

Our Mythical Childhood...

Metaforms

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Our Mythical Childhood...

*The Classics and Literature for Children
and Young Adults*

Edited by

Katarzyna Marciniak



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What Is a Classic... for Children and Young Adults?

In the beginning of the history we wish to share here was Homer, soon joined by his sons and perhaps by his daughters, too. They proffered humankind the gift of Orpheus, the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope: the most precious heritage from the prehistorical, mythical chronotope, when time was not reckoned by human measure and the world was infinitely moldable. This gift has permitted each and every one of our kind—whether adult or child, whether living in Antiquity or today—to experience and to wield a divine power that enables us to shape the universe, even though its mythical moldability has long since vanished and the borders between reality and our imagination have been fixed. Yes, I mean the magic of the Word and storytelling.

This magic seems to have waned in comparison to its primordial force, for nobody, not even Homer himself, has succeeded in repeating the charms of Orpheus, who could rouse the stones and trees to dance, cause rivers to stop flowing, and tame savage beasts. In truth, however, this was not the most important emanation of the power of the Word (though it was certainly the most spectacular). The human mind invented many a way to deal with the physical world. But the crucial aspect of Orpheus's magic pertains to the immaterial sphere of our existence, one that still evades our perception and understanding. And this magic has survived as strong as it ever was in the beginning—and even before our history. Through the magic of the Word we have learnt to build our identity, to confer a deeper significance to the joys and sorrows of daily life, to catalyse a whole range of the emotions—both the good and the dangerous ones—touching our hearts. To this day we experience and use this magic. The passing of thousands of years and the progress in technological development are of no importance here.

Our Mythical Childhood

The ancient demiurges of the Word travelled from house to house, weaving the stories of the Trojan War and the Returns (*nostoi*). They gathered the precious crumbs from Homer's table and prepared on such leaven dramas ever-compelling. They reached more and more boldly both for myths and history (in fact, as Heinrich Schliemann proved, in the case of the Trojan War, the border between these two realms may be rather permeable after all), and they reached for contemporary events as well. Thus did they create tales that would (try to) explain the meaning of life and attractively convey the values presumed universal.

All this resulted in beautiful, but at the same time painful lessons, like the one drawn from the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which is vital for young readers, too—as will be demonstrated in the present volume.¹ This myth teaches us that each closeness bears within itself an unavoidable loss (even when the protagonist is the son of a god...), and this loss is the greater, the stronger the love is. But Orpheus's lesson also teaches us that, in spite of all, true closeness, if only for a very short time, is worth the terrible price of suffering which sooner or later will be experienced by those who remain on Earth longer than their loved ones.

All things change, as Ovid wrote in his *perpetuum carmen*, but nothing is extinguished. The aoidoi are no longer among us to pass on the primordial lessons of life, but we do have literature. Despite the negative view on the discovery of writing on the part of Plato's Socrates, literature began preserving the magic of the Word and the memory of universal values, owing to which every new generation (ours included) can feel and know them beyond time and space. And ever since Antiquity, the heirs of Homer—in each generation—have been taking up ancient threads and weaving them still deeper into the fabric of the world, tailoring them into new language and discourse forms, into new cultures. They have been introducing, removing, or modifying the primordial motifs (yet ever beholding their original core), in response to both the individual experiences each author has gone through during her or his physical and spiritual journey, as well as to the collective needs of the recipients of culture met along the way.

Indeed, the needs were high and ancient heritage remained attractive because of its potential to meet them. Hence the centuries-long admiration of the past and the conviction—present in scholarship until the 1960s—of its *influence* on subsequent epochs. However, there has never ever been a passive ingestion of the ancient heritage, but an active, at times even fiery dialogue with this tradition,² one that has consistently mirrored the social, political,

1 See the chapter in this volume by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Orpheus and Eurydice: Reception of a Classical Myth in International Children's Literature."

2 The new "active" approach in scholarship was initiated by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960); Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978; in German as *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, München: W. Fink Verlag, 1976); Hans Robert Jauss, *Die Theorie der Rezeption. Rückschau auf ihre unerkannte Vorgeschichte* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1987). However, the birth of reception studies should be linked to Tadeusz Zieliński's revolutionary methods in his monograph *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig–Berlin: Teubner, 1929; ed. pr.—subsequently significantly expanded—1897).

and cultural transformations underway in various locations and periods. The fascinating trajectories of this dialogue may be researched within the framework of classical reception studies, which focus on the dynamics of re-uses, and sometimes even abuses, of the past.³ And there is much to be researched, for the canon of the classics took form already in Antiquity, and—owing to the uniqueness of its potential, strengthened by the particular concatenation of historical events—it became a steady reference point for a considerable part of the world through the ages.

In consequence, a macro-community came into being, one composed of diverse societies that interpreted the ancient heritage more or less differently. At the same time, however, those societies firmly shared an axiological system and communication code built upon references to Classical Antiquity which became *Our Mythical Childhood*, immortalised and developed with every new emanation of the Orphean magic of the Word. Thus, for many centuries the ancient classics were cherished, safeguarded, and passed on: mostly with love, but sometimes brutally, too—as when imposed by school or as a result of various culture clashes. All in the unwavering belief that knowledge of the classics is crucial for the assimilation of ethical values that define the essence of humanity.

With the passing of time the ancient classics were joined by other authors who—to use the definition by Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve in his famous paper from 1850, *Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?*—managed to enrich the human spirit, too. And nearly each of them drew profoundly from the heritage of Classical Antiquity: Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Voltaire, Goethe, to mention only the most prominent for various periods and languages. Moreover—a paradox observed by the audacious visionary Sainte-Beuve—each and every one of them, though immersed in the past, has led humankind a step further into

3 See, e.g. (also more bibliographical references therein), Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas, eds., *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Craig Kallendorf, ed., *A Companion to the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Constanze Güthenke, “Shop Talk: Reception Studies and Recent Work in the History of Scholarship,” *Classical Receptions Journal* 1 (2009): 104–115; Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and Salvatore Settis, eds., *The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2010); Simon Goldhill, *Victorian Culture and Classical Antiquity: Art, Opera, Fiction, and the Proclamation of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Lorna Hardwick and Stephen Harrison, eds., *Classics in the Modern World: A Democratic Turn?* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

the future.⁴ This is probably the only definition of a classic that does not raise doubts to this day.

Leading people toward the future is also an intrinsic element of young readers' literature, one of the most important aims of which is to raise children and youth—whatever we think of their “starting position” (pure and innocent beings, little savages, or *tabulae rasae*)—to be wise adults, governed in their life by humanistic values.⁵ Such a pedagogic conviction would seem to favour in works for kids a plethora of references to the Graeco-Roman heritage as a several-thousand-year-old treasury of these values. However, the matter is complicated. First of all, literature for children and young adults is a relatively fresh cultural invention. None of the ancient classics was aimed directly at kids—not even the myths we typically come to know at the most elementary level of education, which now means in childhood, nor even Aesop, today associated mainly with the much beloved and ingenuously sweet animal fables for the youngest. Yet Rousseau long ago deemed them detrimental to the morality of children who are easily allured by stories which are innocent, albeit only superficially, and which offer

4 Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, “Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?,” *Le Constitutionnel*, Oct. 21, 1850. See also Antoine Compagnon's lecture *Le Classique*, 2011 (http://www.college-de-france.fr/media/antoine-compagnon/UPL18803_12_A.Compagnon_Le_Classique.pdf, accessed Oct. 15, 2014).

5 See Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London–Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984). For the particularly subordinated position of children as readers, see Perry Nodelman, “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature,” *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17 (1992): 29–35. For the background of some fervent discussions on the conceptions of childhood, see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962; ed. pr. *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, 1960); George Boas, *The Cult of Childhood*, “Studies of the Warburg Institute” 29 (London: The Warburg Institute, 1966); Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London–New York: Routledge, 1990); Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, UK–Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2013; ed. pr. 2001); Jens Qvortrup, William A. Corsaro, and Michael-Sebastian Honig, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (New York, N.Y.–Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Paula S. Fass, ed., *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London–New York: Routledge, 2013); Michael Wyness, *Childhood* (Cambridge, UK–Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2015); Catherine Allerton, ed., *Children: Ethnographic Encounters* (London–New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

serious reflections more suitable to adults, as will also be demonstrated in the present volume.⁶

Of course, in our times both Aesop and mythology at large reach youngsters in special adaptations adjusted to their ages, and as far as some particularly “sugar-coated” versions are concerned, this is a rather regrettable practice. However, for better or for worse, this is the biggest difference in regard to Classical Antiquity. Indeed, in ancient times the charm of the *aidoi* gathered whole communities and we have no shred of information that any age rating system was in use. Maybe this is because no special attention, in terms of modern pedagogy, was paid to children then. Nevertheless, not without reason is Homer called the educator of the Greeks. Although it is difficult to determine the beginnings of children’s literature,⁷ the ancient classics were prominent at schools from the very invention of this institution, and remained so over the subsequent epochs—whether in their entirety, as selections (in later times with preference for Latin authors who were more easily approachable than the Greeks), or in specially prepared (and often censored in many aspects) versions *ad usum Delphini*. Studies into these issues constitute a fascinating challenge, one worthy of being undertaken in the near future on a large scale. Herein we present but two exemplary cases.⁸ However, the challenge only begins at this point, for the ancient classics at a certain stage expanded beyond the school and entered the space of children’s and young adults’ leisure time, as this sphere of young people’s lives was also supposed to be spent toward their (and, ultimately, the whole of society’s) moral benefit. The ancient authors guaranteed this with their ethical authority.

Literature written especially for children seemed a perfect tool for entertaining and educating them “after hours.” Indeed, the origins of this type of literature are linked to Enlightenment optimism rooted in the Horatian maxim

6 See Edith Hall’s chapter, “Our Fabled Childhood: Reflections on the Unsuitability of Aesop to Children,” in the present volume. By the way, Rousseau was generally against reading for young people, recommending to them only Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*.

7 See, e.g., Peter Hunt, ed., *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* (London–New York: Routledge, 1996); Seth Lerer, *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago, Ill.–London: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Carolyn L. Burke and Joby G. Copenhaver, “Animals as People in Children’s Literature,” *Language Arts* 81 (2004): 205–213; M.O. Grenby, “The Origins of Children’s Literature,” in M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–17.

8 See the chapters in this volume by Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska, “Childhood Rhetorical Exercises of the Victor of Vienna,” and Wilfried Stroh, “From Aesop to *Asterix Latinus*: A Survey of Latin Books for Children.”

“docere, movere, delectare” and embedded in respect for the values conveyed in the works of ancient authors. Thus, even if they did not constitute the direct base of reference, they lingered in the background—in the growing collection of literary works targeted at the youngest group of culture recipients, many examples of which, like *Karlson on the Roof* by Astrid Lindgren, are also discussed in the present volume.⁹ The crowning of this new literary movement was expected to take place in the twentieth century, called “the Century of the Child”—as Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer reminds us in her preface to *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein internationales Lexikon*, evoking the famous thesis of the Swedish educator Ellen Key (1849–1926). The Century of the Child was to be a period of intense blossoming of books for young readers,¹⁰ one full of hope for restoring the Golden Age, which was considered the innocent childhood of humanity for adults too, as Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts observe in the present volume.¹¹ Nonetheless, the Century of the Child turned out to be the century of wars¹² and totalitarian regimes, and of killings organised on an unprecedented scale. Violent quakes struck, one after another. Cracks appeared on the ancient monument. The classics—both those from and based on the heritage of Antiquity—seemed to have failed both adults and children alike. The magic of Orpheus and Homer had lost its charm. Or at least it seemed so.

In a Dialogue with T.S. Eliot

Widely known in the discussion on the definition and reliability of the classics is T.S. Eliot’s address of 1944 to the freshly established Societas Vergiliana, *What Is a Classic?*, delivered in London during the air raids.¹³ The great poet

9 See Katarzyna Jerzak’s chapter in this volume, “The Aftermath of Myth through the Lens of Walter Benjamin: Hermes in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and in Astrid Lindgren’s *Karlson on the Roof*.”

10 Ellen Key, *Century of the Child*, trans. from the German by Marie Franzos (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1909; ed. pr. in Swedish 1900); see also Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein internationales Lexikon* (Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler, 1999), Bd. A–K, ix; and eiusdem, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012).

11 See Sheila Murnaghan’s and Deborah H. Roberts’s chapter in this volume, “Armies of Children: War and Peace, Ancient History and Myth in Children’s Books after World War One.”

12 See Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Bd. A–K, ix.

13 T.S. Eliot, *What Is a Classic? An Address Delivered before the Virgil Society on the 16th of October, 1944* (London: Faber & Faber, 1945).

and future Nobel laureate coaxed his audience to read the *Aeneid*. He did not so much as mention the war in his speech. He hinted only at the difficulty of accessing libraries due to some recent events, without dwelling on the matter any further. This does not, however, testify to the insensitivity of the eminent author and humanist. His seemingly academic discussion on the criteria needing to be fulfilled in order to call a text “classical” is permeated with poignant reflections on guilt and redemption, or rather on the compelling need of the latter. Eliot’s address is not a lecture divorced from reality, but a dramatic appeal to restore the Paradise lost—the striking plea of a man aware of the fact that the world is falling apart before his very eyes, and who sees in the classics the only salvation.

The poet’s words did not, however, speak to the minds of the angry youth from the post–WWII generation. The difficult settlements with the world wars and with colonial-era abuses were taking place. The conviction also emerged that Classical Antiquity, which (as a fixed part of school curricula the world over) was the base of education for many a later war criminal, had failed in teaching them humanity. This set of factors contributed to a rebellion in the West. Orpheus saw too many deaths and the Furies remained for much too long the Kindly Ones. 1968 brought slogans to the barricades calling for changes within the educational system, and for breaking with Latin and the classical canon. The continuity of education was irreparably severed.

The new generation behind the Iron Curtain also rebelled. Here, however, the most serious threat came from the totalitarian force in the East. Thus, ancient culture was not rejected—on the contrary, it was restored after WWII’s traumas as a pillar supporting the opposition in their struggles against the regime. While building the pretenses of democracy, the communists tried to sever ties with Western Europe and the common cultural heritage of this part of the world. In such circumstances, Latin as the language of the Catholic Church, which centralised many an oppositional effort in the Eastern Bloc, and Graeco-Roman culture as such were seen as vehicles of the joint legacy of Mediterranean civilisation, the scope of which exceeded geographical barriers and the divisions established at the Argonaut (*sic!*) Conference in Yalta.¹⁴ Learning of ancient culture, the intelligentsia, in the widest meaning of this term, worked to preserve the civilisational continuity that permitted them to cross the Iron Curtain, at least in the spiritual realm. Moreover, Classical Antiquity as the basis for a cultural code became a medium to express, in its truly Aesopian language, ideas which the totalitarian censorship would never have

14 So codenamed by Winston Churchill, see, e.g., S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace* (London: Viking Penguin, 2010, accessed via Google Books, pages not numbered).

allowed to be articulated directly.¹⁵ The ancient magic of the Word under the pen of talented and courageous authors disguised the truth to, paradoxically, reveal it with all the more strength. The mechanisms of this particular reception of Classical Antiquity may be observed owing to the manifold project initiated by Jerzy Axer, György Karsai, and Gábor Klaniczay at the Collegium Budapest, and at present being carried out at the Centre for Studies on the Classical Tradition (OBTA) at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw: *Gnóthi seauton!—Classics and Communism. The History of Studies on Antiquity in the Context of the Local Classical Tradition in the Socialist Countries 1944/45–1989/90*.¹⁶

After 1989, however, the need for a common code and spiritual bond with the West disappeared. It became clear that Graeco-Roman Antiquity is only one of a number of equally valuable cultures all over the world. It has also lost—both in the West and in the East—its privileged position as an enduring base built of virtues, changing its image into a melting pot of varied content, from which every single culture user may draw. But will s/he want to?

Yes, s/he will—for, paradoxically, this seemingly negative change in the perception of ancient heritage has given it a new lease. On the one hand, it more and more often serves countries bearing a colonial burden or other deep wounds as a platform for a wide-reaching dialogue on still difficult issues.¹⁷ On the other, the scratches discovered on marble once considered flawless inspire ever new generations of artists the world over—an unexpected benefit of globalisation—to extract meanings from Antiquity that are of special

15 See also Victor Bers and Gregory Nagy, eds., *The Classics in East Europe: Essays on the Survival of Humanistic Tradition* (Worcester, Mass.: American Philological Association, 1995); and Gábor Klaniczay, Michael Werner, and Ottó Gecser, eds., *Multiple Antiquities—Multiple Modernities: Ancient Histories in Nineteenth Century European Cultures* (New York–Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2011).

16 See the project’s presentation: <http://www.obta.uw.edu.pl/pliki/Gnothi%20Seauton.pdf> (accessed Oct. 15, 2015). The newest event within it was the conference *Classics & Communism in Theatre*, Jan. 15–17, 2015, at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana; see also the volume edited by David Movrin and Elżbieta Olechowska, *Classics and Class: Greek and Latin Classics and Communism at School* (Ljubljana–Warsaw: Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana–Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw–Wydawnictwo DiG, 2016).

17 See, e.g., Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky: Modern African Adaptations of Classical Greek Tragedy* (Jefferson, N.C.–London: McFarland, 2002); Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia, eds., *Classics and National Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Erin B. Mee and Helene P. Foley, eds., *‘Antigone’ on the Contemporary World Stage* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

importance in our ever so “scratched” times, too. In fact, we no longer need or want to idealise the past. We are ready to perceive the whole spectrum of Orpheus’s magic, owing to which ancient culture today warns us of *hubris* and shows us that each culture is marked by shadows, but at the same time it carries a saving brightness. And it is entirely up to us how we will use this multifaceted heritage. The Furies do sleep sometimes, but never for long; they can be awoken by great, truly universal literature—this is the role of a classic, too.¹⁸ And as another eminent humanist and Noble laureate, J.M. Coetzee, observed in the dialogue he conducted with Sainte-Beuve and Eliot in 1990 in Graz, after the Iron Curtain had fallen, the strong and ambiguous emotions stirred up by the classics were not only natural, but desirable. Indeed, criticism only strengthens classical authors, and if they make us rebellious, they help us expand our horizon and enrich our identity.¹⁹ Coetzee, who—owing to his South African roots—is particularly sensitive to multifarious cultural experiences, well understands how important it is to divest oneself of a patronising attitude toward other regions of the world. The classics embedded in the Graeco-Roman tradition will not lose anything in the process. On the contrary: new layers will be added to the joint legacy of humankind and we will make another step—yes, Sainte-Beuve was correct here—into the future.

And again, mention of the future takes us to children’s and young adults’ literature, the main role of which—according to Walter Benjamin—is to stimulate rebellion in its readers.²⁰ We may even come to the conclusion that the

18 See the very interesting novel—surely an event-of-the-year 2014 for the admirers of the ancient heritage, but not only for them—by Natalie Haynes, *The Amber Fury*, published by Corvus. I am grateful to Edith Hall for directing my attention to this book. See also the famous and controversial adult novel by Jonathan Littell, *Les Bienveillantes* (in English as *The Kindly Ones*) published by Gallimard in 2006 (Prix Goncourt).

19 See J.M. Coetzee, “What Is a Classic?” in his *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays, 1986–1999* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 1–16; see also Katarzyna Marciniak, “Po co mitologia?—Świat współczesny w zwierciadle mitu” [Why do we need mythology? The contemporary world in the mirror of myths], *PAUza Akademicka. Tygodnik Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności* 103–105 (2010): 9–11; and Sotera Fornaro, *Che cos’è un classico?: Il classico in J.M. Coetzee* (Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2013).

20 See Helene Høyrup, “Modernism for Children? Cecil Bødker’s *Silas and the Black Mare*,” in Sandra L. Beckett and Maria Nikolajeva, eds., *Beyond Babar: The European Tradition in Children’s Literature* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 151; Kimberly Reynolds, *Children’s Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5. See also Nicholas J. Tucker, *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1981); and Jack Zipes, *Literature and Literary Theory: Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (London–New York: Routledge, 1999; ed. pr. 1988). On the other hand, Roberta Seelinger Trites observes that young adults’ literature’s

definition of a classic is basically the same for children and adults: a classical work is embedded in the past, but oriented toward the future, addressing the recipient on both a personal and universal level and encouraging nonconformity and respect. Such a definition is full of paradoxes and perhaps too uncomfortable to be presented in the mainstream of education, but think about the classics (for young and old) that changed your own life before you decide whether or not to accept it.

The idea to treat literature for adults and that for youth as having equal status would surely not appeal to Eliot, who recommended starting with “adult” classics as soon as possible and thought that reading books for children was generally regressive. However, each and every one of us can easily indicate many an adult book with a similar effect, too—and today all the more easily than in Eliot’s times, when writing was an elitist activity. The texts that meet the definition of a classic develop us at any age. For indeed, great literature knows no barriers, a fact which is also proved by the recent studies into the phenomenon of dual audience and double address, cross-writing, and the “hidden adult” in works for children.²¹ The hidden adult has always been present in this kind of texts, though today, after recent changes on the world literary stage (mainly the Harry Potter phenomenon, discussed in this volume as well²²), we no longer feel ashamed of reading “kid stories.” Besides, if you think about it, there has always been a “hidden child” in books for adults, too. With the current development of literature, the sphere for children and the sphere for adults influence and stimulate each other. In a certain sense, we are

goal is in fact to socialise, tame, and train young readers—see her *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000). Further discussion is probably to be found in the forthcoming Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark, eds., *Child Autonomy and Child Governance in Children’s Literature* (London–New York: Routledge, 2017).

21 See Barbara Wall, *The Narrator’s Voice: The Dilemma of Children’s Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); and Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), and idem, “The Hidden Child in *The Hidden Adult*,” *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 8.1 (2016): 266–277.

22 See the chapters in this volume by Christine Walde, “Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Its Productive Appropriation: The Example of Harry Potter,” and Elżbieta Olechowska, “J.K. Rowling Exposes the World to Classical Antiquity.” Recently, Richard Spencer analysed a number of aspects of the reception of Classical Antiquity in Rowling’s heptalogy—his is the first monograph on this subject: *Harry Potter and the Classical World: Greek and Roman Allusions in J.K. Rowling’s Modern Epic* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2015). By the way, at the beginning of the Harry Potter phenomenon, there were separate editions of the novels with “adult” covers, a move to alleviate the embarrassment adult readers might feel reading children’s books in public.

returning to Antiquity, when there were no age limits and when a marvellous tale was a source of joy for all who got in touch with it by means of Orpheus's and Homer's magic.

Classical Reception in Children's and Young Adults' Literature

The question of a classic becomes complicated, however, in our era of modern media. The canonical lists prepared by scholars or literary critics are more and more often substituted by Internet "must reads," circulating widely beyond any professional control owing to the blossoming of social media, where both groups—adults and children—are free to voice their opinions (by the way, this is a perfect realisation of the most important postulate of so-called childist criticism, that is when young readers are allowed to express themselves as contributors to the development of critical theories).²³ In this respect also are we nearer to Antiquity than at any other time. In the beginning was Homer and people's respect for him; only later came his approval by the critics from the Library of Alexandria. Social media open new streams for the magic of the Word and there is no doubt that the classics will pass this test. They will even benefit from this.

In the present volume we approach the classics in a dual meaning: from the treasury of modern and contemporary texts that have achieved or are striving to achieve the status of classics for children and young adults, we focus on such works that draw inspiration from Classical Antiquity: Greek and Roman myths and history—"our" ancient classics. And the "inspiration" here does not mean a slavish repetition of the ancient patterns, but an intimate and dynamic dialogue with the legacy of the past to help youth face present-day challenges and to prepare them for future ones. It is a paradox that ancient culture, marginalised or almost eradicated from school curricula, is still attractive for authors and their readers, who reach for books with Antiquity-rooted threads in their most precious time—namely, their free time. This is all the more striking as young people are increasingly independent from their parents and tutors in the choices of what to read after lessons, and they have ever more ways at their disposal for spending leisure hours. So how to explain this? Maybe ancient

23 See Peter Hunt, "Childist Criticism: The Subculture of the Child, the Book and Critic," *Signal* 43 (1984): 42–59. The updated discussion on the canon in children's literature is to be found in the forthcoming volume edited by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Anja Müller, *Canon Constitution and Canon Change in Children's Literature* (London–New York: Routledge, 2016).

culture appeals to us because it became delightfully exotic (Christine Walde aptly compares its status with that of fantasy²⁴), or maybe because in spite of this, it still circulates in the subcutaneous layer of world civilisation and we are seeking a link with our ancient heritage not to feel bereft. These two observations do not exclude each other—on the contrary, they are complementary—another paradox which is possible in our postmodern reality. Last but not least, contact with the classics stokes hunger for reading, which is also hunger for the ancient magic of the Word.

Research in this field is, however, extremely difficult, if only because of the unsettled status of children's and young adults' literature. Since 1984, when Jacqueline Rose proclaimed the impossibility of this literature,²⁵ much has changed, although many basic problems are still unresolved. We continue to approach it as if it were a coherent and separate body, while the variety of its genres surpasses even those in literature for adults. Speaking of whom, we adults look at texts targeted at children from our adult perspective, which is of course the only one available to us, but a high degree of caution is necessary when it comes to hypotheses and conclusions.²⁶ Nor should research disregard the marketing and commercial strategies that—in the case of children's and young adults' literature as a huge market—precondition many decisions undertaken by editors. And it is necessary to take into consideration the recently arisen phenomena of transmedia and transliteracy, as in fact the first contact of the youngest generations with Classical Antiquity happens more and more often not through books, but movies, computer games, social media, or interactive e-books on tablets and smart phones. These new forms influence the picture of ancient times and later reading experiences (food for thought: a daughter of my colleague, unable to memorise the name Persephone, called the Queen of the Underworld “Smartphone” and this was entirely natural for her²⁷). We thus need to be aware of these challenges and to treat children's literature seriously, thereby heeding C.S. Lewis, who long ago stressed that any other attitude made no sense at all.²⁸ For if we fulfil these preconditions,

24 Walde, “Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Its Productive Appropriation.” See also Maria Nikolajeva, *The Magic Code: The Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

25 Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*; see also above, n. 5.

26 See Nodelman, “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature,” 29–35.

27 Jokes aside, on the reception of Persephone's myth, see Holly Virginia Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature* (New York–Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

28 See e.g., C.S. Lewis's reflections in “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” (1952), published in his *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966), 22–34.

then we may access not only a precious base for studies into ethics, various approaches to education, and aesthetic criteria applied toward youth, but also a mirror of the sundry transformations the world has been undergoing throughout the ages. Children are particularly sensitive to all that is happening around them; they observe and are deeply affected both by positive and negative events. How badly might we delude ourselves in assuming that they do not see and do not understand. But they do. Hence, all the more do they need trustful guides in life. The authors who try to respond to this need on the basis of ancient culture create an intergenerational bond and a space where the past, present, and future meet. Classical reception studies help us understand the particular character of this meeting, along with its roots and consequences.

Classical reception studies in reference to children's and young adults' culture is, however, still a new research field. One of the first major initiatives which brought together various aspects of the problematics involved was the conference *Asterisks and Obelisks: Classical Receptions in Children's Literature* organised at the University of Wales in Lampeter in 2009 by Helen Lovatt and Owen Hodkinson. The summary of the results was subsequently presented in a remarkable report published in the *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, and a volume is currently being prepared for publication by the organisers.²⁹ To mention a few other milestone events, in 2013, the rising appeal of this field inspired the British Classical Association to include several panels focused on children's literature in the programme of the CA's annual conference, at the University of Reading.³⁰ In 2014, Lisa Maurice included a fine selection of "children's" themes, among them fascinating lectures by Caroline Lawrence (the English-American author of the bestselling series "Roman Mysteries,"

29 Helen Lovatt, "Asterisks and Obelisks: Classical Receptions in Children's Literature," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 16 (2009): 508–522; Helen Lovatt and Owen Hodkinson, eds., *Changing the Greeks and Romans: Metamorphosing Antiquity for Children* (forthcoming). See also Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Children's and Young Adult Literature," in Manfred Landfester in cooperation with Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, eds., *Classical Tradition*, vol. 16.1 of *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2006), coll. 750–754; Martin Korenjak and Stefan Tilg, eds., *Pontes IV. Die Antike in der Alltagskultur der Gegenwart* (Innsbruck–Wien–Bozen: StudienVerlag, 2007); and Sheila Murnaghan, "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children," *Classical World* 104 (2011): 339–351.

30 Moreover, in July 2016, a workshop on the uses of the past, including Classical Antiquity (a lecture by Prof. Helen Lovatt), among children, mostly in nineteenth-century Britain, *Packaging the Past for Children, c. 1750–1914*, was organised by Dr. Rachel Bryant Davies and Dr. Barbara Gribling at Durham University, see <https://www.dur.ac.uk/cncs/conferences/packagingthepast/> (accessed July 10, 2016).

discussed in the present volume, too³¹) and Simon Scarrow (the UK-based author of the gripping “Gladiator” series) in the conference she organised at Bar-Ilan University in Israel: *From I, Claudius to Private Eyes: The Ancient World and Popular Fiction*. She also edited *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children’s Literature: Heroes and Eagles*, which was published by Brill in 2015.³² A study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century receptions of classics in relation to childhood is being prepared by Sheila Murnaghan of the University of Pennsylvania, and Deborah H. Roberts of Haverford College: *For Every Age: Childhood and the Classics, 1850–1970*. In October 2015, Marcus Janka from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, with a core group of collaborators, organised a conference on the presence of Classical Antiquity in the media targeted at youth: *Medusa & Co. Reloaded—Verjüngte Antike im Mediendialog: Transformationen griechisch-römischer Mythologie und Historie in Kinder- und Jugendmedien der Moderne und Gegenwartskultur*.³³

A New Approach: The Potential of the Regions

The present volume stems from the project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Classics and Children’s Literature between East and West*, which began in 2011 at the Centre for Studies on the Classical Tradition (OBTA) at the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw.³⁴ The history of the Faculty mirrors the transformations in Europe and is important for understanding the optics applied in our research. Professor Jerzy Axer, who was elected Dean of the Faculty of Polish Studies on the wave of the *Solidarność* movement in the 1980s, wished to support the ideas of the liberal arts and civic freedoms also following the Breakthrough of 1989. Thus he founded OBTA—an independent centre at the University of Warsaw—to build a dialogic platform for studying the reception of Classical Antiquity, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe and from regional perspectives. It was the first centre of its kind in the world, established

31 See Helen Lovatt’s chapter in this volume, “East, West, and Finding Yourself in Caroline Lawrence’s *Roman Mysteries*.”

32 See the volume’s review by Krishni Burns at <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2016/2016-05-26.html> (accessed June 15, 2016).

33 Organisational committee: Markus Janka (University of Munich), Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (University of Tübingen), Katarzyna Marciniak (University of Warsaw), Anita Schilcher (University of Regensburg), Michael Stierstorfer (University of Regensburg).

34 See Katarzyna Marciniak, ed., *Antiquity and We* (Warsaw: Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw, 2013; for e-book format see: www.al.uw.edu.pl/antiquity_and_we, accessed Dec. 28, 2015).

in 1991. OBTA quickly also set up a cooperation network with Western Europe and the United States, thereby expanding the optics of the studies, and became a pioneering hub of educational initiatives, responding to society's needs for university teaching that would be elitist in terms of scholarly excellence and, at the same time, open to all interested young people, irrespective of their financial status. For its novel methodological approaches and educational enterprises, OBTA was twice awarded the prestigious Hannah Arendt Prize. It is a beautiful and fitting coincidence that this volume appears on the 25th anniversary of the Centre.

OBTA also encompassed the complicated problematics of the borderland and culture confluences owing to the pillar built by Professor Jan Kieniewicz, the former Ambassador of Poland to Spain (1990–1994) and an eminent historian of India and colonisation. Today, the Centre for Studies on the Classical Tradition OBTA is part of the Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” which evolved from the Centre and continues to provide a meeting place, a neutral haven for people with differing contacts with History behind them, but who are willing to debate with each other.³⁵ And debates were the form I chose for the project *Our Mythical Childhood*. How does the reception of Classical Antiquity vary in different parts of the globe? Does it reflect the world's transformations? Does it have any regional particularities? And by stressing “regional” it was obvious to me that we would pursue our studies without the pejorative implication of regions as parochial or inferior, but as extremely valuable reception contexts. It was also clear to me from the beginning that such a venture could be achieved only through daring team work—to the best of my knowledge, the first of this kind in the field.

A Loeb Classical Library Foundation grant opened up great possibilities in this respect, strengthened by the support we got from the “*Artes Liberales*” Institute Foundation and the Faculty's research fund. Initially planned on a modest scale as a comparative study of the two optics predominant in Europe after WWII, the project developed in what was an almost natural way. It dawned on us very quickly that the Western–Eastern perspective was not enough and that our efforts should be augmented, taking into account the experience of other continents, the influence of new media, and globalisation.³⁶ Moreover, we

35 See the series “Debaty Artes Liberales” initiated by Prof. Jan Kieniewicz; some of the volumes are freely available on the Faculty's website: <http://www.obta.uw.edu.pl/pl-426> (accessed Dec. 28, 2015).

36 Thus, in the present volume we try to encompass more than the juxtaposition between these two optics, ones that—for the youngest generation—in fact may seem to belong to a remote past. However, as they were our starting point and the primary object of

decided to embed the project in a vast educational-societal background. First, we invited students to collaborate, under our tutorship, on a specially conceived database: they responded and carried out an ambitious undertaking—a freely accessible catalogue of references to Classical Antiquity in Polish literature.³⁷ Second, we initiated cooperation with artists, as in children's literature the magic of the Word is strictly linked to the power of pictures. Under the direction of the recently deceased Professor Zygmunt Januszewski and his collaborators, Jan Rusiński being our main contact, students from the Illustration Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw prepared artwork inspired by mythological phraseology—and they illustrate the present volume. Furthermore, the young and much-appreciated artist Matylda Tracewska created for the project a painting that symbolically reflects the essence of our venture; it graces the cover of this volume. Third, believing that the University should be a meeting place where all who are willing to learn with the curiosity of children can exchange their ideas, we opened our debates to readers, teachers, writers, translators, and editors. In view of this project's social importance we received

studies, we decided to expand the research scope with caution, without claiming the right to any general conclusions. Rather, we felt the necessity to test the ground here. See also below: *The Unique Character of the Volume*. For the fundamental bibliography on the ideology and the national concepts in children's and young adults' literature see, e.g., John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992); Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (New York–London: Garland Publishing, 1999); Margaret Meek, ed., *Children's Literature and National Identity* (Stoke on Trent, UK–Sterling, Va.: Trentham, 2001); Jenny Plastow and Margot Hillel, eds., *The Sands of Time: Children's Literature: Culture, Politics and Identity* (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010); Catherine Butler and Hallie O'Donovan, *Reading History in Children's Books* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Kate Darian-Smith and Carla Pascoe, eds., *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage* (London–New York: Routledge, 2013); Christopher Kelen and Björn Sundmark, eds., *The Nation in Children's Literature. Nations of Childhood* (London–New York: Routledge, 2015). For general studies on regional aspects of children's literature see, e.g., Elwyn Jenkins, *National Character in South African English Children's Literature* (London–New York: Routledge, 2007); Supriya Goswami, *Colonial India in Children's Literature* (London–New York: Routledge, 2012). On the new media see, e.g., Gustavo S. Mesch and Ilan Talmud, *Wired Youth: The Social World of Adolescence in the Information Age* (London–New York: Routledge, 2010); and Zoe Jaques, *Children's Literature and the Post-human: Animal, Environment, Cyborg* (London–New York: Routledge, 2015).

37 See Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, and Michał Kucharski, eds., *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity. A Catalogue* (Warsaw: Faculty of "Artes Liberales," University of Warsaw, 2013; for e-book format see: www.al.uw.edu.pl/omc_catalogue, accessed Dec. 28, 2015).

the honorary patronage of the Spouse of the President of the Republic of Poland Anna Komorowska on the culminating event—the final debates in 2013.³⁸

The scholarly results of the debates are gathered in the present volume. It would have never come into existence but for the joint effort of the team members—scholars from all over the world who with remarkable openness and courage decided to trust the idea and build the team. We had a great time studying the links between different regions. Sometimes we experienced shivers, as when we traced ideological (ab)uses of the classical legacy. But mostly we felt childlike joy, as when we saw how this legacy, appealing to Orpheus's magic, brought readers to understanding, helped them heal wounds, and—last but not least—became a source of fun, something so essential in difficult times. The chapters show how fascinating and complex the issue of the reception of Classical Antiquity in children's and young adults' literature is. They also show enthralling ties and parallels between regions which, though they may not always have a common history, do share the ancient heritage.

Overview of the Volume's Content

In Part 1 of the volume, *In Search of Our Roots: Classical References as a Shaper of Young Readers' Identity*, we set out on a journey through time, starting with the period when knowledge of Latin and Greek belonged to the basic competences of educated people and when no one even thought about questioning the conviction that the ancient classics were a treasury of universal ideas crucial for ethical formation of the human being.

In view of this, the first chapter pays homage to the tradition of classical philology. It was written by Wilfried Stroh with a special focus on the role of Latin, for centuries a *lingua franca* that both ennobled people and connected them beyond geographic borders. Works in Latin were *eo ipso* prone to becoming classical and understandable globally for all (of course "all" meaning educated people). While the role of Latin in scholarship is a subject of in-depth research,³⁹ its place within children's literature remains *terra incognita*.

38 For the project's presentation see my "In the Mirror of Antiquity," *Academia. The Magazine of the Polish Academy of Sciences* 4/12 (36) (2012): 36–39 (available also in Polish); and "Our Mythical Childhood... Classics and Children's Literature Between East & West," (commentarii), *Eos* 100 (2013): 399–403. See also the project's website: www.omc.al.uw.edu.pl (accessed Dec. 28, 2015).

39 See, e.g., Françoise Waquet, *Latin or the Empire of a Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2001; ed. pr. in French 1998); Jerzy Axer,

Stroh enters this field boldly, offering a survey of translations of the classics *par excellence*—Homer and “his” *Batrachomyomachia*, the “animalistic” theme of which made it seem an excellent work for young readers; Aesop’s fables; translations of modern works for youth inspired by Classical Antiquity, such as *Les Aventures de Télémaque* by François Fénelon, as well as those without any direct links to the ancient heritage, such as *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe; translations of twentieth-century bestsellers, like *Winnie the Pooh* or the “Asterix” series; and, last but not least, works created recently in Latin, mainly by eminent scholars, such as *De simia Heidelbergensi* by Michael von Albrecht. Even though today, because of the changes in school curricula, such works awake curiosity more in adults than in young readers, the Latin language—*regina linguarum*—still seems to seal the status of a classic.

Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska reconsiders two miraculously surviving documents testifying to the education embedded in classical values of the future king of Poland and the famous “Victor of Vienna” of 1683, Jan III Sobieski, whose father—as it turns out—represented a surprisingly modern attitude toward his role as a parent. During times when children’s literature was only just starting to develop its potential, it was the ancient texts that, in the hands of wise tutors, shaped youth.

Katarzyna Jerzak analyses the reception of the figure of Hermes in books that became classics of children’s world literature—J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and Astrid Lindgren’s *Karlson on the Roof*—showing how the ancient trickster, under the pen of brilliant and sensitive writers, proves to the kids the not-so-obvious idea: that life is worth living.

Jerzy Axer reconsiders, by way of Rudyard Kipling’s example, the process of boys’ initiation into a society marked by the ethos of the colonial empire that believed in the superiority of ancient culture. However—as Axer shows—a sensitive tutor would be able to build upon this initiation a very particular lesson for life. Such a tutor understood that the price for world domination could also be high for the victorious rulers, for their morality, and was ready to sacrifice his own ambitions on behalf of his pupils, offering them a shield taken from the Graeco-Roman treasury to support them in the process of their initiation into adulthood. In this context, Axer proposes a new and illuminating interpretation of Kipling’s “Regulus” in regard to a neglected aspect of the ancient heritage connected with the later fairy-tale tradition.

ed., *Łacina jako język elit* [Latin as the language of the elites] (Warszawa: OBTA UW–DiG, 2004); Movrin and Olechowska, eds., *Classics and Class: Greek and Latin Classics and Communism at School*.

Valentina Garulli presents an author crucial for the knowledge of Antiquity among the children in Italy whose works were also translated into foreign languages—Laura Orvieto. Garulli analyses various aspects of building young readers' identity in reference to ancient culture. The fabulous and seemingly carefree realm of myths encompassed such serious issues as women's status, the threat of wars, and anti-Semitism. Orvieto came across such barriers herself, having to relinquish her dream to work as a teacher, as being unsuitable for her social status; she also had Jewish roots and observed and experienced the escalating persecutions of scholars of Jewish origin at the threshold of WWII.

Agata Grzybowska, on the other hand, in her chapter, which originated from her joint lecture with Jörg Schulte, displays an attempt made by Saul Tchernichowsky at uniting various generations of Jews—"those of the parents and grandparents who could hardly imagine a life outside the diaspora, and that of budding Zionism"⁴⁰—by means of Homeric references which universalised and immortalised the community of the vanishing shtetl.

Robert A. Sucharski discusses the potential of Classical Antiquity in offering ever-new reinterpretations of myths on the example of the Polish writer Jadwiga Żylińska. He analyses her elaborations of Greek mythology in the then avant-garde "herstory" optics, in the Poland of the 1970s—i.e., a country behind the Iron Curtain, where the inflow of new concepts was restricted, but the regime favoured (in certain propaganda contexts) the strong position of women.

Przemysław Kordos examines the most recent Modern Greek books for children, proving that even in our reality the demand for ideological uses of Classical Antiquity has not vanished. Kordos proposes a novel approach both in children's literature and reception studies—mainly an ethnographic insight—and he reflects on how contemporary Greek authors face their "inferiority complex" toward their great ancestors and how they shape their young readers' identity in regard to both the complicated historical relations with Turkey and the controversial decisions made in the nineteenth century concerning the treasures of Greek national heritage (the Parthenon Marbles).

This section would not be complete without consideration of one of the most important types of educational text. The final chapter in this section proves that not only works of fiction have the potential to influence the identity of youth. Ewa Rudnicka focuses on an unlikely medium—namely, dictionaries for school children. Using examples from Polish lexicons, though her observations may be applied to various language circles, she reconsiders the role of the

40 See Agata Grzybowska, "Saul Tchernichowsky's Mythical Childhood: Homeric Allusions in the Idyll 'Elka's Wedding,'" in this volume, p. 111.

dictionaries in developing both the users' vocabulary and their knowledge of the ancient world. These depend, however, on the decisions made by the compilers, even on the most simple level, such as which words or expressions to include in a given lexicon. Here the objectivity and the risks of ideologisation of this medium are called into question.

The second section—*The Aesop Complex: The Transformations of Fables in Response to Regional Challenges*—is dedicated to the reception of Aesop's fables in different civilisational circles. It opens with a thought-provoking study by Edith Hall, who takes up Jean-Jacques Rousseau's challenge and reflects on a welter of calamitous effects the fables might exert on children. To what extent hers is sincere support for the French philosopher's thesis and to what extent this is a bold palinode worthy of Stesichorus will be left to the reader to assess. Hall's chapter is proof that the issue of the reception of the ancient heritage constitutes an excellent launch pad for a broad discussion about contemporary readers' practices and trends in the book market. It is also a voice against destroying this heritage by excessive sugar-coating.

The next chapters regard Aesop's reception beyond temporal and geographic borders. Peter T. Simatei's gloss presents the animal fable tradition in Africa, situating it in a general context of the reception of Graeco-Roman culture in modern African literature, which has been shaped by both European and African traditions in the process of clashes and confluences of cultures.

Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi analyses the reception of Aesop's fables in Japan, where the Greek storyteller became a kind of ambassador of Classical Antiquity; the morals extracted from the fables perfectly fit the Japanese respect for assiduity and hard work.

Adam Łukaszewicz takes us to communist Poland and discusses Jan Brzechwa's famous fables in the Aesopian context of force relations and the Stalinist totalitarianism of the 1950s. Brzechwa—one of the most important authors for children in Polish literature—could, as Łukaszewicz suggests, have made use of the seemingly innocent fables for kids to encode therein, with truly Aesopian language, his criticism toward the leftist regime that punished its opponents with death. In a state ruled by censorship such expressions in children's literature as “keep to the right” could mean more than a simple indication of geographical direction.

Finally, David Movrin also focuses on the force relations in animal fables—in the context of Slovenian culture with its most recent achievement, the highly praised comics on the Balkan wars by Tomaž Lavrič.

Movrin's reflections on children's suffering in armed conflicts lead us to the third part of the volume, *Daring the Darkness: Classical Antiquity as a Filter for Critical Experiences*, which discusses the role of references to Graeco-Roman

heritage in helping youth to deal with difficult coming-of-age issues. Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts show how childhood was shadowed by WWI, when the propagandistic potential of literature for young readers manifested itself through references to Caesar's military campaigns with the aim of encouraging American boys to enlist in the army. At the same time, however, literature inspired by Classical Antiquity offered compensation to the children in broken families (i.e., the father killed in the war), in an attempt to educate a new generation on the value of peace.

The twentieth century brought not only brutal wars, but also cruel totalitarianism of various kinds. Elena Ermolaeva discusses the situation of children's literature inspired by ancient culture in the Soviet Union. In those gruesome times the physical extermination of scholars in fact did take place, censorship determined the editors' choices, and the Party expected works engaged in building a "perfect" communist society. Ancient culture constituted a rich source of material for various ideological incentives. At the same time, the efforts of the scholars who strived to preserve an unbiased picture of the ancient world were all the more vital. It was perhaps with this aim that they assumed the mission of writing for children. Ermolaeva shows how they maneuvered between the inner need to preserve scholarly integrity and the very real risk of paying for it with one's life, if the truth was not compatible with the reigning ideology.

But children and youth are not cloistered from difficult matters in the free world, either. Elizabeth Hale transports us to the Antipodes and analyses a wonderfully creative reception of ancient culture in literature for young adults in New Zealand, in a part of the world self-titled "Down Under." Hale traces how the ancient topos of katabasis penetrates landscapes where Classical Antiquity reached only by means of intermediaries to serve as a reassuring reference point for youth in the difficult process of coming of age.

Next, we travel even further, to a parallel world, in the chapter by Owen Hodkinson, who reflects on the reception of Greek mythology in a global best-seller of recent times—Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*—in which the Greek mythological tradition, Platonism, and Christian heritage, filtered through such masterpieces as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, complement each other, building the scenography for the young protagonist's Orphean quest. These intellectually demanding books are, by the way, a perfect example of the double address in youth literature, with adult readers finding many challenges to their minds in each volume of Pullman's trilogy.

An Orphean quest is also undertaken by the protagonists of the novels discussed by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, who analyses various reinterpretations of the myth of this "Jimi Hendrix of the ancient lyre," as he is alluded to in

one of the books in question, to see how the mythical tale helps young readers face and cope with the most difficult experience in human life—the loss of loved ones—without losing hope.

Kümmerling-Meibauer's chapter takes us to the fourth section of the volume, *New Hope: Classical References in the Mission of Preparing Children to Strive for a Better Future*. The complex process of adopting the Graeco-Roman heritage in a state of strong identity, but in need of defining its ideological frame anew in response to current transformations, is discussed by Lisa Maurice, who analyses the issue of Israeli literature for children, including the necessity to create this literature from scratch in the reborn Hebrew language.

Joanna Kłos approaches the transformations that took place in the People's Republic of Poland of the 1970s, when youth searched for an alternative way of life from that of their parents, who yielded to the materialistic culture promoted by the government. Using the example of the reception of Telemachus's myth, Kłos analyses the ancient hero as a role model focused not on chasing after material goods, but on taking care of human relationships.

Hanna Paulouskaya discusses the social transformations that accompanied the transition from the Soviet Union to the new Russia. Paulouskaya looks at Theseus's reception in the works of the famous science fiction writer Kir Bulychev, showing how ancient culture helps one overcome pessimism and regain faith in childhood as the source of the power that saves.

The issue of preserving purity of heart with the hope for a better future is also the axis of the blockbuster at the turn of the new millennium—a series already considered a classic—the Harry Potter heptalogy by J.K. Rowling. No study on the reception of Classical Antiquity in children's and youth culture would be complete without an analysis of these books. This volume contains two chapters that focus on the young wizard's Graeco-Roman background. Christine Walde reconsiders the “glocal” reception of the series, pointing out that Rowling's subliminal transmission of ancient heritage to kids is more efficiently carried off than contemporary high culture and education are able to guarantee. Elżbieta Olechowska, on the other hand, approaches the transmedia and transliteracy phenomena, discussing a welter of multimedial emanations of Harry Potter and their consequences for other works of popular culture such as TV series and movies.

Another popular book cycle for kids (filmed for the BBC) are the “Roman Mysteries” by Caroline Lawrence, set in the Roman Empire. Helen Lovatt, in her in-depth study, reconsiders the questions of the common European heritage and of the complicated relations between East and West from the perspective of the cycle's main protagonists. Ancient culture with the complex

structure of *familia Romana* turns out to be also an apt reference point for today's patchwork families, with children searching for their place in the present and in the future.

Finally, I myself discuss the phenomenon of mythological fan fiction, which makes us pose the question about the notion of a classic and the canon anew. The modern media broaden the knowledge of Classical Antiquity and erase the borders between countries, urging us to reconsider the old definitions. It may be that in searching for new theories, we are coming full circle to the past. Today, the magic of the Word travels across continents as fast as optical fibers will allow. And every one can use it: young and old, erudite and less-educated. Moreover, the classics for children and the classics for adults often turn out to be the same texts. Which of them will retain this status to a degree equal to "our" ancient classics, only time will show.

The Unique Character of the Volume

Our research is the first step on a long, as we hope and believe, road—and I wish to make the reader aware of the consequences of this situation. The present volume sparks off studies on the reception of Classical Antiquity in children's and young adults' literature from regional perspectives by scholars who represent various methods and disciplines—from classical philology and Neo-Latin studies, through modern philologies, archaeology, to ethnography—and who are at various stages of their academic paths. Moreover, while sharing a common vision, we have differing backgrounds and historical experiences that shape our scholarly choices. It would be naïve to deny the influence of such factors on research, as the state of the art in scholarship is always in and of itself a fascinating testimony to the transformations the world has been undergoing over the ages. We prefer to acknowledge this phenomenon and emphasise its potential. Hence, some chapters start from personal insights into the problematics and contain autoethnocentric references—fully intentionally—in order to obtain a sharper picture of the given case. They are also of different lengths, but we believe this heterogeneity is a price worth paying for discoveries and striking up new scholarly debates. For example, Valentina Garulli (at the end of her chapter) provides the reader with a real gem—mainly, the critical edition of Laura Orvieto's unpublished story. Besides, it was often necessary to elaborate on the content of the works under study or to quote from them along with their analyses to make them understandable for the reader who might not be acquainted with the literatures in less widely known languages, like Modern Greek, Polish, or

Slovenian.⁴¹ In this phase of our research, no synthetising approach was of course possible and some hypotheses are yet to be verified. However, we believe that this kind of approach constitutes the essence of scholarship—not only seeking answers but also posing novel questions, all the while upholding the key values in this venture: openness, tolerance, and reciprocal curiosity about the acts of reception in different parts of the world. Our aim was to test the ground, define the most appealing opportunities and challenges, and stimulate further research.

And indeed, our adventure continues. The project has opened so many new and fascinating perspectives that we simply had to move forward with our research. This became possible owing to the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation within the framework of the Humboldt Alumni Award for Innovative Networking Initiatives—a special programme designed for all disciplines, in order to promote pioneering formats for multilateral academic cooperation and to enhance understanding between individual countries or cultures. Already in 2013, inspired by the potential of our first stage, I prepared and presented for evaluation the project *Chasing Mythical Beasts... The Reception of Creatures from Graeco-Roman Mythology in Children's & Young Adults' Culture as a Transformation Marker* (2014–2017), in the belief that we should try novel “reception filters,” such as the issue of human/non-human relations. This effort proved successful and so we focused on how the reception of creatures and monsters from Graeco-Roman mythology has been reflecting the changes in human sensitivity, the axiological system, and the perception of monstrosity itself. In May 2016 we met again in Warsaw to discuss the results of our research. A publication is currently being prepared.⁴²

Both projects revealed how much is yet to be done in this field, or rather on the frontiers between several fields, as the theme is truly interdisciplinary. At the same time, my priority was to find a way to ensure a vibrant broad collaboration and to consolidate the exceptional community of scholars I feel honoured to work with. I therefore applied for a European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant for the project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to*

41 That is why we provide the English translations of the relevant passages (quoting the original only if it is poetry or artistic prose), but not of the fragments in the languages broadly used in scholarship (in this volume's case, apart from English: French, German, and Italian). We also provide translations from the ancient languages, according to the current editorial practice.

42 See the project's website: <http://mythicalbeasts.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/> (accessed July 15, 2016).

Regional and Global Challenges (2016–2021).⁴³ With this excellent support we are excitedly embarking on a new journey through time and space. For paradoxically, the recent crisis of Graeco-Roman culture and classical education is bringing us—with the help of the ever-new generations of Homer’s sons and daughters, speaking in various tongues and writing in various languages—closer to the ancient legacy. We are rediscovering that we still need it and are regaining the courage to believe in the magic of the Word—this most powerful heritage of our mythical childhood.

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I wish to express my utmost gratitude to our benefactors: first of all, the Loeb Classical Library Foundation affiliated with Harvard University, the “*Artes Liberales*” Institute Foundation, and the Faculty of “*Artes Liberales*” at the University of Warsaw. I thank the employees of these institutions, both in research and administration. I wish also to warmly thank the scholars from all over the world who took part in this bold venture and covered huge distances in time and space, thereby making our project come true. I am enormously grateful to Professors Jerzy Axer and Jan Kieniewicz for their constant faith and support, and to Dr. Elżbieta Olechowska—my closest collaborator in this enterprise. I wish to thank the research secretaries of the project: Joanna Kłos, who also proofread one of the final versions of the manuscript, and Dr. Michał Kucharski. A special thanks goes to Dr. Elizabeth Hale, who helped update the bibliography in children’s literature studies, and to Dr. Hanna Paulouskaya, who compiled the final bibliography. And I thank our students, who engaged in the varied stages of the project with great dedication and passion, as well as

43 See the University of Warsaw’s website: <http://en.uw.edu.pl/scientist-in-the-film/> (accessed July 15, 2016). The ERC Consolidator Grant makes it possible for me to, indeed, consolidate the research of our community. We will also carry out novel, bold tasks that—as I deeply hope—open new perspectives in particular regions, for example: in Asia-Pacific, coordinated by Elizabeth Hale from the University of New England, Australia, who will also prepare a guide to classical reception in children’s literature; in Israel, coordinated by Lisa Maurice from Bar-Ilan University, who will also elaborate on classical education; and in Africa, coordinated by Daniel Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1 in Cameroon. Moreover, two ventures are being developed within the project by my team members from the University of Roehampton, UK: *Autism and Mythology*—research into cogitative and emotional capacities and autism in relation to myth, conducted by Susan Deacy; and *Animating the Ancient World*—preparation of five animations and a documentary by Sonya Nevin and Steve K. Simons. See also a short presentation of the project at: <http://en.uw.edu.pl/11th-erc-grant/> (accessed July 15, 2016).

the authors or the owners of the artworks and photographs who kindly permitted us to use them in the volume. It was also possible to carry out this venture owing to the multifarious possibilities offered to me by the aforementioned Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Mobility Plus programme of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland. Last but not least, I wish to thank the two anonymous Brill reviewers for their insightful remarks; Dr. Simon Burton and Dr. Marilyn Burton, who proofread a considerable part of the present volume with their careful British eyes; Grace Morsberger for her final polishing of the manuscript; and Tessel Jonquière, Jennifer Pavelko, and Judy Pereira from Brill for taking care of the editing process.

The references to Classical Antiquity often conjure up memories of childhood, when many of us encountered this tradition for the first time. This experience is similar to that of cross-writing, when a dual audience—of children and adults—is addressed, or even a quadruple audience, if we count the “hidden adult” and the “hidden child” in so many texts of the world’s civilisation. This is something we felt strongly in working on the present volume, when we approached literary phenomena, motifs, and books that had often been crucial for us in our childhood. For we thereby studied matters that had lent to our own identities, and led to our current research paths as well. Thus, we wrote *sine ira et studio*, but with pleasure and delight, as is typical for children discovering the world and tasting a welter of the charms of the Orphean magic transmitted from generation to generation by Homer’s heirs to save humankind from indifference—to make both children and adults wonder, enjoy, and rebel. We deeply hope that not only scholars, but also a wider public will find in this volume both pleasure and inspiration to keep looking for this magic in our world.

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PART 1

*In Search of Our Roots: Classical References
as a Shaper of Young Readers' Identity*



MINOTAUR



Joanna Gębal, The Minotaur (2012)

ILLUSTRATION CREATED AT THE WORKSHOP OF PROF. ZYGMUNT
JANUSZEWSKI, ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN WARSAW, © BY JOANNA GĘBAL

From Aesop to *Asterix Latinus*: A Survey of Latin Books for Children¹

Wilfried Stroh

It remains uncertain whether there were any narrative Latin children's books in the ancient world. The Aesop's fables, which Quintilian uses for simple Latin style exercises, could have also been Greek.² In any case, from some testimonies and documents it is known that Aesop was the prominent Greek author of school readings, before students rose to the level of Homer. By contrast, the poetic fables of Phaedrus (in senarii) and later of Avianus (in elegiac couplets) were clearly not intended for children. It is not until the late classical prose version of Phaedrus, the so-called (after its author) *Romulus*, that the comprehensible history of Latin children's book begins.³ The reason is that the author devotes his fables, which he claims are his own translation of Aesop's works from Greek (which is evidently untrue), to his son. His agenda—to be both morally edifying and entertaining—became the dominant theory of fables for the Middle Ages and early modern times and justifies the inclusion of Aesop in the curriculum. A special role is played by the fable of a cock that finds a pearl on a dunghill but does not know what to do with it—a fable taken over from Phaedrus, but positioned and interpreted as programmatic by Romulus. Phaedrus, however, thought of those readers who did not grasp the meaning of his fables. In many interpretations and reinterpretations, the cock, depending on educational needs, becomes the image of stupidity, ignorance, pursuit of sinful

1 The present chapter has been translated from German into English by Zuzanna Łopacińska-Piędel. This is the short summary of a long and detailed paper written by Wilfried Stroh in Latin (*De fabulis Latinis in usum puerorum puellarumque scriptis*) going to be published in the academic journal *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*. The paper contains an extensive linguistic and historical analysis of the texts mentioned in this chapter.

2 For an edition see, e.g., Ben Edwin Perry, ed., *Aesopica* (Urbana, Ill.: The University of Illinois Press, 1952). For the reception of Aesop in children's literature, see Part 2 of the present volume: "The Aesop Complex: The Transformations of Fables in Response to Regional Challenges."

3 For an edition, see Georg Thiele, ed., *Der Lateinische Äsop des Romulus und die Prosa-Fassungen des Phädrus* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1910).

pleasure, or even dissimulation of virtues. This story is almost always used as an introduction to collections of fables.⁴

Romulus, surviving in various versions, which later were partially translated back into verse (without any knowledge of the original Phaedrus, who was rediscovered only in 1596), was the dominant textbook of the Middle Ages, besides the *Disticha Catonis*. Avianus, by contrast, who was not denied respect as an alleged Christian, usually did not enjoy the same appreciation. Particular success was achieved by the so-called Anonymus Neveleti, whose fables were written in smart elegiac couplets, and who was considered to be “the” Aesop of the late Middle Ages and was highly praised even by Julius Caesar Scaliger. His works continued to be printed up to modern times, since the enjoyment of Aesop’s fables was not destroyed by the Renaissance. They are still recommended by educators, even those who otherwise rejected pagan content. The bilingual *Esopus* by Heinrich Steinhoewel,⁵ in its many adaptations, was the most internationally successful German book of the fifteenth century (being known even in Japan⁶). It encompasses the life and fables of Aesop, with beautiful images, also in the version of the Anonymus Neveleti. It includes the fables that Lorenzo Valla had translated from the original Greek.⁷ Martin Luther, who was annoyed by certain lubricities of Steinhoewel, also translated Aesop and recommended him as a book for the German family. Only the fables of La Fontaine, who owes much to Aesop, gradually outstrip the latter in the seventeenth century. And they were soon translated several times into Latin for their international dissemination.⁸

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- 4 See Léopold Hervieux, ed., *Les fabulistes Latins: Depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du moyen âge*, in three volumes: vols. I–II: *Phèdre et ses anciens imitateurs directs et indirects* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 21893–21894); and vol. III: *Avianus et ses anciens imitateurs* (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1894); Harry C. Schnur, ed., *Fabeln der Antike, griechisch und lateinisch* (München: Heimeran Verlag, 1978, with a German translation); idem, ed., *Lateinische Fabeln des Mittelalters, lateinisch–deutsch* (München: Heimeran Verlag, 1979).
- 5 Heinrich Steinhoewel, ed., *Esopus* (Ulm: [sine nom., c. 1476]; digitalised by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München: <http://daten.digital-e-sammlungen.de/~db/0002/bsb00024825/images/>, accessed Feb. 20, 2016).
- 6 For Aesop’s reception in Japan, see Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi’s chapter, “Aesop’s Fables in Japanese Literature for Children: Classical Antiquity and Japan,” in this volume.
- 7 Maria Pasqualina Pillolla, ed., *Laurentius Vallensis Fabulae Aesopicae* (Genova: Istituto di Filologia Classica e Medievale, 2003).
- 8 E.g., Jean B. Giraud, *Fabulae selectae Fontanii e Gallico sermone in Latinum conversae in usum studiosae iuventutis*, vol. 1 (Rothomagi [Rouen]: ap. Lud. le Boucher / Laurent. Dumesnil, 1775; available via Google Books: https://books.google.de/books?id=J3oTAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false, accessed Feb. 20, 2016).

Before that, however, another work of Greek origin appeared next to Aesop as a new Latin reading book: *Batrachomyomachia*, attributed to Homer, perhaps created in the early imperial period and in itself inspired by Aesop. The droll war of mice and frogs described therein in epic style is triggered by an almost tragic accident: the king of frogs, Physignathus, carries Psicharpax, a male mouse who cannot swim, piggyback to the other side of a pond. Yet when a water snake appears, full of fear he forgets his passenger, dives away, and the mouse drowns, cursing the traitor. Contrary to what researchers assume nowadays, this brilliant epyllion played no role in Greek education in late ancient times, despite its content, which is seemingly appropriate for children, probably because it lacked the moral manifested in Aesop's fables. The work was discovered as a textbook only by the Byzantines, mainly because of their need for a standard literary text appropriate for children, in which they tried also to detect some useful lessons. So the frog-mouse war in its Greek-Latin edition, a brilliant literary translation by the Florentine chancellor Carlo Marsuppini, became probably the first (c. 1474) Greek printed book in Europe.⁹ It was followed by countless translations into Latin and other languages and reprints up to the nineteenth century.

One of the most important is the Latin adaptation of Elysus Calentius (printed in 1503),¹⁰ who, like *Romulus*, devoted the work to his son, and who expanded the plot with many funny ideas into three books and partially transformed it into a criminal history: the frog king (in Calentius's version, called Croacus from the Latin for the sake of non-Hellenists) becomes a criminal who perfidiously drowns the mice prince (Rodilardus) and thus wantonly initiates a war. Jacobus Balde S.J. remains closer to the original with his ingenious *Batrachomyomachia* in five books,¹¹ yet he also brings a new, root cause of the war into play: a seductive female frog supposedly bewitched the male mouse so that he set off on a journey which turned out to be fatal for him. In Balde's work, written for youth, i.e., for his high school class in Ingolstadt,

9 Carolus Marsuppini, *Batrachomyomachia* (Venetiis[?]: [sine nom., c. 1474]; digitalised by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München: <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00048022/images/>, accessed Feb. 20, 2016; it contains only the poetic rendering).

