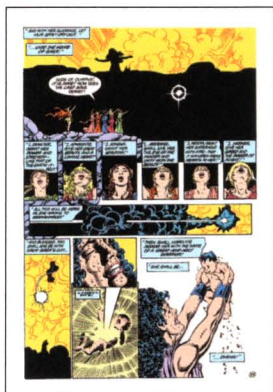
It also strengthens Wonder Woman's ties to Greek mythology. If she is Zeus's offspring, that would make her a half sister to Aphrodite and Hercules (and to Artemis, the Greek equivalent of the Roman hunting goddess, Diana).

The significance of Wonder Woman as a (half-)

divine entity might well go beyond that too, as far as DC's future movies are concerned. Among the best-loved *Justice League* comics are writer Grant Morrison's late-'90s run, which presented the League's members as analogues to the Greek pantheon. It's easy to see how that framework would fit the lineup for the *Justice League* movie due later this year: Aquaman as Poseidon of the oceans; Cyborg as the maker Hephaestus; the Flash as the speedster Hermes.

Justice League's villain could offer the final clue: Steppenwolf, who will be played by Ciarán Hinds, first appeared in Jack Kirby's early-'70s comics series *New Gods*.

Who better than the daughter of one of the oldest gods to help oppose the new?



Diana's earthly origins in 1987's *Wonder Woman* #1, above; mirroring Hippolyta with young Diana, right.

