

**Elsa Marston.** *The Ugly Goddess*. Chicago: Cricket Books, 2002. 218 pp. \$16.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8126-2667-4.



**Reviewed by** Alexandra O'Brien

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In this novel for nine- to twelve-year-olds, Marston tells us of the interweaving lives of Bata, a lowly sculptor's assistant; Hector, a young Greek soldier and son of an important Greek general; and Meret, Pharaoh's daughter, destined to become the Divine Wife of Amun. Fate brings together these very different individuals as Hector befriends Bata and together they plan to rescue Meret after political intrigues intervene in her father's plans. Bata's purpose is to restore a special statue of the goddess Taweret (the Ugly Goddess of the title) to Meret, while Hector seeks to win her love.

Marston has crafted an engaging plot set in the politically complex world of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty in which the position of Divine Wife of Amun did play an important role. We are also introduced to the idea of foreign mercenaries working within Egypt, of the growing strength of the Persian Empire and the threat it poses to Egypt in this period, as well as the concept of personal religion through Bata's relationship with Taweret, embodied in the statue with which he converses and which he (alone) sees move.

This book is a very enjoyable read and can be highly recommended.

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