10 Elisio Calenzio, *La guerra delle ranocchie: Croaco*, ed. Liliana Monti Sabia (Napoli: Lofredo Editore, 2008).

11 Jacobus Balde, *Batrachomyomachia Homeri Tuba Romana Cantata* (Ingolstadt: Hänlin, 1637; digitalised by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München: <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10608727.html>, accessed Feb. 20, 2016). See also Veronika Lukas, ed., *Batrachomyomachia: Homers Froschmäusekrieg auf römischer Trompete geblasen von Jacob Balde S.J. (1637/1647)*, mit kritischer Ausgabe des ersten Buches, Übersetzung und Kommentar (München: Utz Verlag, 2001).

an ethical and political prose commentary reveals the lessons to be drawn from this war, which undoubtedly reflects the Thirty Years' War. Prior to Balde's work, *Froschmeuseler* (1595), by the Magdeburg schoolmaster and town preacher Georg Rollenhagen, which consists of about 20,000 German verses and transforms the epyllion into a huge politically didactic poem, again meant for youth, became even more famous. As far as its moral goes, Rollenhagen follows the interpretation of the reformer Philipp Melanchthon: it is better to accept even a small wrong than to risk a war with its unforeseeable consequences. This admonition to *studium tolerantiae* would today find many advocates, and the work deserves a newer adaptation.

The very first book written specifically for young people is probably the *Avantures de Télémaque* (1696) by the archbishop and French royal tutor François Fénelon, in which Minerva, travelling with Odysseus's son Telemachus, acts as a mentor and gives the prince, who is predestined to rule, an introduction to political ethics. This work, now almost forgotten, was then received with unprecedented admiration, and repeatedly translated into Latin (first in 1744).¹² This, however, was not done so much to provide an interesting reading for language instruction, but out of admiration for a work of art, worth disseminating as widely as possible, and in need of crowning through the Latin language. Most translations are therefore poetic, some are brilliant.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, in which Latin unprecedentedly lost its importance in public life, the requirements for Latin textbooks changed. After Jean-Jacques Rousseau recommended Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as the only reading appropriate for the youth, instead of Aesop, whom he rejected, and after Johann Heinrich Campe adapted it for the German family, this influential educator expressed a wish that his work could be translated into Latin for beginners as suitable reading material that until then had not been available. Thus, the very skilfully translated, *Robinson secundus* (1779) of the progressive Latin teacher Philipp J. Lieberkühn, which is even now worth reading, was the first appealing school text for language learning.¹³ The book was such a success that soon other Latin scholars started to compete with it and exported their adaptations even to America.

12 Gregor Trautwein, *Fenelonii [...] Telemachus Gallice conscriptus. [...] Nunc Nitidior Latinitate et Indice satis copioso donatus [...]* (Frankfurt: Samuel Wohler, 1744; available via Google Books: https://books.google.de/books?id=KdY5AAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=de&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false, accessed Feb. 20, 2016).

13 Philipp Julius Lieberkühn, *Ioachimi Henrici Campe Robinson secundus tironum causa latine vertit [...] Ph.J. L.* (Züllichoviae [Züllichau]: Sumptibus officinae librariae Orphanotrophei et Frommanni, 1785; digitalised at Pantoia: http://www.pantoia.de/Robinson/RS/RS1785_DIGI/index.html, accessed Feb. 21, 2016).

The fact that this direction set by *Robinson* was not pursued immediately is likely due to the new humanistic orientation toward ancient classicism stemming from Germany. The new Latin, as, to a large extent, Christian Latin, was banned from high schools, and describing the living environment of the students in Latin, as Lieberkühn had recommended, was no longer interesting. It was only from the end of the nineteenth century that British classics for youth such as *Treasure Island* (*Insula Thesauraria*) were translated into Latin by a pioneer of the now so-called *Latin vivant*, the Hungarian-born American Arcadius Avellanus.¹⁴ He fought, as he himself wrote in his polemical works, with the scientific Latin philology of the Germans, in particular, whom he branded murderers of Latin. Despite his commitment he was, however, unable to maintain the grammatical standards of the best Latin scholars. After him Ugo Enrico Paoli, a Florentine legal historian was an exceptional linguistic expert in the tradition of Avellanus. In addition to his brilliant original poems he translated Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz* (*Maximi et Mauriti malefacta*)¹⁵ and Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (*Petrus Ericius*) in classical hexameter; and in Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* (*Pinoculus*)¹⁶ he presented a sample of narrative prose. Apart from him, one must mention an Hellenist from Klagenfurt, Erwin Steindl, second to Paoli but respectable, who as early as 1925 brought out a much-imitated, never surpassed *Max et Moritz* in rhythmic Latin verse and then a Greek version.¹⁷

The biggest, scarcely explicable success was achieved, however, by Alexander Lenard, again a Hungarian by birth, with *Winnie ille Pu*,¹⁸ which despite its linguistic paucity immediately climbed to the list of bestsellers, which the ablest Latin scholars can only dream of. It was probably the fact of clothing extremely childish content in the lofty language of Rome that made uncritical readers gush over the book and find it more beautiful than anything that Cicero and Caesar had written. Lenard's success unleashed a virtual tide of Latin translations of popular children's books (*Alicia in Terra Mirabili*, etc.), which has yet to ebb. In terms of language, these are often far below Lenard's level,

14 Arcadius Avellanus, *Insula Thesauraria ab auctore Roberto Ludovico Stevenson: Latine interpretatus est A.A.* (New York: E. Parmalee Prentice, 1922; digitalised at Pantoia: <http://www.pantoia.de/avellanus/insulathesauraria/index.html>, accessed Feb. 21, 2016).

15 Ugo Enrico Paoli, *Maximi et Mauriti malefacta ab Hugone Henrico Paoli Latinis versibus enarrata* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1959).

16 Ugo Enrico Paoli, *Pinoculus Latinus* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1962).

17 Erwin Steindl, *Max et Moritz: Puerorum facinora scurrilia septem enarrata fabellis quarum materiam reperit depinxitque Guilelmus Busch* (München: Braun & Schneider, 1925).

18 Alexander Lenard, *A.A. Milnei Winnie ille Pu Liber celeberrimus omnibus fere pueris puellisque notus nunc primum de Anglico sermone in Latinum conversus auctore A. Lenardo* (London–New York: Methuen–Dutton, 1960).

in fact, some are downright awful. The market seems insatiable. Alone Saint-Exupéry's classic *Le petit prince* has been translated into Latin three times, the last time in 2015 as *Principulus*. This translation runs counter to the rules of grammar, but is popular with readers. Whether these works or concoctions are read as much as they are undoubtedly purchased by grandmothers of students of Latin, remains an open question.

The series "Asterix" (since 1973) adapted (from the French) by Karl-Heinz Graf von Rothenburg or Rubricastellanus still enjoys high readership levels.¹⁹ One cannot deny his wit and skill, although he does not come close to the earlier centuries in the pursuit of linguistic purity. Unlike many amateurs who followed him in the sphere of comic books, he is fluent in colloquial classical Latin and is especially adept at witty inclusion of classical Latin sayings (as in "Errare Romanum est"). In terms of originality, however, two Latin young adult books surpass his; both have appeared in the past few decades and merit imitation. In *Simius liberator* the Heidelberg Latin professor Michael von Albrecht has created a new adaptation of the novel by Apuleius, in which the hero, Lucius, in the body of an ape, visits the world of today and observes it satirically.²⁰ In contrast, Mercedes González-Haba, who was born in Spain and was once a lecturer in Trier, in her work *Tacitus cattus* describes a Latin cat who thanks to the skills acquired in a feline school is able to write his memoirs.²¹ As in many beautiful, genuine children's books since Aesop and the frog-mouse war, the animals speak here as well. What is more, such works show that young adult literature in Latin does not have to encompass solely translations, as has always been the case since *Romulus*.²² Also in this respect there are still new possibilities.

19 Rubricastellanus [Karl-Heinz von Rothenburg], *Asterix Gallus: periculum quoddam Asterigis, composuit Gosciny, pinxit Uderzo, in Latinum convertit R.* (Stuttgartiae [Stuttgart]: Egmont EHAPA, 1973).

20 Michael von Albrecht, *Das Märchen vom Heidelberger Affen (L. Simii Liberatoris Commentarii), lateinisch und deutsch, nach dem Sandhäuser Codex unicus herausgegeben und übersetzt von M. v. A.* (Heidelberg: Manutius Verlag, 1991); first edition only in Latin in Michael von Albrecht, *Scripta Latina* (Frankfurt/M. u.a.: Peter Lang, 1989), 91–124; now available in Latin with footnotes as *De simia Heidelbergensi* (Raisting: Verlag Rudolf Spann, 2004); available at Der Römer Shop: <http://www.der-roemer-shop.de/unterrichtsmaterialschule/schulbuecher-unterrichtsmaterial.html> (accessed Feb. 21, 2016).

21 Mercedes González-Haba, *Tacitus cattus* (Saarbrücken: Verlag der Societas Latina, 1997); available at Societas Latina, Universität des Saarlandes—FR 5.2, D-66041 Saarbrücken.

22 For more texts, see *Pantoia: Unterhaltsame Literatur und Dichtung in lateinischer und griechischer Übersetzung*, coordinated by Bernd Platzdasch, at: http://pantoia.de/bibliogr_ueber.php (accessed Feb. 21, 2016). This bibliography contains, above all, children's books translated into Latin, along with links to their digitalised versions.

Childhood Rhetorical Exercises of the Victor of Vienna

Barbara Milewska-Ważbińska

The present chapter focuses on the literary experience acquired by young people who were entitled to an education in the seventeenth century. While children's literature as such was in *statu nascendi* then, ancient texts, which were compulsory reading at school, played an important role in shaping youth.¹ I pay special attention to one teenage student both as a reader of great ancient literature and an author of school essays on the ancient world. Although this kind of education was a common practice, the case I present here is special because it shows how humanistic education (*studia humanitatis*) shaped the intellect and moral values of none other than the future Polish king and victor of Vienna in 1683—Jan III Sobieski (1629–1696).

It is almost certain that Sobieski would have, as a boy, often browsed the Latin grammar handbook *Grammaticarum institutionum libri IV pro usu scholarum Novodvorscensium in Alma Academia Cracoviensi, opera et studio magistri Lucae Piotrowski*.² This was a Latin textbook used at Nowodworski College, the secondary school established by the professors of the Kraków Academy, which the young Sobieski attended between 1640 and 1642. First published in 1634 in Kraków (Cracow), this Latin grammar handbook quickly went through a number of editions. Although not adopted in Jesuit colleges, where the vast majority of the seventeenth-century Polish nobility received their education, this textbook served students in other colleges until the late eighteenth century, when the Commission of National Education implemented an education reform act in Poland concerning textbooks and curricula.³ Piotrowski's textbook was adopted not only in the elementary grammar classes, but also by more

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- 1 See M.O. Grenby, "The Origins of Children's Literature," in M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–17.
 - 2 See Jan Leniek, *Lata szkolne króla Jana Sobieskiego* [School years of King Jan Sobieski] (Kraków: the author's print, 1888), 9.
 - 3 See Janina Dobrzyniecka, *Drukarnie Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego = De trium Universitatis Cracoviensis typographiarum historia: 1674–1783* (Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975), 25.

advanced students of poetics, rhetoric, and dialectics. It was divided into four consecutive chapters dealing respectively with basic rules of Latin grammar, etymology, syntax, and the basic principles of prosody.

Jakub Sobieski, the future king's father, who had formerly studied at Kraków Academy, sent his sons from their hometown Żółkwia to Kraków to study in the early spring of 1640.⁴ Prior to their departure, the sons were given their father's written guidelines for themselves and their tutors. In his "Instrukcja" [Instruction]⁵ Jakub Sobieski wrote:

Man is graced by science in all places, at war and at court, at home and in the Commonwealth. People show more respect to a learned poor servant than to a foolish great lord, whom they point at with their fingers.⁶

He enumerated sixteen intentions for his sons' spiritual, intellectual, and physical education. The "Instruction" testifies to the father's great care for the education of his young sons. His willingness to cooperate with the tutors reveals a modern attitude toward parenting.

The school that the nearly eleven-year-old Jan Sobieski and his older brother Marek attended was an academic institution. Its humanities curriculum was modelled on the educational system developed by Johannes Sturm in the renowned Strasburg Gymnasium from 1538 onward.⁷ Aside from classical languages, primarily Latin, Nowodworski College provided education in ancient and contemporary history as well as mathematics and geography. These subjects were, however, taught in passing through analysis of texts, rather than as separate modules. European history and geography were taught from Caesar

4 See Karolina Targosz, *Jana Sobieskiego nauki i peregrynacje* [Jan Sobieski's studies and travels] (Wrocław et al.: Ossolineum, 1985), 32.

5 See "Instrukcja Jakuba Sobieskiego, wojewody bełskiego, starosty krasnostawskiego, dana JMĆ Panu Orchowskiemu jako dyrektorowi JMĆ Pana Marka, Jana Sobieskich, wojewodzców bełskich, gdy ich na studia do Krakowa oddawał przez punkta pisana" [The Instruction issued by Jakub Sobieski, Voivode of Bełz, Starost of Krasnystaw, bestowed on Mr. Orchowski, the supervisor of Mr. Marek and Jan Sobieski, heirs to the Voivode of Bełz, upon their departure to study in Cracow, written in points], in Franciszek Ksawery Kulczycki, ed., *Pisma do wieku i spraw Jana Sobieskiego* [Writings on the life and affairs of Jan Sobieski], vol. 1, part 1 (Kraków: Akademia Umiejętności, 1880), 11–29. For further reference on Jakub Sobieski's guidelines, see Targosz, *Jana Sobieskiego nauki*, 29–32.

6 In Kulczycki, ed., *Pisma do wieku i spraw Jana Sobieskiego*, 19 (trans. B.M.-W.).

7 See James Bowen, *A History of Western Education: Civilization of Europe, Sixth to Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), vol. 2, 395–397; see also Lewis Spitz and Barbara Sher Tinsley, *Johann Sturm on Education: The Reformation and Humanist Learning* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).

Baronius's *Annales ecclesiastici*, published between 1588 and 1607, which were read out to students in class. Polish history was taught according to *Chronica sive Historiae Polonicae compendiosa [...] descriptio* (1571) by Joannes Herberus, and mathematics was based on Joannes Broscius's *Arithmetica integrorum* (1620).⁸ The curriculum was conducted in the patriotic and public spirit. Students were familiarised with national history and politics, and imbued with a strong sense of allegiance to home and country.⁹

The young Sobieski brothers entered their names in the register of students of Alma Mater Cracoviensis in 1640. Marek signed in first, as *Marcus Jacobi Sobieski palatinides Belzensis, capit[aneus] Javoroviensis d[ioecesis] Leopold[iensis]* [Marek Sobieski, the son of Jakub the Voivode of Bełz, Starost of Yavoriv from Lviv diocese], followed by his brother, *Joannes Jacobi Sobieski palatinides Belzensis d[ioecesis] Leopold[iensis]* [Jan, the son of Jakub the Voivode of Bełz, from Lviv diocese].¹⁰ They began their education with poetics. This testifies to a high command of Latin, enabling them to follow a more advanced curriculum than the other beginners, who were statutorily assigned to grammar class. A regular school day in poetics classes was five and a half hours long at the basic level, and at higher levels four and a half hours.¹¹ The Sobieski brothers also received private in-home tutoring.¹² Under the tutor's supervision they studied foreign languages, speaking Latin, German, French, Italian, or even Turkish.¹³

While at school, the brothers read extensively the greatest classical works and learned oratorical skills in Latin.¹⁴ The poetics class, for which the brothers were tutored by Dr. Maciej Bolski, offered instruction in classical Latin poetry, including Persius's satires, Horace's odes, Virgil's and Ovid's *oeuvres*, and Claudian's poems. In the rhetoric class, the boys read Cicero's works—his letters

8 See Józef Łukaszewicz, *Historia szkół w Koronie i w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim* [History of schools in the Polish Crown Lands and in the Great Duchy of Lithuania] (Poznań: Jan Konstanty Żupański, 1849), vol. 1, 231.

9 See Henryk Barycz, *Rzecz o studiach w Krakowie dwóch generacji Sobieskich* [Concerning two generations of the Sobieski family studying in Kraków] (Kraków–Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984), 36.

10 Georgius Zathay and Henricus Barycz, eds., *Album studiosorum Universitatis Cracoviensis. Tomus IV (continens nomina studiosorum ab anno 1607 ad annum 1642)* (Cracoviae: sump-tibus Universitatis Jagellonicae Cracoviensis, 1950), 191.

11 See Jan Leniek, *Książka pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu jubileuszu trzechsetnej rocznicy założenia Gimnazjum św. Anny w Krakowie* [Memorial book in honour of the tercentenary anniversary of the founding of St. Anna's Gymnasium in Kraków] (Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1888), 105.

12 See Barycz, *Rzecz o studiach w Krakowie*, 38.

13 See Kulczycki, ed., *Pisma do wieku i spraw Jana Sobieskiego*, 22–23.

14 See Spitz and Tinsley, *Johann Sturm on Education*, 272.

and speeches. Significantly, most of these books later ended up in the royal library of Jan Sobieski.¹⁵

In Sobieski's day, the school in Kraków attracted over a thousand students, among whom were the sons not only of rich magnates like Marek and Jan but also of poor noblemen. At less advanced levels, only students called *magnificentes* and *generosi* were privileged to sit at desks with supports. Other sons of noblemen, referred to as *domini*, had no such supports, and in the worst-case scenario, the low-born and the poorest pupils would sit on wooden stools without back supports.¹⁶ Although in the higher forms all students were provided with desks, only the richest were authorised to occupy the honorary seats right next to the tutor's chair.¹⁷ Moreover, students were grouped as Romans or Greeks according to their parents' status (Sobieski belonged to the elite).¹⁸ The Romans were held in greater respect, and those affiliated with patricians and senators were accorded unique distinction.¹⁹

Nowodworski College, much like Jesuit colleges, staged theatre performances.²⁰ In Sobieski's time dialogue presentations about the life of Christ and the Saints, pastoral eclogues composed for Christmas, or *Dialogi de Passione Domini* were put on alongside tragedies of Seneca—*Thyestes* and *Hippolytus*.²¹ Play-acting and public speeches composed by students and tutors were part and parcel of the contemporary curriculum.

Before the outbreak of WWII, the National Library of Poland in Warsaw had in its collection six notebooks of Marek and Jan Sobieski.²² Two notebooks handwritten by the later victor of Vienna fortunately survived the conflagration and are still preserved in the Library.²³ The first extant notebook contains

15 See Irena Komasa, *Jan III Sobieski—miłośnik ksiąg* [Jan III Sobieski—the book lover] (Wrocław et al.: Ossolineum, 1982), 135–140.

16 See Antoni Danysz, *Studia z dziejów wychowania w Polsce* [Studies of the history of education in Poland] (Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1921), 222.

17 See Leniek, *Książka pamiątkowa*, 81. For further information about sitting in the first row as a token of privilege at school, see also: Jędrzej Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* [An outline of social customs during the reign of Augustus III], ed. Roman Pollak (Wrocław et al.: Ossolineum, 1970), 75 (text written in the eighteenth century).

18 See Leniek, *Książka pamiątkowa*, 113.

19 See Leniek, *Lata szkolne*, 13.

20 See Jan Okoń, *Na scenach jezuickich w dawnej Polsce* [On Jesuit stages in Old Poland] (Warszawa: OBTA UW–Wydawnictwo DiG, 2006), 9–10.

21 See Leniek, *Lata szkolne*, 10; and Leniek, *Książka pamiątkowa*, 42.

22 See Barycz, *Rzecz o studiach w Krakowie*, 49–66.

23 Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library of Poland], II.3195; and Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library of Poland], II.3196.

some notes on Cicero's oration *Pro lege Manilia*, handwritten in Latin by the future king himself on the basis of Andrzej Lipnicki's lectures on the speech in a rhetoric class in the winter semester of 1641/1642. The second manuscript includes Jan's school essays in Latin. With their doodles and inkblots, the notes are not a far cry from present-day school notebooks. Admirable, however, is Jan's command of Latin.

The assumption that early modern gymnasium or college tutors rightly emphasised foreign language study, specifically Latin, is in keeping with the latest pedagogical research, which underlines the positive impact of language acquisition on children's development²⁴—both on verbal and non-verbal intelligence, as well as on cognitive skills in particular. Learning language as a system of signs and symbols influences thinking processes, leading to the better acquisition of analytical and comparative skills. In the seventeenth century a good command of Latin, which served as the language of international communication, enabled students to develop social skills and helped to strengthen cultural ties both with the *Res Publica Litteraria Europea*—Latin-speaking Europe—and within their own social group of the Republic of the Gentry (Polish: *szlachta*).

Let us consider the first notebook, which contains remarks on Cicero's speech *Pro lege Manilia*, also known as *De imperio Gnaei Pompei*, in an attempt to clarify why this particular work was repeatedly recommended for study. Characterised by a clear topic statement, coherent structure, and lucid conclusion, the speech had been assigned to generations of students to be memorised. As a reminder, Roman tribune Gaius Manilius put a motion to the popular assembly in 66 BC requesting that Gnaeus Pompeius take command in the war with Mithridates VI of Pontus. Marcus Tullius Cicero famously supported the motion in a superb speech which affords the reader illuminating insight into the great commander's capabilities and depicts his virtuous deeds in war and peace.

Indeed, the speech was deemed a compulsory text for memorisation up to the twentieth century.²⁵ It was also read for many years in Nowodworski College. It is particularly worth noting that in 1610, Adam Romer, professor of Kraków Academy and lecturer at Nowodworski College, published ten

24 See Magdalena Jałowiec-Sawicka, "Pozytywny wpływ nauki języka obcego na rozwój dziecka" [A positive impact of foreign language learning on child development], *Języki obce w szkole* [Foreign language teaching to primary and secondary school students] 3 (2006): 15–19.

25 See Heinrich Heyden and Friedrich August Eckstein, *Lateinischer und griechischer Unterricht* (Leipzig: Fues, 1887), 256.

annotated speeches of Cicero, with *Pro lege Manilia* opening the collection.²⁶ In this work Romer took pains to explain the structure and rhetorical devices central to the orations.²⁷ He provided a tripartite rhetorical analysis, which included discussion of the invention and disposition of individual components of the speech, grammatical structures, and stylistics. Comparative analysis of Jan Sobieski's handwritten notes and the edition—corresponding phrases and examples quoted—confirms that his tutor did use the annotated edition in question. However, Jan's notebook includes moral sentences (*sententiae morales*) attached to each part, which are missing from Romer's edition (see figure 2.1).

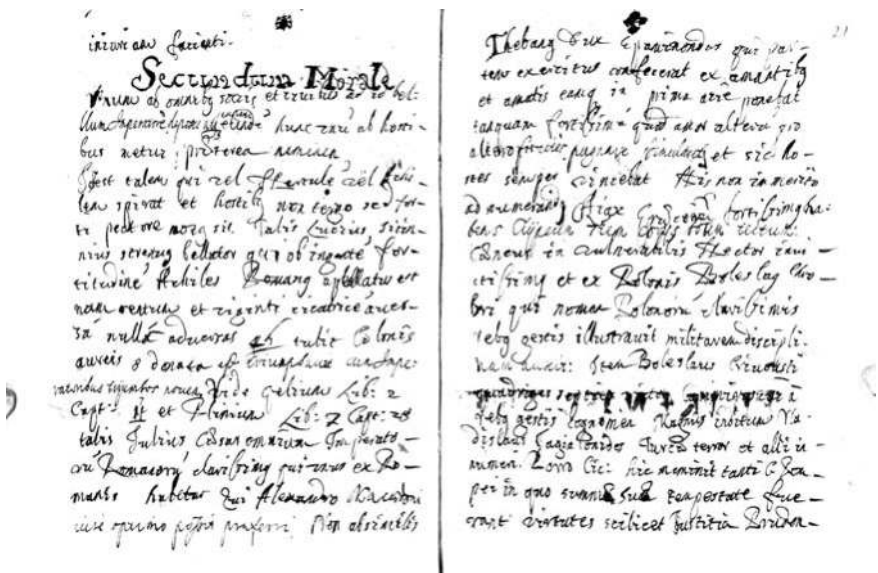


FIGURE 2.1 A page of Jan Sobieski's school notebook including notes on Cicero's oration *Pro lege Manilia*

WARSAW, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF POLAND, II.3195, FOL. 20V.–21R., SCANNED BY BARBARA MILEWSKA-WAŻBIŃSKA.

- 26 *M. Tullii Ciceronis orationes: Pro lege Manilia, Pro S. Roscio, Catilinae quatuor [sic], Antequam iret in exilium, Post reditum in senatu, Nona Philippica, Pro Marco Marcello Adami Romeri Stezicensis Praepositi s. Nicolai Cracoviae, Commentariis illustratae. Cum gratia et privilegio S.R.M.* (Cracoviae: in officina Nicolai Lobii, 1610).
- 27 See Tadeusz Bienkowski, "Działalność naukowa Adama Romera ze Stężycy, teoretyka wymowy i profesora Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego" [Scholarly work of Adam Romer of Stężycza, a rhetorician, professor of Jagiellonian University], *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* [History of science and technology quarterly] 13.1 (1968): 13–21.

As noted down by the young Jan, a good commander, like Pompeius, is characterised by prudence (*prudencia*), justice (*iustitia*), manliness (*fortitudo*), and temperance (*temperantia*).²⁸ These ethical remarks serve to expose the tutor's didactic purposes. Indeed, apart from instruction in the Latin language and classical culture, the students also received instruction in civic education. The tutor paid equal attention to the work's form and to its content and praised Pompeius's laudable attitude. The teacher further underscored the commander's devotion and respect for his homeland and its subjects, commented on his civic responsibilities, and promoted putting the common good over private matters even at the cost of one's self-sacrifice (again, he gave Pompey as an example).

It is clear from the rhetorical analysis of Sobieski's handwritten notes that the future king was well-versed in the principles of rhetoric and elocution. The tutor also considered different ways of speaking to people in the street and to judges in court.²⁹ We must therefore conclude that the future king was also no stranger to the principles of ethics.

The other extant notebook contains Jan Sobieski's forty-one³⁰ supervised school essays. They read as orations on manifold topics, and often as though intended as public speeches. Some of them represent rhetorical declamations characteristic of ancient tradition.

Page 216 verso of the notebook features an interesting composition on the encomium of Athens (*Laus Athenarum*), in which Jan Sobieski shows how the Greeks, once a proud nation of unmatched cultural vitality, now suffer under the Turkish yoke (see figure 2.2). The Polish youngster eulogises Athenian democracy and the prudence and courage of its leaders, who were capable of vanquishing the Persian Empire, taking note of their tremendous literary, artistic, and scholarly achievements. He then goes on to remark that the history of Athens is alive with examples of heroic and patriotic deeds of its citizens, noting Themistocles as a paragon of civic engagement. Nevertheless, it is the philosopher Plato, rather than any outstanding general or politician, whom he salutes as the most illustrious among the Athenians.

28 See Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library of Poland], II.3195, fol. 21r. and fol. 21v.

29 See Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library of Poland], II.3195, fol. 9r.: "Ex verbis Cic[eronis] colligere licet diversam rationem dicendi ad populum et ad iudices, populus enim delectari, iudices doceri volunt, ad populum oratio iucundior atque elegantior, ad iudices severior atque simplicior esse debet. Haec ad utilitatem potius, illa ad ostentationem componi solet."

30 Barycz gives the incorrect number of thirty-nine orations; cf. Barycz, *Rzecz o studiach w Krakowie*, 61.

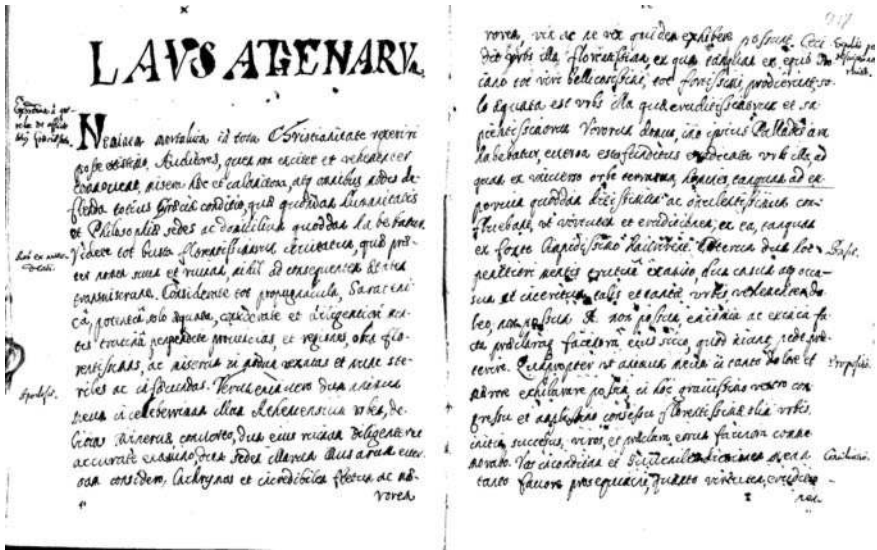


FIGURE 2.2 A page of Jan Sobieski's school essay *Laus Athenarum*
 WARSAW, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF POLAND, II.3196, FOL. 216V.–217R.,
 SCANNED BY BARBARA MILEWSKA-WAŻBIŃSKA.

A quick look through Sobieski's notebooks will suffice to identify copious traces of the vibrant tradition of Classical Antiquity in the school curriculum. Jan Sobieski's compositions are resplendent with references to such mythical heroes as Achilles, Hector, and Aeneas, as well as to historical figures like Epaminondas, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar, and are embellished with quotations from Horace, Virgil, and Ovid.

It should not escape notice that since these quotations served as maxims or words of wisdom, they were derived from school anthologies listing timeless aphorisms or exempla, either in alphabetical order or by subject. For instance, the following quotation from Juvenal's satire, written on page 87 verso of Sobieski's second notebook, engraved itself in the European collective consciousness up until the nineteenth century:

omne animi vitium tanto conspectius in se
 crimen habet, quanto maior, qui peccat habetur.³¹

The greater the sinner's name, the more signal the guiltiness of the sin.³²

31 Iuv. 8.140–141.

32 Juvenal and Persius, trans. G.G. Ramsay (London–New York: Harvard University Press–William Heinemann, Loeb, 1928), 169.

Both the analyses of Cicero's speeches and the subject matter of the school essays reveal an underlying didactic method consistent with composition exercises adopted from ancient textbooks. The core Greek text that served to sustain the tradition of providing ancient speaking and writing exercises for students of rhetoric was *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius (fourth–fifth centuries AD). The Greek term 'progymnasmata' denoted a sequence of categorically ordered rhetorical exercises which students were asked to perform. In the early modern era, Aphthonius's textbook was translated into Latin and reedited over a hundred times.³³ With its numerous examples,³⁴ it gained wide popularity in schools and became valued for its clarity of content and organisation. The remarks of Sobieski's tutor on Cicero's orations echo the rhetorical exercises of Aphthonius's textbook, and the types of essay assignments clearly drew on ancient categories in rhetorical practice, such as *epenesis* (bestowing praise), *encomium* (praising a person or thing), and *psogos* (vituperation).

Jan Sobieski was educated in the same spirit as ancient students, read about the war between Mithridates and the Romans, and wrote Latin compositions praising Athens—the capital of arts and sciences and the place where the Romans sent their sons to acquire an education. The contemporary class system brought students to ancient Rome full of republican ideals. Sobieski, the future king, was brought up not only by his family, who venerated the memory of brave forebears killed on the battlefield, but also by his school, which openly praised the republican values of ancient Rome. Accordingly, we should have little doubt that the future victor of Vienna, together with his peers from Nowodworski College, drew inspiration as adults from Cicero, who had been introduced to them at school as the defender of republican ideals, or that the future king paid tribute to the military code of conduct and patriotic virtues epitomised by Gnaeus Pompeius, hailed the Great for his military and political accomplishments.

33 *Progymnasmata. Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, trans. with introductions and notes by George A. Kennedy (Leiden–Boston, Brill: 2003), 89–90.

34 *Ibid.*, 94–95. Cf. Bartosz Awianowicz, "Miejsce wspólne, pochwała, nagana i porównanie w *Progymnasmatach* Aftoniosa oraz w łacińskim przekładzie Rudolfa Agricoli" [Common places, praising, vituperation, and comparison in *Progymnasmata* by Aphthonius and in the Latin translation by Rudolf Agricola], *Terminus* 7 (2005): 308.

The Aftermath of Myth through the Lens of Walter Benjamin: Hermes in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and in Astrid Lindgren's *Karlson on the Roof*

Katarzyna Jerzak

As long as there is still one beggar around, there will still be myth.

WALTER BENJAMIN, *The Arcades Project*¹



“Mum, do you know what the worst thing about being human is?” asks my eight-year-old son. I say I don’t. “That I can’t fly by myself!” comes the swift reply. Flight is the stuff of myth and fairy tale, but also the perennial dream of humanity in general and of the child in particular. Two lasting fictional characters—J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan from *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) and Astrid Lindgren’s Karlson from *Karlson on the Roof* (1955)—embody the modern fulfillment of that dream while hearkening back to the ancient Greek god Hermes.² I argue that Hermes, the deity of mediation and liminality, returns in these twentieth-century literary texts both as a sign of the persistence of mythical thinking and, simultaneously, to mark the space where myth

1 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. from the German original (*Das Passagen-Werk*, 1927–1940) by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 400.

2 Needless to say, the most obvious mythical allusion present in the figure of Peter Pan is the Greek god Pan. However, as Kirsten Stirling argues in the first chapter of her book *Peter Pan's Shadows in the Literary Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2012), Pan serves only as a distant and a deferred source for Barrie. Stirling deals mostly with the 1904 play, but in the 1911 novel Peter Pan does have two of Pan’s attributes: the goat and the pipes. Later Stirling points to the contrast between the Greek god’s excessive sexuality and Peter Pan’s refusal of sexuality. The book has a comprehensive bibliography as well as a list of sequels, prequels, and adaptations featuring Peter Pan.

gives way to a modern fairy tale, as in the framework set up by Walter Benjamin in *Der Erzähler* (The storyteller, 1936):

The fairy tale tells us of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which myth had placed upon its chest.³

Neither Peter nor Karlson fits the mold of the mythical deity neatly, and yet they both possess enough attributes to be more than mere echoes of Hermes. The enduring power of these uncanny literary characters is due, in part, to the fact that they resonate on a deep level of collective memory and collective imagination. Often classified as fantasy, these two tales do not fit satisfactorily into any single genre. Just as their protagonists are Betwixt-and-Betweens,⁴ so, too, these stories contain elements of both myth and fairy tale, with *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* employing ironic tragedy and *Karlson on the Roof* using comic elements.⁵ Hermes—the god of wit and ambiguity—is a fitting predecessor for the characters of both Karlson—who is funny, eloquent, and shrewd—and Peter Pan, who is the very image of ambiguity. The genre of the two stories, itself ambiguous, is capacious enough to contain the absolutely outlandish and the absolutely necessary. The reader—whether a child or an adult—is the recipient of the counsel that, argues Benjamin, when “woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom”:⁶

3 Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in eiusdem, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 102.

4 This term is used in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* by the bird Solomon Caw to describe Peter:

“Then I shan’t be exactly a human?” Peter asked.

‘No.’

‘Nor exactly a bird?’

‘No.’

‘What shall I be?’

‘You will be a Betwixt-and-Between,’ Solomon said.”

J.M. BARRIE, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

5 Maria Nikolajeva succinctly discusses the complex relationship between myth, fairy tale, and fantasy in children’s literature in a subchapter entitled “Myth as Intertext” of Chapter 6 in her *Children’s Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 156–159. Nikolajeva, however, does not mention the character of Peter Pan in this section of her book.

6 Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 87.

The fairy tale, which to this day is the first tutor of children because it was once the first tutor of mankind, secretly lives on in the story. The first true storyteller is, and will continue to be, the teller of fairy tales. Whenever good counsel was at a premium, the fairy tale had it, and where the need was greatest, its aid was nearest. This need was created by myth.⁷

Myth, according to Benjamin, is the key to the meaning of the world, but fairy tale is our antidote to the inhumanity of myth, to its brutal force.

Both myth and fairy tale contain the timeless: a universal chronotope. The child, too, perceives the world in nonlinear terms. It is from the child's vantage point that reality can be perceived as at once particular and more inclusive.⁸ A baby notices the beetle crawling in the grass, but the same baby, in amazement, raises his or her hand and eyes to the moon that adults take for granted. The child's perspective contains both the micro- and the macrocosm and as such comprehends extraordinary spans of both space and time. In his *Karussellfahrendes Kind* [Child on the carousel, 1928], Benjamin paints a striking portrait of the child straddling the heterogeneous realms of antiquity and modernity:

The board carrying the docile animals moves close to the ground. It is at the height which, in dreams, is best for flying. Music starts and the child moves with a jerk away from his mother. First, he is afraid at leaving her. But then he notices how doughty he himself is. He is ensconced as the just ruler over a world that belongs to him. Tangential trees and natives line his way. Then, in an Orient, his mother re-appears. Next, emerging from the jungle, comes a treetop, exactly as the child saw it thousands of years ago—just now on the roundabout. His beast is devoted: like a mute Arion he rides his silent fish, or a wooden Zeus-bull carries him off as an immaculate Europa. The eternal recurrence of all things has long become child's wisdom to him, and life a primeval frenzy of domination, with the booming orchestrion as the crown jewels at the centre. As the music slows, space begins to stammer and the trees to rub their brows. The roundabout becomes uncertain ground. And his mother appears, the much-rammed stake about which the landing child winds the rope of his gaze.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁸ For the specificity of a child's perspective, please see Françoise Dolto's classic study *Les étapes majeures de l'enfance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Child on the Carousel," in eisdem, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979; ed. pr. of *Einbahnstraße*, 1928).

The child riding a carousel is an allegory¹⁰ of the childhood chronotope.¹¹ It contains both the most primal and the most modern history: the jungle on the one hand, and sheer speed on the other. The child wants to, but is simultaneously afraid to fly away from his mother. He dreams of flying off, but wants to return, echoing Daedalus and Ulysses at once. The movement of the carousel represents domesticated human history from antiquity to the present, prehistory and emergence into history, life and death, the eternal return and the exile's return. It contains as well the Freudian game of *fort und da* with the repetitive disappearance and reappearance of the mother.¹² The mythical past is playfully replayed in the child's riding the carousel dolphin just as Arion rode the real dolphin to safety, or, alternately, riding the Zeus-bull, like the still innocent Europa. The menace of time is there but as long as the now slowing carousel comes to a halt by the mother, the child arrives in a secure haven. Set against the paradigm of Benjamin's carousel, the two stories emerge in their distinct expression. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* proves to be a tragedy in which the game of *fort und da* is cruelly broken, as the boy finds his mother's window barred and the return precluded. Peter's tragedy, like tragedy as such according to Benjamin, is grounded in myth. Sorrow, lament, the ceremonies and the memorabilia of grief, are all Peter Pan's paraphernalia. He is the boy who buries the children who have stayed in the Gardens past Lock-Out Time. Peter Pan of Kensington Gardens strikes a melancholy figure, one much closer to its mythical origins than to a modern fairy-tale model. Like Hermes the Psychopomp, he functions as a mediator and a guide whose role will be further transformed in *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Even though the text is prefaced by a map of the Kensington Gardens and this royal park is a real place to this day,

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- 10 Allegory, of greatest significance to Benjamin, is also indispensable to Mikhail Bakhtin. "The indirect, metaphorical significance of the entire human image, its thoroughly allegorical nature is of utmost importance. [...] The allegorical state has an enormous form-generating significance for the novel," in M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1981), 161–162.
- 11 Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term chronotope to describe the particular spatiotemporal conventions that govern different genres; see "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84–258.
- 12 Freud describes and analyses the *fort/da* game in the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. While the original scene was enacted by Freud's eighteen-month-old grandson, the experience of a child throwing an object away and having it retrieved is familiar to any parent. As for Freudian interpretations of the Peter Pan character, see the first chapter of the classic study of the Barrie cycle by Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Philadelphia, Penn.: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 21992; ed. pr. 1984).

nonetheless its space in the book is not purely geographic: “No child has ever been to the whole of the Gardens, because it is so soon the time to turn back.”¹³ This is a space familiar to all children and to those who remember what it is like to be a child. It is a kind of chronotope, a time-space in which time is molded along very different lines than in adulthood, and space is much larger, much more extensive than later in life. Just as when one returns to one’s elementary school after many years and notices with surprise that the corridors have become shorter and less tall, so, too, the space of the Kensington Gardens to a child is almost infinite, it is an entire universe of sorts. This magical world is so intensely connected to the lives of the children who visit it, that even an absence from it can be a kind of presence: “It is glorious fun racing down the Hump, but you can’t do it on windy days because then you are not there, but the fallen leaves do it instead of you.”¹⁴

In this magical chronotope¹⁵ Barrie places the character of Peter Pan, the boy who must be rather old as the narrator tells the reader that the reader’s grandmother has known him, and yet “his age is one week, and though he was born so long ago he has never had a birthday, nor is there the slightest chance of his ever having one.”¹⁶ Peter flies back to Kensington Gardens, but as he is no longer a bird and not yet a human, his existence is that of an outcast and an exile. “Every living thing was shunning him.”¹⁷ Even though he eventually befriends the birds, the fairies, and some children, he will never be one of them.

Karlson on the Roof, on the other hand, contains almost no pathos even though Karlson is a trickster and as such he cannot be easily assimilated into the society around him, either.¹⁸ He does not quite belong in that world, being himself an extra dimension—one that the novel’s main protagonist, Smidge, needs so badly. Benjamin’s child on the carousel is little, while Smidge is

13 Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, 3.

14 *Ibid.*, 5.

15 Here one must mention Maria Nikolajeva’s seminal work on Bakhtinian chronotope as it applies to children’s literature: *The Magic Code: Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1988). Nikolajeva also devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 5, “Chronotope in Children’s Literature”) to the notion of chronotope in her most recent book, *Children’s Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic* (see above, n. 5), 121–152.

16 Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, 12.

17 *Ibid.*, 15.

18 Interestingly enough, Karlson, just as Peter Pan, is at the origin of a “syndrome” of sorts, in this case defined in Russia, where Lindgren’s character achieves its greatest popularity. See Svetlana Kheronova, *Sindrom Karlsona*, <http://www.globosfera.info/2010/01/31/sindrom-karlsona/> (accessed May 31, 2016).

already seven years old, but Smidge, too, needs a hand—and a lift, as it were—to be able to fly away from his mother, whom he would still like to marry (he believes it is bad luck on his part to have fallen in love with the same woman as his father). Karlson's role is then, among other things, to help Smidge make the transition to the next stage of life. Far from doing it in a traditional, mentor-like manner, Karlson does it by fits and starts, presumably propelling Smidge into a wholesome adolescence and, ultimately, a kind of maturity. Rather than teaching Smidge commonplace morals, Karlson always wants to make a profit—at the end of the third volume he triumphantly collects the large award that the local newspaper offers to the person who will explain the mysterious object flying over Stockholm. Hermes is also the divinity of thieves and found objects while Karlson both steals from thieves and enjoys a little pilfering now and then (jiggery-pokery he calls it). Hermes's (but also Dionysus's) symbol is the rooster and Karlson has a collection of drawings of the cockerel. Karlson is introduced in the first chapter as the one who can fly. "Everyone can fly in aeroplanes and helicopters but Karlson is the only one who can fly all by himself."¹⁹ He lives on the roof, that is in the liminal space between ordinary Stockholm and the sky. This liminality is much like Peter Pan's *Betwixt-and-Between* status because he ultimately does not belong to any world. Despite his friendly ways, his plump physique, and his congenial chatter, he is a figure of the stranger. He is also strangely out of time. When Smidge asks him how old he is, Karlson replies: "Me? I'm a man in my prime,"²⁰ and proceeds to blow up Smidge's steam engine as if he were in fact a rambunctious toddler. Yet when he leaves, "his tubby little body clearly outlined against the star-dotted spring sky,"²¹ Smidge remains behind with a sense of nostalgia, of unmitigated loss. And when Karlson returns, the sound of his motor is more than welcome: "Then he heard a heavenly sound."²²

As for readers, they are initially led to believe that Karlson is just a very entertaining imaginary friend who fills the void that Smidge experiences because he does not have a pet. That is what Smidge's parents and siblings seem to think, too. And then, at the crowning moment of the first of the three volumes, Smidge does indeed get a dog for his birthday. His Mum is sure that now Karlson will not be coming any more. But he does come, crashing the birthday party and eating the biggest piece of cake, because he is the world's best cake

19 Astrid Lindgren, *Karlson on the Roof*, trans. Sarah Death (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 2.

20 *Ibid.*, 8.

21 *Ibid.*, 14.

22 *Ibid.*, 37.

eater, Karlson is. So what is the reader to do? How can Karlson be classified or categorised? He is, on the one hand, the mythical leftover, as it were: an antediluvian creature that survived to our age. At the same time the child Smidge recognises in Karlson the irreplaceable supplement to reality. The child, like the artist, can see the familiar ancient in the seemingly modern. When Giorgio de Chirico first travels to New York, he remarks that the city reminds of him of plaster models of ancient Rome.²³ As Benjamin puts it:

Task of childhood: to bring the new world into symbolic space. The child, in fact, can do what the grownup absolutely cannot: recognise the new once again.²⁴

Technology is to Benjamin just a new configuration of nature, so in this perspective Karlson's motor is merely a new symbol-image of the old, no more surprising to the child than the wings of a bird.²⁵

Many protagonists of Astrid Lindgren's novels fly: Pippi Longstocking certainly does and so do horses in Faraway Land in *Mio My Son*. The brothers Lionheart fall through the air as if flying. Flying in Lindgren's other novels serves usually as a means of escape although it can also be a means of pursuit (for instance the Harpies in *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter*). But none make flight their primary means of locomotion, placing Karlson in a category of his own. Like Peter Pan, Karlson has a special status in every way. He does not quite

23 Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), the Italian painter born in Greece, bears witness to the presence of mythical figures in the contemporary urban landscape in many of his paintings—including several self-portraits with the bust of Hermes—as well as in his surrealist writings: “As for Mercury, the god Mercury if you will, it was *he*, always the same; the Mercury of moving vans, and suburban villas burglarised at high noon; the Mercury of seaports; the Mercury of big navigation lines; the Mercury who soars in gliding flight above the stock exchange at the moment when all the roarers blacken the steps of the temple; the Mercury with a vague, disturbing gaze; the Mercury of tollhouses at the gates of cities; the Mercury of cities, European and transatlantic; the Mercury of Hamburg and San Francisco, the Mercury of *political rallies* held in white, geometrically ordered cities on the edge of the Pacific; the modern Mercury of the Berlin stadium; the Mercury of horse-drawn trolleys moving along tracks in front of the Synagogue and the Protestant church in the clear, gentle September afternoon,” Giorgio de Chirico, “The Engineer's Son,” in *eiusdem, Hebdomeros*, trans. Margaret Crosland (Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 1992), 126.

24 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 390.

25 For other examinations of the *sui generis* attributes of childhood at odds with the adult world, see Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); and Peter Hollindale, *Signs of Childness in Children's Books* (Stroud: Thimble Press, 1997).

belong, he is decidedly an outsider and yet he does not have a separate world of his own.²⁶ Since instead of wings he has a motor, he is a modern angel of consolation come to cheer Smidge up when the boy is most lonesome. Karlson, however, is also cunning and abrasive at times. Like Peter Pan, he cannot be assimilated, adapted, or translated, and equally extraneous and a stranger to love, he is still necessary. His Olympus is not very high but he needs to descend from it nonetheless to complete the otherwise unbearably ordinary world of mere inhabitants of Stockholm. Modern Sweden can thus accommodate the otherworldly Karlson without relegating him to the phantasmic—Miss Crawly, the housekeeper character in the book, believes in ghosts, but Karlson does not. In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Barrie infuses the real Gardens with a mythopoetic second bottom. After Lock-Out Time, the other, magical life takes over. In Lindgren's universe, however, the mythical and the rational coexist even during the day.²⁷

In *Franz Kafka* (1934) Benjamin writes:

Ulysses, after all, stands at the dividing line between myth and fairy tale. Reason and cunning have inserted tricks into myths; their forces cease to be invincible. Fairy tales are the traditional stories about victory over these forces [...]. [Kafka] inserted little tricks into them; then he used them as proof that inadequate, even childish measures may also serve to rescue one.²⁸

26 This makes both Peter Pan and Karlson akin to Mikhail Bakhtin's category of the rogue, the clown, and the fool in the novel: "The rogue, the clown, and the fool create around themselves their own special little world, their own chronotope. [...] their existence is a reflection of some other's mode of being—and even then, not a direct reflection. They are life's maskers; their being coincides with their role, and outside this role they simply do not exist. Essential to these three figures is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege—the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and the falseness of every situation." Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 159.

27 In his study of Astrid Lindgren's archetextual strategies, Krzysztof Bak delineates the importance of fairy tale, idyll, and other literary forms that Lindgren has used in her *oeuvre*. Indeed her use of myth in the *Karlson on the Roof* trilogy could be seen as one of those strategies, although Bak does not specifically address it. See Krzysztof Bak, "Strategie archetekstualne w twórczości Astrid Lindgren" [Archetextual strategies in Astrid Lindgren's work] in *Filoteknos* 1 (2010): 78–96, available at http://www.ifp.uni.wroc.pl/filoteknos/pdf/Filoteknos_01_druk_ok_mail.pdf#page=79 (accessed May 31, 2016).

28 Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka," in eisdem, *Illuminations*, 117–118.

Theodor Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*, says the following about Snow White coming back to life so unconvincingly and then going off with the Prince just because she found him good:

All contemplation can do no more than patiently delineate the ambiguity of melancholy in ever new figures and approaches. The truth is not to be separated from the illusory belief that one day, out of the figures of appearance [*Schein*], real salvation would nonetheless come.²⁹

Smidge is the one who follows Karlson to all the places where one might certainly *almost* fall off the roof. Underneath his childish demeanor and despite his intact nuclear family—he is one of the very few children’s literature protagonists who is not an orphan—he is the melancholy hero whose melancholy is precluded by the heavenly whirl of Karlson’s motor. Thus, the childish measures rescue him. For even in a novel as cheerful and truly funny as the *Karlson* trilogy, there is a hint of suicide, a suggestion that the child might at one point decide that life is not worth living.

If Peter Pan is never too far off in the penumbra of Lindgren’s novel, he and Hermes are very much in the forefront of her earlier story entitled *In the Land of Twilight* (1949). Goran, the little boy protagonist, overhears his mother saying to the father that he will never be able to walk again. That same day, at dusk, the liminal time between day and night, Mr. Lilyvale comes through the closed window and invites him to fly to the Land of Twilight otherwise known as the Land Which Is Not. A Hermes-like figure, this messenger and psychopomp escorts the sick boy to the Land Where Nothing Matters. First they fly to the weathercock, who is not there, then the boy gets to drive the streetcar and the digger, and at last they end up in a little house on the seaside. Unlike Karlson and Smidge, they do not steal or make pranks and nothing in this tale makes the reader laugh. On the contrary. Everything is suffused with the melancholy glow of a northern twilight from which it will be so much easier for Goran to cross over to death. “It really doesn’t matter if you have a bad leg, because in the Land of Twilight you can fly,”³⁰ thus ends the story. This early, eerie version of Karlson seems much in the vein of Romantic characters, such as E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Strange Child*. Like the *Strange Child*, Mr. Lilyvale appears to a child in

29 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. from the German original (*Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 1951) by Dennis Redmond (London–New York: Verso, 2005), 121–122.

30 Astrid Lindgren, *In the Land of Twilight*, trans. Polly Lawson (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2012), 38.

time of dire metaphysical need, has the ability to fly and to bring the child or children along, and is ultimately irreducible in his role as the consoler.³¹

In the world of myth, the ordinary, the human, and the temporal are subjected to the extraordinary, the divine, and the eternal. In the fairy tale, however, the human element is the one that counts. The beating heart of the fairy tale is the human heart, not the heart of the witch, the dwarf, or even the fairy herself. Lindgren's *Karlson on the Roof* purports to tell the story of a "perfectly ordinary family" living in a "perfectly ordinary house" who, nonetheless, have someone not at all ordinary living above them. This extraordinary being, an intrusion of the fantastic and the mythical, is able to fly all by himself. Not an angel and yet out of time, he is not quite in the same space as the rest of the characters. He is not an angel because he is a trickster, but he is not an evil or a satanic character, either, thus effectively bypassing all of Christianity and claiming origins in an earlier tradition. Karlson's otherworldliness and his supernatural powers appear as a surplus of reality. This surplus is an echo of the ancient mythical heritage whose persistence is felt by many a modern artist. De Chirico, who was born in Volos (ancient Iolcos, the city of Jason) in Greece and who from his childhood embraced the continuity of the past and the present, detected the mythical and the ancient in modern cities and often depicted his own ancient double in his paintings. But while de Chirico's Mercury/Hermes is an intangible, metaphysical presence perceived by the hypersensitive artist, both Barrie and Lindgren offer representations that are tangible and compelling. That is why the setting of their novels is so concrete: Peter Pan lives in the actual Kensington Gardens whose map is enclosed in the book, while Karlson lives in the no-nonsense city of Stockholm, rather than in some enchanted forest. It is not that these characters are full-blown versions of the ancient Greek deities; rather, they are modern characters with symbolic glimmers of their mythical origins. The adult reader easily recognises the Greek connection, while children delight in the extraordinary and the extravagant that have been the privilege of their age.³²

Why does the figure of a Greek god, however faint, haunt us in these two modern children's classics? Why do notions of the real and the supernatural come in this particular form? Before Christianity made the figure of Christ both

31 My thanks to Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer who drew my attention to Hoffmann's story. The Strange Child, of course, is itself—for it is an It—not an omnipotent figure, but rather one who is involved in a struggle against an evil power.

32 The dual—child and adult—addressee of children's literature is discussed, among others, in the second chapter ("Children's Literature—A Canonical Art Form") of Maria Nikolaeva's *Children's Literature Comes of Age*, 56–58.

human and divine, the Greek genius already merged the two in the symbolic power of myth. In his doctoral dissertation on the Baroque *Trauerspiel*, Benjamin discusses Friedrich Creuzer's definition of the symbol in his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1819) as that which resolves the conflict between the infinite and the finite "by the former becoming limited and so human [...]. This is the symbol of the gods."³³ The modern meaning of the ancient mythical figure of Hermes apparent in the characters of Peter Pan and Karlson, is distant from the old, but, Benjamin would say, that very distance paradoxically makes it available to the modern reader in its familiar newness. The aftermath of myth, then, is no aftermath at all, but an unbroken continuation across millennia. "This is why Greek myths are like *Philemon's pitcher, which no thirst can empty*,"³⁴ and the genius of Barrie and Lindgren is to tap the flow of myth in the twentieth century and to present it in the modern children's tale. In the era of the overabundance of information, these stories rescue that which children and adults need the most: irreducible meaning.

33 Quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London–New York: Verso, 1998), 164.

34 Walter Benjamin, "Oedipus, or Rational Myth," in eiusdem, *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), vol. 2, part 2: (1931–1934), 577–581.

A Latin Lesson for Bad Boys, or: Kipling's Tale of the Enchanted Bird

Jerzy Axer

Give me the first six years of a child's life and you can have the rest.

RUDYARD KIPLING, *Something of Myself*

• • •

This we learned from famous men

Knowing not we learned it...

RUDYARD KIPLING, *Stalky & Co.*

• •
•

Kipling's short story "Regulus," written between 1908 and 1911, was first published in 1917 and ultimately was included in *The Complete Stalky & Co.* in 1929.¹ In our day this collection is a fascinating source for readers interested in literature documenting both the phenomenon of being a child and how the artist cultivates the memory of "the child within" in his mature work.

In this regard "Regulus" is undoubtedly one of the most inspiring texts in the collection. For while free throughout of any sentimentalism, it conjoins a large dose of nonconformism with a rich and manifold symbolism hearkening to the deep substrata of cultural tradition. In my view this makes it a masterpiece in the realm of literature devoted to the phenomenon of childhood—and a masterpiece that is nonetheless underrated because of the special trouble today's

1 R.R. Kipling, *The Complete Stalky & Co.*, illustrated by L. Raven-Hill (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), 229ff. For a discussion regarding the publication's date, see the paper by Emily A. McDermott, "Playing for His Side: Kipling's 'Regulus,' Corporal Punishment, and Classical Education," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 15.3 (2008): n. i (there also more bibliographical hints), available at http://scholarworks.umb.edu/classics_faculty_pubs/7/ (accessed June 28, 2016). See also notes on "Regulus" by Isabel Quigly on the Kipling Society's website, http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_regulusi.htm (accessed June 28, 2016).

readers encounter during their reading. This trouble concerns the way the narrative is embedded within the context of a Latin lesson conducted according to time-honoured didactic methods, albeit ones with which today's readers are unfamiliar, as the educational culture they were raised in eliminated the teaching of Latin as a method for forming character as long as a half-century ago. Moreover, Kipling's text, in order to entertain and captivate, must be read with an understanding of the intertextual game between the Latin original and what happens to it in the remarks of the teacher and the pupils. Wishing to assist in interpreting the work, classical philologists do indeed offer themselves, and they of course are aware of the difficulties. However, they generally stand at considerable remove from interest in the matter of childhood and the cultural symbolism in "Regulus," preferring to analyse the work from the perspective of the change to the educational model that has occurred since Kipling's time.²

In the interpretation presented below I wish to propose reading "Regulus" as a timeless tale of a young boy's initiation into manhood, in the aim to revealing the deep structure of the story. My chapter offers neither instruction nor commentary meant to facilitate a close reading of this masterpiece. For my primary point is to breach the interpretive barriers created by focusing the reader's attention on the troubles arising from unfamiliarity with Latin and its classroom jargon and from the seeming anachronism of the teaching methods then applied.

*

I shall begin with a summary of the plotline. The narrator invites the reader to "peep" in on a Latin lesson conducted at the school he attended as a boy. The routine lesson turns into a test of strength between the teacher, Mr. King, and his pupils. The age-old ritual of literal, word-for-word translation of Horace's ode on the historical Roman character Marcus Atilius Regulus (Horace, *Carm.* 3.5) unexpectedly leads to a display of emotions on the part of both the teacher and his students. The provocateur who elicits this situation is the pupil Beetle,

2 Very representative of the attitude of classical philologists is the study by T.J. Leary, "Kipling, Stalky, Regulus & Co.: A Reading of Horace *Odes* 3.5," *Greece & Rome* 55.2 (2008): 247–262. According to that author, this work does not belong to Kipling's finest; to a certain degree he even upholds the opinion of Edmund Wilson, who appraised the whole collection *Stalky & Co.* as being of very low artistic quality: cf. "The Kipling that Nobody Read," in Andrew Ruth-erford, ed., *Kipling's Mind and Art* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964), 17–69. Leary sees the text's value only as a social and historical document from the history of English education; he also appreciates that, in the work of teachers today, as well, similar problems appear within the curriculum and must be resolved, albeit by different methods.

who is exceptionally resistant toward analysis of the Latin metre, and through whom Kipling introduces his own persona to *Stalky & Co.*

An extraordinary change soon takes place, particularly in the behaviour of one of the calmest and most introverted boys in class, Winton, dubbed “an elderly horse” by his classmates. During the next lesson, which is devoted to mechanical drawing, Winton seems to release the emotions he had pent up during the Latin lesson, and plays a prank that is very unusual for his personality, in as much as he breaks the rules and offends the drawing master. The Headmaster punishes Winton by making him copy five hundred Latin lines from Virgil. This otherwise mild punishment in fact includes the consequence of Winton not being able to participate in the pupils’ mandatory game of football. This, in turn, entails an unavoidable whipping meted out by a fellow pupil having the rank of Captain of the Games. It was only membership in the First Fifteen that could protect one against such a humiliating punishment. The symbol of belonging to that chosen group was a Cap with a golden tassel, and which Winton had not yet received, although it should have already arrived from the tailor’s shop a week earlier.³

Mr. King (see figure 4.1) accompanies the pupil as he carries out his punitive task, dictating to him Virgilian hexametres, as if continuing the previous Latin lesson. Before receiving his corporeal punishment, Winton fights a heroic battle with his classmates, who jeer at him, and then stoically submits to the punishment he considers to be just. At the close of the tale Winton receives his Cap of the First Fifteen, and Mr. King, quarrelling with the nature teacher about the model for education (“classical versus modern”), states that his lesson about Regulus has left the proper mark: “A little of it sticks among the barbarians.”

Kipling’s story is usually interpreted according to a rather simple formula. The main idea in such analyses of the story’s content and message involves believing that Kipling—on the basis of his own school memories—wanted to present the process of character building in boys who were destined to assume responsible posts in the colonial administration and military apparatus of the British Empire. The writer accomplished his didactic objective by describing a typical Latin lesson at the school of his youth. The story is meant to show how

3 In his essay “An English School” (published in the collection *Land and Sea Tales for Scouts and Guides* [London: Macmillan, 1923]) Kipling says of his school’s team “our foot-ball team (Rugby Union)”; however, about the First Fifteen and the honorific skull Cap he writes as follows: “Very few things that the world can offer make up for having missed a place in the First Fifteen, with [...] the velvet skull-cap with the gold tassel—the cap that you leave out in the rain and accidentally step upon to make it look as old as if you had been in the First Fifteen for years.”



FIGURE 4.1

Leonard Raven-Hill, Mr. King

FROM R. KIPLING, *THE COMPLETE STALKY & CO.* (LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO., 1929), 231, SCANNED BY THE FACULTY OF "ARTES LIBERALES," UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW.

practice in reading the classics can transform unruly boys into men aware of their responsibility; how rigours they do not accept and against which they rebel can lead to discipline based on consciously accepted duty. Thus, the text is presented as an example of the role of the classics in educating British imperial elites.⁴ The entire collection of *Stalky & Co.* is also sharply criticised for this same reason.⁵

The interpretations of "Regulus" point much less often to the dialogue with Horace that Kipling as a poet continued throughout his life. The most interesting work in this regard, it seems to me, is the study by Stephen Medcalf, "Horace's Kipling."⁶

4 Cf. Judith A. Plotz, "Latin for Empire: Kipling's 'Regulus' as a Classics Class for the Ruling Classes," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 17 (1993): 152–167; cf. also Leary, "Kipling, Stalky, Regulus & Co."

5 Cf. McDermott, "Playing for His Side," 369–392.

6 In Charles Martindale and David Hopkins, eds., *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217–239 (about "Regulus," see pp. 226 ff.).

The predominant type of interpretation, founded on the superficial intertextuality linking Kipling's story to Horace's ode (in undergoing his painful transformation, the pupil Winton is similar to the heroic Regulus), leads us to conclude that Kipling's story is interesting first and foremost as a historical source. Viewed as a didactic piece of prose for adults, it can serve as a source for studying the role of the ancient heritage at British schools in Victorian times—a world so distant from today's that even objecting to it ceased to be attractive half a century ago, after the educational revolution of the 1960s.

