

### **Critique of Wes Hempel's *Fatherhood***

Wes Hempel's 1997 painting of *Fatherhood* shows what it's like to be a dad in the contemporary society. In the past, Greek/Roman men weren't the ones who were caretakers for the children; women were the ones that fulfilled that role during that time. In the modern world today, it is more common to see a father taking care of his child compared to the olden days. Females have long since been taking care of children for generation after generations. When the roles switch, and a male has to do what women have done for decades, fatherhood doesn't come easy for men. The reaction that the male is giving to the viewers is like the idiom "it's all Greek to me." One look at his face shows that he's a neophyte and doesn't know what he should do.

Hempel is able to successfully capture the image that was being portrayed in the painting. Just by taking one look at the father's face expression, one can tell the exact emotion he's feeling at that moment. The children are turning to him for their needs and he looks overwhelmed with the responsibility that he has been bestowed. He looks out into the audience almost with an astonished and bewildered look. Hempel was able to show the emotion through the father's face of how he's feeling.

With all the flesh that is shown in the painting, it gives one an uncomfortable and uneasy feeling with how uncommon it is now to see that much skin being shown and on display for others to observe. The father has the spit curl and muscular build that reminds one of Superman. He's bare-chested with only a dark red drape around his lower body.

The children are completely nude, and have a resemblance to Cupid with their chubby rosy cheeks. They all seem to be around the same age as one another and every single one of them has a different emotion on their face displaying their need that they are seeking from their father. Some look for comfort and love, others safety. One wants sleep, and another is asking for food as they cling onto him.

Parents are expected to provide love, food, clothes, nourishment, education, and safety for their children. The immense amount of children that are spilling out of the father's arms in the painting, and the look on his face, shows that he's greatly overwhelmed with the load that he has.

If Hempel changed the gender from a male to female, the painting would take on a whole new different meaning. A mother would know what to do if she were given children to take care of. Unlike the father, she would be able to breast feed for them and give them what they need. Sometimes, a father can't give the child everything that a mother can and vice versa. If the father's face expression was the exact opposite of what it currently is, it would show that he knows what he's doing and has more control over the situation. In *Fatherhood*, he looks lost because of his face expression. However, if he was smiling, then it would show that he can handle what's going on.

In the painting, if the father was interacting with the children, than it would give more of a light mood to the painting than the stressed look that the original one has. Interacting with the children would show that the dad is spending quality time with them. The entire mood of the painting would change if they were all simply in a different position doing something more interactive. If the children were all of different genders and skin tone instead of all being the same, than it would indicate that the painting has something to do with race. In addition, if the children were of different ages, the meaning would yet again change. Not only would altering the people in the painting make the meaning of it different, switching the setting, time period, and even the way that they're positioned would as well. Even the smallest of things can leave a huge difference.

*Fatherhood* by Wes Hempel effectively displayed what it's like to be a father in the modern society. For generations females have been the caretakers, but now the roles have switched. Males of today are being bestowed with the responsibility of a father. *Fatherhood* shows the reaction of a very overwhelmed dad. The children are surrounding him, depending on him to give them what they need. This is a successful painting that Hempel painted. The father's face expression shows a lot of emotion and is very accurate.