

Smash the Patriarchy: A Graphic Novel

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Smash the Patriarchy is a graphic history about societies dominated by men—and about the women who fought (and continue to fight) against them.

Beginning in ancient Greece with Aristotle's idea that women were inferior to men, the book's short, entertaining, educational scenes deliver strong messages. Highlights include double-page spreads featuring historical figures and their infamous quotes, as with Renoir's "Woman is only useful as ovary... and womb." These pages give a sense of the overwhelming social obstacles women have faced. Still other spreads show women who resisted patriarchy throughout history. These are a powerful reversal and counterweight, with memorable quotes like Malala Yousafzai's "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."

The narrative style brings home the scale of the injustices done to women while still remaining optimistic and celebrating the fortitude of those who try to change society for the better. The book explains concepts like "the male gaze" with clear, illustrative examples, as of the ubiquity of strip club scenes in films. It challenges the use of the word "genius" as it has been applied to men throughout history. And it does all this while maintaining a sense of humor: at the end, the three "worst sexists" in history are named—with a long list of (dis)honorable mentions.

With illustrations that are attentive to details and that depict a vast array of likenesses and settings at a brisk pace, *Smash the Patriarchy* is an engaging graphic novel that comments on men's power and women's efforts to achieve equality.

PETER DABBENE (September / October 2023)

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