*

In my interpretation I wish to propose a less conventional way of viewing the intertextual connections between Kipling's work and Horace's poem, and also to expand the scope of references to classical culture that are employed along with this reading.

Let us first note that the name of Horace's character is Regulus; in Kipling's text—the Latin teacher's name is King. In Horace, the scene of action is Rome; in Kipling, the College Westward Ho! serves as a *pars pro toto* of the Roman Empire,⁷ as its pupils learn to become consuls, legates, centurions, and lictors. In Horace's poem featuring Marcus Atilius Regulus, the hero's ordeal in Carthage makes him an example of Roman virtue; in Kipling's text the unruly pupil Winton, once getting through his "ordeal," is rewarded with the Cap with the gold tassel, the emblem of his entrance into the realm of glory—the school's First Fifteen. In consequence, as we see, both of them—the teacher and the pupil—may be dubbed in this context "kings": King and Regulus.

This overly extravagant, at first glance, understanding gains credence when we expand the scope of the textual allusions to include a hitherto neglected aspect of classical tradition, and one which moreover is strictly connected with the later European folk tradition. These are texts about how birds were wont to choose themselves a king. Thus, we shall take up, on the one hand, the fable of Aesop known from Plutarch (Perry Index 434), and—on the other—the fairy tales which the Aarne–Thompson tale type index denotes as numbers 0221 and 0222.

According to classical tradition a little bird—identified as being either from the goldcrest or firecrest species (in Greek *Basileus* or *Basiliskos*, in Latin

⁷ I am referring here to the illuminating observations made by Harry Ricketts in his paper "Kipling, Horace, and Literary Parenthood" presented on April 7, 2004 at the Kipling Society seminar, available at http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_scylla_ricketts.htm (accessed Oct. 15, 2014).

Regulus) or from the wren species (in Greek also *Basiliskos*, in late Latin also *Regulus*)⁸—fought for the crown of the King of Birds, cheating once or more in the process. For example, in Aesop's fable, in a contest to determine the highest flyer it hid in the plumage of an eagle and thus flew a few centimetres higher than the eagle's head. European folklore added new variations: in a contest to find who could dig the deepest hole, the goldcrest used a mouse hole. In other versions it defended its title by leading all the flying creatures against all the four-legged creatures.

Classical tradition and folklore played a part in this bird species being given its Latin and vernacular names. In all of them we find the equivalent of the Latin *Regulus*. The ways in which that bird's pursuit of a crown were imagined are connected with the fact that the heads of two of the three species mentioned (the goldcrest and the firecrest) are plumed with a veritable crown (a gold stripe on a black background, see figure 4.2), and the third (the wren) is so courageous that it faces down much stronger rivals. We need also bear in mind that in the work of classical authors (including Aristotle, Aristophanes, Aesop, and Plutarch), in folklore, and in later poetry these three species of feisty little birds were conflated: the goldcrest, its relative the firecrest, and its more distant cousin, the warrior wren, also called the kinglet (whose diminutive is a precise equivalent of the Latin *Regulus*) were treated as a single species.



FIGURE 4.2 Tim Mason, Goldcrest—*Regulus regulus* (L.)

WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/AMBLEBIRDER, © BY TIM MASON.

8 Concerning the ancient identifications, cf. W. Geoffrey Arnott, *Birds in the Ancient World from A to Z* (London–New York: Routledge, 2007), 20–21. In modern ornithological nomenclature the goldcrest is called *Regulus regulus* (L.), firecrest—*Regulus ignicapillus* (Temm.), and the wren—*Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.).

Today's most popular account of that story was recorded by the Brothers Grimm. "The Willow-Wren and the Bear" is a story about the nest of a wren—the king of birds. The wren fights a winning battle with the other animals to defend its children's right to the crown. (This is the same bird whose virtue Shakespeare underlined on several occasions.)

It is easy to notice that Kipling's text may be suitably juxtaposed with the tale about the choice of a king of the birds in Aesop's fable and in fairy tales. First, we need simply connect the Latin teacher's name (King) and the name of the king of the birds (*Regulus*), which also mimics the name of the Roman hero (Marcus Atilius Regulus). Second, we need note that the pupil who was rewarded with the Cap with the gold tassel in Kipling becomes the sibling of the goldcrest's chicks from the Grimms' fairy tale, who merit the same kind of headdress as worn by their father-king.

We may also reach down to a deeper level of intertextual connection found in Kipling's text. First, the relationship between the teacher and pupil is interesting in this context. The juxtaposition of Kipling's tale with Horace's poem has already created a certain overlapping of roles. Through his reading of *Carmen* 3.5 the teacher, Mr. King, initiated a transformation of the pupil into Regulus, something that was, well, capped when he was presented with the First Fifteen Cap. In the interpretation I am making, when we take into consideration the references to the tradition of Aesop's fable and fairy tales, the ties between the pupil and the teacher gain their full expression. In Aesop's fable the eagle gets fooled and taken advantage of by the wren—who then wins the prize. In Kipling's variant, Mr. King—just as the king of birds, the eagle—helps his pupil achieve a crown by carrying him on his wings. In contrast to the eagle, however, Mr. King helps his student deliberately, out of devotion. This accords with the way in which Kipling—years later—would see the roles of his teachers and their sacrifice of their ambitions on behalf of their pupils, who are to become the equals of kings.⁹ Here I permit myself the observation that the beautiful fairy tale retold by Jane Goodall and entitled "The Eagle and the Wren"¹⁰ contains a similar vision of two birds cooperating with one another in a flight

9 Cf. Kipling's poem that opens the collection *Stalky & Co.* and contains such a message, a fragment of which is one of this chapter's epigraphs.

10 First edition as *Der Adler und der Zaunkönig. Eine Fabel*, mit Bildern von Alexander Reichstein, aus dem Englischen von Bruno Hächler (Gossau–Zürich–Hamburg–Salzburg: Neugebauer, 2000); English version: *The Eagle and the Wren. A Fable Retold by Jane Goodall* (New York: North–South Books, 2000). For the reception of Aesop in children's literature, see Part 2 of the present volume: "The Aesop Complex: The Transformations of Fables in Response to Regional Challenges."

toward heaven. Teachers like Mr. King are thus evidently heroes comparable to Regulus. At the same time, “the black velvet Cap with the gold tassel” testifies to the metamorphosis of the pupil: the grey wren prepared to fight for its dignity is transformed into a crowned bird.

Once we apply the full spectrum of textual associations, the interpretation of Kipling’s story changes in many ways.

First of all, the didactic aspect becomes universal and timeless, just like in a fable. The main message here, as in a Grimm fairy tale, is “never judge anyone by appearance,” and this fits in very nicely with the case of the psychologically transformed pupil, Winton. In accordance with the expectations of his teacher, Mr. King, the “elderly horse” could prove to be the once and future king.

In terms of genre, the story is beyond the boundary separating children’s and adult literature, also just like a fable. The new intertextuality marginalises the outdated imperial political context and replaces it with the universal problem of a free citizen’s education through rebellion against authority to recognition of that authority.

Finally, as regards Kipling’s artistry in storytelling, there emerges the completely new and attractive possibility of seeing “Regulus” as a variation of one of Kipling’s animal stories—stories in which animals are the narrators or characters. After all, we all remember that it was a wren who told Kipling the famous story of the white seal from *The Jungle Book*—the bird that “knows how to tell the truth,” as Kipling wrote.

In my opinion, the short story “Regulus” is a masterpiece on many levels.

Its first level—the description of the Latin lesson based on reading aloud and translating Horace’s *Carmen* 3.5—builds a space of historical and journalistic contextual meanings that the author intended and readers easily interpreted in terms of the ideological debate of the time (the late nineteenth century) on the role of boys’ education and the role of the classics in that education. On this level “Regulus” can be seen as a belletristic version of Kipling’s essay “An English School.”¹¹

At a deeper level, however, and in connection with the less obvious usage of Horatian allusions, there is the fairy-tale context, rooted in Antiquity and folklore, and referenced indirectly through names and the symbolism that stems from them. Here a game is played between the author and the cultural tradition to which the reader may react depending on her/his own preparation and imagination. If the reader reacts, s/he will discern, in my opinion, how deeply that game is related to the essence of Kipling’s artistry. In this

11 See nn. 2 and 3. Kipling annotated the copy of his manuscript of *Stalky & Co.* with the following interesting remark: “This is not intended to be merely a humorous book, but it is an Education, a work of the greatest value.”

sense Regulus's story might be subtitled: "How the Goldcrest Got His Crown" (the same formula Kipling uses in first four *Just So Stories*, e.g., "How the Leopard Got His Spots"). "Regulus" read as a fairy tale is, in keeping with the principles of that genre, cruel—but filled with hope.

Kipling knew very well something that philologists and anthropologists are discovering today: humans are storytelling animals. He himself was one of the greatest storytellers in the history of the English language.

I think Kipling is also in dialogue here with at least two great storytellers he admired. At the level of anecdotes built on school memories, his partner is Mark Twain (the affinity between Tom Sawyer and Stalky is quite obvious). At the level of human-animal relations it would be Joel Chandler Harris and his humorous book *Uncle Remus*.¹² In the tales presented there, animals and humans spin various narratives which mingle and intertwine. Indeed, in *Stalky & Co.* we have a separate story that is testimony to the enthusiasm with which *Uncle Remus* was read by the pupils at Westward Ho!¹³

Kipling was also a very good poet. His dialogue with Horace, begun with Latin lessons by teachers collectively portrayed in *Stalky & Co.* as Mr. King, lasted throughout his life.¹⁴ Thus, at the close of these remarks on the most Horatian story from the collection, I wish to stress (taking a tip from the aforementioned Harry Ricketts¹⁵) that the verse found directly thereafter—"A Translation"—presented as a rendering of the third song from the non-existent Book 5 of Horace's *Carmina*, is strictly connected with the story. That poem offers a subtle game between the syntax of the Horatian ode and the possibilities of its imitation in English, though that language is not reflexive.¹⁶ In the realm of

12 First published in the United States in 1880, in England in 1881.

13 See the story "The United Idolaters." Nota bene, before he began to write the first series of *Stalky & Co.*, on Dec. 6, 1895 Kipling wrote in a letter to Harris: "I wonder if you could realise how 'Uncle Remus,' his sayings, and the sayings of the noble beasties ran like a wild fire through an English public school when I was about fifteen."

14 At the close of his life Kipling described the role of his teacher thus: "[he] taught me to loathe Horace for two years; to forget him for twenty, and then to love him for the rest of my days and through many sleepless nights" (*Something of Myself*; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1977, 29).

15 See n. 7.

16 See Charles Carrington, ed., *Kipling's Horace* (London: Methuen Press, 1978), xix–xx; for the text of Kipling's poem see p. 102. I used a photocopy made in 1980 by the publisher himself that included corrections and addenda. The level of Kipling's game with Horace is also documented by the bibliophilic edition published by Charles Carrington, Charles Graves, and Alfred Godley, *Q. Horatii Flacci Carminum Liber Quintus* (Oxonii: Blackwell, 1920), where the imitation created by Kipling was translated into Latin (p. 21). This fictitious Book 5 of Horace's *Carmina* with scholarly commentary and elaborate editing

language it therefore continues and carries to another level the pupils' troubles, as depicted in the story, with translating Horace into English. In the realm of ideas, in turn, the poem strengthens the story's point: Mr. King proves to be a teacher whose Latin lessons succeeded in regard to both of the difficult pupils—the dull Winton and the deaf to the rhythm of Latin metres Beetle. Indeed, Mr. King helped the latter become no more and no less than a master of English worthy of comparison with Horace.

renders the highest possible homage to the achievements of Kipling the poet in his search of an English equivalent of Horace's poetry.

Laura Orvieto and the Classical Heritage in Italy before the Second World War*

Valentina Garulli

*To Elda Baldi Montesano, who gently opened my eyes
to the wonderland of literature, to life.*



Introduction

Molti e molti anni fa c'era nell'Asia, vicino al mare, una città che si chiamava Troia. Il re di Troia si chiamava Ilo...¹

* I would like to thank Caterina Del Vivo (Director of the Historical Archive at the “Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux,” Florence, and of the Tuscany Section at the Associazione Nazionale Archivistici Italiani) for her precious advice, generous help, and support at every stage of this project. The unpublished documents quoted in the following belong to the Contemporary Archive “Alessandro Bonsanti: Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux,” Florence (henceforth mentioned as ACGV): my warmest thanks to Gloria Manghetti (Director of the Contemporary Archive) for kindly granting me permission to use and publish this material, and to Fabio Desideri (Contemporary Archive) for his help with the manuscript material. My gratitude also to Guido Bastianini, Patrick Finglass, Lucia Floridi, Gabriella Gruder-Poni, Camillo Neri, and Vinicio Tammaro for reading a first draft of this paper and making useful comments. Laura's and Angiolo Orvieto's writings will be referred to as follows.

Laura Orvieto's works (ordered by date):

Orvieto, *Leo e Lia* = Laura Orvieto, *Leo e Lia. Storia di due bambini italiani con una governante inglese* [Firenze: Bemporad, 1909], illustrazioni di Vanna Vinci (Firenze: Giunti, 2011).

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare* = Laura Orvieto, *Storie della storia del mondo. Greche e barbare* [Firenze: Bemporad, 1911, but in fact 1910] (Firenze: Giunti, 1961).

Orvieto, *Principesse* = Laura Orvieto, *Principesse, bambini e bestie* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1914).

Orvieto, *Fiorenza* = Laura Orvieto, *Sono la tua serva e tu sei il mio Signore. Così visse Florence Nightingale* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1920).

Orvieto, *Beppe racconta* = Laura Orvieto, *Beppe racconta la guerra* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1925).

Orvieto, *Il natale* = Laura Orvieto, *Storie della storia del mondo. Il natale di Roma* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1928).

These words, written more than twenty years ago, introduced me for the first time to a fascinating fantastical world, which would continue to engross me so much that it became my everyday world: the classical world. These words, so maternal and charming, are Laura Orvieto's, who opens her retelling of the great and spellbinding story of Troy, addressing her children Leo and Lia within the literary fiction and, through them, children all around the world.

All around the world, indeed, because this book—*Storie della storia del mondo. Greche e barbare*—was immediately and lastingly successful and was translated into several languages. It is known in the English-speaking world as *Stories of Greece and the Barbarians* (1966),² in French as *Légendes du monde grec et barbare* (1924),³ and in Dutch as *Grieken en Trojanen: De ondergang van Troje* (1927).⁴

Orvieto, *La forza* = Laura Orvieto, *Storie della storia del mondo. La forza di Roma* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1933).

Orvieto, *Storie di bambini* = Laura Orvieto, *Storie di bambini molto antichi* [Milano: Mondadori, 1937] (Milano: Mondadori, 1971).

Orvieto, *Stories* = Laura Orvieto, *Stories of Greece and the Barbarians*, adapted and trans. by Barbara Whelpton, illustrated by Clifton Dey [London–Toronto–New York: Burke, 1966] (London–Toronto–New York: Burke, 1983).

Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura* = Laura Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura* (Fondazione Carlo Marchi. Quaderni, 11), a c. di Caterina Del Vivo (Città di Castello, PG: Leo S. Olschki, 2001).

Orvieto, *Viaggio* = Laura Orvieto, *Viaggio meraviglioso di Gianni nel paese delle parole. Fantasia grammaticale* (Fondazione Carlo Marchi. Quaderni, 32), a c. di Caterina Del Vivo (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2007).

Angiolo Orvieto's works cited:

A. Orvieto, "Barbari" = Angiolo Orvieto, "Barbari," *Il Marzocco* 2.7 (March 21, 1897): 2.

A. Orvieto, "I papiri" = Angiolo Orvieto, "I papiri e l'Italia," *Il Marzocco* 13.3 (January 19, 1908): 1.

In the texts cited below I will use expanded character spacing in order to emphasise some words and concepts.

- 1 "Ilus was a great builder who, many centuries ago, reigned over Troy which lies in north-west Asia Minor" (Orvieto, *Stories*, 9).
- 2 Orvieto, *Stories*. This translation is quoted in this chapter only when it does not omit anything of the original text.
- 3 Trans. Sylvère Monod (Paris: Nathan).
- 4 Trans. J. Henzel (Zutphen: WJ. Thieme). A whole list of Laura's books, including their translations into different languages, is found in Caterina Del Vivo, ed., *Fondo Orvieto. Serie 1. Corrispondenza generale. Lettere A–B*, premessa di Paolo Bagnoli (Firenze: Polistampa, 1994), 49–50: the papers of the "Fondo Orvieto" (ACGV, Florence) attest that Bemporad publisher sold translation rights into Spanish and Hebrew for *Storie greche e barbare* in 1928 and 1955, respectively. Del Vivo, ed., *Fondo Orvieto*, 50, also mentions a translation into Czech. See also Caterina Del Vivo, "Educare narrando 'storie.' Miti classici, tradizione ebraica, echi del

Telling stories was Laura's⁵ talent: the story I want to tell is autobiographical to some extent, because Laura's introduction to the classical world was my own first introduction as a child.

Angiolo, Laura, and the Classical World

Who was Laura Orvieto? Let us make her acquaintance. Once upon a time—as she would write—she was born in Milan as Laura Cantoni, into a Jewish middle-class family (March 7, 1876). Her fondness for literature was strong from her youth: she used to read “furiously”—“*furiosamente*,” she writes in her unpublished autobiography *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*⁶—any book she came upon. At the same time, she felt the need to help people and “to do something in the world.” She looked with great interest at the educational activity of the teacher and writer Rosa Errera (1864–1946), who had been her own teacher at the “Scuola Normale Gaetana Agnesi” for girls and who taught afterschool courses (*Scuola e famiglia*) for children of the working class. Laura's family did not allow her to follow Rosa in this endeavour because of her social status, and so it was that her love for children and storytelling found expression within her family, in the stories she used to tell her young cousins.⁷

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- Novecento nella letteratura per ragazzi di Laura Orvieto,” in Antonella Cagnolati, ed., *Madri sociali. Percorsi di genere tra educazione, politica e filantropia* (Roma: Anicia, 2011), 154; Aldo Cecconi, “La fortuna editoriale delle *Storie della storia del mondo. Greche e barbare*,” in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le “Storie del mondo.” Atti della Giornata di studio. Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, 19 ottobre 2011, Antologia Vieusseux* n.s. 18/53–54 (May–December 2012): 75–84.
- 5 In the following I will refer to Laura Orvieto as Laura for the sake of brevity and for avoiding confusion with Angiolo Orvieto.
 - 6 Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 61. For Laura's life, see also Caterina Del Vivo, “Laura Orvieto: per una biografia,” in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le “Storie del mondo”*, 10ff.
 - 7 In Luigi Tonelli's interview, “Laura Orvieto,” *L'Italia che scrive* 16.5 (May 1933), 129, Laura says: “Probabilmente, erano tutte reminiscenze di cose che avevo sentito dire; ma non me ne rendevo conto. Quando cominciavo, non sapevo mai come sarebbe andata a finire la storia; l'inventavo, mentre raccontavo, o mi pareva d'inventarla, divertendomi mezzo mondo. Divertivo, probabilmente, anche i miei piccoli amici, giacché, appena mi vedevano, chiedevano le novelle... Devo confessare che la compagnia dei bambini è stata sempre, per me, la più gradita; nessuna conversazione, anche assai piacevole, di grandi, mi ha mai dato il piacere, che provo, stando coi piccoli, e seguendoli nelle manifestazioni della loro incipiente intelligenza.” See also Del Vivo, “Laura Orvieto: per una biografia,” 14–15. On Laura and the children, see also Giuliana Treves Artom, “Ricordando Laura Orvieto,” in Caterina Del Vivo, ed., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache fra Ottocento e avanguardie (1887–1913)*.

Laura's education was the standard basic education reserved for women at the so-called "scuole normali,"⁸ but afterward her family allowed her to improve her knowledge of English literature by taking private lessons from a young teacher from Newcastle, Lily Marshall, who, along with Rosa Errera, became one of Laura's female reference points and a close friend.⁹

Her familiarity with the classical world increased after her marriage in 1899 to Angiolo Orvieto (1869–1967), a Jewish poet, journalist, and founder—together with his brother Adolfo—of the cultural journal *Il Marzocco* (1896–1932).¹⁰ With him she moved to Florence.¹¹

Laura and Angiolo's relationship involved a complete and deep community of interests: they shared their projects and ideas throughout their life together.¹² So Angiolo's interest in the classical world involved and affected Laura, too.

Atti del seminario di studi (12–13–14 dicembre 1983) (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1985), 365. On Laura's commitment to Jewish orphans, see Lionella Viterbo, "Impegno sociale ed educativo nella comunità ebraica fiorentina," in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le "Storie del mondo"*, 65–73. Laura's choice to introduce her stories as told by Laura herself to her children in *Storie greche e barbare* might indicate that such a frame could make a woman's book more acceptable, as Lucia Floridi has suggested to me (*per litteras*).

8 Laura, as a teenager, did not like traditional female activities: she liked to study, but her family did not approve. See Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 61–62, 64–65; Carla Poesio, *Laura Orvieto* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1971), 10–12; Claudia Gori, *Crisalidi. Emancipazioniste liberali in età giolittiana* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2003), 55–56; Monica Pacini, "Il giornalismo di Laura Orvieto: educarsi/educare," in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le "Storie del mondo"*, 109–126.

9 See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 13; Gori, *Crisalidi*, 57.

10 Laura and Angiolo were relatives: the genealogy of their families is drawn in Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, xvii; and Caterina Del Vivo and Marco Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913). Mostra documentaria coordinata da Caterina Del Vivo. Catalogo* (Firenze: Mori, 1983), 11–12; on the journal *Il Marzocco*, see, e.g., Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, and Diletta Minutoli, "Il carteggio Orvieto–Vitelli," *Analecta papyrologica* 14/15 (2002/2003): 325–330. The journal's logotype contained a Greek quotation from Aesch. *Pr.* 309–310: μεθάρμοσαι τρόπους / νέους.

11 On Florence between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Franco Contorbia, "La Firenze di Laura Orvieto: qualche considerazione," in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le "Storie del mondo"*, 27–34.

12 See, e.g., Alda Perugia, "Poesia e bontà nell'opera di Laura Orvieto," *La Rassegna mensile di Israel* 19/8 (1953): 11 and 13; Pasquale Vannucci, "Da Maria Pascoli a Laura Orvieto a Eleonora Duse. Tre donne tre luci," *La Fiera Letteraria* (July 18, 1954): 2; Sonia Naldi de Figner, *In memoria di Laura Orvieto* (Monza: Nuova Massimo, 1954), 5–6; Treves Artom, "Ricordando Laura Orvieto," 366. Laura dedicated her books to him as to her "amico, maestro, compagno."

As she writes in *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, during his university course in Florence Angiolo was anxious to improve his knowledge of ancient Greek because of his interest in ancient philosophy, and he asked the papyrologist Girolamo Vitelli¹³ to give him tutorials: although he liked Angiolo, Vitelli declined the request, perhaps because he had no time, but perhaps—Laura adds—because he understood immediately that Angiolo was not cut out to be a philologist:

L'Ateneo fiorentino era allora nel suo pieno splendore. Vi insegnavano professori come Pasquale Villari, Girolamo Vitelli, Augusto Conti, Gaetano Trezza. Convinto di dover diventare storico della filosofia e quindi di dovere imparare molto bene il greco, Angiolo chiese al professor Vitelli di dargli lezioni particolari. Ma il Vitelli pur essendogli benevolo e diventandogli poi sempre più amico nel corso della vita, non aderì. Non aveva tempo, e forse aveva acutamente capito che in Angiolo non c'era la stoffa del filologo.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 40

Nevertheless, Angiolo attended Vitelli's lectures, and his enthusiasm revealed a promising poet rather than a philosopher or a philologist:

Nondimeno Angiolo frequentò assiduamente le lezioni del Vitelli, quelle del Trezza [...]. E i due professori lo avevano caro, perché riconoscevano in lui quel caldo entusiasmo e quella sincerità di impressione che c'era veramente, e che a un osservatore imparziale sarebbe apparso, come forse apparve al Vitelli, indizio di uno spirito poetico più che filosofico e filologico.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 40

13 On Vitelli (1849–1935), see below: *Laura's Workplace and Girolamo Vitelli*. On Vitelli's role in the history of classical scholarship, see Donato Morelli and Rosario Pintaudi, eds., *Cinquant'anni di papirologia in Italia. Carteggi Breccia–Comparetti–Norsa–Vitelli*, 2 vols. (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1983); Rosario Pintaudi, ed., *Gli archivi della memoria. Bibliotecari, filologi e papirologi nei carteggi della Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana* (Firenze: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 1996), 1–14; Guido Bastianini and Angelo Casanova, eds., *100 anni di istituzioni fiorentine per la papirologia. 1908. Società Italiana per la ricerca dei Papiri. 1928. Istituto Papirologico «G. Vitelli». Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Firenze, 12–13 giugno 2008* (Firenze: Istituto Papirologico Vitelli, 2009); Camillo Neri, “«Il greco ai giorni nostri», ovvero: sacrificarsi per Atene o sacrificare Atene?” in Luciano Canfora and Ugo Cardinale, eds., *Disegnare il futuro con intelligenza antica. L'insegnamento del latino e del greco antico in Italia e nel mondo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 115–117.

He graduated in philosophy in 1895 with a dissertation on Xenophanes of Colophon,¹⁴ published in 1899 as *Filosofia di Senofane* (Firenze: Seeber). His rather “poetic” approach to the ancient Greek world comes out even later in the autobiography, for example when, after the publication of Enrico Turolla’s book *Vita di Platone* (Milano: F.lli Bocca, 1939), Angiolo and his friends founded the so-called “Accademia Platonica” and met regularly to read that book:

Quella *Vita di Platone* fu letta dall’amico agli amici in una serie di riunioni che essi chiamarono scherzosamente Accademia Platonica: e portò ad essi l’afflato della grande anima dell’altissimo Greco, passata attraverso l’anima ardente del moderno italiano, abbagliato e placato in luce quasi ultraterrena da quelle aspirazioni quasi divine, da quelle altezze vertiginose. Folgorazioni alle quali, come Dante nel Paradiso, la mente si abituava a poco a poco con stupore e rapimenti sempre crescenti, con possibilità sempre maggiori di più vedere e più capire e più godere, in commozione sovrumana, in quei colloqui e in quelle letture, con le grandi anime antiche a traverso la comunione loro. Ogni contingenza presente era obliata, nella luce di quella altissima poesia.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 134

In fact, Angiolo’s attitude toward the ancient world appears to be quite far from philology and textual criticism, as he shows clearly in Orvieto, “Barbari”:

[...] quella pleiade illustre di filologi, che consumano gli occhi e gli occhiali a contare i *mèn* e i *dè*, gli *kaí* e gli *allà* di Platone o di Demostene, che si lambiccano mesi e mesi il cervello per storcere a qualche strana sentenza l’uno o l’altro passo controverso di questo o di quell’autore, con artifici di virgole aggiunte o sopresse, con sottigliezza di conghietture gelosamente custodite fra parentesi quadre e con arcana profondità di raffronti.¹⁵

However, Angiolo’s passion for ancient Greek culture was fruitful during his life: in a chapter of the autobiography, titled “Papiri,” Laura describes how

14 ACGV, Florence, Or. 4.10.1: “La Filosofia di Senofane di Colofone criticamente esposta da Angiolo Orvieto Tesi di Laurea 1894.”

15 This article is a strong attack against Germany and its hostile attitude toward Greece: it mirrors a tendency which found in Giuseppe Fraccaroli and Ettore Romagnoli its best representatives in Italy, see Neri, “«Il greco ai giorni nostri»,” 126–133. The attack against philologists is already attested in Antiquity, see, e.g., Daniela Manetti, “La Grecia e il greco: la fuga dei filologi (Herodic. *SH* 494),” *Eikasmós* 13 (2002): 185; one wonders whether Angiolo knew such texts.

Angiolo's attitude toward Greek philologists changed from 1897 to 1908, when he met Bernard P. Grenfell and could appreciate him as "uomo d'azione e di studio, miracolo d'energia e di dottrina."¹⁶ On January 11, 1908 the British papyrologist went to Florence and gave a lecture on Greek papyri at the "Società Leonardo da Vinci."¹⁷ Grenfell's lecture brought the difference between papyrology in England and Italy to light:

Il Vitelli ammirava e anche un po' invidiava quei suoi colleghi, ai quali la ricchezza e la liberalità dei cittadini inglesi dava modo di fare quegli scavi, che portavano al mondo moderno nuove luci sugli usi e sui costumi della Grecia antica e dell'antica letteratura [...]. Ma chi poteva pretendere che la povera Italia si permettesse il lusso di spender soldi per le ricerche dei papiri in Egitto? Nemmeno pensarci, e il Vitelli non ci pensava: era quello il tempo che con la scusa della povertà si finiva, in Italia, a non fare tante cose, che con un po' di buona volontà si sarebbero potute intraprendere, sia pure in misura modesta.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 99

This drove Angiolo to do something concrete in order to help Italian papyrology. Laura explains:

[...] quando si trattava di far vivere un'idea che a lui sembrava bella e alta, anche se fosse lontana dai suoi studi, anche se avesse la sicurezza che a lui non ne sarebbe mai venuto nessun utile, Angiolo si metteva a quel lavoro come se la cosa lo interessasse personalmente, con quell'ardore che in genere gli uomini adoperano per ciò che possa meglio farli riuscire nella vita o negli affari.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 100

16 Angiolo describes B.P. Grenfell as follows: "[...] l'uomo abituato a rivocar dalle tombe greche dell'Egitto le voci dei grandi e le voci dei piccoli, mute da decine di secoli; colui che ci ha fatto udire parole ignote di Sofocle e d'Euripide, di Saffo e di Pindaro, di Gesù e di Paolo, e ha spirato il soffio della seconda vita in una folla multiforme che compra e vende, fa leggi e le trasgredisce, salda conti e dà quietanza, promuove sequestri, porge petizioni, paga tasse—allora come oggi—quest'uomo che ha passato tredici inverni fra le rovine del Fajûm a scavare, a scoprire, a raccogliere; e tredici estati a Oxford a decifrare, a interpretare, a illustrare—quest'uomo d'azione e di studio, miracolo d'energia e di dottrina che—come disse il Vitelli—«vola vivo per le bocche degli uomini»—parla della sua grande opera con una semplicità austera che, nella terra di Cicerone, nel paese della retorica endemica, stupisce ancor più dell'opera stessa" (A. Orvioto, "I papiri," 1).

17 Angiolo founded this in 1902, together with Guido Biagi and Giulio Fano: see Orvioto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 88–91; Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 103–108.

In 1908, in his article “I papiri e l’Italia,” Angiolo announced the establishment of the “Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto,” modelled on the British Egypt Exploration Fund:

[...] per andare in Egitto a intraprendere qualche scavo sistematico [...] bastano poche decine di migliaia di lire, e c’è il caso di ricavarne tesori. Ma ci vuole un ente, una associazione con fondi propri, che garantisca all’impresa continuità e sicurezza per un certo numero d’anni [...]. Anche i muscoli dell’ideale hanno bisogno di moto [...]. Si troveranno in tutta Italia 150 persone di buona volontà, che sottoscrivano 100 lire a testa? Io spero di sì. Intanto, eccone una.¹⁸

A. ORVIETO, “I papiri,” 1

Angiolo was the leader and organiser (“l’anima e l’organizzatore”) of the new “società degli idealisti,” as Laura describes it,¹⁹ but he never wanted to follow Vitelli, Medea Norsa, or Ermenegildo Pistelli²⁰ in Egypt, because he did not

18 The establishment of the new association on June 1st was announced in *Il Marzocco* 13/23 (June 7, 1908): 4–5. Ermenegildo Pistelli, in *Omaggio della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci in Egitto al quarto convegno dei classicisti tenuto in Firenze dal XVIII al XX aprile del MCMXI* (Firenze: Tipografia Enrico Ariani, 1911), 4, describing the history of the new association wrote: “[...] si correva il rischio che s’esaurisse tutta l’attività italiana in questo campo, poiché era vano sperare aiuti ufficiali, e troppo audace il continuare l’impresa con la sola speranza di aiuti privati, incerti ed intermittenti, mentre i papiri greci sul mercato Egiziano salivano di giorno in giorno a prezzi sempre più favolosi. Bisognava disciplinare l’iniziativa privata, renderla per qualche tempo stabile e costante, e dirigerla specialmente a nuovi scavi. Fecero il miracolo l’entusiasmo e la tenacia di Angiolo Orvieto.”

19 Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 101.

20 Pistelli is mentioned in Laura’s autobiography: she relates that in 1914 Angiolo and the senior Pistelli turned the room of the “Società Dantesca” into an information centre for the families of the soldiers: “Così, con la collaborazione di Padre Ermenegildo Pistelli, professore di greco e arguto scrittore di libri per ragazzi e per grandi, come due sacerdoti uno nella tonaca dell’ordine degli scolopi, l’altro nel semplice abito borghese ma con lo stesso cuore, eccoli tutti e due nell’ampia sala sovrastante alla chiesa di Orsanmichele e connessa col Palagio dell’Arte della Lana, quello acquistato da Guido Biagi per la Società Dantesca, grande sala nella quale si tenevano le conferenze e le lezioni dantesche e che non serve più, in questi anni, a Dante, ma bensì all’Italia in grigio verde” (Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 116). See also Marino Raicich, “Suggerimenti per la ricerca su alcuni aspetti del «Marzocco» (Pistelli, scuola ecc.),” in Del Vivo, ed., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache*, 246–247.

consider himself competent, nor did he benefit from his efforts financially.²¹ At some point, he decided to attach the society to the University of Florence; this choice proved to be wise, when anti-Jewish laws excluded him from the directorship and from the society itself:

[...] e fu fortuna, ora che le leggi razziali escludono lui dalla Società che con tanta fede e con tanta tenacia aveva fondata e diretta, e della quale Girolamo Vitelli con altrettanta fede e altrettanta tenacia lo aveva voluto sempre presidente, né mai gli aveva permesso di lasciare il posto dal quale egli più volte avrebbe voluto ritirarsi.²²

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 102

Through Angiolo, Laura's name is deeply involved in the history of classical scholarship in Italy, and she proves to be aware of the great importance of papyrology and more generally of the study of ancient Greek and Latin literature:

[...] quei papiri, che spesso contenevano contratti di compra e vendita, di impegni commerciali, di notizie riguardanti un matrimonio o una nascita o una morte, di esazioni di tasse, davano anche talvolta a quegli studiosi gioia di versi sconosciuti di grandi poeti, lezioni sicure là dove esistevano dubbi, talvolta completamenti di passi fino allora mancanti, e notizie preziose sulla vita d'allora.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 99

21 Vitelli and Evaristo Breccia wrote some letters—now in the “Fondo Orvieto,” ACGV, Florence; see Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 107–108; Caterina Del Vivo, “La donazione Orvieto all’Archivio Contemporaneo del Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux,” in Del Vivo, ed., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache*, 369–378; Laura Melosi, “Laura Orvieto,” in eiusdem, *Profili di donne. Dai fondi dell’Archivio contemporaneo Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2001), 110–114—to Angiolo during their excavations in order to communicate their results to him: see Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 107–108; Caterina Del Vivo and Marco Assirelli, “Gli Orvieto: dalle prime riviste alla prima guerra mondiale,” in Del Vivo, ed., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache*, 28–29; Del Vivo, ed., *Fondo Orvieto*; Minutoli, “Il carteggio Orvieto–Vitelli,” 322–336; see also Morelli and Pintaudi, *Cinquant’anni di papirologia in Italia*, vol. 1, 287 and vol. 2, 453 n. 2.

22 On the April 23, 1927 the “Società Italiana” deliberated its dissolution and on June 21, 1928 a new “Istituto Papirologico” was founded at the University of Florence; see Bastianini and Casanova, *100 anni di istituzioni fiorentine per la papirologia*, ix. During the war Angiolo and Laura escaped the anti-Jewish persecutions in a monastery in Mugello, under the protection of Father Massimo, director of the Ospizio San Carlo: see Del Vivo, “Laura Orvieto: per una biografia,” 19–22.

But she became even more deeply involved in another project of Angiolo's in defence of classical culture. In Spring 1911, when a big conference of classicists was held in Florence,²³ Angiolo organised a performance of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, directed by Gustavo Salvini, in the Roman Theatre at Fiesole:²⁴

A quegli studiosi che per studi classici intendevano lo stare chini sui libri a chiosare gli antichi testi, Angiolo propose una rappresentazione classica nel teatro romano di Fiesole: per vivificare quegli studi, far rivivere un dramma antico nell'atmosfera nella quale era nato, all'aperto, dargli nuovo interesse fra gli uomini d'oggi. Mossi dal suo fervore, i vecchioni che dirigevano il congresso accettarono; ed ecco Angiolo fra gli artisti drammatici, con Gustavo Salvini alla testa, a chiamare attori e attrici, a raccogliere e a dare denari, a scegliere drammi e costumi, a riattare il teatro in modo che gli attori avessero qualche cosa che somigliasse a un camerino per vestirsi, e agli spettatori fossero dati posti solidi, senza buche traditrici dove rompersi una gamba.

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 103

On April 20 Sophocles' drama was successfully performed: Laura notes that "i congressisti e tutta Firenze si commossero, e parlavano con interesse della nuova iniziativa."²⁵ The success of the first performance at Fiesole opened the way to further performances in the following years (1911–1914), such as Euripides' *Orestes* and *Bacchae*.²⁶ As usual, Laura took an active part in this project.

23 It was the 4th conference of the "Società Atene e Roma."

24 As Pistelli (in *Omaggio*, 5) explains, the "Società Italiana" offered the participants a little book with some *specimina* of the forthcoming volume of the *Papiri della Società Italiana*.

25 Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 103.

26 Among others involved in these performances were: Ezio Anichini, who designed the posters and tickets (see Marco Assirelli, "Illustratori e grafici nella Firenze del «Marzocco»," in Del Vivo, ed., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache*, 330), and was the illustrator of Laura's *Storie greche e barbare* (see Silvia Assirelli, "L'iconografia delle *Storie della storia del mondo*: tre illustratori a confronto," in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le "Storie del mondo"*, 127–159); Ildebrando Pizzetti, who composed some musical pieces for Euripides' *Bacchae* (1913) and Tasso's *Aminta* (1914); and the classicist Ettore Romagnoli, whose letters to Angiolo belong to the "Fondo Orvieto" (see above) and were published in part. For example, referring to *Bacchae* he appears to be concerned about a correct and consistent staging: "[...] io in queste *Baccanti* ho tentato una ricostruzione stilistica, d'aspirazione artistica, ma archeologicamente fondata. Ho voluto una ricostruzione della Tebe antichissima [...]. Tutto questo allestimento scenico può piacere o dispiacere; però è organicamente concepito" (Del Vivo and Assirelli, "Gli Orvieto," 35 n. 90). On Angiolo's commitment to the Roman Theatre at Fiesole, see Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il*

In particular, she describes her anxiety on the day of *Oedipus's* first performance, as the weather was unpredictable and the performance had to be open-air:

[...] e un'ora prima della rappresentazione Angiolo e Laura con la Lily Marshall ospite salirono su a Fiesole, e con loro una cassetina pesante, che conteneva una quantità di spiccioli, per il caso che all'ultimo momento l'acqua scendesse dal cielo sulla terra, e si dovesse rendere al pubblico i denari dei biglietti. Ma che ansie fino all'ultimo con quel cielo grigio e piovorno! Se si arriva fino a metà rappresentazione siamo salvi. Ma credo che Angiolo e Laura e neppure la Lily alla quale era stata affidata la famosa cassetina non poterono commoversi troppo né troppo ammirare la drammatica interpretazione di Gustavo Salvini: pioverà? non pioverà? [...]. Ma la rappresentazione ebbe luogo, e quando Gustavo Salvini-Edipo nella sua cecità invocò il sole, un raggio di sole sfolgorò veramente, quasi a rispondergli, fra le nuvole.²⁷

ORVIETO, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 104

Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913), 145–151; and Del Vivo and Assirelli, “Gli Orvieto,” 34–36. For some photos of the theatre, see Caterina Del Vivo, ed., ...*Narrando storie. Laura Orvieto e il suo mondo. Catalogo della Mostra documentaria (Firenze, Palazzo Bastogi–Archivio Storico del Comune, 20 ottobre–20 novembre 2011)* (Firenze: Giunti, 2011), 17; cf. also Cristina Nuzzi, ed., *Eleonora Duse e Firenze. Catalogo della mostra, Fiesole 1994* (Firenze: Firenze Viva, 1994).

- 27 Laura notes that the weather improved in the following days and that Eleonora Duse and Sidney Sonnino attended the performances (Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 104). Eleonora Duse was quite close to Laura and Angiolo for some time, and Laura writes that Angiolo had shared with Eleonora his desire to make classical theatre live again at Fiesole; she approved his project enthusiastically: “Angiolo le parlò di una idea che da tempo accarezzava: quella di far rivivere il teatro di Fiesole, di recitarvi le grandi tragedie greche. La cosa le piacque subito, con un impeto di quella sua intelligenza luminosa che la faceva entrare d'un tratto nel cuore di un'idea, e già viverla tutta. Vedeva d'un tratto superato ogni ostacolo, e già il magnifico spettacolo greco-italiano in azione: un generoso e facoltoso tedesco, il banchiere Mendelssohn, marito della sua amica Giulietta Gordigiani, avrebbe certamente dato volentieri i fondi necessari. – Ma non possiamo farne una cosa tedesca; bisogna che sia una cosa italiana – obiettò Laura” (Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 97). The relations between Laura and Eleonora Duse cooled at some point: Eleonora had such a strong ascendancy over Laura that Angiolo finally broke with her (Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 97–99). Some letters between Laura and Eleonora were published by Vannucci, “Da Maria Pascoli a Laura Orvieto a Eleonora Duse,” 2; Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 24–27; see also Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 127; Gori, *Crisalidi*, 119–120.

It is worth mentioning that Angiolo had also dealt with classical themes as a librettist: Laura mentions his *Elena alle Porte Scee*, published in 1904 and set to music by Giovanni Minguzzi, but never performed.²⁸

In other words, as her autobiography clearly shows, the classical world was much more present in Laura's life than one might expect given her education. Since Laura shared Angiolo's projects and ideas with enthusiasm, it should not surprise us that classical mythology shaped her writing for children.

Laura's Way

Laura, however, found her own way to the classical world. Pistelli describes this as follows:

Ad un uomo d'ingegno—per esempio ad Angiolo Orvieto—sarebbe venuto in mente di scrivere sul *Marzocco* un articolo [...] sulla necessità d'aver buoni libri di coltura classica [...]. Oppure, un'altra cosa potrebbe venire a mente, invece d'un articolo: un'adunanza [...], un Convegno, un ciclo di conferenze... Invece, una donna d'ingegno un bel giorno, forse mentre aspettava che Angiolo Orvieto tornasse da una delle adunanze che ho ricordate, con quell'intuito più sicuro, più pratico che è proprio delle donne anche quando hanno ingegno, pensava: – Ma se cominciasimo [...] dai ragazzi? Quali «storie» più belle, più fantastiche, più attraenti anche per loro, di quelle che racconta Omero?²⁹

28 Orvieto, *Storia di Angiolo e Laura*, 87: "In quel momento, specialmente prima del *Pane altrui*, tutti i musicisti volevano libretti di Angiolo; Puccini, Giordano, Franchetti. Per Franchetti Angiolo dopo aver scritto una *Rut e Noemi*, compose una *Elena alle Porte Scee* che fu pubblicata nell'«Illustrazione Italiana» [31/48, November 27, 1904] e musicata poi da un [sic!] maestro Minguzzi." Giovanni Minguzzi was an Italian composer (1870–1934); see Marie-Thérèse Bouquet, in Alberto Basso, ed., *Dizionario Enciclopedico Universale della Musica e dei Musicisti*, vol. 5 (Torino: UTET, 1988), 114. On the history of *Elena alle Porte Scee*, see two letters published by Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 98. On Angiolo's activity as a librettist, see also Del Vivo, ed., *Fondo Orvieto*, 12–13; Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 93–101; and Del Vivo and Assirelli, "Gli Orvieto," 25–27.

29 Ermenegildo Pistelli, "Propaganda classica per ragazzi," *Il Marzocco* 15/51 (Dec. 18, 1910): 2.

Laura's first—and best—work was the *Storie della storia del mondo. Greche e barbare*, published between 1910 and 1911,³⁰ when Angiolo revived Sophocles' *Oedipus* at Fiesole, and a couple of years after the foundation of the Italian society for research on Greek and Latin papyri in Egypt. Seen in context, Laura's first book for children on classical mythology does not appear out of the blue.³¹

The series *Storie della storia del mondo* included, after the first volume, the books *Beppe racconta la guerra* (1925), *Il natale di Roma* (1928), and *La forza di Roma* (1933). This series was announced at the end of *Leo e Lia* (1909):

- [...] quelli che vivono ora sono i figli dei figli dei figli dei figli dei figli dei figli dei figli di quelli là. Ma ognuno di loro ha fatto un passo, e tutti insieme hanno fatto la storia del mondo.
- Raccontami la storia del mondo, mamma – pregò Leo.
- La storia del mondo è fatta di tante tante storie, e sono tutte belle. Ma non te le posso raccontare ora: sei troppo piccino. Te le dirò quando sarai più grande: quando avrai almeno sei anni.

ORVIETO, *Leo e Lia*, 134

The title of the series, as well as its announcement, suggests that the scope of the original project was broader than eventually realised: all the published

30 On the cover of the book, below Ezio Anichini's illustration of the Trojan horse, the date 1910 is printed, but at the bottom of p. iv is printed "1911—Tip. Giuntina, diretta da L. Franceschini—Firenze, Via del Sole, 4." In fact, as Contorbia ("La Firenze di Laura Orvieto," 31) has pointed out, Pistelli's review of *Storie greche e barbare*, published in *Il Marzocco* on December 18, 1910, proves that the book was already printed at that time and in a letter dated on the 21st of the same month Sibilla Aleramo thanks Laura for the book (Del Vivo and Assirelli, eds., *Il Marzocco. Carteggi e cronache (1887–1913)*, 136 no. 281); this is further confirmed by Vitelli's letter to Laura published below, see: *Laura's Workplace and Girolamo Vitelli*.

31 Laura discovered her own inclination toward writing from 1905, when she started to write for *Il Marzocco* under the pseudonym "Mrs. El." Her activity was particularly intensive between 1906 and 1908 (see Pacini, "Il giornalismo di Laura Orvieto," 116–119); her column was titled *Marginalia*: see also Del Vivo, ed., *Fondo Orvieto*, 26; Melosi, "Laura Orvieto," 107; Caterina Del Vivo, "«Nostalgie delle palme e dell'Arno»: dicotomie inattese e proiezioni letterarie nelle opere di Angiolo e Laura Orvieto," in Raniero Spielman, Monica Jansen, and Silvia Gaiga, eds., *Ebrei migranti: le voci della diaspora*, Proceedings of the Conference. Istanbul, 23th–27th June 2010, "Italianistica Ultraiectina" 7 (Utrecht: Igitur, 2012), 174; Del Vivo, "Laura Orvieto: per una biografia," 15. As for Laura's interest in classical mythology, the story of Hercules appears already in Orvieto, *Leo e Lia*, 90–92, 123, 127–128, 131.

volumes invoke Classical Antiquity except for *Beppe racconta*,³² yet the *Storie della storia del mondo* were probably conceived by Laura as a whole series of books drawing from different cultures and traditions.³³

Be that as it may, Laura's writings belong to different genres. As Carla Poesio observes,³⁴ one can easily detect two principal strains: mythical narrative—from *Storie greche e barbare* to *Storie di bambini*—on the one hand, and a more varied collection of “popular literature” (*Leo e Lia*; *Principesse*; *Fiorenza*; *Beppe racconta*; *La forza*) on the other, including short tales from everyday life (*Leo e Lia* and *Principesse*), biography (*Fiorenza*), historical novel (*La forza*), and recent history (*Beppe racconta*); between these two main strains she places *Il natale*, as a sort of *trait d'union*.³⁵ Classical mythology is the subject of Laura's mythical narrative (and partly of *Il natale*), which is unanimously regarded as her best work. Moreover, it is precisely in the field of mythical narrative that Laura plays a primary role in the history of Italian literature for children: after her first and most important book on this subject—*Storie greche e*

32 On this novel, see Pino Boero and Carmine De Luca, *La letteratura per l'infanzia* (Bari: Laterza, 1995), 154–155; Pino Boero, “*Beppe racconta la guerra*: Laura Orvieto e il fascismo,” in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le “Storie del mondo”*, 45–64.

33 Caterina Del Vivo, “«La storia del mondo è fatta di tante storie». Mondo classico e tradizione ebraica nella narrativa di Laura Orvieto,” *Antologia Vieusseux* 15 n. 43 (January–April 2009): 6–7, observes that perhaps “[...] le osservazioni censorie mosse ad alcune delle sue pagine e la tiepida accoglienza editoriale alle sue proposte condussero la scrittrice ad allontanarsi dalle sue intenzioni ed a privilegiare il filone della storia della Grecia e di Roma.” Del Vivo, “Altre *Storie del mondo*: gli inediti di ispirazione ebraica nell'archivio di Laura Orvieto,” in *Una mente colorata. Studi in onore di Attilio Mauro Caproni per i suoi 65 anni*, promossi, raccolti, ordinati da Piero Innocenti, curati da Cristina Cavallaro, vol. 2 (Roma: Vecchiarelli, 2007), 555–574; Del Vivo, “«Nostalgie delle palme e dell'Arno»: dicotomie inattese e proiezioni letterarie,” 175–176, shows that some unpublished writings, such as *I racconti del sabato*, *Leone da Rimini*, but also *Viaggio* (recently published: see Del Vivo, “Educare narrando ‘storie,’” 170–174), suggest that Laura had planned to also tell stories close to Jewish culture and tradition, see also Del Vivo, “Educare narrando ‘storie,’” 159–160, 174–176; Roberta Turchi, “L'ultima delle storie della storia del mondo: *Il viaggio meraviglioso di Gianni*, fantasia grammaticale di Laura Orvieto,” in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le “Storie del mondo”*, 85–107. On Angiolo's and Laura's attitude toward Jewish identity and Zionism, see Del Vivo, “Altre *Storie del mondo*,” 555–574; eadem, “Educare narrando: Laura Orvieto e le sue storie,” *Bollettino dell'Amicizia ebraica cristiana* 1–2 (2007): 7–20; eadem, “«Nostalgie delle palme e dell'Arno»: dicotomie inattese e proiezioni letterarie,” 167–184; eadem, “Laura Orvieto: per una biografia,” 16–18, with further bibliography.

34 *Laura Orvieto*, 69–70.

35 Sabrina Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura per l'infanzia tra le due guerre* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2004), 244, detects Virgil's *Aeneid* and Livy's *History of Rome* as sources of *Il natale* and *La forza*.

barbare—interest in classical mythology grew and produced a rich series of children’s books dealing with this subject in different ways.³⁶ In the context of Italian literature for children Laura’s book is something new: according to Poesio³⁷ and Grandi,³⁸ Laura’s models must be sought in English and American literature.³⁹ Since her mythical narratives share several features with the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), and Andrew Lang (1844–1912), as Poesio admits,⁴⁰ these might have been models for Laura.

Although in Laura’s writings, published or unpublished, these writers are not mentioned, there is no reason to assume that she did not know them.⁴¹ But does this mean that these books were Laura’s sources of classical myths?

The American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls* (1851) and *Tanglewood Tales* (1853), two books for children that include several classical myths: his charming narrative style is actually similar to Laura’s and may have inspired her.⁴² He created a personal and original revision of the classical myths and, like Laura, based his narrative on his experience with his own children. In his collections of stories Hawthorne retells the following myths: Perseus, Midas, Pandora, the apples of the Hesperides, Philemon and Baucis, Bellerophon, Theseus, Antaeus, Cadmus, Circe, Persephone, and the expedition of the Argonauts.

Charles Kingsley did not approve of rewriting classical myths, and he wrote *The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales for My Children* (1856) as a faithful “translation” of the classical world; according to Poesio,⁴³ his poetic prose echoes the rhythm of Homeric verse, as well as some choral odes from Greek tragedy.

36 A synthesis of Italian literature for children before WWI can be found in William Grandi, *La Musa bambina. La letteratura mitologica italiana per ragazzi tra storia, narrazione e pedagogia* (Milano: Unicopli, 2011), 60–71 and 101–108.

37 *Laura Orvieto*, 51–63.

38 *La Musa bambina. La letteratura mitologica*, 104–105.

39 Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura per l’infanzia*, 244, observes generically (and ambiguously) that “l’epopea vibrante narrata in *Storie della storia del mondo* e in *Storie di bambini molto antichi* si avvaleva, più o meno consapevolmente, di fonti mitologiche già rielaborate dai poemi omerici e dall’*Eneide* virgiliana.”

40 *Laura Orvieto*, 63 and 86.

41 In ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.3.7 (a collection of opinions on children’s book: 1915–1920?) none of these authors is mentioned. Nonetheless, Kingsley is mentioned (*Valentia, Two Years Ago*) in Or. 5.3.1, third notebook, p. iv (1898–1905?), although not in regard to his book for children. See Del Vivo, “Laura Orvieto: per una biografia,” 8.

42 Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 53–54.

43 *Ibid.*, 55.

Kingsley retells only three myths: Perseus, the expedition of the Argonauts, and Theseus.

Like Kingsley, Andrew Lang hews to the ancient texts in *Tales of Troy and Greece* (1907), his retelling of the story of the Trojan War, the wanderings of Ulysses, Perseus, Theseus, and the expedition of the Argonauts.

As Poesio correctly points out,⁴⁴ Laura's mythical narrative owes much to these writers, and appears especially close to Hawthorne's approach to classical myth. However, none of the books mentioned above includes the entire saga of the Trojan War as it appears in Laura's *Storie greche e barbare*: a more significant overlapping of contents can be seen between the books mentioned and *Storie di bambini*. Unfortunately, Laura and Angiolo's personal library did not survive, we therefore have no access to Laura's sources of classical myths.⁴⁵

Certainly in Laura's *Storie greche e barbare* one can recognise some epic, specifically Homeric features. Laura's language includes many epithets, which often "translate" the Homeric epithets:

Orvieta, *Storie greche e barbare*, 37: "Elena, divina fra tutte le donne," see δία γυναικῶν, "noblest of women," used for Helen in *Il.* 3.171, 228, *Od.* 4.305, 15.106; see *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos [LfgrE]*, begründ. v. Bruno Snell, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–1991), 526;

Orvieta, *Storie greche e barbare*, 37–38: "Elena dalle bianche braccia," see λευκῶλενος, "white-armed," used for Helen in *Il.* 3.121, *Od.* 22.227; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 526;

Orvieta, *Storie greche e barbare*, 38: "Elena dal lungo velo," see τανύπεπλος, "with flowing robe," used for Helen in *Il.* 3.228, *Od.* 4.305, 15.171; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 526;

Orvieta, *Storie greche e barbare*, 141: "Cassandra, la più bella delle figlie del re Priamo," see Πριάμοιο θυγατρῶν εἶδος ἀρίστην, "the most beautiful of Priam's daughters," in *Il.* 13.365; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 1344;

Orvieta, *Storie greche e barbare*, 65: "Guardò finché poté le piccole navi nere che s'allontanavano"; 38: "le navi nere dalle vele bianche"; 39: "le navi nere," "le piccole navi nere"; 71: "Intanto Menelao, nella nave nera, tornava verso Sparta"; 75: "Salirono sulle navi nere," see μέλαιναι νῆες, "black ships," and the like, both singular and plural; see *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos [LfgrE]*, begründ. v. Bruno Snell, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993–2004), 381–400;

44 Ibid., 56, 58, 61.

45 Nothing interesting in this regard is found in the "Fondo Laura Orvieta" of the "Biblioteca dell'Università Popolare" belonging to the "Biblioteca Comunale del Palagio di Parte Guelfa": I owe this information to Caterina Del Vivo.

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 37 *bis*: “giovinette dalle belle guance,” see καλλιπάρης, “beautiful-cheeked,” used for several women; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 1298–1299.

Laura often uses Homeric epithets for different referents:

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 37: “Elena dagli occhi glauchi,” see γλαυκῶπις, “with gleaming eyes,” epithet of Athena; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 161–162; see also variations such as “la bellissima principessa [...] dagli occhi color del mare” (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 38, 60);

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 86: “nell’isola di Sciro lontana nel mare,” see νήσων ἔπι τηλεδαπάων in *Il.* 21.454 and 22.45—“into isles that lie afar,” trans. Augustus Taber Murray, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2 (London–Cambridge, Mass.: W. Heinemann–Harvard University Press, Loeb, 1925), 441 and 457; τὴν νήσον ἀφίκετο τηλόθ’ ἐούσαν in *Od.* 5.55—“the island which lay afar,” trans. Augustus Taber Murray, in Homer, *The Odyssey*, vol. 1 (London–Cambridge, Mass.: W. Heinemann–Harvard University Press, Loeb, 1919), 175.

Finally, Laura coins several variations of the Homeric epithets:

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 37: “Elena dai capelli color di fiamma,” see, e.g., ἡύκομος, καλλίκομος, “lovely-haired,” “beautiful-haired,” used for Helen in *Il.* 3.329, 7.355, 8.82, 9.339, 11.369, 505, 13.766, *Od.* 15.58; see *LfgrE*, vol. 2, 526; see also variations such as “(la bellissima principessa) dai capelli color del sole” (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 38, 60), “bianca come un giglio e splendente come il sole, portava una corona di croco sui capelli d’oro,” “Elena dai capelli d’oro” (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 54); Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 89, 90, 91, 104: (Agamemnon) “generale dei generali,” see, e.g., ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν, “king of men,” ποιμὴν λαῶν, “shepherd of the host,” regularly used for Agamemnon, see *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos [LfgrE]*, begründ. v. Bruno Snell, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955–1979), 35;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 143: “Ulisse re di Itaca, il più astuto fra i generali,” see various epithets of Odysseus, such as πολύμητις, “of many counsels,” πολυμήχανος, “resourceful,” ποικιλομήτης, “full of various wiles,” πολύφρων, “ingenious”; see *LfgrE*, vol. 3, 518;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 36: “passò per il mare Egeo sparso di isole fiorite”; 69 and 75: “Passarono le Cicladi, le isole fiorite del mare Egeo,” see νήσος δενδρήεσσα in *Od.* 1.51, νήσον ἀν’ ὑλήεσσιν in *Od.* 10.308, “wooded island”; see *LfgrE*, vol. 3, 379.

Besides these epithets, Laura very often makes use of the formulaic pattern “così disse,” which translates the Homeric words ὧς (ἔ)φατο (“thus spoke”),⁴⁶ and of formulaic sequences such as “quand’ebbero finito di mangiare e di bere” (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 125), which remind us of the Homeric formulaic line αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο (see *Il.* 1.469, 2.432, 7.323, 9.92, 9.222)—“but when they had put from them the desire of food and drink,” trans. Augustus Taber Murray, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 1 (London–Cambridge, Mass.: W. Heinemann–Harvard University Press, Loeb, 1924), 39.

What is even more interesting is that, when she describes Paris as a guest at Menelaus’s court, Laura also reuses a Homeric “typical scene,” depicting a banquet (see *Od.* 1.136–142, 4.52–58, 7.172–176, 10.368–372, 15.132–146, 17.91–95):⁴⁷

Il re desiderava molto di sapere chi fosse quel bellissimo giovane, ma non domandò nulla: pensava che sarebbe stato poco gentile farlo parlare prima che avesse mangiato. Ordinò dunque che si portassero le tavole con pane e carne e vino.

Subito i servi vennero, portando lucide tavole; le ancelle versarono acqua pulita in catini d’argento, e il re e lo straniero si lavarono le mani. Poi le ancelle misero sulla tavola pane bianco e grandi pezzi di carne arrostita, e il re e lo straniero mangiarono la carne e il pane. Poi i servi versarono il vino in belle tazze d’oro; e il re e lo straniero bevettero il vino. Poi, quando nessuno dei due ebbe più voglia di mangiare e di bere, il re parlò allo straniero.⁴⁸

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 64

Laura seems to know and appreciate even Homer’s similes. In a few cases the similes appear exactly in the same place of the account as in the Homeric

46 E.g., Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 70: “Così disse Paride” (“Thus spoke Paris,” Orvieto, *Stories*, 80).

47 See Walter Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933), 69–72.

48 “Although Menelaus was most anxious to know who this young and handsome visitor could be, he did not question him, for he feared to break the sacred rules of hospitality by broaching the subject before having offered his guest a meal. So he ordered that tables be set up and that roast meat, wine and white bread should be served without delay. The slaves brought in smoothly polished tables and placed roast meat and loaves of fine white bread on them. They filled silver basins with pure water and offered them to the king and to the stranger, so that they could wash their hands before sitting down to eat. Then they poured wine into beautiful gold cups and Menelaus and the stranger partook of their meal. At last, when the repast had come to an end, the king questioned his guest,” Orvieto, *Stories*, 71–72.

poems: in other words, such similes confirm that the narrative sections they belong to come from Homer:

Teti ringraziò molto il dio fabbro e volò via dall'Olimpo, lesta come uno sparviero, portando con sé le belle armi splendenti.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 121

In the above passage Laura follows closely *Il.* 18.614–617:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πάνθ' ὄπλα κάμε κλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
μητρὸς Ἀχιλλῆος θῆκε προπάροιθεν ἀείρας.
ἦ δ' ἴρηξ ὡς ἄλτο κατ' Οὐλύμπου νιφόντος
τεύχεα μαρμαίροντα παρ' Ἥφαιστοιο φέρουσα.

But when the glorious god of the two strong arms had fashioned all the armour, he took and laid it before the mother of Achilles. And like a falcon she sprang down from snowy Olympus, bearing the flashing armour from Hephaestus.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2, 335

See also the following passage:

Come fiocchi di neve ghiacciata e spessa che cadono dal cielo in un giorno d'inverno, così dalle navi uscivano gli elmi e le corazze, le lance e gli scudi: lo splendore delle armi saliva al cielo e la terra brillava tutta. Simile a un Dio, Achille s'armò. Mise intorno alle gambe gli schineri di ferro guarniti d'acciaio; allacciò la corazza intorno al petto, infilò la spada al fianco, si calcò in testa l'elmo e prese scudo e lancia: quella lancia tanto grossa e pesante che nessuno, fuorché lui, poteva adoperare. Lo scudo luceva come la luna, e il pennacchio dell'elmo splendeva come il sole: nel vedere Achille così armato, bello, forte e terribile, perfino i suoi compagni si spaventarono.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 125

In *Il.* 19.357–383 the same simile introduces a longer and more detailed description of Achilles attiring himself:

ὡς δ' ὅτε ταρφειαὶ νιφάδες Διὸς ἐκποτέονται
ψυχραὶ ὑπὸ ῥιπῆς αἰθρηγενέος Βορέας,
ὡς τότε ταρφειαὶ κόρυθες λαμπρὸν γανώσσαι
νηῶν ἐκφορέοντο καὶ ἀσπίδες ὀμφαλδέσσαι

θώρηκές τε κραταιγύαλοι καὶ μείλινα δοῦρα.
 αἴγλη δ' οὐρανὸν ἴκε, γέλασσε δὲ πᾶσα περὶ χθῶν
 χαλκοῦ ὑπὸ στεροπῆς· ὑπὸ δὲ κτύπος ὄτρυνε ποσσὶν
 ἀνδρῶν· ἐν δὲ μέσοισι κορύσσετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
 τοῦ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν καναχὴ πέλε, τῷ δὲ οἱ ὄσσε
 λαμπέσθην ὡς εἴ τε πυρὸς σέλας, ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ
 δῦν' ἄχος ἄτλητον· ὁ δ' ἄρα Τρωσὶν μενεαίνων
 δύσσετο δῶρα θεοῦ, τὰ οἱ Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων.
 κνημίδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε
 καλὰς ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας·
 δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσιν ἔδυνεν.
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον
 χάλκεον· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε
 εἶλετο, τοῦ δ' ἀπάνευθε σέλας γένετ' ἠὔτε μήνης.
 ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἐκ πόντοιο σέλας ναύτησι φανήη
 καιομένοιο πυρός, τό τε καίεται ὑψόθ' ὄρεσφι
 σταθμῶ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ· τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι
 πόντον ἐπ' ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν·
 ὡς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος σάκεος σέλας αἰθέρ' ἴκανε
 καλοῦ δαιδαλέου· περὶ δὲ τρυφάλειαν αἰείρας
 κρατὶ θέτο βριαρῆν· ἢ δ' ἀστήρ ὡς ἀπέλαμπεν
 Ἴππουρις τρυφάλεια, περισσεύοντο δ' ἔθειραι
 χρύσειαι, ἃς Ἥφαιστος ἔει λόφον ἀμφὶ θαμειάς.

As when thick and fast the snowflakes flutter down from Zeus, chill beneath the blast of the North Wind, born in the bright heaven; even so then thick and fast from the ships were borne the helms, bright-gleaming, and the bossed shields, the corselets with massive plates, and the ashen spears. And the gleam thereof went up to heaven, and all the earth round about laughed by reason of the flashing of bronze; and there went up a din from beneath the feet of men; and in their midst goodly Achilles arrayed him for battle. There was a gnashing of his teeth, and his two eyes blazed as it had been a flame of fire, and into his heart there entered grief that might not be borne. Thus in fierce wrath against the Trojans he clad him in the gifts of the god, that Hephaestus had wrought for him with toil. The greaves first he set about his legs: beautiful they were, and fitted with silver ankle-pieces, and next he did on the corselet about his chest. And about his shoulders he cast the silver-studded sword of bronze, and thereafter grasped the shield great and sturdy, wherefrom went forth afar a gleam as of the moon. And as when forth over the sea there appeareth

to seamen the gleam of blazing fire, and it burneth high up in the mountains in a lonely steading—but sore against their will the storm-winds bear them over the teeming deep afar from their friends; even so from the shield of Achilles went up a gleam to heaven, from that shield fair and richly-dight. And he lifted the mighty helm and set it upon his head; and it shone as it were a star—the helm with crest of horse-hair, and around it waved the plumes of gold, that Hephaestus had set thick about the crest.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2, 363–365

Both in Laura's account and in the Homeric lines, the following introduces Automedon and the dialogue between Achilles and his horse:

Appena lo vide, Achille gli andò incontro come un leone affamato, che si batte colla coda i fianchi e la schiena, ha la bocca spalancata e la schiuma ai denti, e gli occhi brillano come due fiamme.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 126

Before confronting Aeneas, Achilles is described in *Il.* 20.164–175 as follows:

Πηλεΐδης δ' ἐτέρωθεν ἐναντίον ὦρτο λέων ὡς
 σίντης, ὃν τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀποκτάμεναι μεμάασιν
 ἀγρόμενοι πᾶς δῆμος· ὁ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν ἀτίζων
 ἔρχεται, ἀλλ' ὅτε κέν τις ἀρηϊθῶων αἰζηῶν
 δουρὶ βάλῃ ἐάλῃ τε χανῶν, περὶ τ' ἀφρὸς ὀδόντας
 γίγνεται, ἐν δὲ τέ οἱ κραδίη στένει ἄλκιμον ἦτορ,
 οὐρῇ δὲ πλευράς τε καὶ ἰσχία ἀμφοτέρωθεν
 μαστίεται, ἐὲ δ' αὐτὸν ἐποτρύνει μαχέσασθαι,
 γλαυκιῶν δ' ἰθὺς φέρεται μένει, ἦν τινα πέφνη
 ἀνδρῶν, ἣ αὐτὸς φθίεται πρώτῳ ἐν ὀμίλῳ·
 ὡς Ἀχιλῆ' ὄτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
 ἀντίον ἐλθέμεναι μεγάλῃτορος Αἰνείαο.

And on the other side the son of Peleus rushed against him like a lion, a ravening lion that men are fain to slay, even a whole folk that be gathered together; and he at the first recking naught of them goeth his way, but when one of the youths swift in battle hath smitten him with a spear-cast, then he gathereth himself open-mouthed, and foam cometh forth about his teeth, and in his heart his valiant spirit groaneth, and with his tail he lasheth his ribs and his flanks on this side and on that, and rouseth himself to fight, and with glaring eyes he rusheth straight on in his fury,

whether he slay some man or himself be slain in the foremost throng; even so was Achilles driven by his fury, and his lordly spirit to go forth to face great-hearted Aeneas.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2, 383

The following fight in Laura's account is also very close to the Homeric account:

Le parole uscivano dalla bocca del re di Itaca come i fiocchi di neve cadono dal cielo in una giornata d'inverno.⁴⁹

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 79

Laura describes the effect of Odysseus's words using the simile of *Il.* 3.221–223:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ὄπα τε μεγάλην ἐκ στήθεος εἶη
καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερήσιν,
οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆϊ γ' ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος.

But whenso he uttered his great voice from his chest, and words like snowflakes on a winter's day, then could no mortal man beside vie with Odysseus.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 1, 133

Paris and Helen have left Sparta and go fast to Troy by sea:

Le navi corsero veloci sul mare, e parevano gabbiani che volassero sulle onde.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 66

The comparison between speed and the flight of a bird is usual in the Homeric poems.⁵⁰ See for example *Od.* 11.124–125 and 23.271–272:

οὐδ' ἄρα τοὶ ἴσασι νέας φοινικοπαρήους,
οὐδ' εὐήρε' ἐρετμά, τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται.

And they know naught of ships with purple cheeks, or of shapely oars that are as wings unto ships.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Odyssey*, vol. 1, 409

49 "The words fell from his lips like snowflakes, dropping from heaven on a winter's day" (Orvieto, *Stories*, 92).

50 See Simonetta Nannini, *Analogia e polarità in similitudine. Paragoni iliadici e odissiaci a confronto* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2003), 57–58.

Menelaus remains alone and lies on his bed without weeping, without complaining, without saying a word, motionless as a young tree uprooted by a storm, and thrown to the ground:

Menelao rimase solo, gettato sul letto, senza piangere, senza lamentarsi, immobile, come un giovane e forte albero che la furia della tempesta abbia schiantato e gettato al suolo.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 74

Other heroes are compared to trees falling down when they are killed, e.g. in *Il.* 13.389–391 and 16.482–486:

ἤριπε δ' ὡς ὅτε τις δρῦς ἤριπεν ἢ ἀχερωῖς
ἢ ἐ πίτυς βλωθρή, τήν τ' οὔρεσι τέκτονες ἄνδρες
ἐξέταμον πελέκεσσι νήϊον εἶναι.

And he fell as an oak falls, or a poplar, or a tall pine, that among the mountains shipwrights fell with whetted axes to be a ship's timber.

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2, 31 and 201

and in *Il.* 14.414–418:

ὡς δ' ὅθ' ὑπὸ πληγῆς πατρὸς Διὸς ἐξερίπη δρῦς
πρόρριζος, δεινὴ δὲ θεεῖου γίγνεται ὀδμῆ
ἐξ αὐτῆς, τὸν δ' οὐ περ ἔχει θράσος ὅς κεν ἴδῃται
ἐγγὺς ἐών, χαλεπὸς δὲ Διὸς μέγαλοιο κεραυνός,
ὡς ἔπεσ' Ἐκτορος ὦκα χαμαὶ μένος ἐν κονίησι.

And even as when beneath the blast of father Zeus an oak falleth uprooted, and a dread reek of brimstone ariseth therefrom—then verily courage no longer possesseth him that looketh thereon and standeth near by, for dread is the bolt of great Zeus—even so fell mighty Hector forthwith to the ground in the dust.⁵¹

Trans. MURRAY, in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 2, 97

Laura's attention to the world of the Greek singers is obvious in her cameo of the singer:

Arrivato all'isola di Salamina, Paride Alessandro scese a terra, e per prima cosa volle visitare il tempio di Afrodite, di quella dea che egli aveva scelto

51 See also *ibid.*, 26–27.

come la più bella quando era soltanto un pastore e badava alle pecore sul monte Ida. S'avviò verso il tempio, e lungo il cammino sentì una musica. Un giovinetto biondo cantava accompagnandosi colla cetra: era un poeta, un aèdo, come lo chiamavano gli antichi Greci.

– Come hai detto? – domandò Leo.

– Un aèdo. Gli aèdi erano poeti e musicisti insieme: e andavano di città in città cantando canzoni e suonando la cetra.

– Come quelli che ora girano con l'organino?

– Press'a poco, ma gli aèdi cantavano cose belle. Cantavano belle storie di dèi e di principi e di eroi, e però erano accolti con festa nelle capanne dei poveri e nei palazzi dei re, e amati e onorati da tutti.

Paride, dunque, mentre dalla spiaggia andava verso il tempio di Afrodite, sentì un aèdo cantare. L'aèdo cantava così:

– Chi non ha visto Elena, la figlia di Zeus, la regina di Sparta? Chi non ha ammirato Elena, divina fra tutte le donne? Certo chi non ha visto Elena non sa che cosa sia la bellezza: certo chi non ha visto Elena non sa che cosa siano gioia e piacere. Elena dalla bianche braccia, Elena dagli occhi glauchi, Elena dai capelli color di fiamma, tu sei in tutto uguale alle dee immortali! Felice chi ti può mirare, felice l'uomo a cui tu sorridi! Il suo cuore si riempie di dolcezza e la sua anima si illumina di sole! –

[...] Sulla riva del mare l'aèdo cantava accompagnandosi colla cetra. Cantava così:

– Chi non ha visto Elena, la regina di Sparta, fior di bellezza? Elena dal dolce sorriso, Elena dal lungo velo? Cammina diritta e bianca fra le sue ancelle bianche, e sembra la luna che risplende nel cielo fra le stelle del cielo. Elena dalle bianche braccia, Elena dai capelli color del sole, Elena dagli occhi color del mare, tu sei in tutto uguale alle dee immortali! Felice chi ti può mirare, felice l'uomo a cui tu sorridi! Il suo cuore si riempie di dolcezza e la sua anima si illumina di gioia!

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 36–38

Laura's style in *Storie greche e barbare* shows a special taste for repetition and seems to develop its own "formulariness":

Una di loro aveva i capelli nerissimi e pareva che dirigesse il gioco: era Clitennestra, la figlia maggiore del re Tindaro. Un'altra se ne stava in disparte, intrecciando corone di croco per i suoi capelli d'oro: era Elena, la sorella di Clitennestra, bianca come un giglio e bella come il sole.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 52

Una di loro, cogli occhi e coi capelli neri, camminava avanti a tutte con passo sicuro: era Clitennestra, la figlia maggiore del re Tindaro. Un'altra, bianca come un giglio e splendente come il sole, portava una corona di croco sui capelli d'oro: era Elena, la più bella creatura che occhi umani avessero mai veduta.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 54

Alta e sottile, vestita di bianco, con un velo leggero sui capelli d'oro, col bellissimo viso un po' triste, entrava come una immagine di sogno la donna magnifica.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 64

Alta e sottile, vestita di bianco, cogli occhi color del mare e i capelli color del sole, pareva che Elena portasse con sé il sole, dovunque appariva.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 70

The end of one chapter runs as follows:

Elena ascoltava: una magia dolce, mandata da Afrodite, le faceva credere a tutte le parole del principe troiano, desiderare di star sempre con lui, sognare un mondo meraviglioso di amore e di gioia nella città lontana dove la nave li portava.

E la nave correva, veloce come il vento, portando Elena lontano, lontano, e sempre più lontano.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 68

The next chapter begins as follows:

Come un sorriso sul mare, Elena, la bella regina, andava lontano nel mare, accompagnata da Paride. Una magia di sogno, mandata da Afrodite, le faceva dimenticare le persone e le cose che aveva lasciato nel suo paese, e le impediva di pensare al dolore infinito che la sua colpa avrebbe portato a lei ed agli altri.

ORVIETO, *Storie greche e barbare*, 69

Such a feature may certainly belong to fairy tales, but since it is found in *Storie greche e barbare* more than in the other books, we are perhaps entitled to argue for the influence of Homer's diction and formulaic style.⁵²

⁵² See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 84–85.

At the very least, *Storie greche e barbare* betrays a good knowledge of ancient epic poetry. Laura's intention of making school subjects not boring but pleasant⁵³ reminds us to some extent of Angiolo's attitude, his intolerance of a boring—and philological—approach to the classical world. Nevertheless, in *Storie greche e barbare* Laura provides children with many details on several aspects of classical world and culture, always paying attention to their correct historicisation and inviting children to compare different behaviours and understand what is good and not good:

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 43: “– *Noi* non dobbiamo vendicarci, perché *noi* sappiamo che vendicarsi è una cosa molto brutta. Ma allora gli uomini non lo sapevano. Allora gli uomini erano peggiori di noi. Erano tutti un po' selvaggi, e gli antichi Greci, quantunque fossero il popolo più civile del mondo, credevano che la vendetta fosse una cosa bella”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 63: “Gli antichi Greci chiamavano barbari tutti quelli che non parlavano la loro lingua, e che si vestivano in modo diverso da loro”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 63–64: “[...] altri accompagnarono gli stranieri nella stanza del bagno. Perché devi sapere, Leo, che gli Elleni eran molto puliti, e quando arrivavano a casa impolverati, prima di ogni altra cosa si lavavano”;

53 In the interview given to Tonelli (“Laura Orvieto,” 129) she says: “Mi parve simpatico, dunque, parlar loro, invece che di maghi e di fate, di quei personaggi che avrebbero dovuto conoscere, prima o poi, nella scuola e nella vita; e senza annoiarli, anzi divertendoli, e magari entusiasmandoli.” Tonelli (*ibid.*, 130) comments: “[...] ella ha bisogno dello stimolo storico, come se propriamente non le riuscisse, o non le piacesse, inventare di sana pianta; ma, avuto lo stimolo, e trovato quasi lo schema narrativo, riesce a illuminare questo schema, a colorirlo, animarlo, trasfigurarlo, facendo qualcosa di nuovo e inconfondibile [...]. I personaggi storici, secondo i suoi intendimenti, esplicitamente confessati, non dovrebbero apparire, come generalmente appaiono nei libri di scuola, quasi figure cristallizzate e immobilizzate, che avessero perduto ogni movimento vitale, per assumere una determinata e convenzionale figura, ma bensì muoversi con le passioni multiformi di quando vivevano e operavano.” See also Naldi de Figner, *In memoria di Laura Orvieto*, 8–9: “Per i piccoli soltanto [...]? No. Nella fretta della vita presente anche un adulto non può che con vero diletto vedere balzar fuori da quelle pagine personaggi a lui noti i quali, alleggeriti e sciolti dalle pesanti notizie bibliografiche e dalle snervanti postille dei testi scolastici, appaiono sotto una luce nuova.” On the success of Laura's works at school, see Melosi, “Laura Orvieto,” 108; Del Vivo, “Altre *Storie del mondo*,” 567 n. 58; Cecconi, “La fortuna editoriale,” 81. On the importance of classical mythology at school in Italy between the 1920s and 1940s, see William Grandi, “La musa bambina: il mito nei libri italiani per ragazzi,” in *AA.VV.*, *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le “Storie del mondo”*, 163–164.

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 25 (referring to Paris): “Ma non aveva già sposato Enone? – Sì, ma allora gli uomini potevano avere più di una moglie”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 100: “Ma gli antichi non pensavano che questo fosse rubare: era diritto di un esercito prendersi la roba e le persone dei vinti. Paride aveva rubato al re Menelao perché gli aveva portato via Elena di nascosto, ma, secondo l’idea degli antichi, Achille non rubò niente affatto quando prese Briseide. A tutti pareva giusto che la bella giovinetta toccasse a lui, e anche a Briseide pareva giusto, sebbene fosse molto dispiacente di diventare schiava. Devi pensare, Leo, che allora gli uomini erano un po’ selvaggi, e credevano di avere il diritto di trattare gli schiavi come adesso noi non si tratterebbero nemmeno le bestie”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 101: “Sì; anche ora, qualche volta, si bruciano i morti, ma in modo molto meno bello. Allora si bruciavano all’aria aperta, sopra un mucchio di legna, e le ceneri dell’uomo e quelle della legna si mescolavano. Ora i morti si mettono in una specie di forno per bruciarli, e si fa tutto il possibile perché le loro ceneri rimangano separate”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 103: “[...] mandò due araldi. – Che cosa sono? – domandò la Lia. – Invece dei giornali c’erano questi uomini che gridavano le cose – rispose Leo”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 120: “Gli antichi non sopportavano il dolore senza piangere, anzi i più forti urlavano più degli altri. E anche Achille piangeva, prendendo da terra manate di polvere che si gettava sulla testa, sul viso e sui vestiti, e strappandosi i capelli”;

Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 132 (referring to Greeks outraging Hector’s corpse): “– Era una brutta cosa quella che facevano – disse Leo. – Era brutta, ma agli antichi non pareva. E anche Achille, il più nobile di tutti, fece una cosa che nessun eroe farebbe oggi.”

Such passages not only reveal how modern Laura’s educational idea is, implying a deep, thoughtful, and critical or rather “active” reading, through which the reader is stimulated to ask questions and to think independently,⁵⁴ but

54 See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 82–83; Oreste Del Buono, “A Micene c’era una volta un orco,” *Rinascita* 27 (July 7, 1984): 32. As Gori, *Crisalidi*, 124–125, observes, “[...] il ribaltamento del principio di autorità portava Laura Orvieto a credere che l’educazione non dovesse impartirsi attraverso l’imposizione di norme e divieti ma, viceversa, offrendo stimoli continui, per formare il carattere, le idee e i modelli di comportamento”; on Laura’s ideas about education, which were close to Montessori’s methods, see Gori, *Crisalidi*, 132–133; eadem, “Laura Orvieto: un’intellettuale del Novecento,” *Genesis* 3/2 (2004): 183–203. Perugia, “Poesia e bontà,” 12, defines Laura as “l’educatrice garbata che insegna ad essere contenti e sereni ed a scoprire la ricca meravigliosa varietà della vita”; see also Mario Gastaldi, *Donne*

they also reveal Laura's own investigation of the ancient world and its customs. After all, Angiolo's classicism hesitated between Vitelli's philology and Romagnoli's "antiphilologism,"⁵⁵ and Laura may have shared his ambivalence.

However, she was able to find her personal and unique way to classical myth. She stresses its fairy-tale aspects, often introducing her stories with a typical fairy-tale opening such as "once upon a time."⁵⁶ At the same time, she

luce d'Italia (Pistoia: Grazzini, 1930), 461. In Laura's idea of education books played a central role: therefore she supported the institution of the so-called "bibliothecine," small collections of books bought by generous women for children of the working class (see, e.g., Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura*, 242 n. 7; Pacini, "Il giornalismo di Laura Orvieto," 119 n. 41). She wrote in *Il Marzocco* 13/6 (Feb. 9, 1908): 1: "[...] educazione e cultura, perché soltanto una maggior diffusione di buoni libri può innalzare il livello morale e intellettuale degli uomini, perché soltanto dopo un diligente esame si possono dare libri che facciano bene e non male, e perché una parola può talvolta gettare nell'anima di un bimbo una luce che ne illumini tutta la vita"; these books have to be "capaci di divertire i piccoli lettori, di incatenarne l'attenzione, di educarne i sentimenti, di formarne il carattere." On Laura's opinions about children's literature, see Gori, *Crisalidi*, 65–66; and Caterina Del Vivo, "Libri dietro i libri. Laura Orvieto, «Il Marzocco», la biblioteca di Leo e Lia, e le «Storie del mondo»,» *Antologia Vieusseux* N.S. 19/57 (September–December 2013): 93–122.

55 As Raicich, "Suggerimenti per la ricerca," 247–248, observes: "[...] da un lato si favorisce la seria filologia di Girolamo Vitelli, la ricerca di papiri e dunque quel suo modo di leggere i greci che troverà poi ammiratori come De Robertis e Cecchi, un modo lindo e rigoroso. D'altra parte [...], viene favorita anche una divulgazione di tutt'altro aspetto, indulgente a fantasiose ricostruzioni, a traduzioni tra carducciane e dannunziane, ai gusti insomma di Ettore Romagnoli, così sprezzante verso la filologia vitelliana di marca teutonica e arida. Dal romagnolismo, combinato con il clima dei salotti fiorentini, si giunge [...] agli spettacoli fiesolani con quel *menu* classicheggiante e nello stesso tempo salottiero che così bene rappresenta l'impasto di classicismo e di *belle époque* [...]. Ma gli Orvieto [...] si muovevano senza troppi disagi tra filologi ed esteti, servendo gli uni e gli altri." Angiolo Orvieto, immediately after the discovery of *PSI* 1X 1090 with Erinna's lines, wrote "Erinna e Bauci. Una poetessa diciannovenne di 23 secoli fa," *Il Marzocco* 34/8 (Feb. 24, 1929): 1: "[...] se con un po' di fantasia—stimolata anche dalle ingegnose integrazioni ed ipotesi del Vitelli e della sua eccellente discepola Medea Norsa—arriveremo non dico a ricostruire ma a supporre qualche parte del poemetto, che male ci sarà?" On Romagnoli and his *philologia delenda*, see Enzo Degani, "Ettore Romagnoli," in AA.VV., *Letteratura italiana. I Critici*, vol. 2 (Milano: Marzorati, 1968), 1431–1448 and 1459–1461 (= Maria Grazia Albiani et al., eds., *Filologia e storia. Scritti di Enzo Degani*, 2 vols., Hildesheim–Zürich–New York: Olms, 2004, vol. 2, 937–957); and Neri, "«Il greco ai giorni nostri»,» 128–133.

56 Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 7: "Molti e molti anni fa c'era nell'Asia, vicino al mare, una città che si chiamava Troia"; *ibid.*, 15: "C'era una volta un re che si chiamava Priamo ed era re di Troia"; *ibid.*, 41: "Negli antichissimi tempi, in un antichissimo paese, vivevano due fratelli. Uno si chiamava Tieste, e l'altro, che aveva sposato la figlia di un re, si chiamava Atreo"; *ibid.*, 45: "Molti anni fa, in un'alba d'autunno tutta scintillante di rugiada, due giovinetti camminavano in silenzio per una stretta e sassosa strada di montagna. Parevano fratelli ed erano infatti; biondi e belli tutti e due, col viso pallido e triste e gli occhi pieni di lagrime. Andavano

casts a fresh light on the everyday aspects of the ancient stories, making them even more familiar to children.⁵⁷

Laura's ancient world, while very different from the present time,⁵⁸ is not idealised. Even in *Storie di bambini* her presentation of Classical Antiquity could not be further from Fascist propaganda, which used the Roman past to foster insane delusions of grandeur: while reducing classical myths to a size suitable for children, her good sense also provides adults with an alternative approach to ancient world, one flavoured with humour.⁵⁹ While avoiding the horrors of war and gory excess in her narrative,⁶⁰ she also avoids sentimentality.⁶¹ Laura's

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- soli per la montagna, ma non erano coperti di grosse tuniche di lana come i montanari di quel tempo: le loro tuniche bianche brillavano di ricami d'oro, e i loro sandali ben fatti erano ornati d'oro come quelli dei re"; *ibid.*, 61: "Molti e molti anni fa vivevano nella città di Sparta un re, una regina e una principessa. La regina si chiamava Elena, il re, Menelao, e la principessa, Ermione. Ermione era la bimba più graziosa che si potesse immaginare, bionda e bianca, cogli occhi celesti e la bocca che pareva una fragola." On the fairy-tale accents of Laura's narrative, see, e.g., Perugia, "Poesia e bontà," 10; Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura*, 245 n. 25.
- 57 "Vivevano nel palazzo di Atreo tre figli di Tieste; due bimbi e una bambina. Erano cresciuti insieme coi figli d'Atreo; insieme facevano il chiasso giocando a rincorrersi, a rimpattino, alla palla" (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, 41). Note that "fare il chiasso" is one of Laura's *Lieblingswörter*. See also Franco Cambi, "La classicità spiegata ai bambini in *Storie della storia del mondo*," in AA.VV., *Laura Orvieto: la voglia di raccontare le "Storie del mondo"*, 37–38.
- 58 Also the narrative frame of *Storie greche e barbare*—a mother/Laura who tells stories to her children Leo and Lia—helps to go back and forth between the present and the past: see Del Vivo, "Educare narrando 'storie,'" 169; Perugia, "Poesia e bontà," 9. Unfortunately, the English translation (Orvieto, *Stories*) omits this frame completely.
- 59 Del Buono, "A Micene c'era una volta un orco," 32, suggests: "*Storie della storia del mondo* è un bel libro anche e forse soprattutto per gli adulti. Portatelo via ai vostri bambini dagli 8 ai 10 anni!" See Gastaldi, *Donne luce d'Italia*, 462 and 464; on Laura's irony, especially in *Storie di bambini*, see Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 44 and 89–95. On Laura's writing and Fascism, see Naldi de Figner, *In memoria di Laura Orvieto*, 10; Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 43 and 117; Boero–De Luca, *La letteratura per l'infanzia*, 155; Gori, "Laura Orvieto: un'intellettuale del Novecento," 183–203; Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura*, 247–248, 250 n. 51, 267; Del Vivo, "Educare narrando 'storie,'" 169–170. On censorship, see Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura*, 246 and 313; Del Vivo, "Altre *Storie del mondo*," 565–566; eadem, "Educare narrando 'storie,'" 154ff. Laura appears in the list of the authors unwelcome in Italy in 1939, and definitely from 1942: see Giorgio Fabre, *L'elenco. Censura fascista, editoria e autori ebrei* (Torino: Zamorani, 1998), 451 and 479. *Il Marzocco* folded in 1932, when its editors were invited to work for the regime (see Del Vivo, "La donazione Orvieto," 378).
- 60 See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 77–78; Fava, *Percorsi critici di letteratura*, 245; Grandi, *La Musa bambina. La letteratura mitologica*, 59–60. See also the next section on Laura's workplace and the unpublished *Storia del principe Agamennone e della principessa Clitennestra* (see below, *Appendix*).
- 61 See Del Buono, "A Micene c'era una volta un orco," 32: "[...] storie vibranti ed essenziali, magari dominate da sensualità smodate e crudeltà inammissibili, ma comunque non contagiabili dai sentimentalismi."

interest in the historical reality of the ancient world no doubt contributed to this attitude.

Laura's Workplace and Girolamo Vitelli

The papers of the "Fondo Orvieto" (ACGV, Florence) cast light on Laura's work process, in particular with regard to her treatment of mythical subjects: Or. 5.5.1 includes a manuscript of *Storie greche e barbare* dating, according to the inventory drawn up by Caterina Del Vivo, to 1910–1911, very close to the publication date. This manuscript version differs from the published text: the titles of three chapters are slightly different from those published⁶² and the manuscript includes a chapter that was not published (*Storia del principe Agamennone e della principessa Clitennestra*). This chapter was certainly excluded from the published version because of the bloody and crude violence of the story: Agamemnon's behaviour is brutal, especially in killing the baby, and Tantalus's head being chopped off is not a picture suitable for children.⁶³ On the verso of fol. 17 the following comment is added:

Non so chi altro racconti di questa uccisione del bambino, senza attingere ad Euripide (Ifigenia in Aulide v. 1151); e in Euripide è detto, a quanto sembra, che Agamennone uccise il bambino sbatacchiandolo a terra (non contro le pareti).

This is similar to a few comments written on the verso of the other sheets of the same file by a hand different from Laura's. These notes can be classified as follows: (a) narrative additions; (b) comments on myths and their tradition; (c) lexical suggestions. (In the following transcription of the notes, E = Editor, L = Laura.) Most of them are narrative additions: they are accepted by Laura only in a very reduced form.

62 *Storia di Paride*, instead of the published *Storia di Paride e delle feste di Troia; Seguito della storia di Agamennone e Menelao*, instead of *Continua la storia di Agamennone e Menelao; Storia di un finto pazzo e di una finta donna*, instead of *Storia di un finto pazzo; Storia del ritorno di Achille alla guerra*, instead of *Come Achille tornò a combattere*. The first chapter of the book (*Storia della città di Troia e del re Laomedonte*) is missing, but its first sheet can be found in ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.7.3 (unnumbered).

63 The text is published in the *Appendix* at the end of this chapter.

a) *Narrative Additions*

Storia di Paride, di Enone e della mela d'oro
(ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 3)

fol. 1v: “– Come? interrompe la Lia – il dio del mare porta dei cavalli? – Sicuro; forse avevo dimenticato di dirvi che Posidone era anche dio dei cavalli. Posidone, dunque, condusse con sé sue magnifici cavalli ecc.” E

fol. 4v: “figlio di Afrodite: Eros significa proprio amore, e si capisce che anche lui, come sua madre, era dio dell'amore” E

fol. 5v: “era Eris, che vuol dire Discordia, tutt'il contrario di Eros—una dea in somma ecc.” E

fol. 12v: “– Ma il figlio di Priamo si chiamava Paride, osservò Leo. – È vero: non avevo pensato a dirvi che aveva due nomi, Paride e Alessandro... In somma, quel bellissimo giovane giudicherà ecc.” E

Storia del principe Paride e della regina Elena (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 10)

fol. 5v: “Dall'Asia era andato a Salamina e di là veniva ora a Sparta. (Altrimenti può esservi il malinteso che Salamina non sia nell'Ellade)” E

Storia del ritorno di Achille alla guerra
(ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 19)

fol. 18v: “e dieci talenti d'oro. Talent? disse Leo. – Già, talenti. Allora non c'erano le monete coniate, e l'oro e l'argento si davano a peso; e si chiamava talento il peso non so bene di quanti chilogrammi, parecchi di certo. Così, dunque, la pace fu fatta, etc.” E

Storia di Paride, di Enone e della mela d'oro (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 3)

p. 21: “Poseidone, dio del mare e dei cavalli, condusse con sé due magnifici cavalli fatati”

p. 22: “figlio di Afrodite e, come sua madre, dio dell'amore”

p. 22: “era Eris, la Discordia; una dea”

p. 24: “Paride Alessandro giudicherà”

Storia del principe Paride e della regina Elena (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 10)

p. 62: “Era venuto colle sue navi da Salamina”

Come Achille tornò a combattere
(Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 19)

p. 122: “e dieci enormi monete d'oro. E la pace fu fatta”

Laura avoided the learned, sometimes heavy additions made by an editor who certainly knew Greek and classical culture very well, but ignored the lightness and special touch of Laura's narrative. On the other hand, Laura paid much attention to the editor's comments on myths and their traditions, following such suggestions carefully:

b) *Comments on Myths and Their Tradition*

<p><i>Storia di Paride</i> (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 4)</p> <p>fol. 7v: "Crederei preferibile l'altra forma della leggenda. Ed Enone sarebbe corsa a salvarlo, se suo padre non l'avesse a forza trattenuta. Quando poté arrivare al suo Paride, egli era già morto" E</p> <p><i>Seguito della storia di Agamennone e Menelao</i> (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 8)</p> <p>fol. 6v: "C'è un Timandro figliuolo di Tindaro? Che io sappia, era una <u>Timandra</u>. Abbia la bontà di riscontrare" E</p> <p>fol. 7r (in the text): "con lui uscirono i suoi figli: <u>Timandro</u>, Castore e Polluce" ("Polideuca" is written above "Polluce") L</p> <p><i>Storia della principessa Ifigenia</i> (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 15)</p> <p>fol. 28v: "<u>Tauride</u> è un malinteso moderno (non modernissimo però) dal greco Ἰφιγένεια ἢ ἐν Ταύροις##### [e dal latino <u>Iphigenia in Tauris</u>], cioè 'Ifigenia fra i Ταῦροι'. C'è il popolo dei <u>Tauri</u>, ma non il paese Tauris (Tauride). Dica dunque 'nel paese dei Tauri' 'in un paese i cui abitan o qualcosa di simile" E</p> <p>fol. 29r (in the text): "in un paese lontano che si chiamava Tauride" is corrected into "nel paese dei Tauri" L</p>	<p><i>Storia di Paride e delle feste di Troia</i> (Orvieto, <i>Storie greche e barbare</i>, Ch. 4)</p> <p>p. 28: "e Enone sarebbe corsa a salvarlo se suo padre non l'avesse a forza trattenuta. Quando poté arrivare al suo Paride, era troppo tardi. Paride giaceva morto"</p> <p><i>Continua la storia di Agamennone e Menelao</i> (Orvieto, <i>Storie greche e barbare</i>, Ch. 8)</p> <p>p. 52: "con lui uscirono i suoi figli Castore e Polideuca"</p> <p><i>Storia della principessa Ifigenia</i> (Orvieto, <i>Storie greche e barbare</i>, Ch. 15)</p> <p>pp. 96 and 97: "nel paese dei Tauri"</p>
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fol. 32r (in the text): “a Tauride” is corrected into “nel paese dei Tauri” written above L

Storia di due re e di due schiave (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 16)

fol. 1v: “Forse converrebbe non compromettersi, ed adoperare espressioni tali da non dar come sicuro che Briseide e Criseide furono tutte e due fatte schiave nella stessa occasione etc.” E

fol. 2r (in the text): “ma ad Agamennone e ad Achille, che aveva combattuto meglio di tutti, toccavano le due donne più belle della città vinta. Le [fol. 3r] più belle erano Briseide e Criseide, due giovinette dalle guance rosee e dagli occhi lucenti” is corrected into “ma ai re e ai generali toccavano le donne più belle e gli oggetti più preziosi. Achille fra le altre cose ebbe una giovinetta bellissima che si chiamava Briseide. Agamennone ebbe una giovinetta bellissima, dalle guance rosee e dagli occhi lucenti, che si chiamava Criseide” L

Storia di due re e di due schiave (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 16)

pp. 99–100: “ma ai re e ai generali toccarono le donne più belle e gli oggetti più preziosi. Achille fra le altre cose ebbe una giovinetta bellissima, dalle guance rosee e dagli occhi lucenti, che si chiamava Briseide. E Agamennone ebbe una giovinetta bellissima dalle guance rosee e dagli occhi lucenti che si chiamava Criseide”

Finally, corrections of personal names, such as “Polideuche” instead of “Polluce” and “Xanto” instead of “Csanto,” reveal that Laura wanted to adopt the forms closest to Greek; she also accepted a suggestion concerning word choice:

c) *Lexical Suggestions*

Seguito della storia di Agamennone e Menelao (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 8)

fol. 6v: “(Il nome greco di Polluce è Polydeukes)” E

fol. 7r (in the text): “con lui uscirono i suoi figli: ~~Timandro~~, Castore e Polluce” (“Polideuche” is written above “Polluce”) L

Continua la storia di Agamennone e Menelao (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 8)

p. 52: “con lui uscirono i suoi figli Castore e Polideuche”

Storia del principe Paride e della regina Elena (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 10)

fol. 15v: “questo ‘terribilmente’ mi sa troppo di tedesco e forse non è molto adatto al tono di stile di questi ‘märchen’ italiani” E

fol. 16r (in the text): “Elena somigliava **terribilmente** alle dee immortali”; and “veramente” is written above “**terribilmente**” L

fol. 25v: “Non so perché l’accento Astioché (In francese si capisce, ma in italiano sarebbe falso)” E

fol. 26r (in the text): “Astioché chiamò le altre ancelle, e raccontò quello che era successo. E tutte piansero e gridarono, svegliarono i cittadini e i soldati”

Storia di Achille, di Enea e di Ettore (ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 20)

fol. 2v: “scriverei Xanto” E (in the text Laura had written Csanto first, then corrected it to Xanto)

Storia del principe Paride e della regina Elena (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 10)

p. 64: “Elena somigliava veramente alle dee immortali”

p. 66–67: “Climene chiamò le tre ancelle e raccontò quello che era accaduto. E tutte piansero e gridarono, svegliarono i cittadini e i soldati”

Storia di Achille, di Enea e di Ettore (Orvieto, *Storie greche e barbare*, Ch. 20)

pp. 125, 126, 128: “Xanto”

These notes are evidence of an attentive reading by someone who was close to Laura and knew Greek and classical culture very well, since she took these suggestions to heart: she did ask for more information about myths and their details and was concerned with their exactness, but felt free to decide what suggestions to accept.

Who was this mysterious editor? A comparison with other handwritten documents preserved in the Fondo Orvieto reveals that this fine handwriting belonged to Girolamo Vitelli, who was a close friend of Angiolo’s and Laura’s throughout their life.⁶⁴ Further proofs for this ascription are given by two short

64 Vitelli’s letters to the family are preserved at ACGV, Florence, Or. 1.2485.1–118. A complete edition of these letters by Diletta Minutoli is forthcoming in the collection “Carteggi di filologi” to be published by the Dipartimento di Civiltà Antiche e Moderne of the University of Messina. On Vitelli’s relationship with Adolfo and Angiolo Orvieto and his collaboration to *Il Marzocco*, see Minutoli, “Il carteggio Orvieto–Vitelli,” 322–336.

letters sent by Vitelli to Laura in 1910, preserved at ACGV, Florence, as part of the Fondo Orvieto (Or. 1.2485.40 and Or. 1.2485.42 respectively). Their texts are the following:⁶⁵

Firenze 23.1.'910

Preg.ma Signora

Ho ricevuto il manoscritto, che leggerò molto volentieri. Ma Ella dovrà darmi un po' di tempo, perché appunto in questi giorni ho altro da fare, e non posso differire. Spero di poterle rimandare il manoscritto a principio della prossima settimana. Mi perdoni, se non⁶⁶ farò più presto: gli è che non posso proprio. Ho lette alcune pagine: mi paiono | addirittura 'deliziose'. Capirà, quindi, l'interesse mio di poterle suggerire qui un ma invece di però, e altrove un benone invece di bene.⁶⁷ Così un po' di merito di quelle 'delizie' toccherà anche a me.

Mi ricordi ad Angiolo ed Ella mi creda

Suo Dev.mo

G. Vitelli

Firenze 11 Dic. '910

Preg.ma Signora

Grazie del Suo bel libro. Ne ho rilette alcune pagine, con vero piacere: e m'immagino l'entusiasmo con cui lo leggeranno i piccoli lettori ai quali è destinato. I miei nipotini non sanno, pur troppo, ancora leggere: serbo ad essi, per un avvenire sperabilmente non | troppo lontano, le Sue "Storie della Storia", e son sicuro di tenere in serbo per essi un prezioso regalo. Mi auguro che il Suo esempio abbia molti imitatori—dato e non concesso che molti vi sieno capaci di imitar... bene!

Mi ricordi a Suo marito, e non Le rincresca di credermi sempre

Suo Dev.mo

G. Vitelli

65 In the transcription the sign | indicates the end of a page and the passage from the *recto* to the *verso* of the cards. These letters—mentioned by Minutoli ("Il carteggio Orvieto-Vitelli," 324 n. 4)—are unpublished: I thank Diletta Minutoli for allowing me to publish these texts, which will be included in the complete edition of Vitelli's letters to the Orvieto family.

66 The word *non* is added *supra lineam*.

67 Underlined by Vitelli.

The date of the first letter, the allusion to a manuscript that Vitelli intends to read soon (“Spero di poterle rimandare il manoscritto a principio della prossima settimana”), and the verb “rilette” (“reread”) in the second letter, referring to *Storie greche e barbare*, all this suggests that Vitelli had read and commented on Laura’s *Storie greche e barbare* before publication (“Così un po’ di merito di quelle ‘delizie’ toccherà anche a me”). Furthermore, the second letter proves that this book came out at the end of 1910, rather than in 1911 as the date printed on the book itself indicates.⁶⁸ The manuscript of the *Storie greche e barbare* can thus be reasonably dated before January 23, 1910.

The letters published above are the sole letters addressed to Laura by Vitelli and preserved at the ACGV. Vitelli sent two postcards explicitly to Angiolo and Laura.⁶⁹ Even when Vitelli wrote only to Angelo, however, he never failed to mention Laura and to send his greetings to her.⁷⁰ It should therefore come as no surprise that Vitelli was asked to read Laura’s first writing on classical mythology before publication. We should also acknowledge Laura’s attention to the historical and philological exactness of her stories and admit that, within such a context, her sources to classical myth had to be more varied than they were supposed to be.

Unfortunately, no manuscript of *Storie di bambini* survives. This book is different from *Storie greche e barbare* for several reasons. As Poesio pointed out,⁷¹ it shares with *Storie greche e barbare* its felicitous style and careful delineation of characters; Laura provides detailed information about customs and life in Classical Antiquity less often than in *Storie greche e barbare*, because these are stories of gods and semi-divine heroes, out of time and place.⁷² However, the

68 See above n. 30.

69 ACGV, Florence, Or. 1.2485.101 (a black and white postcard with a view of Colle Isarco) and ACGV, Florence, Or. 1.2485.102 (a black and white postcard with a view of “Passo Brennero m. 1370: Limite col Cippo di Confine”) will be published in Diletta Minutoli’s edition of Vitelli’s letters to the Orvieto family.

70 See Diletta Minutoli and Rosario Pintaudi, “Medea Norsa ed Angiolo Orvieto,” *Analecta papyrologica* 12 (2000): 302–370; and Minutoli, “Il carteggio Orvieto–Vitelli,” 322–336. Vitelli’s letters preserved in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, do not include any from Laura: I owe this information to the courtesy of Giovanna Rao (keeper of the section “Manoscritti, Rari e Tutela”).

71 *Laura Orvieto*, 98–101.

72 Poesio’s judgement is too sharp in this respect (*Laura Orvieto*, 98): “[...] un certo scaldamento rappresentato, in qualche parte, da un’eccessiva insistenza sul tono colloquiale e da un voluto rifuggire da precisazioni storico-geografiche, così come una certa negligenza—sempre voluta—di documentazione, allo scopo, forse, di sottolineare la familiarità del dialogo col lettore, col proposito, insomma, di dimettere l’abito da cerimonia.”

systematic attention paid in providing both the Greek and the Latin names of gods and heroes reveals the same care in giving complete and careful information on classical myths to children as in *Storie greche e barbare*.⁷³ Furthermore, a comparison between the myths collected in *Storie di bambini* and those told by Hawthorne, Kingsley, and Lang shows that Laura's selection is broader than theirs.

A Weekly Journal for Children: *La Settimana dei Ragazzi*

Laura's last project, the weekly journal *La Settimana dei Ragazzi*,⁷⁴ which she edited from 1945 until early 1948,⁷⁵ also reflected her interest in Classical Antiquity. Various references to the classical world come up here and there in this publication. A survey of the whole series under her direction allowed me to collect four kinds of texts concerning the Graeco-Roman heritage.

1. Short historical and informative notices concerning people (Loc.,⁷⁶ "Carneade, chi era costui?" *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 11/35, Sept. 1, 1946, p. 2), monuments, and places (Loc., "Che cos'è la via Appia?" *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/28, July 13, 1947, p. 6), customs (anon., "La prima lettera postale," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 1/10, June 2, 1945, p. 2). The anonymous piece on the first postal letter is particularly interesting, because it gives a description and a proper Italian translation of one of the oldest preserved Greek private letters, engraved on both sides of a lead tablet, found in Athens, published in 1897 and dating from the end of the fifth or the fourth century BC, and kept in Berlin.⁷⁷ In Wilhelm Dittenberger's edition—*Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Hirzel, 3^a1920), 385–386, no. 1259—the inside text runs as follows:

73 Note also that Laura prints the names of some gods and heroes with the correct accent: e.g., "Prosèrpina," "Pèrseo." The case of "Pèrseo" is particularly interesting because this accent is rather unusual in Italian, but it is the usual (and correct) accent among classicists.

74 See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 121–123.

75 The issue of January 11, 1948 was still edited by Laura; the first issue of February 1948 was edited by Giuseppe Fanciulli: Caterina Del Vivo kindly gave me this information. See also Del Vivo, "Laura Orvieto: per una biografia," 22 n. 58; and Pacini, "Il giornalismo di Laura Orvieto," 122–126.

76 I could not identify "Loc."

77 See also Federica Cordano, "Le missive private dei Greci nel V secolo a.C.," *Acme* 58 (2005): 43; further bibliography in Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*, with the collaboration of Daniel P. Bailey (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 19 n. 5.

Μνησίεργος | ἐπέστειλε τοῖς οἴκοι | χαίρεν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν· | καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως
ἔφασ[κε] [ἔχεν] | στέγασμα, εἴ τι βόλεσθε, | ἀποπέμψαι ἢ ὤας ἢ διφθέρας ὡς
εὐτελεστά(τα)ς καὶ μὴ σισυρωτάς | καὶ κατύματα: τυχὸν ἀποδώσω.

Mnesiergos sends to the people at home (his instructions for them) to rejoice and to be healthy and says it to be so also with him. Dispatch a covering, if you please, sheepskins or goatskins, the cheapest possible and not shaped into cloaks, and shoe-soles; I will make a return when I get the chance.

Trans. HANS-JOSEF KLAUCK, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 19

The outside address runs as follows:

φέρειν ἰς τὸν κέραμ|ον τὸ γ χυτρίκον, | ἀποδοῖναι δὲ Ναυσίαι | ἢ Θρασυκλήι ἢ
θυίῳι.

Take to the earthenware pottery and give to Nausias or Thrasykles or his son.

Trans. KLAUCK, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament*, 19

The text published in *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* is the following:

La prima lettera postale

La lettera postale non è un'invenzione moderna. Sembra che la prima lettera sia stata scoperta da uno studioso in Grecia ed è un documento molto curioso. Si tratta di una sottile laminetta di piombo piegata in due. Sopra una delle facce si legge inciso il seguente indirizzo: "Da portare al Mercato delle Ceramiche e da rimettere a Nausias oppure a Trasicles padre e figlio". Sull'altra faccia si legge: "Mnesiergos invia saluti ed auguri di buona salute a tutti quelli della famiglia e annunzia loro che egli sta bene. Gli fareste piacere inviando una coperta a due pelli di montone (oggi si direbbe a due piazze) ma di genere ordinario e senza guarnizioni di pelliccia. Avrei anche bisogno di due suola forti. Appena avrò il modo ve le restituirò".

2. Short stories signed by authors other than Laura: Angelica Marrucchi, "La cicala, la formica e l'ape," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 11/32, Aug. 11, 1946, p. 3; Ester Maugini, "Orfeo ed Euridice," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 11/47, Nov. 24, 1946, p. 3; Gabriella Neri, "Fabio e la Dea Fortuna," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 1/37, Dec. 9, 1945, p. 6, and "Il sorcio compito e quello rustico," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi*

1/38, Dec. 16, 1945, p. 6; Angiolo Orvieto, "Il pastore e la zanzara," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 11/37, Sept. 15, 1946, p. 3 (Angiolo appears as the translator of the pseudo-Virgilian poem *Culex*).

3. Very short stories not signed, mainly taken from Aesop's fables: "La vecchia e il medico," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 11/28, July 14, 1946, p. 2; "La rana invidiosa," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/25, June 22, 1947, p. 3; "Il Cervo che si specchia," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/33, Aug. 17, 1947, p. 5; "La gatta morta," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/38, Sept. 21, 1947, p. 6; "La signora Fortuna," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/39, Sept. 28, 1947, p. 6; but see also anon., "Gli occhi, il naso, la bocca, gli orecchi e i diti," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 1/22, Aug. 26, 1945, p. 3; and [AA.VV.], "Discordie," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 1/31, Oct. 28, 1945, p. 3, on the same subject, which is the well-known fable on the human body and its parts (see Aesop's *The Belly and the Members* and Menenius Agrippa's speech in Liv. 2.32, a fable included in Orvieto, *Leo e Lia*, pp. 79–83, as *Siamo tutti servitori*).

4. One story signed by Laura: "Storia di Ercole e di Filottete," *La Settimana dei Ragazzi* 111/7, Feb. 16, 1947, p. 3. This is essentially the last piece of the *Storie greche e barbare*, on the basis of both its subject and the structure; moreover, one can see some continuity in Laura's interest in Hercules' character from *Leo e Lia* (see above, n. 31) and from *Storie di bambini* (*Storia di un bambino che si chiamava Eracle e si chiamava anche Ercole*, 113–130) to this journal.

Laura's Projects

Laura died in Florence on May 9, 1953, leaving some projects unfinished.⁷⁸ Some of them concern, once again, Classical Antiquity. Several unpublished writings are preserved at ACGV, Florence, as Or. 5.5.2 (manuscript copies) and Or. 5.5.3 (typed copies): in addition to stories such as "Teseo e sua moglie," "La venditrice di corone e l'operaio del palazzo," "Le due montagne," and "La storia del gigante," some manuscript sheets contain an unpublished translation of the Greek text of the *Life of Homer* falsely attributed to Herodotus. The translation preserves many Greek sentences from the original text, often within brackets, to explain or justify the given translation: although his handwriting

⁷⁸ See Poesio, *Laura Orvieto*, 33. In the interview given to Tonelli ("Laura Orvieto," 129), probably referring to *La forza*, Laura says: "Che cosa scrivo ora? Sto terminando di correggere un nuovo libro per ragazzi, che dovrebbe servire d'introduzione a una Vita di Virgilio: un libro che, seguendo il metodo dei due precedenti, narra la storia di Roma prima dell'Impero, anzi, prima dello sbalzo di Cesare e della democrazia imperiale."

tended to become increasingly similar to Laura's, this translator can be recognised as Angiolo.⁷⁹

A close collaboration between Laura and Angiolo is attested in the first decade of the twentieth century, when Laura wrote the unaccomplished novel *Leone da Rimini*:⁸⁰ at least some parts of the text betray both Laura's and Angiolo's hands, especially when Jewish customs and rituals are described in detail. In other words, Laura and Angiolo's perfect communion involved writing, too.

The manuscripts mentioned above suggest that Laura's creative writing on classical material could take the translation of an ancient text as its starting point: such a work process casts new light on Laura's attitude to ancient literature and culture and—most important—on her writings concerning the classical world.

Appendix: One More *storia della storia del mondo*

^[1r] *Storia del principe Agamennone e della principessa Clitennestra*⁸¹

Oggi bisogna raccontare la storia di una principessa che aveva i capelli neri e gli occhi neri e fu prima buona e poi cattiva. Era figlia del re di Sparta e si chiamava Clitennestra: era bella, ma aveva una sorella più bella di lei, che si chiamava Elena. Elena e Clitennestra stavano sempre insieme. Insieme facevano il chiasso e insieme filavano la lana: insieme lavavano i ve^[2r]stuti del re nel fiume e insieme tessevano la tela. Ma un giorno un principe che veniva da Micene vide la principessa Clitennestra, la domandò in moglie e l'ebbe.

Così la principessa Clitennestra lasciò la sua madre Leda, il suo padre Tindaro, la sua sorella Elena, i suoi fratelli Castore e Polluce e Timandro,⁸² per andare a Micene col principe Tantalò. Da principio non voleva molto bene al suo marito...

79 A comparison with Angiolo's handwriting reveals some significant similarities; such similarities can be detected also in the Greek texts written by Angiolo in his "tesi di laurea" (ACGV, Florence, Or. 4.10.1).

80 The text has been recently published by Del Vivo, "Altre Storie del mondo," 571–573.

81 ACGV, Florence, Or. 5.5.1, file 1 (currently counted as such, although a number 8 written in pen is discernable). In the following transcription a vertical stroke followed by a sheet number printed within square brackets marks the beginning of a new page.

82 The words *e Timandro* are underlined in blue pencil and a question mark is traced above the name *Timandro* by the same pencil.

– Ma se non gli avesse voluto bene non l'avrebbe sposato! esclamò Leo
 – Non si può dire. Allora un uomo quando voleva sposarsi non domandava alla donna ^[3r] se lei gli voleva bene: la⁸³ prendeva perché badasse alla casa, gli filasse la lana, gli⁸⁴ facesse vestiti e gli desse⁸⁵ figlioli. Del bene non glie ne importava. E nemmeno Tantalo probabilmente domandò a Clitennestra se era contenta o no di diventare sua moglie. Era contento lui e basta.

Lontana dalla sua sorella, dalla mamma, dal babbo e dai fratelli, Clitennestra si sentì in⁸⁶ principio triste triste. Ma poi si abituò alla casa e al marito. Aveva anche molto da fare, e si sa che lavorare fa allegria. C'erano mucchi di lane da filare, mucchi di filo da ^[4r] tessere, e bei tappeti da ricamare, e un'infinità di ancelle da dirigere!

– Perché dici ancelle? domandò la Lia.

– Perché le cameriere di allora si chiamavano così.

Quando poi Clitennestra partorì un bambino, un cosino piccolo piccolo e grasso grasso, colle mani e i piedi che parevano quattro guancialini rosa e gli occhi che parevano due fiori celesti, allora sì che la principessa fu occupata da mattina a sera! Aveva fatto fabbricare una culla piccina e bellina, e insieme colle ancelle aveva lavorato a preparar ^[5r] fasce e camicine e copertine. E le pareva proprio di avere un bambolino, e si divertiva a fasciarlo e rifasciarlo, a cullarlo, a cantargli la ninna nanna.

Un giorno Clitennestra cantava una canzone al suo bambino che si addormentava, quando sentì un gran rumore per la strada. – Che cosa c'è, che cosa non c'è? – Mandò un servo a vedere, e il servo ritornò poco dopo un po' spaventato. – Io non ci capisco niente, padrona. Tutti gridano; uno dice una cosa, uno ^[6r] ne dice un'altra. C'è chi ha visto dei soldati, ma nessuno sa chi siano e che cosa vogliono... Torno a vedere, padrona? –

Il servo andò per la seconda volta in istrada e ritornò più spaventato che mai.

– Padrona, dicono che ci sia la guerra! Uomini armati vengono verso la città! Qualcuno ha visto fra loro Agamennone e Menelao, i due figli d'Atreo! Tutti scappano, tutti si nascondono! Nascondiamoci anche noi, padrona! –

Ma Clitennestra non si nascose, e mandò invece alcuni servi a cercare Tantalo.⁸⁷ ^[7r] La città era sottosopra: tutti sapevano ormai che Agamennone e

83 The word *la* is corrected from a previous *La*, with the initial letter capitalised; a preceding dot has been likely turned into a colon.

84 Before *gli* was written *e*, then deleted by an oblique stroke.

85 The initial version was *vestiti e figlioli*: the original *e* was deleted and replaced by the above-line addition *e gli desse*.

86 Before *in* a letter is deleted, possibly *d*: Laura might have planned to write *da principio*.

87 Before *Tantalo* one can read *dove fosse*.

Menelao venivano a combattere il re Tieste. I cittadini discutevano e non andavano mai d'accordo: chi diceva che Tieste aveva ragione e chi diceva⁸⁸ che avevano ragione i figli d'Atreo; chi sosteneva⁸⁹ che il vero re era Tieste e chi avrebbe voluto che vincessero Agamennone e Menelao. Alcuni si nascondevano pieni di paura negli angoli⁹⁰ più bui della casa, altri correvano in cerca di notizie, altri restavano incerti, altri si armavano per combattere. |[^{8r}] Fra i combattenti c'era il principe Tantalo,⁹¹ lo sposo di Clitennestra. Appena Tantalo seppe che un esercito nemico s'avvicinava, corse a casa, rivestì l'armatura solida e lucente che gli aveva regalato Tindaro nel giorno delle nozze,⁹² lasciò nelle stanze più sicure Clitennestra e il bambino, e corse in aiuto di Tieste suo padre e di suo fratello Egisto.

Intorno alla città,⁹³ per le strade, nelle piazze, tutti combattevano: nelle vie si ammonticchiavano i morti e i |[^{9r}] feriti. Agamennone, tutto armato, non si fermava un istante, ma feriva e uccideva senza posa: sotto la sua spada rossa di sangue cadevano innumerevoli i nemici. Nessuno, vedendolo combattere, avrebbe creduto che il figlio d'Atreo fosse tanto giovane. Aveva la forza di dieci uomini: pareva un lupo in mezzo a un gregge di pecore che non sanno difendersi e cadono sanguinanti là dove⁹⁴ passa il feroce animale: intorno a lui⁹⁵ cadevano a destra e a sinistra i guerrieri feriti e uccisi.

|[^{10r}] Nel mezzo della lotta, quando già stava per vincere, Agamennone incontrò Tantalo. Lo vide di lontano, e corse verso di lui per combattere. Tantalo non desiderava di misurarsi con Agamennone che sebbene più giovane era tanto più forte di lui,⁹⁶ e si sarebbe allontanato, se Agamennone non gli avesse rivolto parole ingiuriose:

– Tu cerchi di sfuggirmi, vile, cane miserabile! Vieni, vieni avanti! Vedremo se il figlio di Tieste potrà vincere il figlio d'Atreo! Ah tu te ne vai? Tu |[^{11r}] fuggi?

88 Before *diceva* has been deleted *soste-* at the end of the line.

89 Before *sosteneva* have been deleted the words *voleva per re*.

90 Laura had written *nell'angolo*: above the preposition is written *negli* above the line, and the final *o* in *angolo* is corrected to *i*.

91 In the manuscript one can read *c'era Tantalo: A il principe Tantalo*; the words *lo sposo marito di Clitennestra* are added above the line.

92 In the manuscript *delle sue nozze*.

93 Before *Intorno* one reads *Sutte ri*.

94 The words *là dove* are written above *dovunque*.

95 In the manuscript *dove intorno ad A al principe*: above *principe* is written *a lui*.

96 In the manuscript *tanto più giovane era già tanto più forte di lui*.

Fuggi, fuggi pure, se ti piace!⁹⁷ Saprò ben io raggiungerti e trapassarti colla mia spada! –

Così urlava Agamennone: e intanto correva veloce incontro a Tantalo che ormai l'aspettava di piè fermo, pronto a ferire. Ma la lancia di Tantalo, urtando contro il grossissimo scudo di ferro di Agamennone,⁹⁸ si ruppe in cento pezzi, e a Tantalo restò solo la spada.

– Ma non avevano i fucili e tutte le altre cose? domandò la Lia.

|^[12r] No, non li avevano. I fucili furono inventati molti molti anni dopo. Allora i guerrieri⁹⁹ adoperavano soltanto la lancia e la spada, e poi¹⁰⁰ frecce [*sic*], e pietre, e sassi e bastoni. E Agamennone, colla sua lancia, trapassò la corazza di Tantalo.

– Ma che? domandò Leo meravigliato. Che la trapassavano? Non era di ferro?

– Sì, ma quando il colpo era molto forte, anche la corazza si rompeva: e ti so dir io che in quel momento Agamennone adoperava tutta la sua forza! Fatto sta che Tantalo rimase |^[13r] ferito, e Agamennone gli saltò addosso come una tigre,¹⁰¹ cacciandogli la spada a doppio taglio nel collo, presso la spalla. Un sangue nero e denso uscì dalle ferite: la testa si staccò a mezzo dal busto, e Tantalo cadde morto fra i morti. Ma Agamennone non si fermò nemmeno a guardarlo. Lo spinse da parte con un piede, e continuò a combattere.

– Perché non si fermò? domandò Leo

– Era in guerra: non poteva fermarsi. E poi gli uomini d'allora eran feroci: non ci badavano ad ammazzare qualcuno.

– Ma quelli che morivano erano dispiacenti |^[14r] di morire?

– Quelli sì, molto. Ma allora non si sapeva che dobbiamo fare agli altri quello che vorremmo fosse fatto a noi. Adesso lo sappiamo; eppure in guerra,¹⁰² chi ci bada? E anche senza la guerra, quante volte gli uomini e i bimbi si tormentano fra loro!

– Ma io vorrei sapere del bambino della principessa – disse la Lia

– Il bambino della principessa dormiva tranquillo, e la sua mamma lo cullava per paura che si svegliasse.¹⁰³ veniva tanto rumore dal di fuori! Urli di vincitori

97 In the manuscript *se t'accomoda!*: immediately after *t'* has been added *i*, and *piace!* is written above *accomoda*.

98 In the manuscript *del figlio d'A di Agamennone*.

99 In the manuscript *i sold guerrieri*.

100 Laura had written *te frecce, te pietre e i sassi e i bastoni*: above the first four words deleted she has written *e poi, e, e* respectively; the comma after *pietre* is added, too.

101 The words *come una tigre* are added above the line.

102 In the manuscript *specialmente in guerra*: a comma before *specialmente* is deleted, too.

103 In the manuscript *che non si svegliasse*.

e lamenti di feriti; rumore d'armi che s'urtavano e grida di gente che chiedeva
|[^{15r}] aiuto.¹⁰⁴

A un tratto la porta s'aperse, e un servo entrò piangendo,¹⁰⁵ colle vesti stracciate e macchiate di sangue:

– Padrona, padrona!

– Che cosa c'è? Parla!

– Il tuo sposo, l'illustre Tantalo....

– Dov'è? È ferito?

– È morto! Il principe Agamennone l'ha ucciso!

– Dov'è? L'hai qui? L'hai portato con te?¹⁰⁶

– No padrona è nella strada! Non uscire!¹⁰⁷ Se esci, siamo morti tutti! Agamennone ha la forza di cento |[^{16r}] uomini!¹⁰⁸ Ferisce, squarta, ammazza tutti! Nessuno gli resiste! Uno spettacolo simile non l'ho mai visto! Nascondiamoci,¹⁰⁹ padrona, che Agamennone non ci veda! Se ci trova, siamo morti!

– Ma però Agamennone sarebbe stato un vile se avesse ammazzato una donna senz'armi – disse Leo.

– Sì, ma Agamennone in quel momento era infuriato, e il servo sapeva che un uomo infuriato è facilmente vile. E piangeva forte, e con lui piansero Clitennestra e le ancelle:¹¹⁰ e il bambino a quel rumore si svegliò, |[^{17r}] e pianse anche lui.

Ma quando Clitennestra sentì piangere il suo bimbo, lo prese in collo e lo alzò al cielo, pregando gli dei.

– Zeus padre, e voi tutti, dèi immortali che abitate le alte cime dell'Olimpo, ascoltate la mia preghiera! Proteggete questo bambino, fatelo diventare coraggioso e forte, e quando sarà grande, aiutatelo a vendicare Tantalo suo padre, a vincere Agamennone e a ucciderlo! –

104 In the manuscript *chiedeva* |[^{15r}] *domandava aiuto*. The verb *chiedeva* might have been added after deleting *domandava* in a blank space available at the bottom of fol. 14r.

105 Laura had written *in furia*, above the line is added *piangendo*. One reads *colle vesti stracciate, e in disordine, piene* [on the line is added *e*, above the line *macchiate*] *di sangue*; [semicolon is corrected to a dot] *Clitennestra*.

106 Laura had written *to voglio vedere, to voglio seppellire!* [above the line are written the words *L'hai qui? L'hai portato con te?*].

107 Laura had written – *Padrona non uscire!* [*No* is added at the beginning of the line, the initial letter *P* in *Padrona* is corrected from capital to lower case, *è nella strada!* is added above the line, the initial small *n* in *non* is capitalised].

108 At the top of the page one reads *ferisce, squarta uomini*.

109 Laura wrote *Nascondiamoci* at the beginning of a new line, then she struck through the first part of the verb (*Nascon*) and added *Nascon* again at the end of the preceding line.

110 Below the line, after the word *ancelle* Laura added *e pia*, and struck it afterward.

Così pregava Clitennestra. E mentre ella pregava,¹¹¹ Agamennone entrò nella stanza colla furia di una bestia selvaggia.¹¹² La sua ^[18r]armatura era nera¹¹³ di sangue: i suoi occhi schizzavan ferocia. S'avvicinò alla principessa, le strappò dalle braccia il bambino, e lo scagliò¹¹⁴ lontano¹¹⁵ contro la parete. I servi si gettarono per terra urlando,¹¹⁶ il bambino cadde morto, e Clitennestra rimase lì ferma ad aspettare che Agamennone uccidesse anche lei.

– Così il tuo figlio ammazzerà Agamennone! urlò il figlio d'Atreo. E guardò la principessa, e la vide pallida e addolorata, come una che desideri solo di morire.

Allora sentì un gran rimorso, e le andò vicino.

– Figlia di Tindaro, perdonami. Ero acciecato [*sic*] ^[19r]dall'ira. Ma non voglio farti del male. Voglio farti diventare regina di Micene.

– Lasciami seppellire il mio bambino e il mio sposo – rispose la principessa. Fece¹¹⁷ raccogliere della legna e farne un mucchio; ci mise¹¹⁸ sopra il corpo di Tantalo e del bambino e li bruciò; poi riunì le ceneri, le seppellì: e pianse sulla tomba dei suoi morti.

Quando tutto fu finito, Agamennone tornò da Clitennestra.

– Figlia di Tindaro, io sono re di Micene e voglio farti regina. Diventa mia moglie. –

Ma Clitennestra, guardandolo bene in ^[20r]faccia, rispose:

– Non voglio sposare il mio peggiore nemico. Tu mi hai ucciso il marito, tu mi hai ucciso il figliolo. Io non diventerò mai tua moglie. –

111 Laura had written *Così pregava Clitennestra*, e [corrected into capital E] *in quel momento entrò mentre ella pregava*, ent [corrected into *Aga*] *mennone entrò*.

112 Vitelli's comment on this story (fol. 17v) runs as follows: "Non so chi altri racconti di questa uccisione del bambino, senza attingere ad Euripide (Ifigenia in Aulide v. 1151); e in Euripide è detto, a quanto sembra, che Agam. uccise il bambino sbatacchiandolo a terra (non contro le pareti)."

113 The word *nera* is added above the line: the original text is not legible, since it has been corrected several times.

114 Added above *gettò*, stricken in order to avoid repetition, given the following *si gettarono* in the next sentence.

115 The words *per terra* followed, and were stricken in order to avoid repetition, given the following *si gettarono per terra* in the next sentence.

116 Before *urlando* one reads *spav*.

117 The initial capital letter *F* is a correction from something else, hard to identify: the following *raccogliere* seems to be corrected from an original *raccol* corrected by addition of *g* between *o* and *l*.

118 One reads *un mucchio di* [above the line *della*] *legna*, [comma replaced by *e farne un mucchio*; written above the line] *ci mise*.

Così disse la principessa, sicura che Agamennone l'avrebbe ammazzata per le sue parole.

Ma Agamennone non ammazzò Clitennestra. La prese a forza, la portò nella casa d'Atreo, e la obbligò a diventare sua moglie.

Così Clitennestra diventò regina di Micene. Per le strade i cittadini gridavano:¹¹⁹ Viva Agamennone nostro re! ^[217] Viva Clitennestra nostra regina! – Ma Clitennestra piangeva in segreto, e pensava in segreto a vendicarsi di Agamennone.

119 Laura had written *Così per le strade di Micene* [*Clitennestra diventò regina di Micene. Per le strade* added above the line] *i cittadini gridavano*.

Saul Tchernichowsky's Mythical Childhood: Homeric Allusions in the Idyll "Elka's Wedding"

Agata Grzybowska

The Hebrew poet Saul Tchernichowsky was born in 1875 in a small village in Tauria, in the steppe north of the Crimean peninsula. When he was a boy, his neighbours called him "a salted Greek" (*grek solenyi* in Russian). Many years later he was called "the Greek" among the Hebrew poets. Tchernichowsky learned to read Russian when he was five years old and Hebrew when he was seven. In the gymnasium in Odessa he studied Greek and Latin. Between 1918 and 1931, he translated the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* from the original, as well as the fifteenth idyll of Theocritus and the poems of Anacreon. He was the first Hebrew writer who had never studied in a *heder*.¹

As well as being a translator, Tchernichowsky wrote his own sonnets, ballads, and idylls. The idylls, which have always been the author's most widely read works, are dedicated to the life of Jewish children and to the link between generations: between those of the parents and grandparents who could hardly imagine a life outside the Diaspora and that of budding Zionism. As almost all of these poems are centred around a hero in the first years of his adolescence, they were avidly read by Jewish children and teenagers in the Diaspora, and were featured on essential reading lists in Israeli schools over several decades. One of them, "Keḥom ha-yom" [In the heat of the day],² tells the story of Velvele, who decides to follow a *meshuloḥ* (an emissary) to Palestine and dies on the way. The idyll "Berele ḥoleh" [Berele is sick]³ relates how the Jewish boy

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- 1 *Heder* (lit. "room")—the common name for the elementary school for the teaching of Judaism. The *heder* was a privately run institution, the teacher receiving his fees from the parents. It was generally housed in a room in the private home of the teacher, called the *rebbe* (Yiddish form of "rabbi") or *melammed*. The age groups were from 3–5, 6–7, and 8–13. No secular studies were taught, the subjects for the three classes being, respectively, reading in the prayer book, the Pentateuch with Rashi, and the Talmud. See Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 8, s.v. (Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2007).
 - 2 Sha'ul Ṭsherniḥovski, "Keḥom ha-yom" [In the heat of the day], in eiusdem, *Shirim* [Poems] (Tel-Aviv: Shocken, 1947), 215–225. For the readers' convenience, the transliteration of Hebrew words, proper names, and titles in the main text has been simplified.
 - 3 Sha'ul Ṭsherniḥovski, "Bereleḥ ḥoleh" [Berele is sick], in eiusdem, *Shirim*, 233–245.

Berele is cured by a Ukrainian sorceress (*volkhovitka*). In the idyll “Levivot”,⁴ the grandmother recalls the childhood of her granddaughter Rezele. All these stories are narrated in Hebrew hexameters (Tchernichowsky was the first to use them in Hebrew). The idylls were inspired by Homer and Theocritus, but also by Goethe’s *Hermann und Dorothea*⁵ (1796–1797) and Adam Mickiewicz’s *Pan Tadeusz*⁶—the Polish epic national poem first published in 1834. Tchernichowsky also wrote several collections of poetry for Hebrew children who were just about to learn to speak and to read. These poems—some of which have recently been republished⁷—describe scenes of the everyday lives of children or refer to Biblical stories or Talmudic legends.

Tchernichowsky’s works drew on the memories of his own childhood. The memories which grew into his idylls and his autobiographical poems have also yielded the poet’s autobiography, describing the poet’s youth until his arrival at the gymnasium in Odessa.⁸ In this autobiography he combines the memories of the magic moments of his childhood with his family history, which he himself calls the “mythology” of the family—using the Greek word for “mythology” transliterated into Hebrew. By this he refers to the heroic deeds of his ancestors which contributed to the image of the “Hebrew hero” that he created for himself when he was still a child.

We have to be aware that the autobiographical works of Hebrew poets fulfilled part of the role that the *Bildungsroman* had in European literature. Clothing Jewish childhood in the garments of a Greek genre clearly reveals the universal element in the childhood experience.⁹ This element was based on references to Classical Antiquity. Before Tchernichowsky wrote his first idylls,

4 Sha’ul Tshernihovskī, “Levivot” [Pancakes], in eiusdem, *Shirim*, 133–144. Levivot—a type of potato pancake.

5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Hermann und Dorothea* (Lepizig: Koehler & Amelang, 1955; ed. pr. 1798).

6 Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (Kraków: Dom Książki, 1992; ed. pr. 1834).

7 See Sha’ul Tshernihovskī, *Ba-ginah* [In the garden] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2012).

8 Sha’ul Tshernihovskī, “Me’eyn Avtobiografiya” [A sort of an autobiography], in Boaz Arpaly, ed., *Sha’ul Tshernihovskī. Mehkarim ute’udot* [Sha’ul Tshernihovskī. Studies and documents] (Tel-Aviv: Shocken, 1947), 17–135.

9 I am aware that the universality of childhood experience is a broadly disputed and contested topic in childhood studies. However, since this chapter is focused on philological matters, I chose not to join this discussion. See: Martin Woodhead and Heather Montgomery, eds., *Understanding Childhood: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (Chichester: Wiley–The Open University, 2003); Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout, *Theorising Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Mary Jane Kehily and Joan Swann, eds., *Children’s Cultural Worlds* (Chichester: Wiley–The Open University, 2003).

classical works were virtually absent from Hebrew literature. The Hebraists of his generation translated European classics for young readers on a large scale.¹⁰ Their project encompassed the bestsellers that every Russian child would read: Jules Verne, Thomas Mayne Reed, Mark Twain, and many others. It also contained a number of European classics that were adapted for the young Hebrew reader—most notably Chayim Nachman Bialik's adaptation of *Don Quixote* (from a second-rate Russian edition).¹¹ In fact, the only work which referred to Classical Antiquity was Vladimir Jabotinsky's Hebrew translation of Raffaello Giovagnoli's *Spartaco*¹² (made from the Italian original published in 1873–1874).

It is remarkable that Tchernichowsky's childhood, as we know it, is a work of translation: he knew the names of all the flowers, animals, fruits and vegetables, foods, kitchen tools, and all the other details of rural life in Ukrainian and Russian, but when he gave his memoirs the form of idylls, he translated the words into Hebrew and then dressed them in a Greek garment. This process of translation can be illuminated by a close philological reading.

Tchernichowsky's longest idyll contains around 2,200 hexameters and has the title "Ḥatunatah shel 'Elkah" [Elka's wedding]. Elka was the poet's grandmother, who was married in the 1840s when she was between fourteen and sixteen years old. In 1911 Tchernichowsky wrote a letter (in Russian) to his aunt asking her to describe in Yiddish every detail of Elka's wedding. Thanks to some features of Homeric style that Tchernichowsky uses in the poem, as well as the Homeric allusions present in it, the poet's grandmother, a Jewish girl in a village in Tauria, receives some of the lofty dignity of the Homeric epic.

The first example of a Homeric allusion in "Elka's Wedding" can be found in the first verses of the poem: Mordechai of Podovka observes the cattle that are being lead from the pasture:

מועד שוב הבהמים ורועי-הצאן מן השדה
 בשאון ומהומה ומבוכה ובענגי אבק פורח.
 געה תגעיה הפרות הנענות להם לעגליהן,

10 See also Lisa Maurice's chapter, "Greek Mythology in Israeli Children's Literature", in the present volume.

11 Ḥayim Nachman Bialik, "Don Kishot, Targum Mekuṣṣar" [Don Quixote: An abbreviated translation], in Ḥayim Nachman Bialik, *Kitvei H. N. Bialik ve-Mivḥar Targumav* [The works of Chayim Nachman Bialik and a selection of his translations], vol. 3 (Berlin: Hovevei ha-Shira ha-Ivrit, 1923).

12 Raffaello Giovagnoli, *Aspartakus* [Spartacus], trans. Ze'ev Jabotinsky (Odessa: Targeman, 1913).

אֲשֶׁר פָּרְשׁוּ הַבַּעֲלִים מִבּוֹא אֶל הַדָּבָר הַרְעֵנִן
 לִיגֹק מִשָּׂד אַמּוֹתֵיהֶם, וְשׁוֹרְקִים הַרְחִלִים וְהַטְּלֵאִים
 לְקוֹלֵי־קוֹלוֹתָן¹³. [...]

It was the time when cowherds and shepherds returned from the pastures, in tumult, in riot and confusion, and in clouds of floating dust. The cows were mooing, responding to their calves whom their owners prevented from going to the fresh pastures in order to suck the teats of their mothers, and the ewes were bleating, as were the lambs with all the strength of their voices [...].¹⁴

The image of cows calling out to their calves can be found in book ten of the *Odyssey* as part of a typical Homeric simile.¹⁵ After arriving at Aeaea, Odysseus sends some of his crew to explore the territory. When his men fail to return, he explores the island on his own. He finds his companions transformed into pigs by Circe. The sorceress plans the same for Odysseus, but he manages to avoid his own transformation and eventually becomes her guest. Before he participates in the feast that Circe has prepared for him, Odysseus returns to the shore in order to fetch the rest of his crew.

When Odysseus relates these events to the Phaeacians, he uses the following simile in order to describe how his companions ran toward him after his long absence:

ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἄν ἄγρᾶυλοι πόριες περὶ βοῦς ἀγελαιίας,
 ἔλθούσας ἐς κόπρον, ἐπήν βοτάνης κορέσωνται,
 πᾶσαι ἅμα σκαίρουσιν ἐναντία: οὐδ' ἔτισηκοί
 ἴσχουσ', ἀλλ' ἀδινὸν μυκῶμεναι ἀμφιθέουσι:
 μητέρας: ὡς ἔμ' ἐκεῖνοι ἐπεὶ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
 δακρυόεντες ἔχυντο.¹⁶

And as when calves in a farmstead sport about the droves of cows returning to the yard, when they have had their fill of grazing—they all frisk together before them, and the pens no longer hold them, but with constant

13 Sha'ul Tshernihovskī, "Ḥatunatah shel 'Elkäh" [Elka's Wedding], in Benyamin Harshav, ed., *Shirat ha-teḥiyah ha-Ivrit: Antologyah historit-biqortit* [The poetry of the Hebrew Renaissance: A historical-critical anthology], vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2000), song 1, vv. 6–11; the following quotations are taken from this edition.

14 Trans. A.G.

15 Hom. *Od.* 10.410–415.

16 Ibid.

lowing they run about their mothers—so those men, when their eyes beheld me, thronged about me weeping.¹⁷

This scene, a product of Odysseus's imagination, comes to life in "Elka's Wedding." The connection is even more striking when we consider Tchernichowsky's own translation of the same passage into Hebrew.¹⁸ He uses the same biblical infinitive absolute of the verb "to moo" (*lago'a* in Hebrew).

The next example is very similar. A new character, the craftsman Meir, arrives at the scene and interrupts the idyllic moment of reflection. Tchernichowsky introduces him with the following words: Meir was "a suppressor of humankind with his talk, because his words had no measure":

מִצָּר לְבָרִיּוֹת בְּדַבְּרוֹ, כִּי דִבְרָיו אֵין לָהֶם שְׁעוֹר [...] ¹⁹.

The Homeric character whose words have no measure is Thersites, who is described in the second book of the *Iliad* as ἀμετροεπής—in a *hapax legomenon* meaning "unbridled of tongue."²⁰

Yet another allusion to Homer can be found at the end of the fifth song of "Elka's Wedding," in the account of the wedding feast and specifically of Mordechai's ecstatic dance. The bride's father asks his wife for a dance, and, when she refuses, decides to dance the Cossack dance on his own:

הֶלֶם בְּרַגְלֵי בְּכַח בְּרִצְפָּה וַיַּעַף וַיִּטֵּשׁ:
 יֵשׁ שֶׁהוּא הוֹלֵךְ וְסוֹבֵב בְּעִגּוּל בְּקֶהֱל בְּתָוֶד,
 וַיֵּשׁ שֶׁהוּא תוֹפֵס מְקוֹמוֹ מִכְתֵּשׁ כְּתִישִׁים וְתִכּוּפוֹת,
 וַיֵּשׁ שֶׁהוּא פּוֹשֵׁט וְרוֹעוֹתָיו בְּאַהֲבָה רַבָּה וְגַעְגּוּעִים,
 וַיֵּשׁ שֶׁהוּא טֹס וּמַעוֹפֵף, מִתְהוֹלֵל בְּשִׁנּוּנוֹ וּבְאֹנוֹ. ²¹

He hit the floor powerfully with his feet, he floated and flew, sometimes he moved in circles in the middle of the crowd, sometimes he paused in one place, and stamped swiftly and rhythmically; sometimes he stretched

17 Trans. A.T. Murray in Homer, *The Odyssey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press–William Heinemann, Loeb, 1919), 375.

18 See Tchernichowsky's translation of Hom. *Od.* 10.410–415 in the digitalised online edition by Ben Yehuda, <http://benyehuda.org/tchernichowsky/odyssey.html> (accessed Nov. 14, 2015).

19 Tšherniḥovskī, "Ḥatunatah shel 'Elkah," song 1, v. 38.

20 Hom. *Il.* 2.212.

21 Tšherniḥovskī, "Ḥatunatah shel 'Elkah," song 5, vv. 439–445.

out his arms in great love and longing, and he flew around, rowdy in his strength and madness.²²

The image of dancers hitting the floor with their feet appears in book eight of the *Odyssey* just before Demodocus begins to sing his song:

[...] κήρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθε φέρων φόρμιγγα λίγειαν
 Δημοδόκω: ὁ δ' ἔπειτα κί' ἐς μέσον: ἀμφὶ δὲ κοῦροι
 πρωθήβαι ἴσταντο, δαήμενες ὀρχηθμοῖο,
 πέπληγον δὲ χορὸν θεῖον ποσίν. αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 μαρμαρυγὰς θηεῖτο ποδῶν, θαύμαζε δὲ θυμῶ.²³

[...] and the herald came near, bearing the clear-toned lyre for Demodocus. He then moved into the midst, and around him stood boys in the first bloom of youth, well skilled in the dance, **and they smote the goodly dancing floor with their feet.** And Odysseus gazed at the twinklings of their feet and marvelled in spirit.²⁴

In the Hebrew translation of this passage Tchernichowsky uses exactly the same expression as in his idyll.²⁵

Besides the direct allusions, the most remarkable of which I have presented, Tchernichowsky's idyll contains more subtle allusions that add a humorous note to the poem. Examples of such are the numerous Homeric similes in its text, two of which can be traced back to similes used by Homer to describe the crowd of Greek warriors in the second book of the *Iliad*:

τῶν δ' ὡς τ' ὀρνίθων πετεηνῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ
 χηνῶν ἢ γεράνων ἢ κύκνων δουλιχοδείρων
 Ἄσῳ ἐν λειμῶνι καῦστρίου ἀμφὶ ῥέεθρα
 ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα ποτῶνται ἀγαλλόμενα πτερύγεσσι
 κλαγγηδὸν προκαθιζόντων, σμαραγεῖ δέ τε λειμῶν,
 ὡς τῶν ἔθνεα πολλὰ νεῶν ἄπο καὶ κλισιάων
 ἐς πεδίον προχέοντο Σκαμάνδριον: [...]
 ἦϋτε μυιάων ἀδινάων ἔθνεα πολλὰ
 αἶ τε κατὰ σταθμὸν ποιμνήϊον ἠλάσκουσιν
 ὦρη ἐν εἰαρινῇ ὅτε τε γλάγος ἄγγεα δεύει,

22 Trans. A.G.

23 Hom. *Od.* 8.261–265 (emphasis mine, A.G.).

24 Trans. Murray in Homer, *The Odyssey*, 85.

25 See <http://benyehuda.org/tchernichowsky/odyssey.html> (accessed Nov. 14, 2015).

τὸσσοι ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
ἐν πεδίῳ ἴσταντο διαρραῖσαι μεμαῶτες.²⁶

And as the many tribes of winged fowl, wild geese or cranes or long-necked swans on the Asian mead by the streams of Caystrius, fly this way and that, glorying in their strength of wing, and with loud cries settle ever onwards [...]. Even as the many tribes of swarming flies that buzz to and fro throughout the herdsman's farmstead in the season of spring, when the milk drenches the pails, even in such numbers stood the long-haired Achaeans upon the plain in the face of the men of Troy, eager to rend them asunder.²⁷

In "Elka's Wedding," the young girls, the bride's friends and cousins who come together before the wedding ceremony, are compared to a flock of birds:

[...] כַּאֲתֵן צִפְּרִים קִטְנֹת שְׁנִשְׂאָרוּ לָנוּ בַּחוּרָה,
שֶׁתִּתְכַנְּסֶנָּה בְּסֵתוֹ (עַת גָּדַל הָרֶעֶב בַּחֲרֻשָּׁה)
אֶצֶל הַגָּדוֹן, שֶׁם עָרַךְ הַצִּיד זִרְעוֹנִים לְצוּדוֹ:
אֵלֶּה תְּבִאֲנָה וְסוֹקְרוֹת וְאֵלֶּה תִּפְרָשְׁנָה כַּנְּפִיָּהוּ,
נְסוֹת וְחוּזְרוֹת וְשְׁבוֹת, מִתְּגַנְּבוֹת לְזִכּוֹת בְּזָרַע,
אֶחָת אֶחָת תְּבִאֲנָה: הַשְּׂרָשׁוֹר, הַחוּרְפִי וְהַיָּרְגָן,
אוֹ אֲדָמוּנִיָּה וְחַלְחִי, מִתְּנוֹסְסִים בְּשִׁלְל נּוֹצְוֹתֵיהֶם
יָרֵק וְכַחַל וְאָדָם, שָׁחַר וְכַתֵּם שֶׁל לִימוֹן—
כִּכָּה הַתְּכַנְּסוּ הַנְּעֻרוֹת הַבְּתוּלוֹת אֶל חֲדָרָה שֶׁל אֶלְקָה,
עוֹטוֹת מִחֲלָצוֹת חֲדוּרוֹת, בְּגָדֵי צְבֻעוֹנִין, תְּכֵשִׁיטִים,
וְרִיחוֹת סַמֵּי־הַבֶּשֶׂם נוֹדְפִים מֵהֵן לְמַרְחוֹק,
אֵלֶּה נִכְנְסוֹת בְּרִיָּצָה, וְאֵלֶּה תִּצְאֲנָה בַּחֲפוּזוֹן,
מְשׁוֹחָחוֹת, מְשֻׁפְרוֹת אֶת־עֵצְמָן, מִיִּטְיבוֹת מִחֲלָצוֹת רְעוּתָן.²⁸

[...] as those little birds that stay with us in winter, that gather in autumn (when famine grows in the thicket) next to the granary; there, the hunter strews grains only in order to hunt them: some of the birds come and try them, some spread their wings, leave and return, [and] sneak up in order to pick a grain; one by one they come: chaffinch, siskin, tit, goldfinch, and robin, they ruffle up the abundance of their feathers, green, blue and red, black and yellow as lemons—thus assembled the young girls in Elka's room, wrapped in fancy garments, colourful dresses, adornment, and in

26 Hom. *Il.* 2.459–473.

27 Trans. A.T. Murray in Homer, *The Iliad*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press–William Heinemann, Loeb, 1924), 85.

28 Tshernihovskī, "Ĥatunatah shel 'Elkäh," song 5, vv. 15–27.

perfume that spread its scent. Some were running into the house, some rushing out, chatting, dressing up and praising each other's dress.²⁹

Despite the obvious differences between the Homeric simile and the image presented in "Elka's Wedding," both passages have a lot in common. They share, first of all, the idea that people who come together resemble a flock of birds. In both similes the birds behave in a similar way: they fly to and fro and ruffle their feathers. Tchernichowsky further clings to the form of a traditional Homeric simile by naming various bird species. His simile, one might say, is a diminutive version of the simile that appears in the second book of the *Iliad*.

Another simile in "Elka's Wedding" is inspired by the comparison between the crowd of Greek warriors and a swarm of flies. After a night of dancing and feasting, the wedding guests linger in their beds and walk around tired and sleepy:

[...] מִמָּשׁ כְּאוֹתָן הַזְּבוּבִים כְּתָם יְמִי־קִיץ, וּפְתָאוֹם
תֵּאֲחִזּוּ הַצָּנָה אֶת־כָּלָם וּמְחַסְרֵי־כַח הֵם יוֹשְׁבִים
הַלְוִיִּם בְּכַתְלִים וּזְכוּכֵי־חַלּוֹנוֹת [...] ³⁰.

[...] truly like flies at the end of the summer, when cold suddenly comes upon them and they sit, without power, and hang on walls and window-panes [...].³¹

The comparison is a humorous antithesis to the vigorous warriors ready to fight and destroy the Trojans.

Perhaps the most notable example of Homeric style in "Elka's Wedding" is Tchernichowsky's recreation of the famous ship catalogue in the second book of the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad*, the catalogue follows the introduction of Thersites; similarly, in "Elka's Wedding" the episode with Meir (who is Tchernichowsky's version of Thersites) precedes the catalogue of wedding guests. Mordechai reads the guest list to Elka and to her aunt Frieda, repeating the formulaic expression "el ha-ḥatunah yaḏay yavo'u" ("they will certainly come to the wedding") for every guest whom he has invited. The catalogue closely follows the Homeric original: it provides the names of the guests and of the villages that they inhabit, adding characteristic features of the guests and their place of origin. Every unit is concluded by the same formula:

29 Trans. A.G.

30 Tšherniḥovsḱi, "Ḥatunatah shel 'Elḱah," song 6, vv. 3–5.

31 Trans. A.G.

קְמִינְקָה, מְקַדְש־נוֹשָׁנוֹת, מִיּוֹצְאֵי דוֹבְרוּדְז'ה, יְסֻדוּהָ,
 חוֹבְבֵי גִיּוֹיִּיקוֹת וְרוֹב דָּגָן בְּאַסְמִיָּה
 אֲשֶׁר עַל חוֹפֵי הַקּוֹנְקָה, הַשׁוֹפְכָה לְדִנְפָּר—שׁוֹב שָׁנִים.
 צִירְלִין הַקֶּפֶדָן וְלִיטְוִינְסְקִי הַלֵּץ שְׂבִלְצִים בְּעוֹלָם,
 קְרוֹב לִי—שְׁנֵי בְּשָׁלִישִׁי—לְחַתוּנָה וְדַאי יָבוֹאוּ.³²

Kamenka (on the shores of the Konka that flows into the Dnieper), a village once founded by the Old Believers from the Dobruia; they are garden lovers, and their barns are filled with corn—two [guests] will come from there: Tsirlin, the pedant, and Litvinski, the greatest clown in the world, my distant cousin—they will certainly come to the wedding.³³

The examples of Homeric allusions clearly show that Tchernichowsky had first-hand knowledge of the features of Homeric style and was familiar with the achievements of Homeric scholarship. The most striking feature of the poet's idylls, however, is the fact that Tchernichowsky's two most important literary inspirations—the Hebrew Bible and the Homeric epic—merge in his poetic work and describe the Jewish past in the Crimea in the most natural way.

32 Tshernihovski, "Hatunatah shel 'Elkah," song 2, vv. 94–98.

33 Trans. A.G.

Jadwiga Żylińska's Fabulous Antiquity

Robert A. Sucharski

When James Mellaart, a British archaeologist, discovered in 1958 the settlement Çatalhöyük (written also as ÇatalHüyük or Çatalhöyük) in southern Anatolia, near today's neighbourhood of Konya, he could not have realised how (un)fortunate for him the later excavations there in 1961–1965 would be.¹ The discovery of a well-preserved Neolithic community, reminiscent of an American *pueblo*, inhabited from the middle of the eighth until the middle of the sixth millennium BC, coupled with the unearthing of many well-preserved figurines and reliefs depicting women, seemed decisive confirmation of the nineteenth-century theory of a Neolithic matriarchate.² The figurine representing a woman sitting on a throne with her arms laid on flanking cat-like animals (lionesses?) seemed of particular significance at the time. This was found in a grain bin, which suggested to Mellaart that it was of a Mother Goddess whose duties were to ensure the harvest or to protect the food supply.³

The discovery of a Neolithic city functioning as a kind of matriarchal beehive echoed not only in the world of science but also in popular life. In Poland, Jadwiga Żylińska (1910–2009)⁴ was the author of a collection of twenty short stories *Kapłanki, amazonki i czarownice. Opowieść z końca neolitu i epoki brązu* [Priestesses, Amazons, and witches. A tale of the end of the Neolithic and Bronze Age] which drew on—among others—Mellaart's findings. Although the title sounds very serious and almost scholarly, the book is addressed primarily to teens or young adults, and others of Żylińska's writings I will discuss in this chapter are books for children.

The book *Priestesses, Amazons, and Witches*, finished in 1970, was first published in 1972 by the Polish publishing house Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy [State Publishing Institute] and then reprinted several times—I have counted

1 See James Mellaart, "Excavations at ÇatalHüyük," *Anatolian Studies* 12 (1961): 41–65; 13 (1962): 43–103; 14 (1963): 39–119; 16 (1965): 15–191 (series of reports on the excavations).

2 See Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht. Eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Basel: Schwabe, 1861).

3 See James Mellaart, *Çatal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), 180.

4 See [Lucyna Marzec], "Jadwiga Żylińska," in *Wielkopolski Słownik Pisarek*, http://pisarki.wikia.com/wiki/Jadwiga_Żylińska (accessed Nov. 5, 2015).

at least four new editions (1978, 1981, and 1986 by the same editorial house, and 2001 by Kopia Sp. z o.o.). Significantly, this book therefore belongs to Żylińska's best-known and most published writings: in the number of editions it yields first place only to her two-volume historical novel *Złota włócznia* [Golden spear, 1961],⁵ which narrates the history of Richeza of Lotharingia, the wife of Mieszko II Lambert and the Queen of Poland in the eleventh century, and competes for second place with *Piastówny i żony Piastów* [Piast daughters and wives, 1967],⁶ a collection of essays about women belonging to the first Polish dynasty.

Priestesses, Amazons, and Witches is a journey through the archaeological and mythical past, centred on the Eastern Mediterranean, having as its principal theme woman as an active factor in history. No doubt, this is a fiction, composed mainly of myths, but it does also contain some facts that we are accustomed to regard as true and proven. The plot starts in Çatalhöyük, called here Beehive-City (in Polish: *Miasto-Ul*), which is depicted as a society which worshipped the Mother Goddess and in which all power was in the hands of the great Queen-Bee (in Polish: *Królowa-Pszczota*)—by contrast the role of the king was first to impregnate the queen, then to die by being torn into pieces, and finally to inseminate the soil with his blood. From the city in Anatolia we move to Mesopotamia, where we watch the deluge and see “in the moment when authority passed into the hands of men” how “manners significantly deteriorated.”⁷ Then we watch the founding of cities, observing the deeds of mythic and historic queens and princesses—Hatshepsut, Pasiphaë, Anchesenamón, Medea, Iphigenia, etc.—until finally we find ourselves in a Greece already dominated by the Roman Empire, where young Spartiates, protesting against the Latin conqueror, die willingly, while being whipped at the altar of Artemis Orthia.

We see millennia pass—in the beginning women were active priestesses, but in the end they forgot about that, and while maintaining their relation with nature, came to be accused of magic and treated as malevolent witches. In her book Żylińska presents her own vision of history; it is a kind of experiment that depicts a possible alternative version of the past and emphasises

5 I have counted at least six editions of the novel, all by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy in Warsaw: 1961, 1964, 1968, 1974, 1976, 1989.

6 At least four editions of the book by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy: 1967, 1969, 1975, 1982.

7 Jadwiga Żylińska, *Kapłanki, amazonki i czarownice. Opowieść z końca neolitu i epoki brązu* [Priestesses, Amazons and witches. A tale of the end of the Neolithic and Bronze Age] (Warszawa: PIW, 1972), 34 (quoted in the translation by R.A.S.).

the female factor in our common times of yore. To use the words of Lucyna Marzec, this is a “matriarchal, feministic manifesto.”⁸

Also significant is the fact that the book seems to be the first “herstory” in Polish popular mythography. If we also take into account Żylińska’s previous books on Polish history published in the 1960s, we may say that her writing anticipates the very moment when the term “herstory” (no matter how erroneous and amusing it might seem) was coined—*Oxford English Dictionary On-Line* presents the definition of the term as “history viewed from a female or specifically feminist perspective” and gives its origin as 1970.⁹ It does not matter in this context that modern archaeology regards Mellaart’s ideas on Çatalhöyük as mistaken—as Ian Hodder, the present director of excavations there, makes clear:

It has long been argued that some form of “mother goddess” was central to the symbolism at Çatalhöyük, and these views were partly based on the interpretation of the reliefs with upraised arms as a woman. While it remains possible that the figures are “mother bears” and representative of a female divinity, there is now little evidence that they are indeed women at all.¹⁰

8 Lucyna Marzec is a historian of literature, working at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and interested in women writers in history and gender studies. See Natalia Mazur’s interview with her on the lives and writings of women from the region of Wielkopolska, “Święte i prowokatorki. Julia pali cygara i jeszcze całuje się z Antonim” [Women saints and provocateurs. Julia smokes cigars and yet kisses Anthony], *Gazeta Wyborcza. Poznań*, March 8, 2013, http://poznan.gazeta.pl/poznan/1,36037,13523870,Swiete_i_prowokatorki_Julia_pali_cygara_i_jeszcze.html (accessed Nov. 17, 2015).

9 See <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/herstory?q=herstory> (accessed Nov. 5, 2015). See also Milena Kostić, “Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage*: Subversion of the Patriarchal Identity,” in Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić, eds., *Identity Issues: Literary and Linguistic Landscapes* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 98 n. 4: “Herstory is a neologism coined in the late 1960s as a part of a feminist critique of conventional historiography. In feminist discourse the term refers to history (ironically restated as “his story”) written from the feminist perspective, emphasizing the role of women, or told from a woman’s point of view. The word has been used in feminist literature since its inception. The Oxford English Dictionary credits Robin Morgan with coining the term in her 1970 book, *Sisterhood is Powerful*.”

10 Ian Hodder, *Çatalhöyük 2005 Archive Report*, http://www.catalhoyuk.com/sites/default/files/media/pdf/Archive_Report_2005.pdf (accessed Aug. 31, 2016). It is also highly informative to learn about the modern feministic view on the excavations in Çatalhöyük: Kathryn Rountree, “Archaeologists and Goddess Feminists at Çatalhöyük,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23.2 (2007): 7–26.

Nevertheless, despite its ideological burden, Żylińska's book was interesting and influential literature that echoed also in popular culture. In the fourteenth issue of *Relax*, one of the first comic magazines published in Communist Poland, Maria Olszewska-Wolańczyk and Marek Szyszko presented their comic story *W mocy Wielkiej Bogini* [Within the power of the Great Goddess].¹¹ The hero of the story, a young Pole, moves with his sandglass to Çatalhöyük, marries the queen's sister, introduces the solar calendar in order to stop the ritual of killing the queen's lunar husbands, and luckily escapes the knives of the bloodthirsty priestesses who try to immolate him.

Although Żylińska's story is not directly mentioned in the comic it is quite obvious that the story was conceived after a close reading of the book. (Only the daily *Kurier Popołudniowy* of August 15, 1961 is depicted—we can see the newspaper in the hands of our hero just before he reaches for his sandglass and mysteriously moves through millennia to Çatalhöyük.) Some Polish comic fans accused the story of incongruities and sloppy drawing,¹² but it nevertheless provides evidence of the transferral of Żylińska's ideas to the world of children and teens, who sometimes prefer to see what they read instead of imagining it.

The plot of *Priestesses, Amazons, and Witches* concluded in ancient Greece. It is therefore not surprising that in subsequent years Żylińska presented her interpretation of a number of ancient Greek myths in a series of small books addressed to young people. There were five of them: *Mistrz Dedal* [Daedalus the master] (1973, reprinted 1976), *Opowieść o Heraklesie* [A tale of Hercules] (1973, reprinted 1976), *Tezeusz i Ariadna* [Theseus and Ariadne] (1973, reprinted 1976), *Młodość Achillesa* [The youth of Achilles] (1974, reprinted 1976), and *Wyprawa po złote runo* [The expedition for the Golden Fleece] (1976, reprinted the same year). All of them were republished together in 1986 under the title *Oto minojska baśń Krety* [Behold the Minoan story of Crete] in a slightly different order.¹³

At first glance you can see here a collection of myths that might be regarded as "standard" Greek mythology and that includes the most important cycles: the Cretan, Herculean, Thesean, Trojan, and Jasonian ones. Only the Theban myths are lacking here. However, a closer look reveals much more and we are

11 *Relax* 14.1 (1978): 29–32.

12 Cf. the review by Sebastian Chosiński, "Czar «Relaksu» #14: Anioł Stróż towarzysza Mao i pechowi zbójcerze" [The charm of «Relax» #14: The guardian angel of Comrade Mao and the unfortunate robber knights], *Magazyn Kultury Popularnej Esencja* [Popular culture magazine Essence], <http://esensja.pl/magazyn/2011/07/iso/09,48.html> (accessed Nov. 19, 2015).

13 I omit here *Lament Demeter* [The lament of Demeter], which was never published in its entirety.

able to see and understand the ways in which Żylińska rewrites, reinterprets, and manipulates Greek myths in order to give them a much more “female look.”

Beginning with *The Youth of Achilles*, the first book I read as a six-year-old child, I can perceive at least two methods Żylińska uses to achieve her aim. First, there is the choice of a myth, or a special moment within the myth, which emphasises female activity. Achilles’ youth is chosen, the period in his life when he was hidden and raised as a girl, and so the book focuses on his relation with Deidamia. Thus, in the book, the Trojan War—although certainly referenced—is not presented as the most important part of his life. Second, Żylińska dares to challenge the epic legacy. We all know the first verse of the *Iliad*:

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος [...],¹⁴

rendered into English by Samuel Butler:

Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus [...].¹⁵

However, we have to read to verse 280 of the first book of the poem before we find out—thanks to Nestor—that Achilles’ mother is a goddess (“[...] εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ”¹⁶), and even then we do not become acquainted with her name until verse 413 (“Τὸν δ’ ἠμείβετ’ ἔπειτα Θέτις κατὰ δάκρυ χέουσα”¹⁷). Generally speaking, such a situation fully corresponds to the later Greek tradition, according to which people are identified by their fathers’ names. In Żylińska’s book the situation is entirely different—we learn first about Thetis, Achilles’ mother, and his father’s name—Peleus—only comes later: as that of a man whom she did not want to marry. Thetis, in Żylińska’s view, is the daughter of Chiron, the king of the centaurs, as well as a nymph and an arch-priestess of the Moon Goddess. Indeed, Żylińska actually charges Homer with changing the truth about Thetis (in the *Iliad* she is a Nereid, a sea

14 The Greek texts are referenced according to the editions of *The Online Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*: <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/> (accessed Dec. 27, 2015).

15 For the English texts, see: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> (accessed Dec. 27, 2015).

16 “You are strong, and have a goddess for your mother,” trans. Samuel Butler, quoted from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%03Atext%03A1999.01.0217%03Abook%03D1> (accessed Dec. 27, 2015).

17 “Thetis wept and answered,” trans. Samuel Butler, quoted from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> (accessed May 18, 2013).

goddess, the daughter of Nereus), because he lived half a millennium later, when the legends had changed. In doing so Żylińska follows Robert Graves, her spiritual master and himself a Mother Goddess worshipper, who in *The Greek Myths* (1955), which is a kind of enlarged commentary on *The White Goddess* (1948), his *opus magnum*, often prefers the idiosyncratic versions of myths to be found in the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes.

We owe to this Hellenistic poet the most elaborate version of the myth of the Golden Fleece. It goes without saying that trying to follow the rules of erudite poetry typical for the period forced Apollonius to look for those versions of the myth hardly to be found elsewhere. Żylińska follows Apollonius's version of the story of Medea in *The Expedition for the Golden Fleece*, the second of her books that I read as a child. Polish readers, who knew the story through the popular in the 1970s mythologies of Jan Parandowski (1895–1978) or Wanda Markowska (1912–1999), to say nothing of the works of Euripides, must have been surprised when they learnt that it was Jason who killed Apsyrtus, Medea's brother. The choice of this rare version of the myth allows Żylińska to exonerate Medea from the charge of committing a most horrible crime, second only to that of slaying her own children. There is no need to add that in Żylińska's book we find no notion of Medea's infanticide. Woman is blameless and man alone is the cause of all disasters. As *Priestesses, Amazons, and Witches* noted: "in the moment when authority passed into the hands of men, manners significantly deteriorated."¹⁸

When we read the three remaining books, we can find similar patterns of thought. It is clear that Żylińska's main purpose is to rewrite Greek mythology in order to achieve an imaginary world in which the role of women is more than essential (e.g., there is no notion of the Minotaur as a consequence of Pasiphaë's quite extraordinary passion or matrilineal legacy anywhere). There is little doubt that even the choice of the title of the book which contains all five novels—*Behold the Minoan Story of Crete*—and their later rearrangement cannot be regarded as haphazard. When we read the novels separately, we find much discussion of Crete, but the island itself does not appear to be the main subject. However, when we read them together in the later compilation, we confront the popular image of the island, which we owe to Arthur Evans and the Minoan frescoes, as a matriarchate in which women played an elevated role.

Żylińska wanted to rewrite Greek mythology and she succeeded; we have books that are coherent and give us a consistent picture of the mythic past.

18 See above, n. 7.

It does not matter whether this picture fully matches what we can read elsewhere; what is important is the fact that Żylińska gave Greek myths in Poland new spirit and by reinterpreting them proved the classical tradition to be alive and interesting for the youngest generation of readers. Interesting is also the fact that Żylińska proved the Greek myths were flexible, allowing their various interpretations, sometimes opposite and sometimes even contradictory to one another.

A Child among the Ruins: Some Thoughts on Contemporary Modern Greek Literature for Children

Przemysław Kordos

I admit that the title of this chapter may be misleading at first glance. Greece is by no means a country of ruins, or a ruined country, and ancient archaeological sites (“ruins”) are relatively scarce. In fact, in some regions of this beautiful country, such as Thrace or Thessaly, one can hardly find such attractions. On the other hand, the two main cities, Athens and Thessaloniki, which house probably up to 40% of the country’s population, are built around vast and well-exposed ancient sites. The Athenian Acropolis is the city’s most important landmark, helping substantially in navigating the chaotic city centre. In Thessaloniki the excavations mingle seamlessly with housing districts, shopping areas, and recreational parks, and are located near busy streets. So a Greek child has an excellent chance of living close to some ruins.

The other, even more universal means of encountering Greek ruins is the standard school curriculum, which revolves around ancient history, tradition, and literature. Textbooks abound in pictures and drawings that proudly present their ancient heritage to Greek children. The role of the educational system is very important in shaping the attitudes of future citizens. I will come back to this issue later on, but first I will start with a personal note.

Although this chapter analyses several books for children written by Greek authors in the past few decades, it is by no means reduced solely to literary criticism. I propose a daring approach both in regard to classical reception and children’s literature studies—one that results from my primary formation, which is ethnography and my practice in this field, which comprises researching the Modern Greeks for fifteen years now.

The relation between ethnographers and their objects of study constitutes a core of contemporary discussion on ethnographic self-conscience as discipline. Systemic approaches (deriving from social sciences in paradigm crisis) are partly abolished in favour of personal contact, dialogue, and the uniqueness of the ethnographer’s position of being “then and there,” staying faithful to the statement that “a researcher is also a research tool.”¹ Thus, my interest

¹ Cf. Anna Engelking, “Między terenem rzeczywistym a metaforycznym. Osobiste refleksje o antropologicznym doświadczeniu terenowym” [Between the real and metaphorical field

in this chapter is on a person, not a text, and in my analysis I depart from my personal experience to draw out more clearly the most important extraliterary issues, such as the ideological shaping of the audience and historical politics of the Greek state which permeate the realm of education. As a result, we will discover different aspects of the potential of the texts designed for Greek children—texts that affect and strengthen their identity.

I was taught a “traditional” way of appreciating ruins, one bordering on admiration and nostalgia. On numerous occasions I tried to envisage the walls of ancient buildings and arcades shading ancient streets, all in the midst of chasing the remains of yet another edifice. Therefore some of the images I encountered while in Greece came to me as a shock. Little boys playing soccer just outside the Odeon of Herodes Atticus with a goalkeeper standing in one of the ruined arches. An adolescent practising mountain biking on the hills and crevices of the Spartan Acropolis, whose disorderly remains are scattered among a peaceful olive grove north of the modern town of Sparta (see figure 8.1). My own son picking wildflowers in Cyprus’s Kourion. This all made me revise my attitude to ruins. I never had a childlike appreciation of them, because from the very beginning I only considered them in a scholarly manner. Children, on the other hand, treat them for what they really are: bundles of stones in a peaceful park, away from the hustle of a modern town, devoid of crowds and sometimes even left unguarded. One could say that children’s contact with the ruins, and through them with the past, is natural and intimate.²

It is only later that they learn—both through the system (school) and outside of it (through extracurricular books, the centre of my interest here³)—about the past, the “glory that was Greece,” and, for the first time feeling the weight

of work. Personal thoughts on anthropological field experience], in Tarzycjusz Buliński and Mariusz Kairski, eds., *Teren w antropologii. Praktyka badawcza we współczesnej antropologii kulturowej* [Fieldwork in anthropology. Research practice in contemporary cultural anthropology] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM, 2011), 169–180.

- 2 The inhabitants of Warsaw also have this experience of living among the ruins. The ruined places are slowly being rebuilt and reconstructed, but at least the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, situated in the only surviving piece of the Saxon Palace, will remain a memory. Warsaw’s ruins are, however, very different from the Greek ones: while they remind us of the unmatched bravery of insurgents, they are also a reminder of the utter catastrophe that was brought about in the aftermath of the Warsaw Uprising (1944), when prewar Warsaw, destroyed in retaliation by the Nazis, ceased to exist. Therefore, the proportions of pride and nostalgia these ruins evoke in the inhabitants of the Polish capital are quite different from those felt by the Greeks, strolling around ancient debris in the Acropolis or Agora.
- 3 For the supportive role in education played by historical children’s fiction, see Janet Fisher, “Historical Fiction,” in Peter Hunt, ed., *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 1, 490–498. The entry comprises also a brief bibliographical guide.



FIGURE 8.1 *Przemysław Kordos*, Mountain Biking in Sparta
© BY PRZEMYSŁAW KORDOS.

of history upon their shoulders, are taught to respect those places and to approach them with reverence and awe.

A brief glance at the Greek school curriculum is enough to justify this thesis.⁴ Admittedly, the introduction of ancient themes is slow at first. During

4 All up-to-date textbooks are available on the Digital School webpage <http://dschool.edu.gr/> (accessed Oct. 12, 2015). Current curricula are contained in documents published by the Greek Ministry of Education and Culture (the former Ministry of Education and Religion).

the first three years, Greek children become acquainted with ancient myths and aspects of ancient history (deeds of Alexander the Great or ordinary life in classical Athens) only through texts studied in Modern Greek language class—glimpses of Antiquity which function on an equal footing with texts concerning other epochs and countries. However, the situation changes radically in the fourth grade with the introduction of the class on history: the first year of the three-year course (fourth to sixth grade) is devoted solely to mythological, archaic, classical, and Hellenistic Greece. During the second year the periods of Roman and Byzantine dominance are covered. The third year focuses on the last half millennium. Even such a short course description shows the importance placed on Greek Antiquity: up to half of the history course is taken up by ancient history. The emphasis on Antiquity is stressed further in middle school, which lasts for three years and is attended by children aged from 12 to 15. Here the history course is repeated, but this time only a year is devoted to becoming acquainted with Antiquity.⁵ On the other hand a class in Ancient Greek is introduced, along with extensive reading of Herodotus's *Histories* and Homer's *Odyssey*. In the second year the Ancient Greek class is strengthened by an anthology, which supplements the regular language textbook: *Αρχαία Ελλάδα: ο τόπος και οι άνθρωποι* / *Archaia Ellada: o topos kai oi anthropoi* [Ancient Greece: The place and the people].⁶ This is a curious collection of ancient texts, translated into Modern Greek, which revolves around the six most distinguished *poleis* and concludes with a chapter on the phenomenon of ancient athleticism. Pupils in the last year of middle school read *Anabasis Alexandri* by Arrian, learn about ancient theatre (δραματική ποίηση / *dramatike poiese*—dramatic poetry) through the texts of Aristophanes' *Birds* and Euripides' *Helen*, and take their first steps in philosophy with help from the pre-Socratic sages to Plotinus. A diligent fifteen-year-old modern Greek pupil receives a thorough classical education, being able to read and interpret a wide selection of ancient masterpieces in their original form.⁷

5 Greece has recently become a battlefield for Ancient Greek language in the gymnasium (lower middle school). In May 2016 a group of fifty-six professors published an open petition to abolish the extended Ancient Greek language curriculum in favour of extending the Modern Greek programme. Their initiative brought about an intensive, sometimes aggressive response. The issue is still being debated, but it is failing.

6 Theodoros Stephanopoulos, *Αρχαία Ελλάδα: ο τόπος και οι άνθρωποι* / *Archaia Ellada: o topos kai oi anthropoi* [Ancient Greece: The place and the people] (Athens: Ο.Ε.Δ.Β., 2010).

7 Education about Classical Antiquity by no means stops there. The last (non-compulsory) three years of secondary education offer a variety of obligatory classes devoted to ancient times. There is a third look at ancient history in the first year (accompanied by a textbook on

Authors of books for children are free from the constraints and guidelines of the school programme and can thus relate to children's experience by employing a variety of techniques and shaping stories according to their needs. I am interested in such methods as well as the message that they intend to convey by invoking Antiquity. I have therefore chosen to look at three best-selling books with ancient themes. Their plots are contemporary (i.e., they do not reconstruct aspects of ancient lives, like, for example, the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* written by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, 1788), and all of them have as protagonists Greek children who learn about their past. One would assume that these books belong to so-called historical fiction. This is true, but in a different sense this term functions within the realm of children's literature studies. Anna Adamik-Jászó argues that historical fiction is most commonly based on the model "us versus others," where our ancestors are faced not only with different realities, but different people—friends, foes, invaders, victims.⁸ However, Modern Greek historical fiction deals with the Greeks and the model is rather "us versus us" or even "how we have become us." The books chosen for analysis in this chapter fit in perfectly with this model. Their titles are the following:

1. Christos Boulotis, *To άγαλμα που κρύωνε / To agalma pou kryone* [The statue that was cold], illustrated by Foteini Stefanidi and published by Patakis (Athens, 1998);⁹
2. Alki Zei, *Η Αλίχη στη χώρα των μαρμάρων / E Alike ste hora ton marmaron* [Alice in Marbleland], illustrated by Sofia Zarabouka and published by Kedros (Athens, 1997);
3. Kira Sinou, Eleni Hook-Apostolopoulou, *Το χέρι στο βυθό / To heri sto bytho* [The hand in the deep], published by Kastaniotis (Athens, 1988).

ancient historiographers), followed in the second year by anthologised ancient poetry and rhetoric. Pupils read Sophocles' tragedies and—in the third year—Pericles' *Funeral Oration*. Last but not least, those who are willing are offered a two-year course in Latin.

- 8 See Anna Adamik-Jászó, "Friend or Foe? Images of the Germans in Hungarian Literature for Young Readers," in Margaret Meek, ed., *Children's Literature and National Identity* (London: Trentham Books, 2001), 33–42, esp. 35.
- 9 Boulotis, a very popular and prolific writer of books for children, is a professional archaeologist, specialising in the Minoan and Mycenaean periods (see the entry on Boulotis at www.biblionet.gr, which contains the literary resources of the Greek National Book Centre, accessed April 1, 2013).

The first two books are written for children attending elementary school (and Boulotis had in mind younger children than did Zei), while the third, much longer and less illustrated, is for older children in the last classes of elementary and middle school. All of them were acclaimed and won literary prizes.

In order to draw even the simplest comparisons I recently looked at these books from three perspectives: I sought to discover the emotions that they are intended to evoke (emotionality), the range and depth of information that they are intended to convey (informative content), and their “fun factor” (their potential for entertainment).

The first thing that strikes the reader of Christos Boulotis’s book *The Statue That Was Cold* is how beautiful it is (see figure 8.2): hard-cover (and yet quite slim), published in large format and with vivid, slightly dreamy illustrations by the acclaimed Athenian artist, Foteini Stefanidi.¹⁰

The book won a plethora of literary awards, including the National Children’s Book Award and an award from the important literary periodical *Διαβάζω / Diabazo*, and it remains popular. In fact, a fragment of it was included in a textbook.¹¹ It tells the story of an exhibit in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens—a small statue depicting a boy wrapped up in a cape and holding a dog. The boy looks like he is cold and the story explains why: he is cold because he misses his “motherland” and because he has no friends. The statue, which dates back to the first century BC, comes from the Ionian shores of Asia Minor and was delivered to the museum in 1922, the year of the Micro-Asiatic Catastrophe, the Graeco-Turkish war that brought about the exchange of populations and meant the end of Hellenism in Anatolia:

10 One could be tempted to include this book within the now widely discussed category of “picture books.” Perry Nodelman argues the importance of the picture within a picture book, putting it on the same level as textual content. Moreover, he defines dynamic as the “essence” of picture books. While it is uncertain whether any of the books I chose to analyse fall under the picture book category, Boulotis and Stefanidi’s work can be considered as such. However, caution is recommended, as it is the artistic value, not the factor of “moving-the-story-forward,” that draws attention to Stefanidi’s marvellous creations. In addition, the illustrations are here surely of lesser value than the text itself. Cf. Perry Nodelman, “Picture Books and Illustration,” in Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 154–165.

11 Anna Iordanidou et al., *Γλώσσα του Στ’ δημοτικού. Λέξεις... φράσεις... κείμενα, Γ’ τεύχος / Glosa tou St’ demotikou. Lexeis... fraseis... keimena, G’ teuchos* [Language for the sixth grade. Words... phrases... texts, part 3] (Athens: Ο.Ε.Δ.Β., 2011), 58–60 (textbook in Modern Greek language for the sixth grade of elementary school).

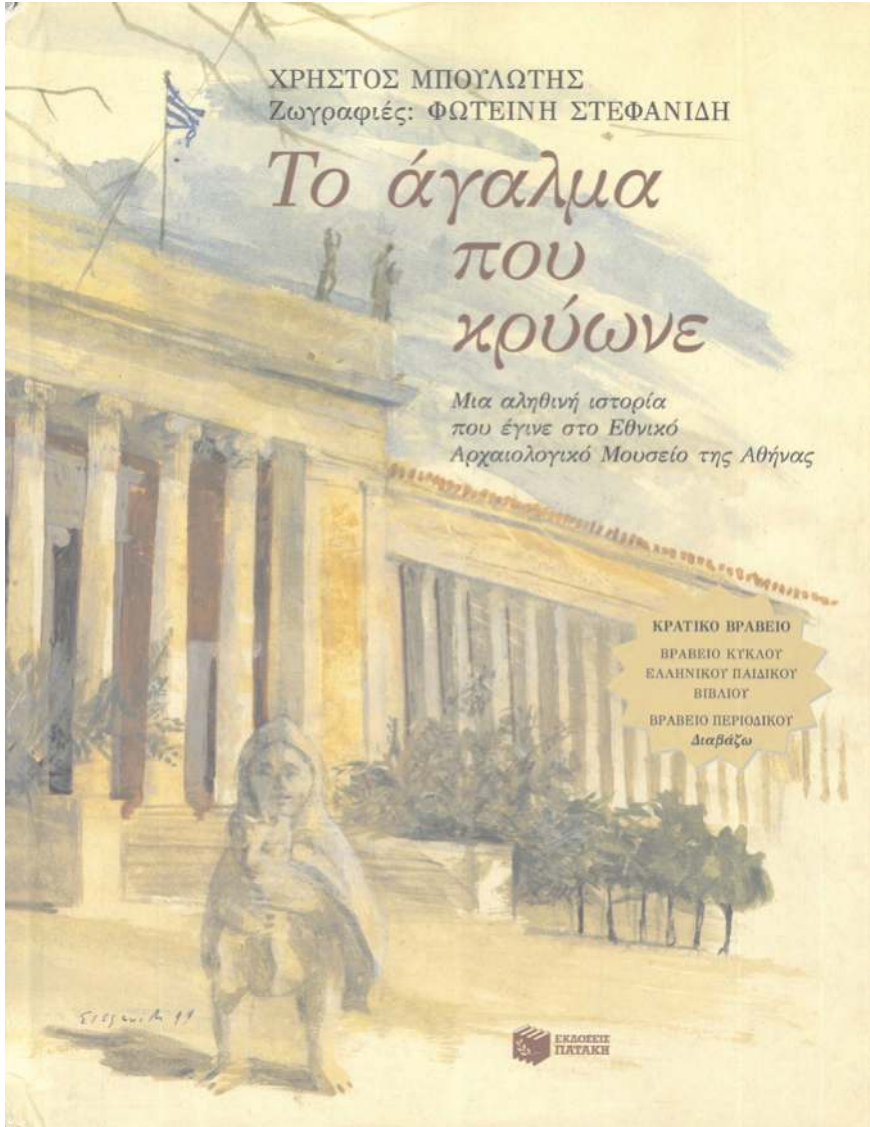


FIGURE 8.2 Cover of Christos Boulotis's *Το άγαλμα που κρύωνε* [*The statue that was cold*] ILLUSTRATED BY FOTEINI STEFANIDI (ATHENS: PATAKIS, 1998), © BY PATAKIS PUBLISHERS.

He [i.e., the statue] was homesick beyond remedy for his motherland in Anatolia, on the opposite shore of the Aegean Sea. He had been brought from there during a great disaster, by the desperate people who left their homes to save themselves, becoming refugees scattered to the four corners of the world. (8)¹²

So the statue itself is a refugee,¹³ and is thus called *To προσφυγάκι* / *To prosfygaki* [The little refugee boy]. In the course of the story the statue befriends a cleaning lady in the Museum, Mrs. Galateia, who is also a refugee from Asia Minor, and then the statue becomes acquainted with another boy, Lambris, the son of the night watchman. The three of them receive help from a mysterious blue bird that comes to them in their sleep and organises a magical night trip to the other shore, the “lost” shore. The excursion soothes their nostalgia—and the statue is not as cold as before. Unlike the illustrations, the story is pretty weak: I actually tried to tell it as a bedtime story to my son, but he did not like it at all as it made him scared (and then he demanded a different story). Moreover, the main message of the book has little to do with Classical Antiquity: the object—the statue—is not the pretext for a discussion about sculpture or Greek civilisation in Ionia, but rather for an account of the lost “motherland” and the deep longing for it:

‘But when will we cross again the waters of the Aegean?’ – sighed the little statue [...].

‘Who knows? [said Mrs. Galateia] Perhaps one day we will again see our motherlands on the other shores of the sea, just for a moment. I also long for it.’ (13)

12 All quotations from the book are translated by P.K.

13 While the majority of Western children’s literature in its inter- or multicultural aspect focuses on contemporary issues such as refugees, exiles, and immigrants, for the Greeks the refugees are also Greek. In a way Greece stays in self-imposed isolation, with its literary attention turned inward and toward the past. Only recently, topics such as the presence of Albanians (and Albanian children), who emigrated to Greece in massive numbers in the 1990s and are now an element of ordinary Greek life, have come to the attention of writers, but rather of those who seek an adult audience. Books, such as Katerina Mouriki’s *Γκασμέντ, ο φυγάς με την φλογέρα* / *Gkasment, o fygas me ten flogera* [Gazmed, escapee with a flute] (Athens: Ekdoseis Papadopoulos, 2003); or Maroula Kliafa’s *Ο δρόμος για τον Παράδεισο είναι μακρύς* / *O dromos gia ton Paradeiso einai makrys* [The road to Paradise is long] (Athens: Kedros, 2003), are notable and rare examples.

So the book is not at all informative (with the exception of a small fragment on the last page which explains details about the statue as a museum exhibit), it is not particularly entertaining, and its chief goal is evidently to evoke intense nostalgia for the land east of the Aegean. This feeling is very present in contemporary Greek culture, permeating the most important masterpieces of twentieth-century Greek literature. Antiquity is here merely a vehicle for this feeling, a part of the history lost with everything else that was there. But there are no political suggestions, no pointing fingers—just feelings.¹⁴ Laurajane Smith states that using nostalgia as a discursive technique is generally improper for creating a link between (young) readers and their heritage. Nostalgia can imply that the past was better than the present and evoke a feeling of a loss, which, due to the nature of nostalgia, cannot be replaced.¹⁵ Overall, the message of the text is thus not at all positive.

It is worth mentioning that Boulotis later wrote another children's book, in which he approached Antiquity from a different angle. In the story of Pinocchio visiting Athens, the main protagonist, Collodi's original creation, appreciates the genius of the Ancients who created such a marvellous city. The connotation is here devoid of nostalgia, but full of pride.¹⁶

The second book looks similar, but appearances are deceptive. In Alki Zei's *Alice in Marbleland* (with illustrations by Sofia Zarabouka, whose name also appears on the cover and is written in the same print since her work is considered equally important to that of the author; see figure 8.3),¹⁷ even the title suggests another type of entertainment. The main protagonist is a girl called Alice, who likes reading about her famous predecessor who had adventures in

14 It is notable that neither the pupils' exercises in the aforementioned textbook nor the teacher's guide book corresponding to the textbook mention Antiquity. The fragment of Boulotis's story is used only to teach the rules of narration: how to reconstruct the sequence of events in a story.

15 See Laurajane Smith, "Taking the Children: Children, Childhood and Heritage Making," in Kate Darian-Smith and Carla Pascoe, eds., *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2013), 107–125, esp. 115.

16 Christos Boulotis, *Ο Πινόκιο στην Αθήνα / Ο Pinokio sten Athena* [Pinocchio in Athens], illustrated by Vasilis Papatsarouchos (Athens: Polaris Ekdoseis, 2013).

17 Such a remark may be commonplace in a world in which illustrators and picture books have won their position in literary criticism. It is not so in Greece, where book artists still fight for their rightful place and appreciation. Sofia Zarambouka is an important example, as she has published many books that she has both written and illustrated (e.g., twelve volumes of mythology for children).



FIGURE 8.3 Cover of Alki Zei's *Η Αλίχη στη χώρα των μαρμάρων* [*Alice in Marbleland*] ILLUSTRATED BY SOFIA ZARABOUKA (ATHENS: KEDROS, 1997), © BY METAI-CHMIO PUBLICATIONS S.A.

Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass*. The Greek Alice will also have adventures—but in the British Museum.

The book begins by introducing Alice, who lives just by the Ancient Greek Agora and whose balcony has a view of the Acropolis. Her uncle Angelos is:

[...] an archaeologist—and a passionate one, as everyone said. His greatest dream was to see the Parthenon marbles (let no one dare call them the Elgin Marbles!) removed from the British Museum, one by one, and returned to their original home in Greece. (7)¹⁸

18 Trans. Amy Mimis (Athens: Kedros, 1997), pages in the book are not numbered.

During the Easter holidays Alice travels with her uncle to London to see the marbles (the so-called Elgin marbles taken off the Parthenon by Lord Elgin at the beginning of the nineteenth century and treasured in the heart of the British Museum ever since). Alice and her uncle visit them in the afternoon as soon as they have checked in to their hotel. The next day, as Uncle Angelos has some things to do, he leaves Alice in the hotel, but she goes out and finds herself in the museum, in front of the marbles. There she meets a mysterious talking cat, which, like the Cheshire Cat, can disappear at will. It tells her that it is the descendant of Lord Elgin's cat. They have a talk about the marbles. Alice tells the cat about Lord Elgin, explaining how the marbles found their way to London. In her story Lord Elgin is a selfish dandy, a thief, and a miser, but also an unbelievably lucky devil. She explains how barbarous the process of claiming the marbles really was. The cat is convinced and offers Alice help in returning the marbles. She is supposed to take Polaroid pictures of the marbles, for the cat has a special substance which, when applied to the photographs, will transport the marbles from the museum to anywhere the photographs are placed. So Alice will take her photos to the Acropolis and use the substance to bring the marbles back to Greece. At the moment the cat has only a little portion, "only enough for the horn of the ox and for one ear of the horse" (33). But perhaps in the future things will be different?

The book explains to children an important problem in Modern Greek archaeology: the loss of important works of Greek Antiquity to foreign museums. Zei's work is dedicated to Melina Mercouri (1920–1994), the actress, singer, and eventually Minister of Culture, who put so much effort into trying to regain the marbles, so far with no success, although the new Acropolis Museum has a special hall, empty at the moment, that awaits the marbles. From Alice's story children also learn about the marbles themselves, about their former situation within the Parthenon, about the themes they depict, and so on.

The book, while emotional, is also quite informative and entertaining, especially if one knows and likes *Alice in Wonderland*. But the propaganda and political undertone that permeate the whole text can be a little offputting. Here yet another author decides to talk about Classical Antiquity using the language of strong emotions¹⁹ and it is not surprising, because "neither

19 Literary critics Peter Panaou and Tassoula Tsilimeni show that Zei's book can be read within the framework of national ideology, whose aim is not the glorification of the classical past but the reclaiming of its lost pieces. They also show that the book attempts a British-Greek reconciliation within this subject. See Peter Panaou and Tassoula Tsilimeni, "International Classic Characters and National Ideologies," in Christopher Kelen and

education nor literature is value-free,” as Judith Humphrey states in the opening line of her article on the image of girls in British children’s literature.²⁰ She then moves on to say that traditionally British education has been “strongly moral.” These intuitive judgements are very true for the Modern Greek case, as it is the easiest way to convey value and strengthen morality through evoking certain emotions.

Kira Sinou and Eleni Hook-Apostolopoulou published *The Hand in the Deep* (see figure 8.4) with the help of the illustrator Orion Akomanis, who is not as well-known as the previously mentioned illustrators—and to be frank—whose pictures are quite feeble. Nevertheless the book won many awards: the Silver Medal of the Greek Divers Federation, the Award of the Women’s Literary Company, the Award of the Journalists and Tourism Writers Union, and others. The awards, especially the first, say much about the book.

One of the writers, Hook-Apostolopoulou, is a diver, a professor of Greek studies who takes a professional interest in “scholarly” diving and has been a member of expeditions exploring old wrecks. The book tells the story of the discovery and excavation of the so-called Antikythera Treasure, the wreck found by the shores of the small Ionian island of Antikythera, performed mostly by Greek sponge divers from the Dodecanese island of Symi in the early years of the twentieth century.²¹ The most famous exhibits found were the bronze statue of Ephebe and the Antikythera Mechanism.²²

The book undertakes to tell young readers about the excavation and its aftermath. The main protagonists are a young diver named Tsabikos and Korinna, a girl from a wealthy Athenian family who takes part in the expedition along with the senior government officials and naval officers. At the end of the book we learn that the main narrator is the granddaughter of Korinna and Tsabikos. She finds Korinna’s diary and questions her grandfather to record his memories. The book is highly informative. It informs the reader about the divers, their customs and problems (especially “the bends”), and about the sea itself, its fauna and flora, and its dangers.

Björn Sundmark, eds., *The Nation in Children’s Literature: Nations of Childhood* (London: Routledge, 2013), 200–206.

20 Judith Humphrey, “Subversion and Resistance in the Girls’ School Story,” in Jenny Plastow and Margot Hillel, eds., *The Sands of Time: Children’s Literature: Culture, Politics and Identity* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), 25–48, esp. 25.

21 Kira Sinou and Eleni Hook-Apostolopoulou, *To χέρι στο βυθό / To heri sto bytho* [The hand in the deep] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1988), 165.

22 The Antikythera Treasure was exhibited until August 2013 at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

από την Ιστορία

νεανική βιβλιοθήκη

ΚΙΡΑ ΣΙΝΟΥ
ΕΛΕΝΗ ΧΟΥΚ-ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

ΤΟ ΧΕΡΙ ΣΤΟ ΒΥΘΟ



FIGURE 8.4 Cover of Kira Sinou's and Eleni Hook-Apostolopoulou's *Το χέρι στο βυθό* [*The hand in the deep*]

ILLUSTRATED BY ORION AKOMANIS (ATHENS: KASTANIOTIS, 1988), © BY KASTANIOTIS.

Readers also learn about Athenian highlife, and meet some high-profile figures like the then Minister of Education, or the famous scholar Panagiotis Kavvadias (1849–1928). They also hear about emerging social problems like the fight for women’s suffrage. There are some historical digressions, for example about the Cretan Insurrection in 1897. Finally, readers receive a lot of information on the wreck itself and on its treasures. The heroes take part in some of the action, especially Tsabikos, who is actually the one who finds the treasure (represented by the “hand literally sticking out of the sea bottom,” 26²³). But they are more a background, a pretext to present the whole story. In fact at the beginning of the book the authors clearly state what is true and what is fictional.

The propaganda that dominated the first two books is here much more discreet, but I will note two striking examples:

Then I told her about Symi, which was still Turkish then [...]. Korinna did not know what slavery [σκληρία / sklabilia] was, because she was born in free Athens and I did not know what freedom was, because I was born in enslaved Symi. I felt freedom only when I left with my ship for the open sea. There, in the boundless seas, there was no slavery [σκληρία / sklabilia] and no Turkey [Τουρκία / Tourkia]. (134)

These last two words actually neatly rhyme in Greek and bring out the message even more; but there is no evidence of Classical Antiquity here. It is presented in the next fragment:

‘[These findings] have even more meaning, because they will be one of the first, let’s say, “excavations” done exclusively by our own people.’
 ‘Why, father? Were there no excavations performed by Greek archaeologists?’
 ‘Unfortunately, only in a very few cases. Mycenae was discovered by Schliemann. Excavations in Olympia were led by the Germans. The French found the Charioteer when they were digging in Delphi. And Evans, who discovered unprecedented civilisation in Crete, is an Englishman. Only Mr. Kavvadias, who visited our home the other day, did some excavating in Epidauros and on the Acropolis, where he discovered the true treasure: the famous *korai* and Three-Headed Daemon. [...] Besides, from what I know these will be the first archaeological investigations to take place under water.’ (63)

23 All translations from this book—P.K.

In the first passage we experience a touch of nationalism, the well-known rhetoric that “Turkish rule was the Dark Ages for the Greeks.” The second is much nobler, and in my opinion states an important reason for the significance of the Antikythera findings. Not only is the treasure great and without comparison, not only will it finally be the Greeks that discover important aspects of their past, but this exploration will be the first of its kind. Finally, Greece will excel in what should be her “speciality”—in archaeology.²⁴

I must admit that in the above books I failed to find what I was looking for: they did not manifest any coherent (and advanced) way of teaching about the past.²⁵ I have found, however, some unexpected threads, like the use of the past to promote present political and national issues, to reaffirm Modern Greek identity, and to guide future endeavours (like the reclaiming of stolen heritage). The above sample is small²⁶ and it is difficult to present further

24 Such rhetoric by no means belongs to the past. Recently the striking announcement hit the Greek and then the world media that Greek archaeologists had discovered a tomb in Amphipolis (Eastern Macedonia) attributed to Alexander the Great’s wife and son. Regardless of the quality of the findings, the national hysteria that accompanied the discovery was remarkable, with it being dubbed a great triumph of “national archaeology.” See Georgios Hamilakis, *Από τη Βεργίνα στην Αμφίπολη: Πρώτα ως τραγωδία, μετά ως φάρσα* / *Arche from Vergina to Amphipolis: Protos as tragodia, meta os farsa* [From Vergina to Amphipolis: First as tragedy, later as farce], <http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2013/09/01/xamilakis-2/> (accessed Sept. 30, 2013).

25 On the other hand they are ideologised, which aligns with the thought of John Stephens who states that it is historical fiction for children that is “most radical ideologically,” see his *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), 202. Later (203) he admits that while writing historical fiction can be dangerous, he truly believes in the existence of “transhistorical human values” and he assumes that “human desires are reasonably constant,” thus strengthening our bond with the past. Therefore, a well-executed historical book for children is able to transmit a whole set of positive values, reaffirming the grasp of the past and reflecting eternal—as it seems—human nature, striving for happiness and a good life, regardless of restrictions, conditions, and other time-related factors. Moreover, “[i]t has long been an assumption of our culture that the essential purpose of writing both history and fiction is moral. [...] [Such a] novel will make sense in a thematic or symbolic way and will [...] produce closure” (236).

26 A preliminary survey suggested the conclusions that apart from retellings of Greek mythology and ancient works, or stories about time travel, there are only a few books for children with ancient themes; see, for example, Boulotis’s series on Pinocchio experiencing life in Ancient Athens or on Olympic Agon, the already evoked *Ο Πινόκιο στον Αθήνα*; Eleni Sarantiti, *Ο κήπος με τ’ αγάλματα* / *O kepos me t’ agalmata* [The garden with statues] (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1980). One reason for this may be the aforementioned absence of regular teaching on Antiquity in the first years of elementary school. The decision to introduce

conclusions beyond some questions for future research. Nikos Dimou (b. 1935), a famous Greek essayist, once said:

[Some Greeks] are like the sons of a famous philosopher who cannot understand his works, but who see that those who can respect these works and cherish them.²⁷

Through this little aphorism Dimou provokes a series of questions, which, in the present socioeconomic crisis, are more pressing than ever. How is it possible to be a Modern Greek citizen without retaining an inferiority complex (or a “victim syndrome”)? How is it possible to avoid being overshadowed by the past? How is it possible to use Classical Antiquity to make oneself a better Greek, who not only stands in reverent silence among the ruins, but who also dares to converse with them, to question them, or even to refute them?²⁸

Well, a good beginning, in my opinion, would be less emotional overtones, less politics, and more fun in books for children with ancient themes. Let them understand, the sooner the better, their privileged position among the ruins, and at the same time let them play among them, too.

Antiquity only to older children deprives younger children of the knowledge base needed to appreciate extracurricular books with ancient themes.

27 Nikos Dimou, *Η δυστυχία του να είσαι Έλληνας / E dystychia tou na eisai Ellenas* [The unhappiness of being Greek] (Athens: Patakis, 2014), aphorism 53 on p. 30 (trans. P.K.).

28 Tassoula Tsilimeni, in an entry that sums up postwar Modern Greek literature for children, is openly optimistic, as she states that the “didactic element has virtually disappeared”; see her “Greece. From 1945 to the Present,” in Hunt, *International Companion Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 1069–1071. I hope she is right, although three more modest examples show the—at least partial—existence of an ideological trait in such texts. And—as the example raised by Robert Dunban proves—ideologised historical discourse quickly becomes dated and soon these books will be unreadable or not deliberately funny. See Robert Dunban, “Ireland and Its Children’s Literature,” in Meek, *Children’s Literature and National Identity*, 79–88.

The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Polish Lexicography for Children and Young Adults

Ewa Rudnicka

The paper is devoted to references to Classical Antiquity in Polish dictionaries for children and young adults. The subject may seem uninteresting, but in fact the information and comments contained in dictionaries can be astonishing. And the issue is important, especially if we take into consideration the role of dictionaries in the education of young people, in conveying knowledge not only about a modern language, but also about ancient times. They are also important in shaping their consciousness of traditions and their attitudes toward their cultural heritage.

Dictionaries as Cultural Texts

It is not universally accepted that dictionaries—like literary works—are influenced by sociocultural factors, because traditionally dictionaries have been treated as purely practical and objective works (although they are clearly not objective). Indeed, the approach of scholars to lexicography has only begun to change recently in Poland. It is significant, for example, that Ewa Szczęsna included dictionaries under the category of cultural documents in 2002, even though her study provides no justification for such a categorisation.¹

Of course the cultural determinants in lexicography in some cases are obvious, but in others much less so. However, we can find something that may be called a *signum temporis* in every dictionary. Ulrike Hass, the editor of an impressive book about European lexicography,² simply and logically justifies the necessity of taking this factor into account in contemporary metalexicographical studies:

Research on lexicography has to include the cultural background and its impact on lexicographical methodology, because lexicographers as well

1 See Ewa Szczęsna, ed., *Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury. Terytoria słowa* [The dictionary of notions and texts of culture. Territories of the word] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 2002), 260–261.

2 See Ulrike Hass, ed., *Große Lexika und Wörterbücher Europas* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

as dictionary users are social beings and dictionaries are texts which have communicative functions.³

But it is not enough to say that sociocultural factors influence the shape and content of dictionaries. Rather, this is a two-way relationship. Dictionaries also influence their users, and thus indirectly influence linguistic and extra-linguistic reality. We need to keep in mind that dictionaries are the products of specific people who, while they admittedly do not have the same freedom of expression as other writers, can nevertheless create new meanings of words, annihilate meanings, or even remove words which they deem unnecessary. And what is more, they can also manipulate someone else's texts and in this way use persuasion on readers or even manipulate them, by taking advantage of the widespread belief in the objectivity of dictionaries.

Thus, on the one hand dictionaries bear the mark of time, place, culture, national customs, and sometimes even the mark of ideology (they "succumb" to reality), and on the other they influence and mould our linguistic awareness (they "shape" reality). They are important and interesting documents and mirrors both of the language as well as of the perception of culture and the world. They are also a specific means of intergenerational communication (because it is usually adults who prepare dictionaries for children and young people). And young readers are a special kind of audience.

Polish Monolingual Dictionaries for Children and Young People

Polish monolingual lexicography for children and young adults is quite diverse so far as the types of dictionaries and their level of difficulty is concerned. The decision about choosing proper research materials therefore needs to be preceded by a very careful study of the content of library catalogues.

There are three hundred and two books categorised as dictionaries for children (aged approximately 0–6) in the catalogue of the National Library of Poland, however, this number considers not only first editions but all editions

3 Ulrike Hass, *In Search of the European Dimension of Lexicography*, plenary paper, held at the Fifth International Conference for Historical Lexicography and Lexicology, Oxford, St. Anne's College (June 16–18, 2010), 1, online: http://www.linse.uni-due.de/linse/tagungen/Hass_European-dimension-of-lexicography_SHORT_FINAL-VERSION_fer_LINSE.pdf (accessed Nov. 6, 2015, link no longer active, but see: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275407101_In_search_of_the_European_dimension_of_lexicography_Plenary_Paper, accessed Sept. 2, 2016).

taken together.⁴ Moreover, most of these books are simple pictorial dictionaries for very young children, usually translated into Polish from foreign languages (mostly English, French, and Spanish). Among these books, one is outstanding. This is the dictionary compiled by Maria Krajewska entitled *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik* [My first real dictionary]. In this dictionary illustrations do not play the crucial role, but simple full-sentenced definitions accompanied by contextualised examples of usage.⁵

There are in all two hundred and thirty items in the Polish National Library catalogued as dictionaries intended for school age children and young adults (aged approximately 6–18). This may sound like a large number, but if we take into account that some of them are new editions or adaptations of earlier published books, then the field is narrowed considerably, especially given the significant fact that spelling dictionaries predominate among Polish school dictionaries. There are of course various types of school dictionaries such as general dictionaries, dictionaries of synonyms, dictionaries of foreign or difficult words, dictionaries of punctuation, dictionaries of idioms, etymological dictionaries, dictionaries of correct Polish language, and, finally, thematic/specialised dictionaries from fields such as grammar, history, and economics. This variety is a sign of the appropriate development of Polish school lexicography.

In order to maintain the relative uniformity of the tested material we decided to carry out preliminary research on general dictionaries of the Polish language. Detailed analyses were made of the following seven dictionaries:

1. Małgorzata Iwanowicz and Edward Polański, *Szkolny słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Nie tylko dla uczniów* [A thematic school dictionary of Polish. Not only for school students] (Łódź, 2011);
2. Małgorzata Kita, Edward Polański, *Słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Człowiek w krainie słów* [A thematic dictionary of Polish. People in the land of words] (Warsaw, 2002);
3. Zofia Kurzowa and Halina Zgólkowa, *Słownik minimum języka polskiego. Podręcznik do nauki języka polskiego dla szkół podstawowych i obcokrajowców* [A minimum dictionary of Polish. A textbook for learning Polish in primary schools and for foreigners] (Poznań, 1992);
4. Maria Krajewska, *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik* [My first real dictionary] (Warsaw, 2000);

4 Nevertheless the number allows us to realise the flourishing and growing publishing market of lexicography for children in Poland.

5 See Maria Krajewska, *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik* [My first real dictionary] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, 2000).

5. Bogusław Dunaj, ed., *Szkolny słownik języka polskiego* [A Polish language school dictionary] (Warsaw, 2008);
6. Mirosław Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia* [The school student's big dictionary] (Warsaw, 2006);
7. Ewa Dereń, Tomasz Nowak, and Edward Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami* [Dictionary of Polish with proverbs and idioms] (Warsaw, 2009).

The aim of the preliminary surveys of the dictionaries was to excerpt all entries containing any mention of ancient heritage. Thus we analysed not only the words and their definitions, but also all other elements of the dictionary's microstructure.

Our Analysis of the Dictionaries' Content

Although our preliminary research covered only one type of dictionary, the analysed material turned out not to be truly comparable. This is because the dictionaries were different in terms of size, number of entries, and especially in terms of their microstructure, which made a proper comparison difficult:

Dictionary	Number of entries	Volume (number of pages)	Structure
M. Iwanowicz and E. Polański, <i>Szkolny słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Nie tylko dla uczniów</i> [A thematic school dictionary of Polish. Not only for school students]	100	183	thematic arrangement, descriptive definitions, examples of usage in the form of aphorisms
M. Kita and E. Polański, <i>Słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Człowiek w krainie słów</i> [A thematic dictionary of Polish. People in the land of words]	15,000	447	thematic arrangement, non-definitional dictionary, examples of usage in the form of aphorisms

Dictionary	Number of entries	Volume (number of pages)	Structure
Z. Kurzowa and H. Zgółkowa, <i>Słownik minimum języka polskiego. Podręcznik do nauki języka polskiego dla szkół podstawowych i obcokrajowców</i> [A minimum dictionary of Polish. A textbook for learning Polish in primary schools and for foreigners]	1,520	215	alphabetical arrangement, descriptive definitions, examples of usage in the form of made-up sentences
M. Krajewska, <i>Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik</i> [My first real dictionary]	6,000	560	alphabetical arrangement, full-sentenced definitions, examples of usage in the form of made-up sentences
B. Dunaj, ed., <i>Szkolny słownik języka polskiego</i> [A Polish language school dictionary]	25,000	639	alphabetical arrangement, descriptive definitions, no examples
M. Bańko, ed., <i>Wielki słownik ucznia</i> [The school student's big dictionary]	50,000	2,628	alphabetical arrangement, full-sentenced definitions, examples of usage in the form of sentences taken from corpus
E. Dereń, T. Nowak, and E. Polański, <i>Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami</i> [Dictionary of Polish with proverbs and idioms]	20,000	526	alphabetical arrangement, descriptive definitions, examples of usage in the form of made-up sentences

We begin our analysis with thematic dictionaries.

A *Thematic School Dictionary of Polish. Not Only for School Students* by Iwanowicz and Polański and *A Thematic Dictionary of Polish. People in the Land of Words* by Kita and Polański differ the most from the set of dictionaries we analysed, though they are similar to each other. These dictionaries are different because they have a thematic—and not a typical alphabetical—organisation. The fundamental characteristic of these dictionaries is that they show semantic relations between words and do not provide definitions, nor do they make typical use of sentence examples. Instead, the authors use aphorisms and proverbs.

The material referring to Classical Antiquity is rather scant in both dictionaries. But we ought to remember that both dictionaries are small. In the dictionary by Kita and Polański the description of twenty thematic fields contains about forty words concerning Antiquity, for example *Nestor* [Nestor] (in the category “people of various ages”); *Pola Elizejskie* and *Tartar* [the Elysian Fields and Tartarus] (in the category “locations of the dead”); *ścięgno Achillesa* [Achilles’ tendon] (in the category “musculoskeletal system”); *pięta Achillesa* [Achilles’ heel] (in the category “parts of the body in expressions”); *wenerologia* and *mitość lesbijska* [venereology and lesbianism] (in the category “knowledge about sexuality and eroticism”); *kompleks Edypa*, *kompleks Elektry*, *narcyzm* [Oedipus complex, Electra complex, and narcissism] (in the category “mental life”); *deus ex machina* and *katharsis* (*deus ex machina* and *catharsis* in the category “tragedy”); *helikon* [helicon] (in the category “instruments”); and *Herkules*, *homerycki śmiech*, *prometejski*, and *safizm* [Hercules, Homeric laughter, Promethean, and sapphism] (in the category “literary eponyms”). The words’ definitions are not supplied, and the only hint for guessing the meaning is the name of the semantic field in which the words appear.

Furthermore, the dictionary presents aphorisms that illustrate the meaning of the words. There are over forty of this kind of sentence ascribed to classical writers, speakers, rulers, or philosophers, among them Agrippa, Aristotle, Cicero, Epicurus, Euripides, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Horace, Julius Caesar, Ovid, Pythagoras, Seneca the Elder, and Socrates. However, the aphorisms not only accompany the words that are formally related to them (which means using a particular word), but also words that are semantically related to them (which means using any word that is semantically close to a particular entry), for example:

entry: *śmierć*—example: *Nie wszystkim umrę. Horacy*⁶
[entry: *death*—example: *I shall not wholly die. Horace*];

6 Małgorzata Kita and Edward Polański, *Słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Człowiek w krainie słów* [A thematic dictionary of Polish. People in the land of words] (Warszawa: Grafpunkt, 2002), 13 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

entry: *wiedza*—example: *Nie wystarczy dużo wiedzieć, aby być mądrym. Heraklit*⁷

[entry: *knowledge*—example: *It is not enough to know a lot to be wise. Heraclitus*];

entry: *odpoczynek*—example: *Jak miło spocząć w położystej trawie lub pod cienistym dębem starym. Horacy*⁸

[entry: *rest*—example: *How nice to sit down on the lush grass or under a shady old oak. Horace*];

entry: *brzydota*—example: *Nawet najbrzydsza kobieta jest zadowolona ze swego wyglądu. Owidiusz*⁹

[entry: *ugliness*—example: *Even the ugliest woman is happy with her looks. Ovid*];

entry: *chciwość*—example: *Chciwemu zawsze mało. Horacy*¹⁰

[entry: *greed*—example: *He who is greedy is always in want. Horace*].

We can find similar solutions in the dictionary by Iwanowicz and Polański. *A Thematic School Dictionary of Polish. Not Only for School Students* is a small dictionary and contains only words relating to three thematic spheres: time, space, and human beings. In the dictionary the authors note individual words, their attributive expressions (usually adjectives), and the usage of the words in sentences as well as some idioms that include the words.

There are eight words with definitions concerning Classical Antiquity. All of them are proper names (seven concerning time, one concerning human beings) with brief and simplified explanations, for instance:

Chronos (gr. 'czas') [w mitologii greckiej bóg uważany za uosobienie Czasu; bóg wszytkowiedzący]¹¹

[*Chronos* (gr. 'time') [in Greek mythology a god regarded as the personification of Time; an omniscient god]];

Ananke (gr. 'konieczność')—w mitologii greckiej matka Mojr i Adrastei, personifikacja przeznaczenia i konieczności¹²

7 Ibid., 214.

8 Ibid., 243.

9 Ibid., 250.

10 Ibid., 262.

11 Małgorzata Iwanowicz and Edward Polański, *Szkolny słownik tematyczny języka polskiego. Nie tylko dla uczniów* [A thematic school dictionary of Polish. Not only for school students] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Literatura, 2011), 17 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

12 Ibid., 47.

[*Ananke* (gr. 'necessity')—in Greek mythology the mother of the *Moirai* and *Adrasteia*, the personification of destiny and necessity];

Fortuna—w mitologii rzymskiej bogini kierująca ludzkimi losami, odpowiednik greckiej bogini *Tyche*, personifikacja losu; pot. *Los*¹³

[*Fortune*—in Roman mythology the goddess who controlled human fate, the equivalent of the Greek goddess *Tyche*, the personification of fate; colloquially *Fate*];

Psyche [w mitologii greckiej personifikacja duszy ludzkiej przedstawiana jako młoda dziewczyna ze skrzydłami motyla]¹⁴

[*Psyche* [in Greek mythology the personification of the human soul portrayed as a young girl with butterfly wings]].

In these descriptions we can clearly see that Greek mythology is treated with primary importance; when a Roman character is described, its Greek equivalent is always given, although this rule does not apply in the opposite situation.

In addition, the dictionary contains thirty quotations by various classical authors (sometimes given in Polish and Latin), several anonymous classical Latin adages, and one quotation from Marcin Punpur's¹⁵ essay in which he mentions Thales (of Miletus) and Xenophanes (of Colophon):

Uroda cieszy tylko oczy, dobroć jest wartością trwałą. (Safona) (entry: *uroda*)¹⁶

[*Beauty only delights the eye, goodness is a lasting value. (Sappho)* (entry: *beauty*)];

Nadmiar snu męczy, zbyt długi odpoczynek staje się cierpieniem. (Homer) (entry: *wypoczynek*)¹⁷

[*An excess of sleep is tiring, excessive rest becomes suffering. (Homer)* (entry: *rest*)];

Łatwo przychodzi wiara w to, czego się pragnie. (Owidiusz) (entry: *wiara i religia*)¹⁸

[*It is easy to believe in what we desire. (Ovid)* (entry: *belief and faith*)];

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 143.

15 Marcin Punpur is an economist and philosopher, and one of the hundreds authors who publish their essays on the portal www.racjonalista.pl (accessed Sept. 2, 2014), which propagates rational thinking.

16 Iwanowicz and Polański, *Szkolny słownik tematyczny języka polskiego*, 115.

17 Ibid., 133.

18 Ibid., 148.

*Tak przemija chwala (tego) świata (łac. Sic transit gloria mundi) (entry: przemijanie)*¹⁹

[*Thus passes the glory of (this) world (Lat. Sic transit gloria mundi) (entry: passing away)*];

*Surowe prawo, ale prawo. (łac. Dura lex, sed lex) (entry: prawo)*²⁰

[*The law is harsh, but it is the law. (Lat. Dura lex, sed lex) (entry: law)*];

*Jeśli Tales był prekursorem nauki, to Ksenofanesa (obok sofistów) możemy uznać za prekursora racjonalizmu. (M. Punpur) (entry: prekursorzy)*²¹

[*If Thales was the precursor of science, then Xenophanes (along with the sophists) may be treated as the precursor of rationalism. (M. Punpur) (entry: precursors)*].

Using aphorisms by ancient authors to illustrate Polish entries is quite unusual in Polish lexicography today, although a long time ago in Polish dictionaries (at that time Latin–Polish or Polish–Latin) it was the wise ancients who offered their witty sentences to illustrate the meaning of words! Indeed, Cicero, Horace, Ovid, or Terence were often mentioned on the pages of dictionaries by Jan Mączyński²² or Grzegorz Knapius,²³ but these dictionaries were bi- or multilingual, and the ancients were the only authors cited, while today they resonate with the voices of many others, such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Albert Camus, Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin, Sigmund Freud, Nikolai Gogol, Leszek Kołakowski, Stanisław Jerzy Lec,²⁴ Abraham Lincoln, Blaise Pascal, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Arthur Schopenhauer, George Bernard Shaw, Stendhal, Jan Sztudynger,²⁵ Kurt Tucholsky, Ivan Turgenev, Voltaire, and Oscar Wilde. But that ought to come as no surprise since time passes and people have cleverer and cleverer things to say.

The rest of the dictionaries have structures typical of dictionaries. Nevertheless, two of them are worthy of separate comment.

19 Ibid., 44.

20 Ibid., 171.

21 Ibid., 30.

22 See Jan Mączyński, *Lexicon Latino-Polonicum ex optimis Latinae linguae scriptoribus concinnatum* (Regiomonti Borvssiae: excvdebat [...] Ioannes Davbmannvs, [post] 1564).

23 See Grzegorz Knapius, *Thesaurus Polonolatinograecus* [...] (Cracoviae: typis Francisci Caesarij, 1621).

24 Stanisław Jerzy Lec (1909–1966) was a Polish poet and one of the most influential aphorists of the twentieth century, known for his lyrical poetry and sceptical philosophical-moral aphorisms, often with a political subtext.

25 Jan Sztudynger (1904–1970) was a Polish poet and satirist. He was best known for his epigrams and enjoyed enormous popularity in Poland after WWII.

A Minimum Dictionary of Polish Language. A Textbook for Learning Polish in Primary Schools and for Foreigners by Kurzowa and Zgółkowa²⁶ differs slightly from the other dictionaries under examination, because the entries in this dictionary were selected from Polish lexis using the criterion of text frequency in five basic stylistic variants of Polish which means that only the most common Polish words are found in this dictionary and there is in fact no place for any allusions to Classical Antiquity. Even if the entry called for any mention of ancient culture, the rarity of using that word with such a meaning or context caused this meaning (or context) to be omitted. An example of such a case is the word *konsul* [consul], which has three meanings in Polish: 1. “an official appointed by a government to reside in a foreign country to represent the commercial interests of citizens of the appointing country”; 2. “either of two annually elected chief magistrates of the Roman republic”; 3. “one of three chief magistrates of the French Republic from 1799 to 1804.”²⁷ But in Kurzowa and Zgółkowa’s dictionary we can only find one definition of that word—“an official appointed by a government to reside in a foreign country.”

Another dictionary, *My First Real Dictionary* by Krajewska, is intended for pupils who are starting their school (*nomen omen*) odyssey, which in Poland means children aged from six to nine. This is a unique dictionary, because it is largely based on common thinking and cultural stereotypes, as can occasionally be seen in the definitions. For example:

Alkohol to mocny płyn, który znajduje się w wielu lekarstwach i w niektórych napojach, np. w wódce (entry: *alkohol*)²⁸

[*Alcohol is a strong liquid that is found in many medications and certain drinks, such as vodka* (entry: *alcohol*)];

Ludzie wierzą, że anioł to bardzo dobra, niewidzialna istota, która służy Bogu (entry: *anioł*)²⁹

26 Zofia Kurzowa and Halina Zgółkowa, *Słownik minimum języka polskiego. Podręcznik do nauki języka polskiego dla szkół podstawowych i obcokrajowców* [A minimum dictionary of Polish. A textbook for learning Polish in primary schools and for foreigners] (Poznań: Kantor Wydawniczy SAWW, 1992).

27 Stanisław Dubisz, ed., *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* [The universal dictionary of Polish] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2003); Mirosław Bańko, ed., *Inny słownik języka polskiego* [The different dictionary of Polish] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000); Bogusław Dunaj, ed., *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego* [The dictionary of contemporary Polish] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996); and others.

28 Krajewska, *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik*, 16 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

29 *Ibid.*, 17.

[*People believe that an **angel** is a very good, invisible being who serves God (entry: *angel*)*];

*Asfalt to czarna masa, którą pokrywa się jezdnie (entry: *asfalt*)*³⁰

[*Asphalt is a black mass that covers the roads (entry: *asphalt*)*];

*Kiedy chłopcy się biją, to uderzają i popychają jeden drugiego (entry: *bić się*)*³¹

[*When boys **fight**, they hit and push each other (entry: *to fight*)*].

However, the stereotypical thinking used in the dictionary is especially clear in the sentences that illustrate definitions and show the usage of words. For example:

*Każda mama boi się o swoje dzieci (entry: *bać się*)*³²

[*Every mum worries about her children (entry: *to worry*)*];

*Mama ugotowała dobry obiad (entry: *dobry*)*³³

[*Mum cooked a good dinner (entry: *good*)*];

*Tata wbija gwóźdź w ścianę (entry: *gwóźdź*)*³⁴

[*Dad is hammering the nail into the wall (entry: *nail*)*];

*Najładniejsze bajki opowiadał mi dziadek (entry: *bajka*)*³⁵

[*My grandfather used to tell me the most beautiful fairy tales (entry: *fairy tale*)*];

*Dziewczynki bawią się lalkami, a chłopcy lubią się bawić w wojsko (entry: *bawić się*)*³⁶

[*Girls play with dolls, and boys like to play soldiers (entry: *to play*)*].

Moreover, the dictionary is written with empathy and includes a child's point of view. This is apparent in numerous examples like these:

*Najbardziej lubię budyń czekoladowy (entry: *budyń*)*³⁷

[*I like chocolate pudding most of all (entry: *pudding*)*];

*Bałem się wejść do ciemnego pokoju (entry: *ciemny*)*³⁸

[*I was afraid to go into the dark room (entry: *dark*)*];

30 Ibid., 19.

31 Ibid., 27.

32 Ibid., 21.

33 Ibid., 66.

34 Ibid., 118.

35 Ibid., 21.

36 Ibid., 24.

37 Ibid., 37.

38 Ibid., 50.

Nie cierpię szpinaku i matematyki (entry: *cierpieć*)³⁹
 [*I hate spinach and maths* (entry: *to hate*)].

Thus we find only a few isolated examples references to Classical Antiquity. Vocabulary referring to the classical world is generally not included in the dictionary (there are no *gladiator* [gladiator], *heros* [demigod], *muza* [muse], *faun* [faun], etc.). We find only some basic names connected with Classical Antiquity, and they are described in a very simple, schematic way adapted for the needs of young learners. For example:

amfiteatr to rodzaj teatru z widownią, którą tworzą siedzenia, znajdujące się jedne nad drugimi wokół sceny (entry: *amfiteatr*)⁴⁰

[*an amphitheatre* is a kind of theatre with an auditorium consisting of seats around a stage located one above the other (entry: *amphitheatre*)];

laur 1. *Laur* to drzewo o błyszczących zielonych liściach, rosnące w ciepłych krajach. 2. *Laur* to wieniec z tych liści, w dawnych czasach zakładany na głowę zwycięzcom olimpiad (entry: *laur*)⁴¹

[*laurel* 1. A *laurel* is a tree with glossy green leaves, growing in warm countries. 2. A *laurel* is a wreath made of those leaves, placed on the heads of the winners in ancient Olympic games (entry: *laurel*)].

Instead of the classical world, contemporary school reality is constantly mentioned there:

Pani dzieli klasę na dwie grupy (entry: *dzielić*)⁴²

[*The teacher divides the class into two groups* (entry: *to divide*)];

Co mamy na dzisiaj zadane? (entry: *dzisiaj*)⁴³

[*What's our homework for today?* (entry: *today*)];

Już po dzwonku, zaczynamy lekcję (entry: *dzwonek*)⁴⁴

[*The bell's rung, we are starting the lesson* (entry: *bell*)];

Boję się, że dostanę jedynkę z ostatniej klasówki (entry: *jedynka*)⁴⁵

[*I am afraid I will fail the last test* (entry: *fail*)].

39 Ibid., 51.

40 Ibid., 17.

41 Ibid., 177.

42 Ibid., 85.

43 Ibid., 87.

44 Ibid., 88.

45 Ibid., 133–134.

There are no mythological or ancient figures in this book, although there are many figures from fairy tales and children's literature (for example Asterix, the Basilisk, the Wizard of Oz, Little Red Riding Hood, Ferdinand the Bull, Bromba and Gluś,⁴⁶ Hansel and Gretel, Karolcia [Charlotte],⁴⁷ Cinderella, King Matt the First,⁴⁸ Winnie the Pooh, the Little Prince, the Moomins, Pinocchio, Plastuś [Plasticine Man],⁴⁹ Robin Hood, the Fisherman and the Gold Fish, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Waligóra and Wyrwidąb [Mountain Beater and Oak Tearer],⁵⁰ Zorro, the Frog Prince, dragons, etc.), and famous Polish people and other people who are world famous (Hans Christian Andersen, Frédéric Chopin,

46 Bromba and Gluś are small creatures who are heroes of the series of children's books written by Maciej Wojtyszko (b. 1946), which have long been popular in Poland especially in the 1970s and 1980s. The first book of that series (Maciej Wojtyszko, *Bromba i inni* [Bromba and others] [Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1975]) was included in the Polish official Canon of Books for Children and Young Adults under the patronage of the National Library of Poland and the Polish Book Society.

47 Karolcia is an eight-year-old girl who owns a magic blue bead which makes her dreams come true. She is the main character of two books for children written by Maria Krüger (1904–1999), the first of which was *Karolcia* [Charlotte] (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1959).

48 King Matt the First is a young boy who as a child becomes king after his father's death and tries to rule the kingdom in a unique way. He is the main character of two books for children written by Janusz Korczak (1878–1942): *Król Maciuś Pierwszy* [King Matt the First] (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1922); and *Król Maciuś na bezludnej wyspie* [King Matt the First on a desert island] (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1923).

49 Plastuś is the main character of books written by Maria Kownacka (1894–1982), the first of which is the novel *Plastusiowy pamiętnik* [Plasticine Man's journal] (Lwów–Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1936), and the hero of a popular Polish cartoon series. He is a small red man made out of plasticine, who lives in a pencil box owned by a small girl named Tosia.

50 Waligóra and Wyrwidąb [Mountain Beater and Oak Tearer] are legendary twin brothers who have extraordinary strength and save their kingdom from a dangerous dragon. They are the heroes of a traditional Polish fairy tale. There are many written versions of this story, see, e.g., Julian Krzyżanowski, ed., *Słownik folkloru polskiego* [The dictionary of Polish folklore] (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1965), 425. The most famous version of the story was recounted by Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki (1807–1879), a Polish folklorist and writer, in his *Klechdy. Starożytnie podania i powieści ludowe* [The legends. The old folk tales and narratives] (Warszawa: w Drukarni S. Lewentala, 31876; the 1st edition of 1837 was entitled: *Klechdy. Starożytnie podania i powieści ludu polskiego i Rusi* [The legends. The old Polish and Ruthenian folk tales and narratives], Warszawa: w Drukarni P. Babryckiego), 99–102; see also *Baśnie polskie* [Polish fairy tales], selected by Tomasz Jodełka-Burzecki (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1985), 21–22; as well by others, e.g., *Polskie baśnie i legendy* [Polish fairy tales and legends], selected by Grzegorz Leszczyński (Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2006), 6–9.

Pope John Paul II, Maria Konopnicka,⁵¹ Nicolaus Copernicus, Jan Matejko,⁵² Adam Mickiewicz,⁵³ Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Wit Stwosz [Veit Stoss],⁵⁴ Julian Tuwim,⁵⁵ Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Columbus, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Pablo Picasso). The omission of figures from Classical Antiquity is justified, however, because Polish children at the beginning of primary school are not usually taught about mythology or ancient history.⁵⁶ It is thus worth paying attention to those few examples concerning the world of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Usually such references can be found in examples showing the usage of a word in a typical context. For example:

boski to taki, który ma związek z Bogiem lub bogami. Ludzie ufają Boskiej dobroci. Starożytni Grecy wierzyli w boską moc Zeusa i innych bogów (entry: boski)⁵⁷

[divine is something that concerns God or gods. People trust divine goodness. The ancient Greeks believed in the divine power of Zeus and other gods (entry: divine)];

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- 51 Maria Konopnicka (1842–1910)—one of the most important poets of the Positivism period in Poland, the author of numerous poems and novels for children and youth. She was also a translator, journalist, and critic, as well as an activist for women's rights and Polish independence.
- 52 Jan Matejko (1838–1893)—a Polish painter known for paintings of notable historical Polish political and military events and a gallery of Polish kings (*Fellowship of the Kings and Princes of Poland*).
- 53 Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)—Polish national poet and a dramatist, essayist, publicist, translator, professor of Slavic literature, and political activist. The main representative of Polish Romanticism, he is often compared to Lord Byron and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
- 54 Wit Stwosz (also: Veit Stoss, ca. 1450–1533)—leading German sculptor, mostly in wood, whose career covered the transition between the late Gothic and the Northern Renaissance. He is best known for the altarpiece in St. Mary's Basilica in Cracow, Poland.
- 55 Julian Tuwim (1894–1953)—one of the most important poets of the interwar period in Poland, as well as a translator and a writer for and artistic director of many Polish cabarets. In 1919 he co-founded the group of Polish experimental poets named "Skamander." He was also admired for his contribution to children's literature. In 1935 he received the prestigious Golden Laurel of the Polish Academy of Literature.
- 56 Polish children are not taught about all the famous Polish people mentioned nor about other world-famous people either, but they could have heard of many of these figures from their parents or by taking part in cultural life; having heard about ancient figures is less likely.
- 57 Krajewska, *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik*, 31 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

bóg to istota, która żyje wiecznie i ma moc dużo większą od zdolności ludzi. Starożytni Grecy i Rzymianie mieli wielu **bogów** (entry: *bóg*)⁵⁸

[*a god is a being who lives forever and has far greater power than people. The ancient Greeks and Romans had many gods* (entry: *god*);

mit to historia, którą w dawnych czasach wymyślono po to, żeby wyjaśnić powstanie świata i ludzi. **Mit** o Demeter i Korze tłumaczy zmiany pór roku (entry: *mit*)⁵⁹

[*a myth is a story that was thought up in olden times to explain the origin of the world and people. The myth of Demeter and Kore explains the change of seasons* (entry: *myth*);

mitologia to zbiór mitów. Anka interesuje się **mitologią** grecką (entry: *mitologia*)⁶⁰

[*a mythology is a collection of myths. Anka is interested in Greek mythology* (entry: *mythology*);

olimpiada 1. **Olimpiada** to zawody sportowe, w których biorą udział sportowcy z całego świata, odbywające się co cztery lata w różnych miejscach świata. W dawnych czasach **olimpiady** organizowano co cztery lata w Olimpii (w Grecji) (entry: *olimpiada*)⁶¹

[*olympics* 1. *The Olympics are a sports event, involving athletes from around the world, held every four years in different places around the world.*

In ancient times, the **Olympics** were held every four years in Olympia (in Greece) (entry: *olympics*);

syrena 1. **Syrena** to wymyślona postać kobiety, która zamiast nóg ma ogon ryby. Czytałam o żeglarzach, którzy słyszeli śpiew **syren** (entry: *syrena*)⁶²

[*a siren* 1. *A siren is an imaginary figure of a woman who has the tail of a fish instead of legs. I read about sailors who had heard the song of the sirens* (entry: *siren*)].

However, the verbal references are not the only references to Classical Antiquity. The dictionary contains some pictures among which we can find some witty allusions to Graeco-Roman culture. Next to the entry *kolumna* [column] we see the picture of a contemporary loudspeaker (which in Polish is also called *kolumna*) standing on an Ionic column (see figure 9.1).

58 Ibid., 32.

59 Ibid., 207.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 261.

62 Ibid., 419.

kolumna 1. Kolumna to okrągły słup, na którym opiera się jakaś część budowli. **2.** Kolumny to komplet głośników.



FIGURE 9.1 *The entry kolumna [column] in Maria Krajewska's Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik [My first real dictionary] (WARSZAWA: WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN, 2000), 154, © BY WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN SP. Z O.O.*

The motif of a column also accompanies the entry *podstawa* [base], but in this case the similarity to the classical order of architecture is less obvious (see figure 9.2).

podstawa 1. Podstawa jakiegoś przedmiotu lub jakiejś budowli to ich dolna część, na której się one opierają. *Kolumna stała na okrągłej podstawie.* **2.** Podstawy jakiejś nauki to rzeczy w niej najważniejsze – te, które wszyscy powinniśmy znać. *Znając podstawy matematyki, możesz rozwiązywać zadania.* • Kiedy coś robimy na podstawie jakichś informacji lub decyzji, to opieramy się na nich – od nich zależy, co i w jaki sposób robimy. *Lepiej nie oceniał ludzi na podstawie ich wyglądu, możesz się pomylić.*



FIGURE 9.2 *The entry podstawa [base] in Maria Krajewska's Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik [My first real dictionary] (WARSZAWA: WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN, 2000), 304, © BY WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN SP. Z O.O.*

The part of a column identified in the dictionary as *podstawa* should technically be called *baza* in Polish. The name *podstawa* is rather colloquial.

Finally, we find a very interesting allusion, not connected with the content of the entry or colloquial connotations, next to the entry *porozumienie* [agreement] (see figure 9.3). In this picture ancient legionnaires (their helmets suggest that they are probably centurions) have thrown away their gear and are hugging each other. Of course children cannot precisely determine who these strange soldiers are.

The rest of the dictionaries are addressed to students aged 10 and older, so they contain much more vocabulary concerning the ancient world. The convention for mentioning Classical Antiquity is different in each of them, but there are some similarities. All three books: *A Polish School Language*

porozumienie 1. Ludzie, których łączy porozumienie, dobrze się rozumieją i mają podobne poglądy na wiele spraw. 2. Ludzie, którzy doszli do porozumienia, przestali się spierać. 3. Porozumienie to umowa między jakimiś osobami, państwami, instytucjami dotycząca jakiejś sprawy. *Po wojnie państwa, które brały w niej udział, podpisały porozumienie dotyczące warunków pokoju.*



FIGURE 9.3 *The entry* porozumienie [agreement] *in* Maria Krajewska's *Mój pierwszy prawdziwy słownik* [*My first real dictionary*] (WARSZAWA: WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN, 2000), 313–314, © BY WYDAWNICTWO SZKOLNE PWN SP. Z O.O.

Dictionary,⁶³ *The School Student's Big Dictionary*,⁶⁴ and *Dictionary of Polish with Proverbs and Idioms*,⁶⁵ include words and meanings referring to the ancient world; all of the dictionaries describe such words as *amfiteatr* [amphitheatre], *amfora* [amphora], *areopag* [Areopagus], *barbarzyńca* [barbarian], *egida* [aegis], *gigant* [giant], *gladiator* [gladiator], *heros* [demigod], and *muza* [muse]. Selected entries include:

egida Jeśli coś odbywa się **pod egidą** jakiejś instytucji, organizacji, rządziej osoby, to odbywa się pod jej opieką, zwierzchnictwem, kierownictwem lub wpływem. [...] (*W mitologii greckiej egida to tarcza Zeusa wykonana przez Hefajstosa*) (entry: *egida*)⁶⁶

[*aegis* If something is held **under the aegis** of some institution, organisation, or rarely persons, it is held under its care, control, management or influence. [...] (*In Greek mythology the aegis is the shield of Zeus made by Hephaestus*) (entry: *aegis*);

63 Bogusław Dunaj, ed., *Szkolny słownik języka polskiego* [A Polish language school dictionary] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Langenscheidt, 2008).

64 Mirosław Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia* [The school student's big dictionary], vols. 1–2 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006).

65 Ewa Dereń, Tomasz Nowak, and Edward Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami* [Dictionary of Polish with proverbs and idioms] (Warszawa: Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawniczo-Handlowe „Arti,” 2009).

66 Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia*, vol. 1, 361 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

gigant ‘w mitologii greckiej: istota o wielkiej sile, olbrzym’ (entry: *gigant*)⁶⁷
 [*giant* ‘in Greek mythology: a being of great strength, ogre’ (entry: *giant*)];
gladiator ‘zapaśnik walczący na arenie cyrkowej w starożytnym Rzymie’
 (entry: *gladiator*)⁶⁸
 [*gladiator* ‘a wrestler fighting in the circus arena in ancient Rome’ (entry:
gladiator)];
koturn ‘gruba podeszwa damskiego obuwia’: Nosić koturny. Buty na kotur-
 nach (entry: *koturn*)⁶⁹
 [*wedge* ‘a thick sole on women’s footwear’: To wear wedges. Wedge-heeled
 shoes (entry: *wedge*)];⁷⁰
legion ‘duże skupisko ludzi; ochotniczy oddział wojskowy’ (entry: *legion*)⁷¹
 [*legion* ‘a large cluster of people; volunteer troops’ (entry: *legion*)];
syrena ‘mitologiczna nimfa morska, demon morza, przedstawiana jako pół
 kobieta, pół ryba, wabiąca swym śpiewem żeglarzy i uśmiercająca ich’ (en-
 try: *syrena*)⁷²
 [*siren* ‘mythical sea nymph, demon of the sea, visualised as half-woman,
 half-fish, attracting sailors with her voice and then killing them’ (entry:
siren)];
trójząb ‘włócznia zakończona z jednej strony trzema ostrzami (zębami), z
 którą przedstawiany jest w sztuce Posejdon (Neptun)—bóg mórz w mitolo-
 gii antycznej’ (entry: *trójząb*)⁷³
 [*trident* ‘a three-pronged spear, which in art is an attribute of Poseidon
 (Neptune)—the god of sea in ancient mythology’ (entry: *trident*)].

We find the greatest number of such descriptions in *The School Student’s Big Dictionary* edited by Bańko—which should not surprise us considering the

67 Dunaj, ed., *Szkolny słownik języka polskiego*, 117 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

68 Dereń, Nowak, Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami*, 114 (English translations of the quoted entries—E.R.).

69 Ibid., 171.

70 In Polish *koturn* in one of its meanings is the equivalent of the Greek *kothurnos* or Latin *cothurnus* (meaning the high, thick-soled boot worn in Athenian tragedy—*buskin*). But this entry includes only one, more general and contemporary meaning and omits the meaning connected with Classical Antiquity.

71 Dereń, Nowak, Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami*, 184.

72 Dunaj, ed., *Szkolny słownik języka polskiego*, 472.

73 Ibid., 503.

size of the book. But all three dictionaries lack consistency in the selection of entries—some classical terms are included and some are not. Sometimes the selection can be justified for semantic reasons. For instance, all the dictionaries contain a description of *tunika* [tunic] and *toga* [toga, gown], but omit *chiton* [chiton]. But we need to remember that in Polish today *tunika* means not only the Roman garment but also a long, loose shirt worn with trousers or a tight skirt; likewise, in Polish *toga* means not only a loose, flowing outer garment worn by the citizens of ancient Rome, but also a contemporary loose cloak worn by lawyers, academics, and the like. In contrast, *chiton* in Polish refers only to the ancient Greek item of clothing. The reason for inclusion or omission of words therefore also concerns particular historical meanings connected with Classical Antiquity.

Dunaj's dictionary does not include any other references to ancient heritage, because the individual entries consist only of headwords, grammatical descriptions, and definitions. So all in all there are not many such mentions and they are just the terms and historical meanings of ambiguous words. It is especially a pity that there are no comments or even general hints about the ancient origins of many contemporary terms. For instance, the entries *gracja* [grace] and *amazonka* [Amazon, in reference to a woman who has had a mastectomy] look like this:

gracja 'wdzięk, urok, wytworność, lekkość' (entry: *gracja*)⁷⁴

[*grace* 'charm, allure, elegance, lightness' (entry: *grace*)];

amazonka 'kobieta z usuniętą piersią z powodu nowotworu' (entry: *amazonka*)⁷⁵

[*Amazon* 'a woman who has had a mastectomy' (entry: [*Amazon*] *woman after mastectomy*)].

The student using this book will thus associate neither the word *gracja* with the three Roman Graces, nor the Polish *amazonka* with the ancient female warriors.

Two other studies—Bańko's dictionary and that by Dereń et al.—include several other types of entries. Both books contain idioms referring to Classical Antiquity, which makes sense as learning new vocabulary in this area is obligatory in the older classes of primary school. (It is actually strange that the

74 Ibid., 124.

75 Ibid., 6.

publisher decided not to include idioms in Dunaj's *A Polish School Language Dictionary*.) In Bańko's dictionary not only are the meanings of these idioms well explained, but there are also brief comments making their origins clear:

Mówimy, że ktoś przekroczył Rubikon, jeśli podjął ważną i nieodwołalną decyzję. Wyrażenie książkowe. (Od nazwy oddzielającej Galię od Italii rzeki, którą Cezar przekroczył na czele swoich legionów, rozpoczynając wojnę domową) (entry: przekroczyć)⁷⁶

[We say that someone crossed the Rubicon, if he or she made an important and irrevocable decision. Formal (bookish) expression. (It derives from the name of the river separating Gallia from Italia which Caesar crossed at the head of his legions, thus beginning the civil war) (entry: to cross)].

In the dictionary of Dereń et al. such idioms as *miecz Damoklesa* [the sword of Damocles], *nić Ariadny* [Ariadne's thread], *objęcia Morfeusza* [the arms of Morpheus], *pięta Achillesa* [Achilles' heel], *puszka Pandory* [Pandora's box], *strzała Amora* [Cupid's arrow], and *węzeł gordyjski* [Gordian knot] are left without semantic explanations and generally without etymological hints. Even if such a reference occurs, it is generally so vague that it is hardly helpful, e.g., *Amor "postać mitologiczna"* [Amor "mythological figure"].⁷⁷

In both dictionaries we find proper names (such as Achilles, Amor, and Ariadne), explained in a concise, simple way. The descriptions Bańko gives are extremely informative and useful. They either clarify the reasons for creating metaphorical meanings of the eponyms or justify the forms and meanings of the idioms, including the names:

weneryczny Przymiotnik używany w następującym wyrażeniu. Choroby weneryczne to choroby zakaźne, przenoszone najczęściej przez kontakty seksualne z osobami chorymi, np. kiła lub rzeżączka. (Od imienia Wenery, rzymskiej bogini miłości) (entry: weneryczny)⁷⁸

[venereal Adjective used in the following expression. Venereal diseases are contagious diseases, usually transmitted through sexual contact with infected people, e.g., syphilis or gonorrhoea. (From the name of Venus, the Roman goddess of love) (entry: venereal)].

76 Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia*, vol. 2, 305.

77 Dereń, Nowak, and Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami*, 16.

78 Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia*, vol. 2, 966.

In contrast to Bańko's dictionary explanations, the ones provided by Dereń et al. are very vague, as mentioned earlier, although there are some good exceptions. For example:

pyrrusowy 'od imienia władcy Epiru—Pyrrusa, przen. o zwycięstwie okupionym wielkimi stratami': Pyrrusowe zwycięstwo (entry: *pyrrusowy*)⁷⁹
 [*Pyrrhic* 'from the name of the ruler of Epirus—Pyrrhus, figuratively about a victory paid for with heavy losses': *Pyrrhic victory* (entry: *Pyrrhic*)].

Unfortunately, both books lack consistency in providing such information; sometimes it is given and sometimes not. For example, explanations are missing in such entries as *afrodyzjak* [aphrodisiac], *jupiter* [spotlight],⁸⁰ or *prometejski* [Promethean]:

Afrodyzjak to środek wzmagający przyjemność lub aktywność seksualną (entry: *afrodyzjak*)⁸¹

[*An aphrodisiac* is a means of increasing pleasure or sexual activity (entry: *aphrodisiac*)];

Jupiter to reflektor dający bardzo intensywne światło, używany np. do oświetlania sceny teatralnej lub planu filmowego. W sali obrad rozjarzyły się jupitery (entry: *jupiter*)⁸²

[*A spotlight* is a floodlight giving a very intense light, used for example to illuminate a theatre stage or filmset. The spotlights came on in the conference room (entry: *spotlight*)];

prometejski 'uznający poświęcenie się jednostki dla dobra i szczęścia ogółu': Postawa prometejska. Prometejskie cierpienie (entry: *prometejski*)⁸³

[*Promethean* 'recognising the sacrifice of an individual for the good and happiness of humanity as proper conduct': a *Promethean attitude*. *Promethean suffering* (entry: *Promethean*)].

79 Dereń, Nowak, and Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami*, 344.

80 The Polish term for a spotlight (*jupiter*) derives from the name of the Roman god of sky and thunder.

81 Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia*, vol. 1, 9.

82 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 570.

83 Dereń, Nowak, and Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłowiami*, 323.

Finally, the mentions of Classical Antiquity which are given as dictionary exempla (or examples of usage) are the most interesting and important, especially if they occur in entries not connected or even associated with ancient culture. Occasionally, they appear in the dictionary by Dereń et al., but they can quite often be found in the well-honed phrases of Bańko's *The School Student's Big Dictionary*. Compare, for example.:

Badania Jana Parandowskiego nad mitologią (entry: *mitologia*)⁸⁴

[*Jan Parandowski's studies on mythology* (entry: *mythology*)];

Kolumny w porządku jońskim, doryckim, kompozytowym (entry: *porządek*)⁸⁵

[*The columns in the Ionic, Doric, and composite order* (entry: *order*)];

Wziął sobie za maksymę słowa Arystotelesa o złotym środku (entry: *maksyma*)⁸⁶

[*He took as his maxim Aristotle's words about the golden mean* (entry: *maxim*)];

Kto w bogów nie wierzy, niech nie czyta Homera—gromił Julian Apostata duchownych galilejskich (entry: *gromić*)⁸⁷

[*'Whoever does not believe in the gods should not read Homer; Julian the Apostate reprimanded Galilean clergymen* (entry: *reprimand*)];

Na Zeusa! Apollo przemawia przez usta tego pacholęcia! (entry: *przemówić*)⁸⁸

[*By Zeus! Apollo speaks through the mouth of this lad* (entry: *speak*)];

Atena trochę sobie z Odyseusza dworuje, ale bynajmniej nie potępia go (entry: *dworować*)⁸⁹

[*Athena gently makes fun of Odysseus, but she does not condemn him at all* (entry: *make fun of sb.*)];

84 Ibid., 209. Jan Parandowski (1895–1978)—Polish writer, essayist, and translator, and a professor at the Catholic University of Lublin (1945–1948). He was one of the best-known Polish authors of Greek and Roman mythology. He is also well-known for other works relating to Classical Antiquity. He was the president of the Polish PEN Club (from 1933) and vice president of PEN International (from 1962).

85 Dereń, Nowak, and Polański, *Słownik języka polskiego z frazeologizmami i przysłówkami*, 311.

86 Ibid., 196.

87 Bańko, ed., *Wielki słownik ucznia*, vol. 1, 473.

88 Ibid., vol. 2, 312.

89 Ibid., vol. 1, 329.

Tłumacz robi aluzję do podstępności, cechy Odysuseusza (entry: *podstępny*, subentry: *podstępność*)⁹⁰

[*The translator is making an allusion to insidiousness, a characteristic of Odysseus* (entry: *insidious*, subentry: *insidiousness*)];

Gra Orfeusza miękczyła serca bogów Hadesu (entry: *miękczyć*)⁹¹

[*Orpheus' playing softened the hearts of the gods of Hades* (entry: *soften*)];
Badacze ci, nawiązując do Arystotelesa, twierdzili, że jedną z konstytutywnych właściwości człowieka jest popęd do naśladowania rzeczywistości (entry: *konstytutywny*)⁹²

[*These scholars, referring to Aristotle, claimed that the desire to imitate reality was one of the constitutive properties of man* (entry: *constitutive*)];

Logika uczuć jest różna od logiki Arystotelesa (entry: *różny*)⁹³

[*The logic of feelings is different from Aristotle's logic* (entry: *different*)];
Wielu filozofów, od Platona począwszy, zamierzało reformować świat w imię swojej filozofii (entry: *począć*)⁹⁴

[*Many philosophers, beginning with Plato, intended to reform the world in the name of their philosophy* (entry: *begin*)];

Augustyn przystosował metafizykę Platona do prawd wyłożonych w Biblii (entry: *przystosować*)⁹⁵

[*Augustine adapted the metaphysics of Plato to the truths expounded in the Bible* (entry: *adapt*)];

Szyf wtacza na szczyt góry głaz, który zawsze stacza się z powrotem (entry: *wtoczyć*)⁹⁶

[*Sisyphus rolls to the top of a mountain a rock that always rolls back* (entry: *roll*)];

Władca bogów, Zeus, rozgarnął płaszcz chmur i ze szczytu Olimpu wejrzał na ziemię (entry: *wejrzeć*)⁹⁷

[*The father of the gods, Zeus, parted the mantle of clouds and looked upon the earth from the top of Mount Olympus* (entry: *look upon*)];

90 Ibid., vol. 2, 131.

91 Ibid., vol. 1, 847.

92 Ibid., vol. 1, 659.

93 Ibid., vol. 2, 507.

94 Ibid., vol. 2, 103.

95 Ibid., vol. 2, 374.

96 Ibid., vol. 2, 1048.

97 Ibid., vol. 2, 964.

Ptaki śpiewem rozgłaszały chwałę i piękność Artemidy (entry: *rozgłośić*)⁹⁸
 [*The birds trumpeted the glory and beauty of Artemis with their trilling* (entry: *trumpet*)];

Oślepienemu Edypowi będzie dana łaska powrotu (entry: *łaska*)⁹⁹
 [*The blind Oedipus will be given the grace of returning home* (entry: *grace*)];

Byłem zauroczony miłością Heleny i Parysa i zasmucony jej końcem (entry: *zauroczyć*)¹⁰⁰
 [*I was enchanted by the love of Helen and Paris and saddened by its end* (entry: *enchant*)];

Odgrzebywano miasteczko, jak Pompeje spod lawy, spod grubych warstw drobnego piachu (entry: *odgrzebać*)¹⁰¹
 [*A town was being unearthed, like Pompeii from under lava and from under thick layers of fine sand* (entry: *unearth*)];

Triumfalny przemarsz wojsk Cezara wywołał entuzjazm w mieście (entry: *triumfalny*)¹⁰²
 [*The triumphal march of Caesar's army evoked enthusiasm in the city* (entry: *triumphal*)];

Helleńskim patronem pasterzy był bóg Hermes (entry: *patron*)¹⁰³
 [*The god Hermes was the Hellenic patron of shepherds* (entry: *patron*)];

Tezeusz udał się na Kretę, aby uśmiercić Minotaura (entry: *uśmiercić*)¹⁰⁴
 [*Theseus went to Crete to slay the Minotaur* (entry: *slay*)];

Posepny Hades był bogiem potężnym i mądrym (entry: *potężny*)¹⁰⁵
 [*The gloomy Hades was a powerful and clever god* (entry: *powerful*)];

Uczyłem ich podstawowych praw fizyki, kładłem im do głowy Owidiusza i Horacego (entry: *głowa*)¹⁰⁶
 [*I was teaching them the basic laws of physics, and putting Ovid and Horace into their heads* (entry: *head*)].

98 Ibid., vol. 2, 463.

99 Ibid., vol. 2, 778.

100 Ibid., vol. 2, 1266.

101 Ibid., vol. 1, 1088.

102 Ibid., vol. 2, 833.

103 Ibid., vol. 2, 35.

104 Ibid., vol. 2, 926.

105 Ibid., vol. 2, 210.

106 Ibid., vol. 1, 446.

In *The School Student's Big Dictionary* there are a few hundred examples of this type. This may not seem like a lot when taking into consideration the book's volume (fifty thousand entries). However, it is worth remembering that this is a dictionary of contemporary Polish and it would be more natural to include examples referring to the present and recent events, such as the following:

Artystom będą towarzyszyć warszawscy filharmonicy pod dyrekcją Jerzego Katlewicza (entry: *dyrekcja*)¹⁰⁷

[*The artists will be accompanied by the Warsaw Philharmonic conducted by Jerzy Katlewicz* (entry: *conduct*)];

Czerwone ciątka krwi zużywają się w ciągu kilku tygodni, ale odtwarzają się stale w szpiku kostnym (entry: *odtworzyć*)¹⁰⁸

[*Red blood cells wear out within a few weeks, but they are constantly reproduced in the bone marrow* (entry: *reproduce*)];

Rolę księcia odtworzył pomysłowo Aleksander Zelwerowicz (entry: *odtworzyć*)¹⁰⁹

[*Aleksander Zelwerowicz played the role of the prince ingeniously* (entry: *play*)].¹¹⁰

The discussion of Classical Antiquity in such dictionaries and the presentation of it in a neutral or positive context is thus extremely valuable. Those sentences often suggest that ancient heritage is an important subject—no less valuable than physics. The only pity is that *The School Student's Big Dictionary* was not in fact written with students in mind; the book is a version of *The Different Dictionary of Polish*¹¹¹ created for general use and then slightly modified by the editor.

107 Ibid., vol. 1, 336.

108 Ibid., vol. 1, 1112.

109 Ibid.

110 Both Jerzy Katlewicz and Aleksander Zelwerowicz are outstanding figures in Polish cultural life. Jerzy Katlewicz (1927–2015) was a conductor, pianist, and a professor at the Academy of Music in Cracow since 1990. He is considered an excellent interpreter of oratorios and oratorian-cantata compositions. Aleksander Zelwerowicz (1877–1955) was an actor, director, theatre president, and teacher. The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art is named after him. He was one of the Polish “Righteous Among the Nations.”

111 Bańko, ed., *Inny słownik języka polskiego*.

Conclusions

Describing vocabulary referring to Classical Antiquity in a dictionary prepared for children or young adults is not an easy task. The problem is to determine the range of words and the type of information that should be given, especially in relation to linguistic information. In Polish dictionaries for children and young people we can find different types of references to ancient culture. But it is deeply disappointing that there are so few words concerning Classical Antiquity and described in the separate entries, especially if we realise how many ancient (mythological) motifs we can find in contemporary literature for young adults. There should definitely be many more such entries in Polish dictionaries.

The lack of entries and of details in the existing entries can be justified by the structure of the publication or sometimes by the needs and perceptual and communicational capacities of its readers. However, in books in which the lexicographers are able to exercise more freedom, they do so, which often makes for interesting and satisfying reading. The entries are prepared reasonably and show the logical evolution from literal meaning concerning Antiquity to metaphorical meaning popular in contemporary language. Unfortunately, however, lexicographers do not do this in a consistent manner and they evidently do not follow any precise rules.

And there is one thing in these dictionaries that we would not expect—the utterly unpredictable interspersing of the classical references in different entries that are not connected with Classical Antiquity: giving examples of usage mentioning different mythological motifs which are set in absolutely neutral entries. In Polish dictionaries for young adults—dictionaries with the simple practical purpose of explaining the meaning of words—it is quite uncharacteristic and very engaging. How can we explain this practice? There are several reasons, but the most important seems to be the generally typical didactic attitude of Polish lexicography, especially in books for young people. It embraces a schematic picture of the world and a clear axiological system. These dictionaries are not, then, only books that explain words, they also teach and communicate moral values—either directly (as in children's books) or in a somewhat disguised fashion. References to Classical Antiquity seem to be particularly useful in this regard.

PART 2

*The Aesop Complex: The Transformations of Fables
in Response to Regional Challenges*





Aleksandra Bąk, Rara avis (2012)

ILLUSTRATION CREATED AT THE WORKSHOP OF PROF. ZYGMUNT JANUSZEWSKI,
ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN WARSAW, © BY ALEKSANDRA BĄK

Our Fabled Childhood: Reflections on the Unsuitability of Aesop to Children

Edith Hall

Aesop's *Fables* occupy a uniquely important position in the history of modern children's literature, both in theory and practice. Aesop has regularly featured in theoretical discussions of the literature suitable for children, and selections of his *Fables* have been published in many more versions than any other ancient text including the *Odyssey*.¹ The English Enlightenment philosopher John Locke recommended Aesop for children in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693),² but he also published his own *Aesop's Fables, in English & Latin, Interlineary* (1703) for practical use in home education. Locke's interest in Aesopic fables as pedagogical material guaranteed that other prominent thinkers would turn their attention to these ancient morality tales, and consider whether they were really suitable for children. In this essay, which is unashamedly polemical, I develop my own response to this question. It is based less on my professional experience as a classical scholar, who has published on the consumption and understanding of the Aesopic *oeuvre* in Antiquity,³ than on my personal experience as an avid childhood reader and as a stepmother, mother, and aunt who has read often to several small but very different children. Just how suitable for children are Aesop's *Fables* in reality?

Skilled writers for children, ever since William Godwin's pathbreaking, imaginative, and hugely influential *Aesop, Fables, Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children from Three to Eight Years of Age*, which first appeared in 1805 under the pseudonym Edward Baldwin, have scored notable publishing successes with radically rewritten small collections of the ancient fables.

1 On which, see Edith Hall, *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey* (London–Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 26–27.

2 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. Charles Eliot, "The Harvard Classics" 37 (New York: Collier, 1910; ed. pr. 1693), 265. See further, Edith Hall, "Aesop the Morphing Fabulist," in Helen Lovatt and Owen Hodkinson, eds., *Changing the Greeks and Romans: Metamorphosing Antiquity for Children* (forthcoming).

3 Edith Hall, *The Theatrical Cast of Athens: Interactions between Ancient Greek Drama and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Ch. 11; Edith Hall, "The Aesopic in Aristophanes," in Emmanuela Bakola, Lucia Prauscello, and Mario Telo, eds., *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 277–297.

Godwin's combined household with his second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont, contained no fewer than five children, so it may not in practice have been difficult to find one to put on his knee. Godwin even placed a stone carving of Aesop on the lintel above the entrance at 41 Skinner Street, where he and his wife moved their juvenile library in 1807.⁴ Godwin made the fables far more attractive by shearing them of their stern "morals" and accompanying them with delightful visual illustrations. His example has been followed by innumerable authors ever since. But have all their efforts at surgical enhancement of the ancient fabulist really been worthwhile? Should the radical Godwin have heeded Locke less and paid more attention to the radical responses to Aesop he must have encountered in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tom Paine? For in *Émile, ou, de l'éducation* (1762), Rousseau had expressed the adamant opinion that Aesop can do a child far more harm than good. Children, Rousseau argues, have not achieved maturity in understanding what they read, and so it does not matter if a child, even at the age of fifteen, remains illiterate.⁵ Rousseau identifies the type of material generally given to children to read, but which simply wastes their time, as including the Bible and La Fontaine's versified version of the ancient fables (1668), which was in Rousseau's day the most popular text for teaching literacy in France. In fables, Rousseau claims, there is "nothing intelligible or useful for children," and anyway "reading is the plague of childhood."⁶ There are further problems, he warns, inherent in the fables as mental food for childhood thought: they give children a false sense of their own intellectual powers by allowing them to think they can decode the jokes. Worse, children often identify with the figure they perceive as the "winner" in the fables, such as the fox who flatters the crow to his self-advantage in *The Fox and the Crow*. Fables therefore encourage them to feel superior to other people and to attend to their own self-interest rather than the interests of the community.⁷ Tom Paine went even further than Rousseau in his denunciation of what we would call the ideological damage that Aesopic fables can do to the young mind. In *The Age of Reason*, Part II (1795), he stated that "with respect to Aesop, though the moral is in general just, the fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable

4 Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 273–274.

5 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: or, On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 117.

6 *Ibid.*, 113, 116.

7 *Ibid.*, 112, 115; see further Dennis M. Welch, "Blake and Rousseau on Children's Reading, Pleasure, and Imagination," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 35.3 (2011): 204–205.

does more injury to the heart, especially in a child, than the moral does good to the judgment.”⁸

Before deciding whether I fundamentally agree more with Locke and Godwin or with Rousseau and Paine, I must first clarify my own broad-spectrum theoretical view of children’s literature. My thinking has been fundamentally affected by a study of children’s books which has almost nothing to say about ancient Greek or Roman literature—Jacqueline Rose’s seminal *The Case of Peter Pan*, the first edition of which was published in 1984. Subtitled, provocatively, *The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, Rose uses J.M. Barrie’s immortal story *Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*, a 1904 stage drama first published as a novel in 1911, to support her argument that the very concept of children’s fiction is “impossible.” There is, she says, no body of literature which rests so openly on an acknowledged *difference* between writer and addressee. The adult writer addresses a child reader only as an acknowledged superior in age, education, and experience. This address has little to do with what a child might want, but a great deal to do with “what the adult desires—desires in the very act of construing the child as the object of its speech.”⁹ What is at stake in *Peter Pan*, which fixes its hero in a liminal state where he can never grow up, is the investment of adults in the idea of childhood, of a primitive, innocent, or lost state, a pre-sexual and natural (rather than cultural) state to which the child has special access. But this adult investment is a delusion: there is actually “no child behind the category of ‘children’s fiction,’ other than the one which the category itself sets in place.”¹⁰ When Locke or Godwin imagined children reading Aesop, the category “child” had emerged exclusively from their adult brains.

My second point concerns the convention of zoomorphic humans, or animals with human sensibilities and consciousness, a convention that holds a privileged position in culture produced for children generally. It is crucial to note that the animal protagonists in Aesopic fables deemed suitable for children are far more interested in food than in indulging other “animal” appetites. There is a marked lack of interest in sex, gender roles, and reproduction in the twenty or thirty Aesopic fables that are most often included in children’s editions. Jacqueline Rose would probably observe that this, while saying nothing at all about very young humans, says a good deal about what adults think

8 Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, in Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), vol. 1, 543.

9 Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children’s Fiction* (London—Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 2.

10 *Ibid.*, 10.

children ought *not* to be concerned with. But there is also, of course, the issue involved in making these animal protagonists talk to each other comprehensibly in human speech. There is no actual child behind the category of fiction for children, a category to which Aesop's *Fables* are commonly understood as belonging. There is only a *fantasy* child reader constructed by the adults rewriting the ancient tales. So why do we always assume that children want to hear fictional animals talking to one another at all? Most specialists in children's literature never ask themselves this intriguing question directly. In *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (1981), for example, Nicholas Tucker proposes a range of psychological functions that humanised animals can perform to the psychological benefit of the child reader: most importantly, he argues, children are protected from the pain of certain psychological scenarios—for example, the death of a parent—provided that the bereavement is suffered by an animal.¹¹ Famous examples include the elephant calf whose mother is shot by huntsmen in *The Story of Babar the Little Elephant* (originally *Histoire de Babar le petit éléphant* by Jean de Brunhoff, 1931), the fawn in *Bambi* who likewise loses his mother (the 1942 Walt Disney animated film was based on the novel *Bambi. Eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Walde* by the Austrian Felix Salten, 1923), and Simba the lion cub in Disney's *The Lion King* (1994), whose father Mufasa is killed early in the storyline.

But, *pace* Nicholas Tucker, in my personal experience, dressing the dying parent/bereaved child relationship up in animal form offers no protection whatsoever to emotionally sensitive children. The death of Mufasa in *The Lion King* upset one of my children so much, when she was six years old, that we had to leave the cinema.

So we need to ask why adults invariably assume that very small children want books about animals—that is, that they want to learn about human relationships through fictions enacted by non-human surrogates. It is not a good enough defence to assert that children “really do” like animals, however much documentary evidence can be accumulated of children happily consuming books or cartoons about animals, since children do not actually get the choice: from the day of their birth they are bombarded with heavy artillery of soft bunnies, squashy ducklings, blankets adorned with cows and sheep, and tactile teddy bears. They are taught from long before they can speak that they are supposed to smile if someone waves a cuddly stuffed animal or a spoon shaped like a duck in their tiny faces. So what we are talking about is not children's “natural” attraction to stories about animals, but adults' *acculturated desire* to

11 See Nicholas J. Tucker, *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

make their offspring smile at animals and consume stories about talking animals. This apparently obvious point bears closer examination.

Most “Aesopic” fables commonly reproduced for children feature talking animals, although many of the ancient fables available to us via the manuscript tradition feature exclusively human personnel. Here we have briefly to address the thorny problem of what constitutes the Aesopic text that finds itself, rather remotely, reproduced in books for children. Many different manuscript collections of fables have been preserved. As the most erudite classical philologist must admit, it is impossible conclusively to sort out what is an Aesopic fable as opposed to one preserved in the Latin collections of Phaedrus, or the fifth-century Avianus. The great scholarly collections of Émile Chambry (1927—the text applied by Olivia and Robert Temple in their useful Penguin edition of 1998) and Ben Edwin Perry (1952) each contain over three hundred. For these reasons, most people adapting the fables for children have not concerned themselves with the “original ancient text”—however that is to be defined and located—but with reprocessing previous modern-language versions. The usual number selected for children’s publications is between ten and thirty. The English-language edition (1999) by Sally Grindley (author of the bestsellers *Wake Up Dad!*, 1988, and *Shhh!*, 1999), illustrated by John Bendall-Brunello, is not untypical. It contains eighteen fables, including the hard core of favourites which are rarely omitted: *The Hare and the Tortoise*, *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Hare and the Hound*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, *The Fox and the Crow*, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, *The Jackdaw and the Doves*, and *The Mice in Council*.

The preference for the animal fables in children’s collections of Aesop is, to introduce my third point, closely related to the issue of *power*. The poet Eric Ormsby, acknowledging the huge cultural influence of children’s books, wrote in his review of Seth Lerer’s *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (2008), that “to shape the minds of the young through books is to exercise power over the future.”¹² And the *Fables* of Aesop, perhaps the most influential “children’s book” of all time, are transparently all about power. A large proportion of the most popular and often anthologised fables directly address the relationship between beings of disparate power, whether physical or intellectual. A good deal of them play on the theme of *force majeure*—for example, *The Wolf and the Lamb*, *The Hare and the Hound*, *The Eagle and the*

12 Eric Ormsby, “Out of Aesop’s Overcoat: Two Histories of Children’s Literature,” *The New York Sun*, June 18, 2008, available online at <http://www.nysun.com/arts/out-of-aesops-overcoat-two-histories-of-childrens/80183/> (accessed Nov. 20, 2015). See also Seth Lerer, *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago, Ill.—London: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Jackdaw. They demonstrate that it is simply *inherent in nature* that big powerful animals beat smaller weaker ones. Very closely related to these power fables is the group that underlines the stupidity or pointlessness of aspiring to things which are not naturally yours or are too good for you: *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, *The Fox and the Grapes*, and *The Cockerel and the Jewel*. Not dissimilar is the type that suggests that gratitude for what you have already secured is more sensible than trying to increase your possessions: a prime example here is *The Dog and the Shadow*. Another whole set, while recognising that some entities are naturally more powerful than others, suggest that cunning can help to even up the balance, most famously in *The Hare and the Tortoise*. A further strategy for dealing with discrepancy in power is a system of reciprocal favours, as in *The Lion and the Mouse* or *The Bat and the Weasels*. A corollary of these, however, is *The Gnat and the Bull*, which shows that small entities can *think* they are being noticed when they try to curry favour with the great, but *they may not even have been noticed at all*. There are also a disturbing number that stress that different groups are *naturally* irreconcilable—*The Jackdaw and the Doves*, for example—while others suggest that masses are not as effective as individual leaders: *The Mice in Council* and *The Frogs Who Wanted a King*.

So, what is going on here? Telling a very small child a fable entitled, for example, *The Lion and the Mouse*, is to attempt to impose a complicated piece of ideology about reciprocal favours between agents of radically disparate physical power. What we are doing is confusing, and this is the core of my argument in this essay. We are trying to drag children out of the natural world of *force majeure*, and into the world of human mechanisms for mitigating the imperative of *force majeure*. But we do so by demonstrating the nature of these mechanisms through examples from the non-human world where no such mechanisms are in operation. This process reveals our own deep ambivalence about the nature of the child, conceived as an animal, who needs to be acculturated as a human, through the twin mechanisms of speech and social contracts. I think it is inherently mystifying that we use animals, the very creatures from which we are trying to differentiate our children, to make this point. We do so by *fantasising* that they—animals—do indeed have speech and social contracts. That is the fantastic hypothesis we ask our children to accept when we offer them Aesop's *Fables*. And in justifying this peculiar practice, we take comfort in the authority that the *Fables'* great antiquity and classical provenance seem to bestow upon them.

Some introductions to collections of Aesopic fables even try to harness the idea that the fables were designed for ancient children, and so modern children who read them are just the latest generation to partake in a tradition of awe-inspiring Antiquity, imbibing through Aesop some “universal” and

time-transcending moral truths. But even the evidence that Aesop was a “children’s author” in Antiquity is extremely controversial. Although Aesop’s *Fables* are intricately bound up with the history of the teaching of literacy, literacy has not always been something normally or necessarily considered to be acquired exclusively in childhood. That the ancient Greeks and Romans saw Aesop as an author to be read as early as infancy just *may*, however, be implied by an important story in Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (5.15). The story reports that the art of fable was bestowed upon Aesop by Hermes, the god of words himself, because the Horai had told Hermes a fable about a cow when he was still in swaddling clothes; as he gave Aesop the gift, Hermes said, “You keep what was the first thing I learnt myself.”

Some critics make no bones about their view that there was children’s literature even in Graeco-Roman Antiquity, and that it included Aesop’s *Fables*: the structure and language used by Seth Lerer whenever he addresses Antiquity in his influential, aforementioned study, *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History from Aesop to Harry Potter*,¹³ imply that he recognises no distinction between one and the other. But, frustratingly, we cannot actually prove that Aesop was part of the curriculum of children until they were rather older, at a stage when class, status, leisure, and access to education begin to interfere with the picture in a society where literacy may have been as low as fifteen or twenty per cent of the total population. The composition of a fable (*muthos*) was certainly the first exercise attempted by students beginning their studies of rhetoric, and Quintilian (2.4.4) says that grammarians were beginning to encroach on the rhetors’ territory by teaching fable. Raffaella Cribiore has demonstrated the importance of Aesop in the Greek-speaking communities of Hellenistic and Roman ancient Egypt.¹⁴ She has also pointed to the significance for later centuries of the *Hermeneumata* or *Colloquia*, mediaeval school handbooks in Greek and Latin that probably derive from third-century Gaul; they are preserved in eight different manuscripts, were but originally composed by Eastern Greek teachers rooted in an ancient school tradition.¹⁵

In classical Greece, too, it is possible that Aesop was used to teach small children literacy, for example at Athens where citizens needed to be able to decipher at least basic civic documents. But we lack a clinching piece of evidence

13 See above, n. 12.

14 Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179–180, with the evidence of Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1996), nos. 230, 231, 232, 314, 323, 409, and 412.

15 Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 15.

that Athenian boys were taught to read with the help of written collections of fables. We do not even know whether a physical collection existed as early as the fifth century BC. The earliest certain recension and collection was made by Demetrius of Phalerum (perhaps during his regency at Athens of 317–307 BC), at least according to Diogenes Laërtius's biography of Demetrius (*Lives* 5.80). This collection, which has not survived, may have been a repertory of fables designed for consultation by rhetoricians (see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.20). The question of whether reading Aesop was primarily associated with the distinction between childhood and adulthood, or with sociocultural status, entirely depends on how we interpret particular passages in Aristophanes' *Birds* (466–475) and Plato's *Phaedo* (61b).¹⁶

Whether Aesop should be imagined as the literature of childhood *after* the invention of the printing press is also academically contested. Lerer, while arguing that Aesop must always have appealed to children, insists at the same time that "Europe's first printers used Aesop's fables not just to sustain a literary heritage or offer guidance to the young, but to affirm their own authority as makers of the texts of culture."¹⁷ During the 1470s and 1480s, Aesopic volumes with elaborate illustrations were among the very first books published in European vernaculars—German, French, and Caxton's influential English edition, with famous woodcuts, of 1484. One group is easily identifiable as designed for school work. A Latin school book printed between 1512 and 1514 by Wynkyn de Worde at Westminster is entitled *Aesopus. Fabule Esopi cum Comento* [*sic!*]. The title page woodcut shows a schoolmaster teaching three youths, who are seated on a school bench and holding books from which they read. These boys, however, are certainly not very young, and they are learning not English but Latin. Their Aesop is equivalent to that other mainstay of the mediaeval and early Renaissance school curriculum, *The Distichs of Cato*. Both Cato and this Aesop were enormously helpful in teaching Latin, the mother tongue of nobody by the time of Chaucer, and they were often treated as a pair.

The intended readership of the other early printed Aesops, those in modern languages, is unfortunately less easy to define. There is no hard and fast rule for distinguishing between those meant for the very young and those aimed at a much wider age group, including adults. Aesopic fables, with their suitability to visual illustration, have been used since even *before* the invention of the printing press to learn to read mother tongues as well as Latin or Greek, and have always been introduced much earlier in any individual's education. Here an important point needs to be reiterated. "Much earlier in any individual's

16 Hall, "The Aesopic in Aristophanes," 287–292.

17 Lerer, *Children's Literature*, 52.

education” does not automatically signify early childhood. The automatic connection of the act of learning to read with juveniles is itself a dangerous one to make when speaking of other times and places. Teaching tools for encouraging basic literacy are definitely not phenomena that can be studied under the exclusive heading of elementary children’s literature. People have always learned to read at all ages, especially in cultures with high levels of adult illiteracy, and have always acquired radically different functional levels of reading ability.

The high profile of Aesop’s *Fables* has also been supported by their relationship with Christianity. These morality tales were widely approved as constituents of the mediaeval and Renaissance syllabus partly because they were felt to be compatible, like the stoicism of Cato, with Christian ethics. Martin Luther changed the course of Aesopic history in terms of the attractiveness of the *Fables* to Protestants when he translated twenty of them in 1530, expressing his great admiration for them in the preface, and was urged by his collaborator Philipp Melanchthon to complete the whole. Gottfried Arnold, the celebrated Lutheran theologian, and librarian to Frederick I, King of Prussia, mentions that the great reformer valued the *Fables* of Aesop second only to the Holy Scriptures.¹⁸ Aesop has ever since been found—to my mind, rather puzzlingly given his rather brutal, even Nietzschean conception of power relations—compatible with the education of Christian readers. This is partly because the morals can be made to sound similar to the Ten Commandments, which makes Aesop a bit like Moses; a good illustration of this type of parallel is the underlying moral, “Thou shalt not envy,” as expressed in Benjamin Harris’s retelling of *The Hawk and Birds* in his *The Fables of Young Aesop* (1700).¹⁹

The extent of the cultural penetration of Aesop’s *Fables*, related as we have seen to their perceived suitability as vehicles for the transmission of literacy, foreign-language skills, and morals compatible with Christianity, remains unparalleled. It in turn has underlain, or at least been a factor, in the character of countless new classics of children’s literature, and this is my fourth point. Aesop’s *Fables* have, since the mediaeval period, appeared alongside or even merged completely with fables from non-classical traditions: the outstanding example is the fables of Reynard the fox-trickster derived in turn from the twelfth-century *Le Roman de Renart*. The cultural presence of Aesopic fables

18 Ernst Thiele, ed., *Luthers Fabeln nach seiner Handschrift und den Drucken neubearbeitet* (Halle: Niemeyer, 21911; ed. pr. 1888); Arno Schirokauer, “Luthers Arbeit am Äsop,” *Modern Language Notes* 62 (1947): 73–84; Manfred Schultze and Walter Simon, *Martin Luther, Briefe und Aesop-Fabeln: Codex Ottobonianus Latinus 3029* (Zürich: Belsler, 1983).

19 Benjamin Harris, *The Fables of Young Aesop, with Their Morals* (London: printed and sold by Benjamin Harris, 41700; ed. pr. 1698), 36–37.

has certainly encouraged the collection of indigenous fables in other traditions, such as the Swahili animal fables of Kenya and animal-dominated allegorical wisdom stories of the poor of Haiti, who originally came by and large from Africa; these stories are held by some to have descended directly from Aesop himself, seen not as a Greek but an African, by etymologising his name as a corruption of Aithops.²⁰ In Russia, which has had a very distinct and important Aesopic tradition since the first Russian translation appeared in 1700, the poetic fables of Korney Chukovsky (1882–1969), through which countless Soviet citizens taught their children to be careful of the great Cockroach, Stalin, as well as to read, are regarded as a national treasure. For the cultural presence of the *Fables* has had another, much more subterranean impact on children's literature in the form of newly invented stories featuring talking animals and often strong moral or even political lessons.²¹ From Beatrix Potter to Walt Disney, whose first three animations featured talking animals (namely the *Alice Comedies* with Julius the Cat, 1923–1927; *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit*, 1927; and of course *Mickey Mouse*, 1928), to the spin-offs from Hugh Lofting's 1920 *The Story of Doctor Dolittle*, the central place Aesop took in the education of children for so many centuries must be held at least partly responsible.

Mentioning a commercial publishing phenomenon as successful as Beatrix Potter, let alone the Walt Disney Empire, brings us to my fifth and final point: money. One of the most important factors that must be considered is the commercial importance of the market in books for children. Indeed, it is the most lucrative sector of the book market in the world. In *The Child and the Book*, Nicholas Tucker justifies spending several pages analysing the appropriateness of animal stories for children, with the specific example of the tales of Beatrix Potter, on the grounds of what he calls their continuing "appeal to children." While conceding that sales figures "can only be a crude indicator of a book's popularity, since it is adults who make such purchases," he nevertheless insists that Beatrix Potter's "high sales over the last fifty years tell their own story," since "adults will not go on indefinitely buying books for younger readers which are meant to give pleasure but no longer do so."²² Well, I have to confess to utter scepticism about this line of thinking. Adults buy books that are directed at them by relentless and cunning marketing campaigns, and a

20 See James W. Ivy, "The Wisdom of the Haitian Peasant: Or Some Haitian Proverbs Considered," *The Journal of Negro History* 26 (1941): 493.

21 On Aesop's reception in various regions of the world, see also the other chapters from this part of the volume.

22 Tucker, *The Child and the Book*, 57.

boxed set of Beatrix Potter books or a cute and colourful edition of Aesop are both almost impossible to avoid in any shops or catalogues selling equipment, of any kind, for children. I do wonder how many of those boxed sets lie as unused as those in my house, displaced whenever a choice was actually offered to the very young by books on any subject whatsoever with some degree of interactive opportunity—fluffy panels, pop-up sections, flaps to lift, or buttons to push that set off music or some other sound effects. I suspect that Aesop's *Fables* these days falls into that depressing category of the text that adults *think* that children want, or—worse—think that their adult friends who have had children will approve of as a gift. Call me a cynic if you like.

The *Fables'* status as a market commodity is connected with their attractiveness to some very able and interesting artist/illustrators, notable among whom have been Walter Crane, whose *The Baby's Own Aesop* (1887), like his *The Baby's Opera* (1877), was a marvel of decorative book production—the true connoisseurs' art nouveau. My own favourite is probably Milo Winter's gorgeous images for McNally & Co. in 1919. Enchanting illustrations often help the packaging, presentation, and marketing of the *Fables* as a potential heirloom that somehow offers continuity through a family line just as it offers cultural continuity with ancient Greece: a typical sentence to find in a preface is this, in Sally Grindley and John Bendall-Brunello's *Aesop's Fables for the Very Young* (see above): they hope their book “will be treasured, read and re-read for generations to come.” That type of marketing is cleverly aimed at adults wanting something very grown-up and abstract and a great deal more than a book for children—they want a continuous genealogical line, a family tradition, and to inscribe themselves into the memory of future generations. When all is said and done, therefore, the phenomenon of “Aesop for children” is much better understood as the phenomenon of “Aesop for adults who dictate what children are given to read.” I end up agreeing with Rousseau and Paine rather than with Locke and Godwin.

Yet rather than with Enlightenment and radical thinkers I conclude, instead, with the fable of a fascinating twentieth-century woman of whom few today have ever heard, Edith Farr Ridington of Maryland. After studying Greek and archaeology at Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Ridington taught Classics at McDaniel College in western Maryland as an adjunct professor for several decades in the middle of the twentieth century. She was particularly interested in Aristotle. In the journal *Classical World* for 1963 she reviewed a selection of children's books that used classical material, and confided that when faced with no fewer than three new collections of Aesopic fables that had appeared that year:

My experience with my own children tells me that any fable has a limited appeal to the modern youngster, and a whole book of them, I am afraid, would bore him excessively.²³

Ridington's reviews of classically informed children's literature appeared annually for a while, and given her scepticism it is no surprise to find her only two years later, faced with the next tranche of new Aesops for children, declaring herself "somewhat puzzled by the proliferation of Aesop's *Fables*."²⁴ Ridington, a mother of four as well as a professor of Classics, who nurtured a passion for reading in her children as they have detailed to me in e-mails, was experienced at the parental coalface. And that experience allowed her to see with unprecedented clarity that the proof of the Aesopic pudding, when it comes to maintaining that it is a pudding really suitable for children, can only lie in its eating.

23 Edith Farr Ridington, "Review: Some Recent Historical Fiction and Juveniles, v1," *Classical World* 56.9 (1963): 278.

24 Edith Farr Ridington, "Review: Some Recent Historical Fiction and Juveniles, x1," *Classical World* 59.3 (1965): 77.

A Gloss on Perspectives for the Study of African Literature versus Greek and Oriental Traditions

Peter T. Simatei

As in African literature in general, most African children's literature exhibits what Richard van Leeuwen calls "a broad network of texts" and "an amalgam of types of stories."¹ This is of course expected given the usual interaction between written and oral traditions in African literature, the former pointing to European cultures accompanying imperial projects. Modern African literature is essentially hybrid to the extent that it incorporates both European and African literary traditions. It is therefore born from a confluence of cultures.

Children's literature draws in many instances from traditional folklore. In any case, and until fairly recently, the first stories that children in Africa came in contact with were orally transmitted fables and fairy tales. Indeed, even to date, we still have oral and written forms of children's literature existing side by side. It is the written forms, though, that exhibit the kind of intertextual borrowing I have referred to due to their affinity with European literary traditions. In fact, it was the desire of the writers of children's stories in Africa to offer alternatives to the European narratives that had dominated classrooms in colonial Africa that led them to experiment with new forms of writing that took cognizance of the holistic environment of the African child reader.²

In a sense, we can distinguish three kinds of borrowing/adaptations connected to the early construction of children's literature in Africa. First, there is the reproduction of oral tales, where writers merely record and publish versions of popular folklore for children's consumption. In this category may also be placed the translation into local languages of well-known universal myths, fairy tales, and fables. Next, there is the more creative attempt to borrow from

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- 1 Quoted after Thomas Geider, "Alfu Lela Ulela: The *Thousand and One Nights* in Swahili-speaking East Africa," in Ulrich Marzolph, ed., *Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 183 (a version of Geider's article was published earlier in *Fabula* 45 [2004]: 246–260). For the original quotation see Richard van Leeuwen, "Traduire Shéhérazade/Translating Shahrazad," *Transeuropéennes* 22 (2002): 89–99.
 - 2 On the general picture of African literature for children, see Osayimwense Osa, "The Expanding Universe of African Children's Literature: The Why, the How, and the What of Publishing in Africa about African Children's Literature," *Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature* 19–20 (2010–2012): 1–17 (which also contains more bibliographical hints).

African folkloric materials and myths from other cultures in order to create narratives that address new African realities. Third, there is the usual category of imaginative fiction.

Let me now use a few examples to further illustrate the second category, which I find especially relevant to this project because it consciously blends African myths with mythic traditions of other cultures. I will begin with Chinua Achebe (1930–2013), a writer originated from Nigeria who is widely recognised as “the patriarch of the modern African novel” and whose borrowing from the traditional resource base has made his writings, both for adult and child readers, some of the most fascinating texts from Africa.³ Most of us know Achebe more for his adult fiction than his children’s works. Among the books he has written for children are such masterpieces as *Chike and the River* (1966), *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (1972), *The Flute* (1977), and *The Drum* (1977).

The Drum is adapted from traditional African folklore. The writer reworks this on two levels, providing on the lower level basic entertainment for the child reader and on the higher level a discourse on power focusing on the collapse of a fledgling oligarchy. The main character in this fable is Tortoise, who is well known in African folktales for wit, trickery, and treachery. Other stock characters that play these roles in animal stories include Hare, Rabbit, and Spider, but also include deities in those narratives that exploit mythology deeply. Adaptations of these characters vary depending on the intentions of the authors: that is, whether they want to use the fables for overt ideological purposes or to merely pass on some useful moral lessons. In most cases the stories that leave lasting impressions are those that leave the ideological messages implicit while giving priority to the structures of the plot.

In any case, children’s books with implicit rather than explicit ideological messages are in fact the most powerful because implicit “ideological positions are invested with legitimacy through the implications that things are simply so.”⁴ This is, in a sense, where Achebe’s adaptations of African folklore derive their particular power. Ideology is encoded implicitly. In the case of the story under discussion, *The Drum*, the essence of the plot lies in the tragic possibilities of the elements of trickery, wit, and treachery that constitute the character traits of Tortoise.⁵

3 See Ruth Franklin, “After Empire: Chinua Achebe and the Great African Novel,” *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2008, online at: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/05/26/after-empire> (accessed June 27, 2016).

4 See John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction*, (London: Longman, 1992), Ch. 1, “Ideology, Discourse and Narrative Fiction,” 8–46, quotation p. 9.

5 In the subsequent paragraphs on Achebe’s *Drum* I repeat my analysis published in my earlier paper: “Ideological Inscription in Children’s Fiction: Strategies of Encodement in Ngugi and

In this story, Tortoise stumbles accidentally into the land of the spirits as he tries to retrieve a piece of fruit which has fallen into a hole. In the Animal Country, a devastating famine has forced animals to traverse vast distances in search of food. Tortoise, searching for food like the rest of the animals, has just come upon a palm tree with plenty of fruit and has been lavishly feasting when one fruit slips through his fingers and falls to the ground and into a hole.

In the spirit world Tortoise is given a magic drum to compensate him for his fruit, which has already been eaten by a spirit boy. The drum is a sort of magic wand, for all Tortoise needs to do is merely beat the drum gently and a variety of food will appear. Upon his return to the Animal Country, Tortoise chooses to exploit the drum as an instrument of power. He constructs a hierarchy of power relationships with himself at the top, a move which he begins by recasting his incidental crossing to the spirit world as a messianic mission undertaken in order to redeem the other animals from perpetual suffering. He says:

I said to myself: all the animals in the country will perish unless somebody comes forward to save them. Somebody who is prepared to risk his own life for the sake of his fellows. And so I decided that person had to be myself.⁶

Ideological encodement here is achieved through appropriation of a messianic idiom in which self-sacrifice is invoked to legitimise ascendancy to absolute power. Here may be seen a parallel to the self-serving ideologies of the post-independence political leadership. If Tortoise is to project himself as the unquestioned leader of the animals, he must fashion new terminologies to define this new role and induce acceptance from the other animals. Hence he now insists on referring to the Animal Country as a "Kingdom"—a strange term that Tortoise introduces in order to presuppose a King and the hierarchical structures that go with him. Indeed, after several days of feasting, the animals come to acknowledge Tortoise as their leader and benefactor:

Everyday the animals returned to the Tortoise's compound and ate and drank and went home singing his praise. They called him Saviour, Great Chief, the One Who Speaks for his People. Then one day a very drunken

Achebe," in Myrna Machet, Sandra Olën, and Thomas van der Walt, eds., *Other Worlds—Other Lives: Children's Literature Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference on Children's Literature, 4–6 April 1995* (Pretoria: Pretoria Unisa Press—University of South Africa, 1996), vol. 2, 29–31.

6 Chinua Achebe, *The Drum* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1988; ed. pr. 1977), 18.

singer called him King Tortoise! Thereafter the great chant of the Animals became:

“We! Want! Our! King!
Our! King Of! Kings!”⁷

Plans are then made for Tortoise’s coronation. But if the appropriation of the magic drum ensured Tortoise’s ascendancy to power, its misappropriation becomes the cause of his downfall. Kingship and the hierarchical order that goes with it demand that Tortoise cease to play certain roles like the beating of the drum. Tortoise makes a tragic blunder when he appoints Elephant to play that role. Elephant’s supposedly gentle tap on the drum breaks it, and this effectively dislodges Tortoise from his position of power. His second journey to the world of spirits in search of another drum ends in disaster when he picks one whose beating yields all kinds of malicious masked spirits and swarms of bees and wasps. He later unleashes them on the other animals, who as a result “scattered in every direction and have not yet stopped running.”⁸ This kind of ending notwithstanding, the genre merely conceals a powerful ideological construction.

What we see in this story by Achebe is an effort to reclaim folktales and combine their motifs in new stories. We may note that even in the novels he wrote for adult readers, Achebe often incorporated folktales in new ways.

Let me now turn to a different kind of adaptation and translation in which popular western mythologies, especially Greek ones, are either reworked to suit local contexts or are translated into local languages and abridged to suit children.

Sophocles’ plays are a good example in this regard. *King Oedipus* and *Antigone* lend themselves especially to different usages in African contexts: they provide material through which Greek mythology is incorporated into African self-representation and they provide metaphors for confronting conditions of domination and repression. Samuel S. Mushi translated Sophocles’ *Oedipus* into Kiswahili as *Mfalme Edipode* in 1971,⁹ an act that had the effect of locating the Greek legend of Oedipus within the existing myths of East Africa in an interesting process in which the written was appropriated by the oral. In this respect *Mfalme Edipode* took on a life of its own and, like the oriental stories of Abu Nuwas (756–814), it found a firm place in the local folklore told to children in East Africa. In the same vein, it may be argued that the translation

⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sophocles, *Mfalme Edipode*, trans. Samuel S. Mushi (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1971).

or transposition of *King Oedipus* by Nigerian playwright Ola Rotimi in 1968 not only popularised the legend of Oedipus among African readers¹⁰ but also transplanted Sophocles' play into a Yoruba context, thus producing a clear hybrid text, which enabled a cultural dialogue with the West even as it addressed specific events in Nigeria's history. Rotimi's adaptation, which he called *The Gods Are Not to Blame*,¹¹ "involves a fairly direct re-inscription of the premises, plot, characters, and *mise-en-scène* of the Greek model into a text informed by predominantly Yoruba and English cultural allegiances."¹²

Indeed, the presence of Oriental and Greek literary traditions in Africa owes a lot to translations or publications of these stories, especially by missionaries who used them for literacy classes and as texts for teaching moral lessons to converts. Koliswa Moropa reveals how 114 of Aesop's fables were translated from English into Xhosa by James Ranisi Jolobe (1902–1976) and published in 1953 with the wider intention of developing the literature of the Xhosa language in general. Moropa writes that "Jolobe's aim with this translation was to ensure that these fables be passed on from one generation to the next by parents reading and telling the stories to children still unable to read."¹³

On the other hand, the translation of *Oedipus* into Kiswahili was part of a major Tanzanian project of translating Western classics into Kiswahili. This was pioneered by the then president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (1922–1999), who translated a number of Shakespearean plays into Kiswahili. Of course, Western canonical texts were already being translated into Kiswahili happening in the early colonial days, through missionaries or early European scholars of Kiswahili who thought they could develop Kiswahili literature through the translation of European fiction. Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and many others were translated into Kiswahili as part of such a literary project. Similarly, an early adaptation of Greek myths, *Mashujaa: Hadithi za Wayonani* [The heroes: the Greek tales], was produced in 1889 after Charles Kingsley's highly popular anthology *The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales for My Children* (1856), and in the following year,

10 Rotimi's play would later become a popular drama text in high schools and universities across Africa.

11 Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

12 For an in-depth analysis of Rotimi's adaptation of Sophocles' play, see Barbara Goff's and Michael Simpson's *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), quotation p. 81.

13 Moropa Koliswa, "Retelling the Stories: The Impact of Aesop's Fables on the Development of Xhosa Children's Literature," *South African Journal of African Languages* 24.3 (2004): 178–188, quotation p. 178.

Aesop's fables were also adapted as *Hadithi za Esopo*.¹⁴ Most of these translations and adaptations available in Kiswahili were abridged versions so that a younger African generation could access them.

Like Rotimi's adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, other more ambitious and more academic adaptations or re-writings of Greek mythology include Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973), Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (1994), and Athol Fugard's re-working of *Antigone* in *The Island* (1972).

So what has all this got to do with children's literature in East Africa or Africa in general? Most of these translations especially in their abridged versions, were meant for direct consumption by young readers and so from the very beginning constituted some kind of reading material for children and youth. However, the most intriguing aspect of this is the way these stories left their "written" forms to enter into day-to-day storytelling sessions in East Africa and then returned to written forms.

Take, for example, oriental tales that include *A Thousand and One Nights* and the stories of Abu Nuwas. Scholars point out that these tales were already part and parcel of East African folklore centuries before they were popularly circulated through European book culture. Ida Hadjivayanis writes that the *Arabian Nights* "have been an important part of the Kiswahili literary polysystem, initially as folklore and then for decades as canons,"¹⁵ so that later translators like Edwin Brenn and Frederick Johnson were merely rendering into written form what was already familiar. According to Thomas Geider, the first collection of East African tales was presented by Edward Steere as *Swahili Tales* (1870) and the stories in this collection contained traces of the *Nights* and Abu Nuwas's stories.¹⁶ However, the first Kiswahili edition of *The Arabian Nights—Alfu Lela Ulela*—was published in 1929 and was meant for a young audience and thus constitutes children's literature of a kind. In a sense, this edition merely transformed the oral into the written.

As we can see, the studies on the character and evolution of children's literature in Africa offer many challenges. In my gloss I have pointed only at some particularly important examples that make us aware of how complex this field is and what fascinating perspectives it offers.

14 Both works published in Zanzibar by the University Mission Press, the latter in 1890. See Thomas Geider, "Die Ökumene des Swahili-sprachigen Ostafrika," in Özkan Ezli, Dorothee Kimmich, and Annette Werberger, eds., *Wider den Kulturreiz: Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), 379.

15 Ida Hadjivayanis, "Norms of Swahili Translations in Tanzania: An Analysis of Selected Translated Prose," Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies (London: University of London, 2011), 199.

16 See Geider, "Alfu Lela Ulela," 248.

Aesop's Fables in Japanese Literature for Children: Classical Antiquity and Japan

Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi

The reception of Classical Antiquity in children's literature has aroused my interest not only because it encompasses children's literature: classical reception is a relatively rare subject in that area of research, but also because of the need to reflect on the impact of Classical Antiquity on Japanese culture. For years my research has focused on Japanese literature and aesthetics, and although it may sound strange, the question of the impact of Classical Antiquity on Japanese literature has never occurred to me before, due to the fact that, while in the West great importance was assigned to Graeco-Roman culture, in Japan this role was played by Chinese culture. From the introduction of Buddhism (which came to Japan from China through Korea in the sixth century) until the mid-nineteenth century, the Japanese archipelago remained heavily influenced by China—an influence seen in its writing, religion, philosophy, arts, science, and system of government. And it was not until relatively recently, less than a hundred and fifty years ago,¹ that Western civilisation became a model for Japan. And yet, despite the ongoing intensive Westernisation of Japanese society ever since, and the existence of a rich literature in translation as well as the strong influence of Western literary currents, Graeco-Roman thought and literature have never become to Japan what they are to Europe. This is because Japan has been dominated for many centuries by a melange of native, Buddhist, Confucian, and neo-Confucian ideals and morals. Although European classics (and especially the Ancient Greek ones), often read in the original languages, have gained their own place in courses on Western thought in modern Japan, their impact on Japanese thought and the Japanese spirit has been relatively insignificant.² One exception seems to be Aesop's fables, which are recognised in Japan as well as in the West. Initially, these fables were known in Japan under a name sounding quite foreign to the Japanese:

1 From the times of the so-called Meiji Restoration in 1868.

2 For more details on Graeco-Roman classics in Japan, see: Yasunari Takada, "Translatio and Difference: Western Classics in Modern Japan," in Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia, eds., *Classics and National Cultures* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 285–301.

Esopono Fabulas [Aesop's fables]. Later, they were called *Isopo/Esopo*³ *Monogatari* [Aesop's tales] and now they are often entitled *Isoppu Dōwa/Guwa* [Aesop's fairy-tales/fables], *Isoppu Monogatari* [Aesop's tales], or simply *Isoppu no Ohanashi* [Stories of Aesop].

They are read both by adults and children, and their numerous translations and adaptations, allowing those fables to be enjoyed today even by three-year-old Japanese children, prove not only the exceptional universality of Aesop's fables, but also the recognition by the Japanese of their educational value.

Aesop's Fables from Amakusa

The history of Aesop's fables in Japan is unusual. They have been known in this country since as far back as the sixteenth century, which is astonishing, given the fact that more detailed knowledge of Western literature (including children's literature) dates only from the second half of the nineteenth century. Aesop's fables initiated the history of translation literature in Japan and, along with *Robinson Crusoe*, they are among the first Western literary works dedicated to Japanese children.⁴ Published in 1593 under the title of *Esopono Fabulas*, and containing seventy fables, they were inextricably linked with the activity of Christian missionaries in the Japanese islands. Following the arrival in 1549 of the Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1562) at Kagoshima on Kyushu Island, a large number of missionaries came to Japan. One of them, Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), established educational institutes named *collegio* to educate priests so that they could better preach Christianity to the Japanese. He transported a printing press from Lisbon (in 1590) in order to print manuals and textbooks for preaching and also for teaching the Japanese language

3 Since roughly the nineteenth-century, characters composing the word "Aesop" were read as "Isoppu." I shall therefore use this form later in this chapter.

4 See Shin Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi* [History of Japanese literature for children for beginners] (Tōkyō: Mineruba Shobō, 2006), 53–54; also Yuichi Midzunoe, "Aesop's Arrival in Japan," text edited and composed for PDF by Francis Britto (2005), in Francis Britto, ed., *All about Francis Xavier. Commemorating the 450th Anniversary of Xavier's Arrival in Japan*, <http://pweb.cc.sophia.ac.jp/britto/xavier/midzunoe/midzuyui.pdf> (accessed Sept. 18, 2015), 1–2. Aesop's fables in Japan, as in Europe, were first intended mostly for adults. But their simplicity and the presence of animal characters made them appealing to children as well. Adaptations clearly intended for children began to appear only in the nineteenth century. As for *Robinson Crusoe*, its first Japanese adaptation dates back to 1848, but the edition considered easy to read, and hence dedicated also to children, appeared in 1857. See Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 65.

to foreign priests. In this way, priests could establish contact with local people more easily and acquire a better knowledge of Japanese culture and mentality. They could also fulfil their mission more effectively, which was to convert Japanese people to the Christian religion.⁵

Esopono Fabulas are among the twenty-nine books published precisely for that purpose by the missionaries on the small island of Amakusa on the west coast of Kyushu, and they are known in Japan as “the books from Amakusa” (*Amakusahon*) or “Christian books” (*kirishitanban*).⁶ Only one copy of *Esopono Fabulas* survives, thanks to an English diplomat who brought it back from Japan in the nineteenth century. This priceless copy is now in the British Museum.⁷

The fables were translated into Japanese from Latin and printed not with Japanese characters, but in romanised Japanese. The translation was made in a simple and colloquial language, close to the spoken language of that time and containing expressions derived from the local dialect. This also allowed children coming to church to understand the moral principles contained therein.⁸

Aesop's Fables during the Edo Period in Japan

It was the moral purity of Aesop's fables, taught by these easy to narrate short stories, which was essential to Christian missionaries. But later, in the beginning of the seventeenth century when Christianity had been forbidden in Japan and books from Amakusa had been censored, Aesop's fables continued to enjoy popularity and were still frequently republished, this time in order to promote Buddhist virtues. During the so-called closed-door policy in the Edo period (1603–1868), which lasted from 1636 to 1868, when Japan was almost completely isolated from foreign influences, nine editions of selected Aesop's fables were published. The first was issued in Kyoto in 1639 and began a series of editions in which both the text of the fables and the accompanying

5 See Sadao Mutō, “Kaisetsu” [Commentary], in Sadao Mutō, ed., *Manji Eirihon. Isopo Monogatari* [The illustrated book of the Manji Era. Aesop's tales] (Tōkyō: Iwanami Bunko, 2012; ed. pr. 2000), 329–331.

6 The vast majority of those books related to Christian themes, see, e.g., *Santosu no Gosagyō* [The deeds of the saints and apostles, 1591] or *Dochirina Krishitan* [Christian doctrine, 1592]. However, some of them, such as the great Japanese heroic poem *Heike Monogatari* [The tale of the Heike, 1593], language textbooks, grammar books, dictionaries (Latin-Portuguese-Japanese), or *Esopono Fabulas* itself, were secular literature. See Midzunoe, “Aesop's Arrival in Japan,” 4.

7 See Mutō, “Kaisetsu,” 329–330.

8 See Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 53.

illustrations, often made by known creators of *ukiyo-e* woodcuts, were printed with the use of wooden matrices. This time the fables were written in a more demanding, literary language, in which the Japanese phonetic alphabet *hiragana* was mixed with Chinese characters,⁹ and Aesop's fables thus lost their character of simple stories which everybody (including children) could understand. No more were their readers intended to be religious or Christian, instead they were courtiers and warriors living in the capital, and also merchants. Through these last, who travelled throughout Japan selling their merchandise, the stories spread to other urban areas. To the popular reader, these so-called "*Aesop's Fables* written in national characters" ("*kokujihon Isopo Monogatari*") appeared as moral narratives in which, as Yuichi Mizunoe stresses, the Buddhist ideas of cause and effect were heavily emphasised.¹⁰ However, regardless of their moralising character, these fables were appreciated also as funny stories and were often read for entertainment. One of the best-known editions of that time, developed by an expert in Japanese literature, Sadao Mutō, is *Manji Eirihon. Isopo Monogatari* [The illustrated book from the Manji Era. Aesop's tales], dating to 1659. The names of the editor and woodcut authors illustrating the fables are not confirmed.¹¹

Aesop's Fables and Children's Literature in Modern Japan

The true popularity of Aesop's fables and their actual inclusion in children's literature began only in the nineteenth century, when Japan realised through the translation of Western literature the existence and the growing need of real books for children. Before, there existed books containing popular, well-known Japanese tales and legends, but they were not intended only for children, but for less educated people in general. Because of the colour of their covers, they were called *akahon* (red booklets) and belonged to so-called *kusazōshi*, books written in the phonetic alphabet (*kana*) and printed with the use of woodcut matrices. These books, usually ten pages long with one big illustration on each page, were part of a larger whole (*gōkan*). Although there were some editions

9 Those books, commonly called *kanazōshi* (notebooks written in *kana*), were published in Japan in the years 1610–1680.

10 See Mizunoe, "Aesop's Arrival in Japan," 5. In the main text I spell the author's name as Mizunoe, applying the most common romanisation system of Japanese language in use today, the Hepburn system.

11 See Sadao Mutō, ed., *Manji Eirihon. Isopo Monogatari* (see above, n. 5).

containing tales written especially for children, most of them consisted of popular, well-known stories and anecdotes (*otogizōshi*), such as the famous tale about a boy born from a peach—*Momotarō* [Peach boy], about a little sparrow which had its tongue cut out by an evil old woman—*Shitakiri Suzume* [Tongue-cut sparrow], or about a bad racoon dog (*tanuki*) to whom the hare taught a lesson—*Kachikachiyama* [Clack clack mountain].¹² Regardless of the fact that most of these books were written in the phonetic alphabet, this spelling form (called *hentaigana*) was more difficult than the contemporary *kana*, so it required a better knowledge of reading. Therefore, it is believed that these fables were usually read aloud by one person, while the elderly and children listened. This type of tale existed from the mid-Edo period (ca. 1673) to the beginning of the Meiji era (1868), and then was replaced by the modern type of tales (*dōwa*).¹³

The first modern books for children, written by Japanese authors, began to appear in Japan at the beginning of the 1890s. *Koganemaru* [The dog Koganemaru] by Sazanami Iwaya and *Shōnen no Tama* [The treasure of boys] by Hirotada Miwa are considered the two most important works, together inaugurating the history of modern Japanese literature for children. They are the first novel-length stories written for young readers, and were both published in 1891.¹⁴ This means that in the field of children's literature, Japan was delayed by about half a century compared with the West, where modern children's literature began earlier with fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.¹⁵ The reason for this delay was the over two-hundred-year isolation of Japan, which disrupted the penetration of modern Western thought. Therefore "the discovery of the child" took place later there. It was

12 See Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 672–673.

13 See Megumi Iwabuchi, "Kusazōshi—Edo Nihon ni okeru E to Bun no Yūgō—Kusazōshi: Illustrated Japanese Books in the Edo Period," *Yūgō Bunka Kenkyū* [The bulletin of the International Society for Harmony and Combination of Cultures] 3 (May 2004): 18–25, <http://atlantic.gssc.nihon-u.ac.jp/~ISHCC/bulletin/03/3035.pdf> (accessed Oct. 27, 2015).

14 See Shin Torigoe, *Nihon Jidō Bungaku Annai. Sengo Jidō Bungaku Kakushin made* [A guide to Japanese literature for children. From the postwar period to the reform times] (Tōkyō: Rironsha, 1987; ed. pr. 1963), 10–33.

15 The first tales for children written by the Brothers Grimm were published in 1812 under the title *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* [Children's and household tales]. Andersen's fairy tales were first published in 1835, and from the 1840s numerous translations began to appear, bringing him true fame throughout the world. The beginnings of children's literature in general dates back to 1740, though this issue is still subject to fervid discussions among scholars.

only the translation of Western literature, which began to develop intensively in Japan from the 1870s, that made Japanese authors realise the existence of such a branch of literature as “books for children.” In time, fairy tales by Andersen and the Brothers Grimm and Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) became widely known and popular among Japanese young readers.¹⁶ However, it was Aesop’s fables that became more important in translation literature in this modernising country, and contributed significantly to the development of Japanese literature for children.¹⁷

The most famous edition in modern Japan was that of 1872–1875, entitled *Tsūzoku Isoppu Monogatari* [Aesop’s fables for all]. The translation of two hundred and twenty-seven fables included in this six-volume edition¹⁸ was done from English by On Watanabe (1837–1898), a progressive activist and educator of the Japanese Enlightenment, the teacher of English in a very progressive school at that time (Numazu Heigakkō). The first five volumes of *Aesop’s Fables for All* were based on the English translation of *Aesop’s Fables* done by Thomas James and published in 1863 by John Murray in London. That book was brought to Japan in 1868 by another famous educator and writer, Masakazu Toyama, who was then in England on a scholarship. The sixth volume was based on *Three Hundred Aesop’s Fables* translated by Flyer Townsend in London, as well as on premodern editions of *Isopo Monogatari*.¹⁹ It was a completely new translation, compared with the previous ones which had been based on texts from the Edo period. The epochal significance of this edition, so famous in Japan, consisted in using simple, everyday language in the translation, just like the sixteenth-century missionary translations. Watanabe introduced a completely modern style of translation using the spoken language, which was a phenomenon at a time when literature was still styled on the difficult, Chinese model of writing (so-called *kanbun*). Watanabe chose women and children as the main addressees of the fables; not only from the cities, but also from the provinces, which had been mentioned in the introduction of his book.²⁰

16 See Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 59–61.

17 Aesop’s fables are also among the only works from Greek Antiquity that were edited in Japan specifically for children in the first twenty years after the opening of the country (1868–1888). A lot of books for children had already appeared in Japan at that time. Torigoe lists about seventy titles among which, apart from Aesop’s fables, there are no other pieces of Greek literature. See *ibid.*, 3–5.

18 Each volume contains around forty fables.

19 See *Tsūzoku Isoppu Monogatari* [Aesop’s fables for all], Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan [National Institute for Japanese Literature], <http://www.nijl.ac.jp/pages/articles/200507/> (accessed Sept. 18, 2015).

20 See Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 61.

In order for the fables to better appeal to Japanese readers, Watanabe coloured them a little with Japanese style.²¹ He also took care that a simple phonetic alphabet be placed above difficult characters in the text. Each volume was also enriched with illustrations by well-known masters of painting and woodcuts, such as Kyosai Kawanabe, who painted with the vigorous line of the Kanō school; Kōson Sakaki, famous for his sketches; and Bainan Fujisawa.²²

About twenty translations of Aesop's fables published in subsequent years were modelled precisely on that innovative translation done by Watanabe, e.g., fables translated by Tsunekichi Ōkubo (1886) or Tatsusaburō Tanaka (1888). Among them, were two editions clearly intended to be read by children. These were by Suimu Nishimura—*Isoppu no Hanashi* [Stories of Aesop, 1893] and Sazanami Iwaya—*Isoppu Otogi* [Aesop's fables, 1911].²³ Thus, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Aesop's fables had become in Japan an integral part of the developing, modern literature for children.

Aesop's Fables in Watanabe's translation have also had an important impact on Japanese education. From 1872, when a modern school system based on the Western model began to be introduced throughout the country, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture introduced some of the fables into primary school textbooks. Since then, many of them have become permanently included in primary school textbooks and used for Japanese, English, ethics, or singing lessons. The moral principles contained therein—the praise of good and reproof of evil—fit well the Enlightenment spirit of modernising Japan.

The Tortoise and the Hare in Japanese Textbooks

One of the most famous of Aesop's fables in Japan is the story about the tortoise and the hare. The fable is so well-known and appreciated in Japan that

21 Compare, e.g., *The Ant and the Grasshopper* translated into English by Thomas James and into Japanese by On Watanabe, included in Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 63–64.

22 See *Tsūzoku Isoppu Monogatari* [Aesop's fables for all], Tamagawa Daigaku Kyōiku Hakubutsukan [Museum of Education of Tamagawa University], <http://www.tamagawa.ac.jp/museum/archive/1991/019.html> (accessed Sept. 18, 2015).

23 See Gen'ichirō Fukawa, "Kyōiku Bunkashi to shite no Kokugo Kyōkasho Kenkyū. Isoppu Dōwa 'Usagi to Kame' no Baai" [History of education through studies of textbooks of Japanese: 'The fable of the tortoise and the hare' by Aesop], in *Kokugo Kyōkasho Kenkyū no Hōhō* [Studies on Japanese-language textbooks], Zenkoku Daigaku Kokugo Kyōiku Gakkai [The Japanese Teaching Society of Japan], *Kōkai Kōza Bukuretto* [Extension lecture booklet] 2 (2012): 22–23, <http://www.gakkai.ac> (accessed Dec. 18, 2015).



FIGURE 12.1 *Odekake Times Teruminkofu*, The Race of a Hare and a Turtle, *Toyosato School*, Shiga Prefecture, <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/sztimes>
© BY ODEKAKE TIMES TERUMINKOFU

not only has it been included in Japanese textbooks, and gained a presence in almost every collection of translations of children's literature in this country, but its characters have even become a part of the decoration of a primary school (see figure 12.1).²⁴

The fable concerns a hare who ridicules a slow-moving tortoise. During the race, the hare soon leaves the tortoise behind and, confident of winning, takes a nap midway through the course. The tortoise gets tired quickly but he keeps going. When the hare awakens, however, he finds that his competitor, crawling slowly but steadily, has arrived before him.

Based on that fable, Gen'ichirō Fukawa examined the different ways of using Aesop's fables in Japanese schools, as well as the evolution of their moral message, from the 1880s until the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁵ The fable of the tortoise and the hare was included in the reading textbook in Japanese

24 The race between the tortoise and the hare, illustrated with bronze figures, can be found on the handrails of wooden stairs in the Toyosato Elementary School, Shiga Prefecture, built in 1937. See *Usagi to Kame no Episōdo* [The episode of the hare and the tortoise], <https://archive.is/GMVso> (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

25 See Gen'ichirō Fukawa, *Usagi to Kame no Kyōiku Bunkashi. Kyōkasho no Naka no Isoppu Dōwa* [History of education through the tortoise and the hare. The fable of the tortoise and the hare in textbooks], <http://www001.upp.so-net.ne.jp/gen-chan/usagitokame.html> [pages not numbered] (accessed Sept. 18, 2015) and Fukawa, "Kyōiku Bunkashi to shite no Kokugo Kyōkasho Kenkyū," 19–30.

primary schools published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1886. The story was there presented as an illustration of a highly estimated virtue in Japan: great effort (*doryoku*). In other textbooks, from 1887, the same fable also illustrated the need to avoid negligence and inattention. A common tendency in all textbooks of this period was to use the original purpose of Aesop's fables, which was moral teachings, to teach children the principles of good conduct. This moral, usually located in Aesop's fables at the end of the story, was replaced in textbooks by a moral virtue, that was clearly indicated and presented at the beginning and that the fable then illustrated.

As Fukawa noted, in books published between 1897 and 1902, at the end of the Meiji period, the moral message of the fables tended to fade. Since 1900, there has been a significant change in Japanese-language textbooks: sentences were simplified, the language became more child-friendly, texts became more interesting, and simple illustrations were added. The fables were narrated with a small amount of text, easy to understand for children. And the readers knew by assumption the whole context of the fable, including everything that was not written. The moralistic character of the fables did not entirely disappear, but teachings were not given as directly as before, and now had to be inferred from the story. Sometimes the moral was not given at all, but the teacher very likely discussed it afterward with the pupils. One can imagine that he or she tried to inculcate a belief in the value of work and effort (*doryoku*, mentioned earlier), whose symbol was the tortoise, and that he or she disapproved the "overconfidence" (*yudan taiteki*) which led to the hare's defeat.²⁶

The fable of the tortoise and the hare was used similarly in textbooks from 1907, both in those for learning to read and those for learning English. In the latter, alongside the fable there were explanations added by the translator, and the moral was thoroughly explained using examples from pupils' daily lives. At the same time, the importance of being diligent, and not relying solely on talent, was stressed.²⁷

Aesop's Fables in Twentieth-Century Children's Literature

Aesop's fables, appearing constantly in Japanese pre- and postwar textbooks, thus entered permanently into the canon of Japanese literature for children. Their interesting content, in which animals play an important role, as well as their simplicity and clear logic, ensured that the fables would easily win over

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

the hearts of Japanese children. And this was not just due to the fact that children learnt about them at school, but mainly because Aesop's fables were interesting and pleasant for them to read. The fact that the moralistic character of the fables has declined also allows the story itself to gain greater importance.²⁸ Thus, Aesop's fables were included in almost all the prewar Japanese editions of collections of world literature dedicated to children (from 1916, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1933, 1937). Postwar editions of Aesop's fables for children in Japan are so numerous that it is difficult to count them all. There is virtually no major edition of foreign literature for children in Japan that does not contain Aesop's fables. This is confirmed by the series of books for children published by such large and well-known publishing houses as Iwanami Shōnen Bunko [Iwanami Publishing's Library for Children, 1950] or Kodansha publishing, which edited in 1961 a representative collection of tales for children, *Jidō Bungaku Zenshū* [The complete collection of children's literature].

There are also editions for younger children, containing adaptations of Aesop's fables or new tales based on them. In those works, the story is narrated in an interesting and funny way, and the moral is not clearly expressed. The fables are often much changed: a cruel ending is softened, sometimes the animal characters make friends (contrary to the original), or some new circumstances are added leading to a significant event. The text is written in a language appropriate to the age, mimetic and onomatopoeic words are often used, and the stories are richly illustrated.

Let's take a closer look at two examples of contemporary Japanese editions of Aesop's fables for children. One, intended for children aged about nine to ten and the other for younger children, aged between three and six.

The first one, included in the aforementioned Iwanami Shōnen Bunko series, first published in 1955, then reprinted twice, is entitled *Isoppu no Ohanashi* [Aesop's stories] and was published by Yoichi Kōno, a university teacher, Romanist, and philosopher.²⁹ On the back cover it states that it is intended for third–fourth graders and above. It contains three hundred fables organised in an interesting fashion: first there is a group of the fifteen fables most famous in Japan,³⁰ and the rest are divided into groups of tales about different animal

28 See Torigoe, *Hajimete Manabu Nihon Jidō Bungakushi*, 62.

29 See Yoichi Kōno, ed., *Isoppu no Ohanashi* [Aesop's stories] (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shōnen Bunko, 2011; ed. pr. 1955).

30 Those are the fables known in English as: *The Fox and the Crow*, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, *The Dog and Its Reflection*, *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, *The North Wind and the Sun*, *The Ass Carrying Salt*, *The Frogs Who Desired a King*, *The Bundle of Sticks*, *The Fisherman and His Nets*, *The Tortoise*

species, insects, and humans.³¹ The fables are dramatised with dialogues, and the final moral sounds like an explanation of the translator rather than a faithful translation. Care was taken to include realistic, black-and-white illustrations familiarising children with Greek culture, and as for Aesop himself, Greece, and the history of the fables, children can read about them in the afterword, written by the editor in a relatively simple language, easy to understand for ten-year-olds.

The second book, aimed at three- to six-year-old children and their parents (as indicated on the cover) is entitled *Isoppu Dōwa Nijūgobanashi* [Twenty-five of Aesop's fairy tales].³² This charming book features large coloured illustrations on each page. Despite the young age of the intended reader, the title shows Aesop's name (*Isoppu*), but it is written not with ideograms, but in the simple Japanese phonetic alphabet. The titles of the twenty-five fables are presented along with their illustrations not only in the table of contents, but also on the back cover. In the afterword, entitled *Isoppu Dōwa no Miryoku* [The charm of Aesop's fables], the publisher has provided relevant information about Aesop, the history of the fables, and the time and place they were created. The fables themselves are written in a simple language, with easy-to-read characters. The text (with no final moral at all) constitutes only a small part of the whole, while most important are the colour illustrations, made using different techniques and in different styles, by contemporary visual artists (whose names appear below picture). The illustrations refer not to Ancient Greece, but rather to universal reality. A very interesting part of this edition, worthy of in-depth research, is the instructions for parents at the end. These are written by Yōko Yokoyama—a specialist in the field of children's literature. She advises parents on how to explain each story, what should be noted, and what should be avoided. For the fable of the tortoise and the hare, the emphasis is put on self-affirmation, on the child's self-confidence, and on building good relationships with friends. Parents are advised that they should draw their child's attention to how strongly the tortoise believes in itself and to how it gives the best of itself in the race, not treating its slowness as a defect. However, parents are also advised not to focus on highlighting the hare as a bad character.³³

A common feature of both these editions is their excellent quality, manifesting itself in the great care taken with their graphic design, attractiveness, and

and the Hare, The Bear and the Two Travellers, The Woodcutter and the Trees, and The Boy Who Cried Wolf; see Yoichi Kōno, ed., *Isoppu no Ohanashi*, 13–45.

31 Ibid., 46–318.

32 See *Isoppu Dōwa Nijūgobanashi* [Twenty-five of Aesop's fairy tales] (Tōkyō: Gakken, 2010).

33 Ibid., 124.

the publishers' effort to maintain the educational character of the fables. This also involves an awareness of the curiosity of young Japanese readers, informing them where the fables come from and who their author was. In both editions, Aesop is mentioned not only in the title, but information about him and about the history of the fables is given in the afterword.

Not only these editions of Aesop's fables, but also many others recently issued in Japan, seem to confirm their important place in Japanese literature for children, as well as their timeless, universal educational value. However, the question should be raised about the actual popularity of Aesop's fables among young readers in contemporary Japan. Surveys by the *Mainichi Shinbunsha* [The Mainichi newspapers], which have been verifying reading trends in schools since 1957, as well as surveys conducted among junior high school students, suggest a negative trend. Thus, Aesop's fables were read by boys until around the 1980s, and a little longer by girls (until the 1990s), but in recent years, especially in the last decade, Japanese children have not been reading Aesop.³⁴ Could it be that Japanese children, living in a postmodern world, in a time of developed information technologies, computer games, animated fantasy movies, etc., and without necessary encouragement from parents and teachers, have stopped reading Aesop's fables? It seems probable. However, from time to time new, animated versions of the fables appear. Likewise, in the very dynamic Japanese market of books for children, Aesop's fables are constantly present in a variety of editions. We can thus assume that the fables are read to younger children and at least known by older ones, and that Aesop, whose fables enjoy such a long and extraordinary history, remains a valuable ambassador of Classical Antiquity in Japan.

34 Fukawa, *Usagi to Kame no Kyōiku Bunkashi. Kyōkasho no Naka no Isoppu Dōwa*.

Vitalis the Fox: Remarks on the Early Reading Experience of a Future Historian of Antiquity in Poland (1950s–1960s)

Adam Lukaszewicz

Ce que l'on voit dans cet écrit
Est moins un conte en l'air que la vérité même.
Tout est beau dans ce que l'on aime;
Tout ce qu'on aime a de l'esprit.

CHARLES PERRAULT, *Riquet à la houppe* (*Moralité*)



The following random selection from my early readings dealing either directly or indirectly with the ancient world begins with a Romanian novel for young readers *Toate pinzele sus!* [All sails up!] (1954) by Radu Tudoran (1910–1992). It is a modern version of the story of the Argonauts, retold in a nineteenth-century setting. The friendship between Orestes and Pylades, and a search for a missing friend, which becomes an original motivation for a sea expedition (a distant echo of the Great Greek Colonisation?), can both be found in Tudoran's novel. It also includes an anecdote about the name of Istanbul, allegedly a distortion of the post-ancient Greek phrase *is tin polin*, “to the city.” (That charming etymology is in my opinion incorrect. Istanbul is a Turkish version of Stanpoli, an abbreviation of Konstantinoupolis.)

The Polish prewar novel *Ostatni faraon* [The last pharaoh] (1929) by Jerzy Mariusz Taylor (1887–1941) (the actual family name of a Polish author, journalist, and novelist, who was perhaps a descendant of seventeenth-century foreign settlers) contains a degree of knowledge of the ancient world. The idea of a remnant of ancient Egyptian civilisation surviving somewhere in Africa is very attractive. The novel's main character is a Polish archaeologist. Another protagonist is the last pharaoh. The story was written at a time of increasing interest in ancient Egypt after the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922. In Poland a second factor that stimulated general interest in the country on the Nile was Marshal Józef Piłsudski's sojourn in Egypt in 1932, the year in which the novel under discussion was reedited.

Władysław Zambrzycki's (1891–1962) *Nasza Pani Radosna, czyli dziwne przygody pułkownika Armji Belgijskiej Gastona Bodineau* [Our Lady of Joy, or strange adventures of Gaston Bodineau, a colonel in the Belgian Army] (1931) contains an explicit description of the ancient world. It is not a book for children, but I read it when I was no more than twelve years old. The protagonists, two Belgians and two Poles, after some difficult years in Greece and Italy, decide to escape from the modern world. The use of some alkaloids allows the party to be transported in time to Vespasian's Italy. At Pompeii they produce strong alcoholic drinks under the obvious name of *aqua vitae*. They also introduce and fabricate playing cards. One of the Belgians, who was a football coach, forms two teams—the Pompeian *fullones* and gladiators. Life in Pompeii is described as joyful. Zambrzycki's novel contains, among other inventions of the author, an apocryphal letter of Saint Luke to Theophilus, with a somewhat unconventional version of Christian theology. After the volcanic eruption of 79 AD, which casts a shadow over the humorous narrative, the story ends with the return of the protagonists to modern times, together with a pagan priest and a statue of Juno, which they set up near the village church in the Ardennes and which soon becomes a miraculous Notre Dame de Liesse ("Our Lady of Joy").

The most fascinating book, however, which I read as a child was Bolesław Leśmian's (1877–1937) variant of *The Arabian Nights* in two volumes: *Klechdy sezamowe* [Sesame tales] and *Przygody Sindbada Żeglarza* [The adventures of Sinbad the sailor] of 1913. The genius of the great Polish poet (a relative of Jan Brzechwa, see below) transformed these Oriental stories into jewels of Polish literature. Incidentally, Leśmian's adaptation contains fewer violent episodes than the original stories.

An excellent Polish novel for children about Classical Antiquity is Witold Makowiecki's (1902–1946) *Diossos* (ed. 1950). Like Halina Rudnicka's (1909–1982) *Uczniowie Spartakusa* [The disciples of Spartacus] (1951), Makowiecki's novel was also influenced to a certain extent by the ideology of the time. The book concerns, among other topics, the fate of slaves, in accordance with the then endorsed version of Antiquity. The ancient past was at that time often interpreted as a world of slaves and their masters. This view was not entirely off the mark, although it cannot be applied to all countries and periods of ancient history.

In my childhood I enjoyed translations of Hugh Lofting's masterpieces on Doctor Dolittle and the excellent books by Edith Nesbit, in which a reminiscence of Antiquity is also present. Reading the *Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling was fascinating, especially the first part, since it creates a mysterious and exotic world in which humans and animals are equal. Kipling's *Just So Stories* also belonged to the canon of children's literature in Poland at that time.

I will never forget the moment when, at the age of four, I realised that I had just read my first entire book. The book was entitled *Szelmostwa lisa Witalisa* [The tricks of Vitalis the fox] by Jan Brzechwa (1898 or, as he later claimed, 1900–1966). The poem was first published in 1948 as a separate booklet, masterly illustrated by a great artist, Jan Marcin Szancer (1902–1973).¹

The story, which Brzechwa tells in verse, is as follows:

1. History knows a number of famous foxes (a list follows). The most excellent fox, however, was Vitalis. There follows the description of the fox, with a particular focus on his splendid tail and unusual intellectual capacities.
2. Vitalis's den was located in a forest, somewhere beyond Łomża, a town in the northeastern part of Poland. The den contained intricate devices—a mirror which had the property of signalling plots against Vitalis, a box with a glass which enabled him to see to a distance, a silver plate which was always full, and a golden comb to take care of his splendid tail.
3. A story of the fox and some bears exemplifies Vitalis's typical behaviour: Vitalis led five hungry bears to a farm, promising them young piglets as easy prey. Just as he expected, the bears were attacked by the dogs of the farm and had to escape. During the confusion Vitalis managed to steal some poultry for himself.
4. The fox urged the hungry animals of the wood to bring him lard in addition to a large quantity of snow, from which excellent pancakes would be baked in his miraculous oven. The raw material was brought, but the result was only water. The fox accused the animals of having brought snow of bad quality. Naturally, he took the lard for himself.
5. The animals of the wood elected their president. The presidential campaign of Vitalis was full of promises. His *alazoneia* (braggadocio) resulted in a unanimous election.
6. Vitalis's authoritarian government levied disastrous taxes and exploited the animals ruthlessly. Vitalis behaved more and more like an absolute monarch.
7. In these unbearable circumstances a conspiracy arose. The wolf plotted a revolution. Vitalis was captured, his splendid tail was shaven bald, and he was expelled from the wood amid the laughter of all the animals. Nobody saw him again.

¹ Jan Brzechwa, *Szelmostwa lisa Witalisa* (Warszawa—Kraków: Wydawnictwo E. Kuthana, 1948), reprinted in his *Wiersze wybrane* [Selected poems] (Warszawa: PIW, 1955), 62–83.

Stories of animals are an important part of the ancient literary heritage from Mesopotamia and Egypt through Aesop to Phaedrus and Avianus. Animal tales are also present in other cultures. Suffice it to mention the animal stories of the Indian *Pañchatantra*.

The fox plays a special role in the post-ancient versions of Aesop. This is particularly evident in the French *Le Roman de Renart* of the twelfth century, which under cover of a story about animals refers to mediaeval society. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe used the German version of the story in his *Reinecke Fuchs* of 1793. Among the fanciful stories of the *Gesta Romanorum*, there is also a story of Sardanapalus “king of Greece” in which the fox appears as a negative symbol. In the same collection of tales, there is an example of one Tiberius, who was transformed into a wicked man, Liberius, by his assumption of imperial power: not exactly a parallel to Vitalis, but certainly a warning to rulers who become bad after assuming supreme power.² The fox as a symbol is also present in the Bible (foxes in a vineyard, an allegory often used in European literature, e.g., by Lion Feuchtwanger as the title of a novel).³ The later Latin usage of *vulpes* includes sayings which confirm the topos of the smart fox, such as “intravit ut vulpes, regnavit ut leo, mortuus est ut canis,” or the exclamation “o vulpes astuta!” well known to the readers of the Polish Nobel Prize-winner Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916), etc.

The story of Vitalis is a story of *hubris*. Polycrates of Samos is to a certain extent a prototype of Vitalis: a fortunate and brilliant dictator, whose end, however, was horrible, due to his *hubris*.⁴

Successful tricks of rulers appear in Herodotus and are also present in the Chinese *Book of Stratagems*. The mirror—used by Vitalis as a kind of alarm—appears as a magical instrument in various old stories, including the genuine ancient ones. The magical properties of a *katoptron* were present, for example, in versions of *Alexander Romance*, in which Alexander the Great used a special mirror to detect enemies.

In Brzechwa’s story, the revolution instigated by the wolf contains typical elements of an ancient political conspiracy, including a speech by the leader about the necessity of removing the tyrant, such as in Herodotus’s story of a *coup d’état* in the Achaemenid Empire.⁵ In the case of Vitalis the final solution

² *Gesta Romanorum*, nos. 204, 205.

³ On the fox as a symbol, cf. Anna Nikliborc, *Od baśni do prawdy. Szkice z dziejów literatury zachodniej dla dzieci i młodzieży* [From fable to truth. Sketches from the history of Western literature for children and young adults] (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1981), 12.

⁴ Hdt. 3.39–45, 121–125.

⁵ Hdt. 3.69–73.

was not a repetition of the bloody deed of Harmodius and Aristogeiton or the assassination of Julius Caesar. Brzechwa's story of Vitalis may be interpreted as a moral exemplum: the wrongdoings of Vitalis are punished, while the virtue and the collective common sense of the naïve and good-hearted animals of the wood triumph over the double-dealing fox.

There is a philosophy behind this apparently innocent story. The fox was not punished in a truly severe way. Punishment in stories for children is often considered in terms of retaliation. However, Brzechwa, in his *Akademia Pana Kleksa* [Mr. Blot's Academy, 1946], a story of a very eccentric school, proposed a purely symbolic means of punishing. In his story wearing a green and yellow mottled tie is viewed as sufficient punishment.

Brzechwa's *Baśń o Stalowym Jeżu* [Story of the Steel Hedgehog, 1947] is also very instructive as an example of indirect use of ancient patterns. The narrative has a very unusual, picturesque beginning and a surprising end. The technique of narrating the adventures of the Hedgehog in a nightmarish metallic world in a rapid-fire series of events is strikingly similar to that used in ancient Greek novels. A similarity to some ancient Greek tales is enhanced by the fact that Stymphalid-like metal birds also appear in this story.

Brzechwa's still earlier *Baśń o korsarzu Palemonie* [Story of Palemon the corsair, 1945] presents the delightfully named Palemon, which is reminiscent of the ancient name Palaemon (rather than a distortion of Polemon).

Brzechwa began to write poems very early. He was born in the region of Podolia. He went to high schools ("gymnasia") in Kiev, in Warsaw, and in Petrograd (the name of St Petersburg during WWI). Later, he passed an examination to enter the Technological Institute but finally began his university studies in medicine at Kazan. He was only able to study there for two years due to the revolution.

Brzechwa's verse and style in *Vitalis the Fox* remind one to a certain extent of the rhythm and melody of Apuleius's "Erant in quadam civitate rex et regina." However, Brzechwa's *Vitalis* derives only in part from ancient prototypes. For it would certainly be naïve to take the story of Vitalis at face value. At first glance the story of Vitalis the fox does not seem to be a hidden criticism of the post-war regime. The expulsion of the fox could be understood in general terms as a triumph of the people over a tyrannous individual. It could even be interpreted by a superficial reader as an allegory of the flight of an opposition leader to the West. Another possible official interpretation could refer to the purge inside the ruling party, initiated in the 1948. Regardless of interpretation, political censors did not oppose publication. However, as early as the 1970s, the story of the fox was (still unofficially) interpreted as an anti-communist pamphlet. Such an interpretation was founded chiefly on the observation that the den of the

“red” fox was situated in the East. This explanation convinced many readers. However, a fox in Polish is not “red” (*czerwony*) but “rufous” (*rudy*).

Whom did Brzechwa actually intend Vitalis the fox to represent? Was he a Polish counterpart of Samuel Marshak’s *Mister Twister*? Was the fox an allegory of a specific communist leader or, perhaps, a general symbol of the Soviet-influenced system? Some help may come from the list of famous foxes at the beginning of the poem. It is a series of characters with fanciful names, which very probably refer to some contemporaneous leaders. This enumeration clearly informs the reader that he should look for the identity of Vitalis in the world of political protagonists. A probable solution of the identity of Vitalis can be found in the very name of Brzechwa’s hero with a splendid tail. For an anagram can be made from the name of Vitalis:

VITALIS = STALIIV.

If we join the last two letters, IV, we obtain an N.⁶ Together with the location of Vitalis’s den in the East, *sapienti sat*. Under the circumstances Brzechwa could not be more explicit. An allegory of the same ruler can be also found in Russian poetry.⁷

Brzechwa was not an open enemy of the new order. He even wrote poems complying with the spirit of official propaganda.⁸ For example Brzechwa’s earlier poem *Opowiedział dzięcioł sowie* [What the woodpecker told the owl] was a positive response to the official call for “progressive” writings. By 1948, however, a secret evolution had evidently taken place in Brzechwa’s attitude to the system.

Another indication of Brzechwa’s concealed opposition (in spite of his apparent conformism) is hidden in his slightly earlier, aforementioned, *Story of the Steel Hedgehog*. In this story a wizard gives the Hedgehog a piece of advice: always keep to the right. During the Hedgehog’s adventurous trip, various tempting images appear on his left, like a *fata morgana*. However, the Hedgehog follows the right path which is very difficult and is finally liberated from the power of evil magic and regains his former human appearance. This

6 I wish to acknowledge Ewa Łukaszewicz’s essential contribution in the discovery of this anagram, as a result of our discussion of the matter.

7 Bulat Okudzhava wrote a song about a black cat (*Pesenka pro chyornogo kota*). Okudzhava’s black cat lives in a dirty and dark doorway and terrorises the inhabitants of the house, who obediently bring him food and drink. He never talks to people, nor asks for anything. Instead, everyone spontaneously brings him nourishment and is grateful when he accepts their gifts.

8 See Halina Skrobiszewska, *Brzechwa* (Warszawa: Agencja Autorska, 1965).

allegory apparently contains the opposite message of Okudzhava's *Song of the Moscow Subway*, in which the rule for those going ahead is to always keep to the left.

The story of Vitalis the fox can also be read as an interesting example of the development of ancient motifs in modern literature for children. The narrative of the rise and fall of a tyrant, in particular, is a classical pattern. The hidden criticism of a ruler is also a topos frequently met in ancient literature. Built on such a background, Brzechwa's story was addressed to both the old and the young. Grown-ups would find in the text risky political allusions, children—a moral about fraudsters getting their just desserts. Far from being an in-depth theoretical study, this essay may provide a willing reader with food for thought and an incentive to further analysis.

Aemulating Aesopus: Slovenian Fables and Fablers between Tradition and Innovation

David Movrin

Among many invocations of Aesop, few have achieved the popularity of Lenin's preface in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Writing on the eve of the October Revolution, Vladimir Ilyich remembered the tsarist censorship, which forced him "[...] to formulate the few necessary observations on politics with extreme caution, by hints, in an allegorical language—in that accursed Aesopian language—to which tsarism compelled all revolutionaries to have recourse [...]."¹ While scholars have since shown that the tsarist regime was not unique in fostering such strategies,² this quote from Lenin (1917) provides an interesting point of departure when dealing with a set of key fable collections published in Slovenian during the last two centuries. Political undertones loom large in this genre. F.R. Adrados was certainly right in pointing out the fluctuating structure of ancient fables, a genre "hard to separate from other genres, one with not very clearly defined limits."³ Over the last two centuries, the category has grown into one that is significantly more Protean than its ancient prototypes;⁴ yet it is remarkable how it is precisely a thinly veiled political agenda, leaving aside the ubiquitous moralistic associations, which keeps tinging the discussions of Slovenian animals and springing up among them as a leitmotif.

Fables constitute by far the most numerous remnant of Graeco-Roman literature within the corpus of Slovenian literature for children, offering enough material to allow comparison and to decipher trends visible over decades. Beyond the obvious problem of how much their various authors were actually indebted to "Aesopus"—some followed the tradition rather closely while

1 Vladimir I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), 1.

2 Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1984).

3 Francisco Rodríguez Adrados, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, vol. 1: *Introduction and from the Origins to the Hellenistic Age*, trans. Leslie A. Ray (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 17.

4 For an overview of research problems, see Niklas Holzberg, *Die antike Fabel: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001; ed. pr. 1993).

others tended to be highly original—they seem to present a kind of litmus test for the historical circumstances in which the authors were working. Valentin Vodnik (1758–1819), the *archegetes* of Slovenian poetry, who in 1806 published *Pesme za pokušino* [Poems for sampling], a book which was widely hailed, *sensu stricto*, as the first Slovenian book of poems, translated thirty-one fables from Aesop, but the ones that are intriguing are those he wrote himself.⁵ One of them, called *A German and Carniolan Horse*, consists of a dialogue between two horses, who apparently realise that their fortunes seem to be connected to the ethnicity of their owners:

Nemški konj slovenjmu reče:
 “Brate, kaj medliš na cest?
 Ti li noga, glava neče,
 al se teb ne ljubi jest?”

Mene v dobri réji imájo,
 ovs ponujajo trikrat,
 čiste nôge mi igrajo,
 nosim po labodje vrat.”

Kranjska para milo pravi:
 “Tud bi lahko jaz bil tak,
 al tepêjo me po glavi,
 lačnemu je stati v mlak.”

The German horse says to the Slovenian one:
 “Brother, why are you so weak?
 Is it your leg? Is it your head?
 Maybe you do not eat enough?”

Myself, I am fed well,
 I get three portions of oats,
 My legs are properly cleaned,
 I carry my neck like a swan.”

The luckless Carniolan answers sadly:
 “I could have been like you,

5 For a critical edition, see Valentin Vodnik, *Zbrano delo* [Collected works] (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1988).

But they keep hitting me on my head,
I have to stand hungry in a puddle.”⁶

The sources Vodnik used for the four of his fables not based on Aesop were varied.⁷ This particular text was clearly influenced by the German poet Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, whose *Fabeln und Erzählungen* (1746–1748) remained popular in the nineteenth century, and whose *Das Kutschpferd* [Coach horse] was a recognised inspiration for Vodnik.⁸ Yet Vodnik gave it a different spin; while Gellert furnished his two horses with a social agenda, Vodnik provided them with a national programme. His push was somewhat astonishing, given the fact that the very adjective “Slovenian” as a term was far from settled.⁹ Vodnik himself put his money where his mouth was and started an ambitious educational programme once Napoleon’s forces occupied the area in 1809, promoting the use of Slovenian in schools and administration. But the Illyrian provinces were short-lived and after the return of Austrian rule in 1813, Vodnik was quickly pensioned off. Interestingly, his two horses were given yet another spin in his personal copy, which is preserved in the National and University Library in Ljubljana, with his own corrections dated March 1816. The Austrians were back in power and German horses were again a difficult subject; so the last version of his fable reads *Czech and Carniolan Horse*.¹⁰ As Cavafy put it in one of his poems “In a Township of Asia Minor” describing the *mutanda* after the battle of Actium: “It all fits brilliantly.”

Anton Martin Slomšek (1800–1862), an important bishop and educator, wrote another series of fables in the middle of the nineteenth century, partly

6 Trans. D.M.

7 Boris Merhar, “Od kod Vodniku snov za basen Kos in brezen?” [Where did Vodnik get the material for his fable about the blackbird and the march?], *Slovenski etnograf* [Slovenian ethnographer] 9 (1956): 187–196.

8 Ivan Grafenauer, *Zgodovina novejšega slovenskega slovstva*, vol. 1: *Od Pohlina do Prešerna* [History of Modern Slovenian literature: from Pohlina to Prešeren] (Ljubljana: Katoliška Bukvarna, 1909), 26. Gellert was not the only literary model; according to Grafenauer, Vodnik was perhaps influenced by Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim.

9 In fact, some scholars, including France Kidrič, believed that his use of the term referred to genus, “the Slavs,” rather than species, “Slovenians.” This remains problematic; for a different opinion see Janez Rotar, “Viri Trubarjevega poimenovanja dežel in ljudstev in njegova dediščina” [The Sources for Trubar’s naming of lands and peoples and its heritage], *Zgodovinski časopis* [Historical review] 42.3 (1988): 350.

10 Vodnik, *Zbrano delo*, 401.

in verse,¹¹ but mostly in prose.¹² While their ancient foundations remain visible, the bishop was quick to add a distinctly Christian message—such as in the following story, titled *Swallow and Ants*, from 1851:

“Kaj pa delate?” mlada lastovka pridne mravlje pobara. “Za zimo spravljamo,” ji mravljice odgovorijo. “Tako je prav,” lastovica reče, in brez odloga poberati začne mertve pajeke, suhe muhe, in jih v svoje gnjezdo nosi. “Pokaj pa ti bode vse to?” stara lastovica mlado pobara. “Za zimo, ljuba mamica! Le tudi vi nabirajte, kakor skerbne mravlje vidite,” ji mlada odgovori. “Pusti pozemeljskim mravljam pozemeljsko blago nabirati,” stara mladi pravi. “Kar se njim spodobi, nama ne sodi. Naji je Stvarnik za kaj višega poklical. Bo najno leto minulo, v ptuje kraje poletive. Popotnice bove pospalo, dokler naji mlada vigred k novemu življenju ne obudi. K čemu nama bo tamo nabrano blago?” – Potreba je, v mladosti z mravljami za starost spravljati, pa tudi, kakor lastovke, na večnost ne pozabiti!

“What are you doing?” a young swallow asks some diligent ants. “We are gathering food for the winter,” the ants reply. “Rightly so,” says the swallow, who starts gathering dead spiders and parched flies and carrying them to her nest. “What are you going to do with them?” the young swallow is asked by the old one. “The winter is coming, dear mother! You too should be gathering food, just as you see that the careful ants are doing,” the young one retorts. “Let the earthly ants gather earthly goods,” the old one replies to the young one. “What befits them is not suitable for us. We have been called to something loftier by the Creator. Once our summer is over, we will fly to foreign lands. We will sleep as travellers, until spring awakes us to new life. Once there, what use can we have of the goods

11 Collected and published in Anton Martin Slomšek, *Pesmi* [Poems], ed. Mihael Lendovšek, vol. 1 of *Antona Martina Slomškega zbrani spisi* [Anton Martin Slomšek's collected works] (Celovec: Družba sv. Mohora, 1876). Of 190 fables, thirteen are written in verse. Among their sources are Phaedrus and Aesop (e.g., *Vulpis et corvus*, *Perae duae*, *Quercus et arundo*), but more frequently La Fontaine and even Krylov. For a detailed list, see Sonja Hafner, *Prispevki k zgodovini odmevov antične basni na Slovenskem* [Contributions toward the history of the reception of ancient fable in Slovenia] (Ljubljana: Diplomsko delo, Univerza v Ljubljani, 1990), 57–60.

12 Published mostly in *Drobtinice* [Breadcrumbs], a journal started by Slomšek in 1846, and later published as Anton Martin Slomšek, *Basni, prilike in povesti* [Fables, parables, and tales], ed. Mihael Lendovšek, vol. 2 of *Antona Martina Slomškega zbrani spisi* [Anton Martin Slomšek's collected works] (Celovec: Družba sv. Mohora, 1878).

gathered?” – In one’s youth, one should gather for old age; but like the two swallows, one should not forget about eternity!¹³

This tone pervades the entire collection, which is frequently amusing, occasionally nauseating. There are moments when the author feels the need to state his opinion of contemporary politics; for instance, comparing the cat which fell into ink to the revolutionaries (“prekucuhi”) of 1848. “Evildoers will turn their coats with the wind, but keep their evil in their hearts.” His didactic writings were well received and Slomšek became—in 1999—the first Slovenian to be beatified.

Josip Stritar (1836–1923), a highly prolific writer and critic, published a series of fifty fables in 1902. Stritar was himself an accomplished classicist who studied with Hermann Bonitz in Vienna, and his poetic compositions are consciously modelled after Aesop (“freely after Aesop,” as he defined them). Six of them can be found in Phaedrus, while the rest are taken from Karl Halm’s *Fabulae Aesopicae collectae*—no fewer than forty of them from Aesop, the rest from Babrius, Aristotle, and Plutarch.¹⁴ Poles apart from Slomšek, Stritar’s texts are polished metrically, they are in rhyme, short, and to the point, and deliberately based on ancient sources, to the extent that they can be considered their poetic translations.

Quite dissimilar from these are the fables of Matej Bor (1913–1993), a well-known partisan poet and later the president of the Writers’ Association of Yugoslavia. Bor, whose real name was Vladimir Pavšič, acquired a taste for fables while translating *The Telegraph Fables* by Croatian poet Gustav Krklec (1899–1977).¹⁵ Bor wrote his series of forty-six fables, entitled *Sračje sodišče* [Magpie court],¹⁶ in the winter of 1954, during his stay on the Croatian coast,

13 Trans. D.M.

14 *Fabulae Aesopicae collectae*, ed. Karl Halm (Leipzig: Teubner, 1860); cf. Hafner, *Prispevki k zgodovini*, 39, as well as Fedora Ferluga-Petronio, “Antični motivi v poeziji in dramatiki Josipa Stritarja” [Ancient motifs in the poetry and drama of Josip Stritar] in Erika Mihevc-Gabrovec, Kajetan Gantar, and Martin Benedik, eds., *Antični temelji naše sodobnosti: referati slovenskih udeležencev na 4. znanstvenem zborovanju Zveze društev za antične študije Jugoslavije v Pulju od 12. do 17. oktobra 1986* [Ancient foundations of our contemporaneity: the contributions of Slovenian participants to the fourth scholarly symposium of the Federation of Classical Societies of Yugoslavia, Pula, October 12–17, 1986] (Ljubljana: Društvo za antične in humanistične študije Slovenije, 1987), 54–67.

15 Gustav Krklec, *Telegrafске basni* [Telegraphic fables], trans. Matej Bor (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1952).

16 Matej Bor, *Sračje sodišče ali je, kar je* [Magpie court, or let bygones be bygones] (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1961).

but had to wait for the somewhat more liberal 1960s to be able to actually publish them; he attributed this fact to their content, as well as to the two hostile reviewers, whom he later immortalised, in a final, forty-seventh fable, as “middle-aged goats,” once the book was finally published.¹⁷ Interestingly enough, the offending content that was problematic to the eye of the party censors in the mid-1950s seems downright innocuous by today’s standards, and the issue that troubled the members of the nomenklatura looks slightly surreal. In Bor’s fables, there is hardly any mention of neuralgic political issues; social criticism, if present, is vague and general, as may be seen in the following fable about *A Certain, Not Very Big, Mouse*:

Neka miška, pa ne prav velika,
je tožila mačka, koleke plačala,
vendar pravda je slabo izpala,
ker je bil pač maček za sodnika.

A certain mouse, not very big,
Sued a cat; it paid for the stamp duty
Yet she was not successful in her case,
Since it was the cat who was the judge.¹⁸

Bor, who famously described himself as “the court poet of her majesty the Revolution” in his ecstatic verses written during the war,¹⁹ was in no way harmed by the publication; in fact, he went on to become a member of the Slovenian Academy in 1965.

The most recent—and perhaps the most creative—Slovenian redefinition of a fable was developed by Tomaž Lavrič (b. 1964), a comic-strip author, whose poignant *Bosnian Fables*, showered with international prizes, further developed the genre in order to address the tragedy into which the Balkans exploded during the early 1990s.²⁰ Fittingly, the book is dedicated to the author’s friend Ivo Štandeker, a Slovenian journalist who died reporting the Sarajevo

17 The identity of the “goats,” Milan Klopčič and Filip Kumbatovič Kalan, was revealed two decades later, in an angry note in Bor’s book of epigrams: *Sto manj en epigram* [Hundred epigrams minus one] (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1985), 111.

18 Trans. D.M.

19 Matej Bor, *Previharimo viharje* [Outstorming the storms] (Glavno poveljstvo slovenskih partizanskih čet [Published by the High Command of Slovenian Partisan Forces], 1942).

20 Tomaž Lavrič, *Bosanske basni* (Ljubljana: published by the author, 1997); later followed by a French edition, *Fables de Bosnie* (Grenoble: Glénat, 1999), as well as a Croatian one, *Bosanske basne* (Zagreb: Fibra, 2006).

siege in 1992. *Bosnian Fables* are different from the representatives of the genre described above. Each of the stories bears the name of an animal—Fish, Snake, Fly, Bird, Dog, Pig, Cat, and Mule—yet its animals, where they appear at all, are not anthropomorphic. Instead, the protagonists are humans, trying to survive the surreal and often deadly circumstances of the Bosnian War. The framework of the book is a routine flight of an American plane; its two pilots hover far above the ground and eventually report that no hostile activity has been spotted—while death and destruction reign supreme on the ground. Critics have noticed that the pilots' vantage point creates "a sense of detachment" that visually underscores the pilots' indifference:

The point of view of the pilots, however, seems implicitly to allude to the uninterested gaze of the West, which preferred observing the Yugoslav wars from a safe distance. By alternating points of view, Lavrič constantly reminds the reader not only of the huge difference between looking at war and being physically involved in it but also of the problem of representing war: a biased perspective may prevent us from seeing anything at all, let alone exposing at least a part of the truth about war.²¹

This complexity of perspectives is further mirrored by a linguistic complexity; *Bosnian Fables* contain a Babel of languages that could be heard in the region during the 1990s—various dialects of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian, as well as French and English spoken by the members of UN and Nato units. This approach provides an impression of authenticity, without cheapening its subject. To quote the author:

I wish to be an objective observer, without being insensitive. I wish to create an atmosphere of terror as authentically as possible, but without explicit scenes of killing which could turn the comics into a cheap aesthetics of death.²²

A remarkable example of this approach is the story "Mačka" [Cat] which starts out in the Sarajevo zoo. The keeper decides to free the animals rather than watch them starve to death: "At least you will die free." After that, the story focuses on Nermin, a boy whose childhood involves recognising armour by its sound, avoiding the gaze of a sniper, wondering whether his father, missing in

21 Stijn Vervaet, "A Different Kind of War Story: Aleksandar Zograf's *Regards from Serbia* and Tomaž Lavrič's *Bosnian Fables*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 55.2 (2011): 175.

22 Ibid., 181.

action, will ever return, and reading Kipling's *Jungle Book*. ("Then Shere Khan roared: 'The man-cub has lived too long. Free People, he was my meat from the first. Give him to me.'") During the night, Nermin sees a tiger—freed from the zoo—pass his window, but is unable to convince his mother and his friends that this was not a dream. Distracted, he starts looking for tracks and forgets about the sniper. The telling switch of perspective painfully reminds the reader of what is about to happen (see figure 14.1).

What could be seen as an inventive take on the traditional *fabula docet* is then accomplished with yet another change of perspective. As the child loses his life, the tiger leaves Sarajevo and disappears into the Bosnian woods, accompanied by the words of William Blake:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The immortal eye belongs to the American pilot, who sees the animal from the plane above. Unlike the Serbian sniper earlier on, who attributed the exotic animal in his crosshairs to his drinking of rakija, the American now exclaims to his colleague: "Are there any tigers in these hills?" His co-pilot replies: "God knows! It's a jungle down there..." Whatever the fable is telling us, its message seems to be far from straightforward; in fact, one of the reviewers in France complained that the fables are "too disparate and not didactic enough" ("trop dispartes, pas assez didactiques").²³ While this was apparently meant to be a damning quality, readers have actually found it quite refreshing.²⁴

Building on centuries of literary heritage, the heterogenous fables described above tend to reveal most of their hermeneutical framework when describing unequal power relations. As Annabel Patterson pointed out, since the times of "Aesopus" the slave, fable speaks "to the need for those without power [...] to encode their commentary"²⁵ on society, using wit as a means of subversion and emancipation. *Contra potentes nemo est munitus satis*. As can be seen from

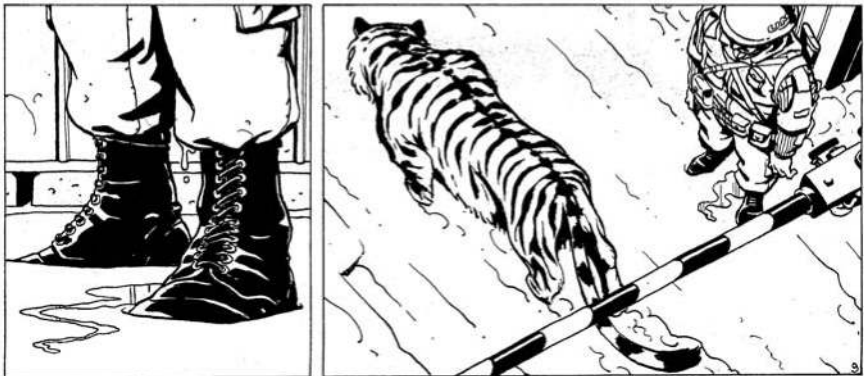
23 Vincent Montagnana, "Tomaz Lavric—Fables de Bosnie," *Chronicart.com* (2000), available at <http://www.chronicart.com/bandes-dessinees/tomaz-lavric-fables-de-bosnie/> (accessed Dec. 27, 2015); cf. Vervaet, "A Different Kind of War Story," 178.

24 A new edition was published in 2014.

25 Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 55.



FIGURE 14.1 *Fragments of "Mačka" [Cat] from Bosanske basni [Bosnian fables] by Tomaž Lavrič (LJUBLJANA: PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR, 1997; HERE FROM THE FRENCH EDITION: FABLES DE BOSNIE, GRENOBLE: GLÉNAT, 1999), 81–82, COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.*



the examples presented above,²⁶ the vestigial structures of this Aesopian language, as opposed to what Lenin had in mind, were used to a different extent by different authors and are quite impossible to crack without a careful contextual analysis. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why they count among the most remarkable remnants of Graeco-Roman tradition in children's literature.

26 For a different selection of Slovenian fables, see Igor Saksida and Mojca Honzak, eds., *Kdo pojasni krasne basni? Izbor slovenskih in tujih basni* [Who will explain the charming fables? A selection of Slovenian and foreign fables] (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2014).

PART 3

*Daring the Darkness: Classical Antiquity as a Filter
for Critical Experiences*

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Ewa Smyk, Between Scylla and Charybdis (2012)

ILLUSTRATION CREATED AT THE WORKSHOP OF PROF. ZYGMUNT
JANUSZEWSKI, ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN WARSAW, © BY EWA SMYK

Armies of Children: War and Peace, Ancient History and Myth in Children's Books after World War One

Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, children have encountered the world of Graeco-Roman Antiquity not only in their language lessons and schoolbooks but also in versions of myth and historical fiction written for young readers. Such recreations of ancient stories and of the ancient world reflect the construction in the writer's day both of childhood and of the classical past. But recreations that emerge from the same historical period will be variously inflected by genre and literary level, intended audience, and the experiences and ideological commitments of the author. We here explore responses to the First World War in texts for children that engage in different ways with the ancient world and present us with oppositions between history and myth, between a more popular and a more rarefied audience, and between the celebration of war and the hope for peace.

In the decades following the carnage of World War One, Europe confronted the loss of a generation of young men. The impact of the war on the young was brutal: not only were many children left fatherless, many of the soldiers who fought in the war had enlisted under age and were themselves hardly more than children.¹ But as critics have noted, it is an over-simplification to imagine that there was an immediate or general falling-off in the literary celebration of wartime heroism. In England, the postwar years saw what Samuel Hynes describes as a "division of judgment" between "two cultures, separate and mistrustful of each other, a conservative culture that clung to and asserted

1 Richard Van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Headline, 2005); see also Kimberley Reynolds, "Words about War for Boys: Representations of Soldiers and Conflict in Writing for Children before World War I," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 34 (2009): 255–271. On the demands made on children's patriotism and general engagement in the war effort in French schools during World War I, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, "Children and the Primary Schools of France, 1914–1918," in John Horne, ed., *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39–52. Cf. on Canadian children Susan R. Fisher, *Boys and Girls in No Man's Land: English-Canadian Children in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), and on the German experience Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

traditional values, and a counter-culture, rooted in rejection of the war and its principles.”² If a series of what Hynes calls “classic war books” in the late 1920s and early 1930s established a story of futility, disillusionment, and alienation, popular culture continued to celebrate and to justify the war.³ And as Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson have pointed out, popular fiction for the young in particular continued to feature tales of wartime adventure, including stories of “the Great War,” even if—as George Orwell noted in his 1939 essay “Boys’ Weeklies”—these tended, tellingly, to involve the “Air Force or Secret Service, not the infantry.”⁴

America’s experience of the First World War was much briefer and less traumatic, so it is not surprising that we should find in postwar American fiction for children a continued embrace of the adventure of war—further enabled, in the case of historical fiction, by the safe distance of the past—as well as a turn toward pacifism.⁵ In this essay, we discuss three works for children by American writers of the 1920s and 1930s in which contrasting responses to the First World War inform and are mediated by an evocation of the classical past: an historical novel that considers the goals of Caesar’s Gallic wars in light of the conflict immediately past and treats young Roman legionaries like “our boys in France”; an introduction to a collection of myths that asks children to understand mythical heroism by analogy with the heroism of ordinary soldiers; and a book (ostensibly for children, but clearly addressed in part to adults) that calls on the hidden meanings of myth in summoning children to heal the trauma of

2 Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1991). On the complexity and variety of British war poetry in its engagement with the classical past, see Elizabeth Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in the British Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

3 Hynes, *A War Imagined*, 424 and Ch. 21; Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850–2000* (London: Reaktion, 2000), Ch. 5. Cf. also Rosa Maria Bracco, *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919–1939* (Providence–Oxford: Berg, 1993).

4 Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850–1950* (London–New York: Routledge, 2010), Ch. 5; George Orwell, “Boys’ Weeklies,” in eisdem, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 1, edited by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 475. Cf. also Dorothea Flothow, “British Children’s Novels and the Memory of the Great War, 1919–1938,” in Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs, eds., *Changing Concepts of Childhood and Children’s Literature* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006); Flothow comments (124–127) on the absence of stories of trench warfare in postwar children’s books and the prominence of the pilot as duelling hero.

5 See for example Kate Seredy’s depiction of the impact of the First World War in *The Singing Tree* (New York: Viking, 1939).

the war and transcend national difference in a world at peace. Where history is reread to reinforce a particular national perspective, myth is reinterpreted to enable a universalising vision of human possibility.

Our first text is R.F. Wells's *With Caesar's Legions: The Adventures of Two Roman Youths in the Conquest of Gaul* (1923). Wells, a 1901 graduate of Amherst College, was a schoolteacher for a number of years and the co-author of a history of his Massachusetts hometown.⁶ *With Caesar's Legions* is one of four historical novels for children, written in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, that feature essentially the same story type,⁷ one that is in its broad outlines reminiscent of the formulaic boys' adventure novels familiar from the works of G.A. Henty and others.⁸ In each of these books, a young man (sometimes accompanied by a friend or relative) joins Caesar's army, demonstrates his prowess in single combat, makes new friends, shows his bravery and cleverness, comes to the attention of Caesar, saves the day on at least one occasion, and advances through the ranks. All four novels focus on the campaigns of Caesar in Gaul or Britain and portray Caesar with an unqualified admiration almost amounting to adoration. In some cases the writers not only acknowledge a debt to Caesar's commentaries but also explicitly offer their narrative as ancillary to students' study of Caesar's work in Latin, thus suggesting that the work is not merely entertaining but propaedeutic.⁹

War and military life are pervasive themes in children's books set in the world of ancient Rome from Henty and Rudyard Kipling to Rosemary Sutcliff, and beyond; their varied representations of the experience of war are inevitably formed by and sometimes clearly evocative of the historical context of

6 Daniel White Wells and Reuben Field Wells, *A History of Hatfield, Massachusetts, in Three Parts* (Springfield, Mass.: Gibbon, 1910), 360.

7 R.F. Wells, *With Caesar's Legions: The Adventures of Two Roman Youths in the Conquest of Gaul* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1951; ed. pr. 1923); R.F. Wells, *On Land and Sea with Caesar, or Following the Eagles* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1926); Paul L. Anderson, *With the Eagles* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1957; ed. pr. 1929); Paul L. Anderson, *Swords in the North* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1960; ed. pr. 1935). For an earlier example of the same story type, see A.C. Whitehead, *The Standard Bearer: A Story of Army Life in the Time of Caesar* (New York: American Book Company, 1914).

8 Although adventure novels of various kinds were often described as "boys' stories," they were widely read by girls; see Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 202–203; Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England: 1880–1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 111–115, 126–127.

9 Wells, *With Caesar's Legions*, 8; Wells, *On Land and Sea with Caesar*, 5; Anderson, *Swords in the North*, 270, and Whitehead, *The Standard Bearer*, 5.

the writer.¹⁰ To take an often-cited example, Kipling's stories (in *Puck of Pook's Hill*) about a young soldier who comes of age fighting the enemies of Rome on Hadrian's Wall recall in many ways the lives (recounted elsewhere in his fiction) of young officers on the frontiers of the British Empire.¹¹

In some instances, however, a writer may explicitly compare recent or current events with a specific moment in the past. In *With Caesar's Legions*, which focuses on the campaigns against the Helvetians and the Germans, Wells draws a parallel between Rome's actions and aims and America's role in the First World War, a parallel further supported by the resemblance of the central characters to small-town American boys eager to enlist. This resemblance, however, even as it reinforces Wells's historical analogy, also suggests that boyhood has certain universal qualities, not specific to any period, and is part of a familiar strategy by which writers of historical fiction seek to construct stories, especially coming-of-age stories, that will resonate with the present-day lives of the intended child readers.¹²

After stating in his preface the importance for European history of the Roman conquest of Gaul, Wells describes his purpose as follows:

To present in one connected tale the story of one season's campaign by Caesar and his troops, as seen through the eyes of two of his young followers, has been the author's task. That some readers shall gain a better idea of how the legionaries fought and lived in stirring times has been one purpose of this work. A second is to vitalize an event in history which deserves more attention than it has received.

WELLS, 5–6

Now America enters the picture:

Another struggle ended only a few years ago on the same fields on which Caesar and his legionaries fought, a struggle that has some striking points

10 On changing depictions of the Roman occupation of Britain in books for children, see Catherine Butler and Hallie O'Donovan, *Reading History in Children's Books* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Ch. 2.

11 See Deborah H. Roberts, "Reconstructed Pasts: Rome and Britain, Child and Adult in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* and Sutcliff's Novels of Roman Britain," in Christopher Stray, ed., *Remaking the Classics: Literature, Genre and Media in Britain 1800–2000* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 113–114 and works cited there.

12 On forms of universalism and historicism in historical fiction for children, see especially Butler and O'Donovan, *Reading History in Children's Books* and John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (London: Longman, 1992), Ch. 6.

of similarity to the former one. In the first century before the birth of Christ, as in the years from 1914 on, a great democracy fought with its allies to defend the latter's homeland and people from aggression. In both cases an invasion was threatened which, if not checked, would have brought destruction of property, the imposition of tribute, and the virtual enslavement of the people. In the World War more than one democracy was involved, and the fighting was on a far larger scale. In that, as in the campaigns with which this tale is concerned, the struggle ended with a host of threatening invaders driven back across the Rhine.

WELLS, 6

Wells describes Rome and the Gallic tribes that fought on Caesar's side in language that identifies them as closely as possible with America and the European Allies during World War One, and that depicts Rome, like America, primarily as a defender of freedoms rather than an imperial power.¹³ He goes on to draw a direct comparison between Roman and modern warfare, with a curious disregard for the realities of infantry warfare in the First World War:

Military leaders have not yet ceased to study [Caesar's] campaigns for information which will guide them in the strategy of war. It is remarkable how very little difference there is between the tactics and some of the formations employed in ancient warfare and those in use today. For that reason, military formations are described at some length in this story. The cohort of Caesar's time corresponded very closely to the modern company. The legion [...] was like a modern regiment.

WELLS, 9

As the story begins, a legion recruiting on its way north enters a village in Cisalpine Gaul, and we meet two boys: Titus, whose father is a farmer, and his cousin Julius, whose father is a local merchant. Their grandfather, a veteran of the Marian campaigns, has raised them on stories of his own experiences, telling them about "the might of the Roman legionaries, the citizen-soldiers, who had repulsed all attacks from foreign foes and were now conquering in all parts of the world and building up a mighty empire" (Wells, 21). When in due time the boys arrive at the legion's encampment to enlist, and mention Marius, the legionary to whom they speak remarks:

13 On the diverse uses of Rome as parallel and symbol in the poetry of the First World War, see Vandiver, *Stand in the Trench, Achilles*, 21–28.

A new Marius has come in our new leader, Caesar, I think, and the rights of the people will be restored. That is why I have rejoined the army.

WELLS, 32

The expressions “citizen-soldiers” and “rights of the people” evoke at once the Roman Republic, the foundational values of the United States (themselves in part derived from an idealised vision of Rome), and the American War of Independence, recalled during World War One in such moments as General Pershing’s visit, on July 4, 1917, to the tomb of Lafayette.¹⁴

The boys’ own response suggests an unreflective enthusiasm uncritically described by the author as a universal characteristic of boyhood: “What boy does not feel the thrill of tales of war and does not at some time long to be a soldier?” (Wells, 22). But this is not their only motive; when the legionary says, “You want to join the army and fight, eh?” Julius replies, “Yes, and to travel... To go somewhere and see something. We can never amount to much in this cramped little town” (Wells, 33). He sounds very much like one of the young Americans to whom World War I recruiting posters sought to appeal (see figure 15.1).¹⁵

Wells reiterates the historical comparison he made in his preface, and reinforces it by drawing another parallel, this time with the Napoleonic wars; note that the American reader, conditioned by recent alliances, is expected to identify with “the people of all Europe” rather than recall America’s own war against Napoleon’s most persistent opponent:

As the people of all Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century felt, when Napoleon and his troops were sweeping over all the countries of Europe, threatening to carry everything before them; and as the people of nearly all the world felt in 1914, when the German troops began to pour through Belgium and Northern France; so, in the first century before the birth of Christ the people of Italy felt, when the news came that the northern barbarians were again on a forward movement.

WELLS, 39–40

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- 14 Byron Farwell, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917–1918* (New York–London: Norton, 1999), 93–94; Jennifer Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 107–108. Note that Keene regularly refers to the (largely conscripted) armed forces of World War One as citizen-soldiers and that Farwell’s last chapter is entitled “Return of the Legions.”
- 15 Cf. the popular 1918 song, “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘em Down on the Farm, After They’ve Seen Patee?” (words by Joe Young and Sam M. Lewis, music by Walter Donaldson). Motives for under-age enlistment in Britain during World War I included “boredom with work,” “a longing for adventure” (Van Emden, *Boy Soldiers*, 3), and “an opportunity to travel” (Reynolds, “Words about War for Boys,” 256).



FIGURE 15.1 *World War I recruiting poster by James Montgomery Flagg (1877–1960)*

TRAVEL? ADVENTURE? ANSWER—JOIN THE MARINES!: ENLIST TO-DAY FOR 2-3 OR 4 YEARS, WORLD WAR I POSTER COLLECTION, RBM 2274, RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, [HTTPS://COLLECTION1.LIBRARIES.PSU.EDU/CDM/REF/COLLECTION/WARPOSTERS/ID/48](https://collection1.libraries.psu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/warposters/id/48).

But the reader's experience of this momentous struggle (where the Helvetians and Germans stand in for the German troops of 1914) continues to be mediated through the day-to-day military life of two boys who seem little different from American small-town or farm boys:¹⁶

16 There were evidently more farmers among American soldiers in World War One than members of any other occupational group (Farwell, *Over There*, 62), although these were

“Money,” exclaimed Julius, his face falling. “Where can we get that? I haven’t any.”

“Never mind,” replied Titus. “I have some of my own with me, enough for us both. My father let me have all the pelts I got from the traps last winter, and I sold them for a good price the other day in town.”

WELLS, 43

The two of them talk like enthusiastic schoolboys or like the heroes of any number of boys’ adventure stories; they compete with each other (“I’ll bet you anything I can carry the pack as long as you can,” Wells, 47) and exclaim over the “fun” of training:

“My, what fun it is to drill like that!” said Julius, when the men returned to camp, and had been dismissed from the ranks.

“Yes,” agreed Titus, “I hope our chance will come to go into a battle soon and show what we have learned.”

WELLS, 72

After the two undergo various vicissitudes (including “desperate” battles and non-fatal wounds), Julius Caesar not only recognises and rewards their bravery and concern for others but takes a kindly interest in their plan to return home for a visit and surprise their parents. The novel (to be followed by a sequel) concludes as the “bronzed youths” embrace and greet their mothers.¹⁷

Wells’s novel, then, depicts the First World War and the campaigns of Caesar as similar noble causes, both fought in part by boys for whom military life was largely a happy adventure, a game, and a broadening of otherwise narrow horizons. This comparison relies on the assumption that boys are the same in all times but is nonetheless tied to history, as Wells isolates and identifies two special eras, “stirring times” of great achievement, when boys could be inspired and shaped by heroic adults with lofty goals. Of these, the Great War of the recent past is so immediately compelling that it has no need to be glorified by a classical antecedent; it is the classical antecedent that is elevated by the comparison. Wells hopes that his young readers will be drawn to an exceptional period in classical history that, in his view, anticipates their own American

mostly conscripts, unlike Wells’s enthusiastic enlistees (Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War*, 18–19).

17 Ferrall and Jackson note the absence of this kind of concluding reunion in British adventure stories between the wars, as opposed to earlier exemplars (Ferrall and Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850–1950*, 144).

moment with its triumphant democratic values. The writers to whom we now turn also assert a connection between young people and the classical past, but in the realm of mythology rather than history, and with the aim of transcending, rather than celebrating, the experiences of the war and the patriotic claims of its victors. For them, the role of children as appreciative readers and auditors of classical mythology is the key (implicitly in one case, more explicitly in the other) to a new era of peace, in which the militaristic and nationalistic sentiments of the war can be left behind.

This connection between children as heralds of a brighter future and a legacy from the past reflects a conception of myth and its relation to childhood that had developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Myth was understood as deriving from the earliest phase of human culture, an undifferentiated, prehistoric time before the particular civilisations and events of the historical record. This time was the common past of all people and the source of universal ideas and stories, which could be found in anonymous folk traditions as well as in the high artistic achievements of the classical Greeks and Romans. Children, in their unformed state, were easily identified with this primal era and its heritage of shared myths, as well as with the unrealised future.

The idea that children have a natural connection to myth because myth comes from a primordial time underlies the recasting of classical myth as children's literature in two pioneering collections by the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* (1851) and *Tanglewood Tales* (1853). Hawthorne presented myths as coming from a prehistoric golden age, "the pure childhood of the world."¹⁸ In *A Wonder-Book*, myths are characterised by Hawthorne's internal narrator—a college student named Eustace Bright who tells the myths to some younger cousins and their friends—as "the nursery-tales that were made for the amusement of our great old grandmother, the Earth, when she was a child in frock and pinafore."¹⁹ Because this moment precedes all historical periods and national divisions, myth is a universal heritage, "the immemorial birthright of mankind," "the common property of the

18 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys and Tanglewood Tales*, vol. 13 in "The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Boston–New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1900), 241. Daniel Hoffman, "Myth, Romance, and the Childhood of Man," in Roy Harvey Pearce, ed., *Hawthorne Centenary Essays* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 199, comments on the identification of myth with the childhood of humanity as "a commonplace made attractive both by Romantic idealization of the child and by progressive theories of cultural evolution."

19 Hawthorne, *A Wonder-Book*, 6.

world, and of all time,” to which “an old Greek had no more exclusive right than a modern Yankee has.”²⁰ The myths Hawthorne tells are Greek ones, but they predate the classical Greeks who, in his eyes, distorted them by making them too cold and grim. In *Tanglewood Tales*, Bright claims that retelling the myths for children means restoring their original purity: “[...] children are now the only representatives of the men and women of that happy era, and therefore it is that we must raise the intellect and fancy to the level of childhood, in order to recreate the original myth.”²¹ Connecting children and myths here becomes a way of escaping the flawed modern world.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the conception of myth as a universal heritage was furthered by the rise of anthropology, which found a stimulus and a subject of controversy in the widespread occurrence of similar myths, a phenomenon most influentially described in James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, first published in 1890. Myth provided an eloquent sign of the inherent similarity of all people despite their cultural and historical differences and their varying degrees of connection to the classical tradition. In that spirit, myth had a natural role to play in expressions of internationalism in the years following World War One, by which time myth had also become firmly established as a fitting subject for children.

Postwar hopes for a more peaceful world were inevitably invested in children, envisioned—in an idealising conception like that of Hawthorne—as uncontaminated by the nationalistic antagonisms that drive adults to fight. In this context, children’s literature was invoked as a means of reinforcing children’s instincts for harmony and international understanding, most prominently in a book published in 1932 by a French historian, Paul Hazard, *Les livres, les enfants et les hommes* (translated into English at the end of the Second World War as *Books, Children and Men*, 1944).²² Hazard’s study is in part an account

20 Ibid., 152–153.

21 Ibid., 241. On shifts in Hawthorne’s perspective on myth and childhood between *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, see Nina Baym, “Hawthorne’s Myths for Children: The Author vs. His Audience,” *Studies in Short Fiction* 10 (1973): 35–46; Laura Laffrado, *Hawthorne’s Literature for Children* (Athens, Ga.–London: The University of Georgia Press, 1992), Chs. 3 and 4.

22 Paul Hazard, *Les livres, les enfants et les hommes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1932), in English as *Books, Children and Men*, trans. Marguerite MacKellar Mitchell (Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1944). For Hazard’s contribution in the larger context of internationalist views of children’s literature, and for a contemporary critique of those views, see Emer O’Sullivan, “Internationalism, the Universal Child and the World of Children’s Literature,” in Peter Hunt, ed., *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 1, 13–25. For a somewhat earlier expression of similar views by an

of children's literature as forging national identities within distinct European traditions, but he lays even more stress on the ability of children's books to cross borders:

Yes, children's books keep alive a sense of nationality; but they also keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native lands lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race; but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships. Every country gives and every country receives—innumerable are the exchanges—and so it comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal republic of childhood is born.²³

Hazard's book-centred vision requires an emphasis on translation as an indispensable factor in international exchange, and he makes a great point of the many languages into which such children's classics as *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* have been translated.²⁴ Myths and fairy tales, however, can be seen as escaping the need for translation, since they in effect translate themselves, appearing in varied but recognisable forms in every national tradition, serving in their unchanging outlines as a kind of universal language. Their primordial point of origin predates linguistic difference along with other distinctions that corrupt the parallel realms of modernity and adulthood.²⁵

Hawthorne's idea of myth as a universal birthright is given a more pointedly internationalist flavour in the introduction to a myth collection for children ("retold and pictured by Margaret Evans Price") published in the United States in 1924:

American children's librarian, see Clara Whitehill Hunt, *International Friendship Thru Children's Books* (New York: League of Nations Non-Partisan Association, 1924).

23 Hazard, *Books, Children and Men*, 146.

24 C.W. Hunt, *International Friendship*, 6, calls for a "philanthropist of international outlook" to fund the translation into many languages of the books that she particularly recommends.

25 For Hazard, fairy tales "draw us [...] back, to the awakening of an undefined soul, unable to distinguish the ego from the non-ego, to separate reality from dream." (Hazard, *Books, Children and Men*, 161.) On the place of "a primary state of language" in idealising conceptions of the child as "a pure point of origin," see Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2nd 1992; ed. pr. 1984), 8–9.

All the world loves a story. Millions of children, in all countries, in all ages, have lifted eager little faces, white, black, tawny, yellow, brown, to the grandmother telling of a runner swifter than the wind, like Atalanta, or a young hero slaying the dragon that would have devoured a lovely maiden, as Perseus rescued Andromeda, or of a tiny people no bigger than clothes-pins, like the Pygmies, who fought the cranes.²⁶

The author of these words was Katharine Lee Bates (1859–1929), a professor of English at Wellesley College and a prolific author, now remembered exclusively for the lyrics to the popular patriotic song, “America the Beautiful.” After World War One, Bates’s patriotism was combined with ardent advocacy of the League of Nations: in 1924, she refused to support the Republican nominee for president, Calvin Coolidge, despite her lifelong allegiance to the party, because of his opposition to the League.²⁷

Bates resembles Hawthorne in giving priority to Greek myth while also asserting that myth is timeless and tying myth to prehistory through the universal figure of the grandmother, who embodies the link between a generic present and its deeper past. In both cases, the universality of myth justifies a collection of Greek myths retold for modern children, but Bates stresses, as Hawthorne does not, the similarity of myths from many traditions, for which the Greek versions serve as paradigms rather than sources, highlighting the childhood experience of hearing myths as a human constant that crosses racial and cultural boundaries. For her, the connections formed by myths are notably egalitarian (a sentiment echoed in Hazard’s image of an international children’s “republic”); an example designed to illustrate continuity over time also subtly corrects an ethnic prejudice of early twentieth-century America: “[...] the tale of Romulus and Remus was first told in Latin to black-eyed little Italians not so very, very, very long ago” (Bates, 7).

Like both Hawthorne and Hazard, Bates sees the stories that are told to children as expressions of what is best in human nature, and in this spirit she invokes the recent victory of America and its allies in World War One. To counter

26 Margaret Evans Price, *A Child's Book of Myths*, with an “Introduction” by Katharine Lee Bates (New York–Chicago: Rand McNally, 1924), 7.

27 “Republican Women Declare for Davis,” *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1924. For Bates’s life, see Dorothy Burgess, *Dream and Deed: The Life of Katharine Lee Bates* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), esp. 200–203, for her responses to World War One, which included admiration of Woodrow Wilson, refusal to boycott German scholarship, and rejection of pacifism coupled with the conviction that “the only program before the world today for ending war is to end *this* war by disarming Prussia.”

the objection that myths involving self-sacrifice, such as those of Alcestis and Orpheus, “are too beautiful to be true,” she insists that “[t]hey are too beautiful *not* to be true,” and points to newspaper accounts of parents who try to save their children from burning houses and boys who drown trying to rescue their playmates, then adds:

Sometime we shall forget the angers of the terrible war that has just shaken the world almost to its overthrow, but God remembers forever the soldiers who fell for their buddies, for their flags, for mercy and righteousness, for their faith in a blessed peace to come at last out of all their strife and suffering.

BATES, 8

Bates shares Wells's view of the war as a noble cause in which the victors are aligned with justice, but she dwells on its costs and defines its goal as the securing of peace rather than the achievement of specific military and political aims. If Wells depicts war as the ideal arena for cementing lifelong friendships among boys, Bates presents such friendships as the occasion of sacrifice and loss, most poignantly with the homely word “buddies” that breaks through her generally high-flown prose. For Wells, identification with the soldiers of World War One will help his boy readers to appreciate a proto-American historical era, from which they can learn more about the particular arts of war; for Bates, the same soldiers can inspire her readers, both girls and boys, to appreciate archetypal myths, from which they will absorb a virtue that is universal and independent of warfare: her final example of self-sacrifice is Dante's willingness to follow Beatrice “into the depths and heights of the realm invisible” (Bates, 8).

We find a more extended, and a more overtly pacifist, account of children's connection to myth as the key to a better future in *The Hedgehog*, a novella by the American-born expatriate poet, novelist, and memoirist H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886–1961), a writer whose many works are pervaded by classical mythology, which she saw as a universal key to human experience.²⁸ *The Hedgehog*,

28 H.D., *The Hedgehog*, with an “Introduction” by Perdita Schaffner (New York: New Directions, 1988). For H.D.'s biography, see Janice S. Robinson, *H.D.: The Life and Work of an American Poet* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984). On her extensive use of classical mythology, see Thomas Burnett Swann, *The Classical World of H.D.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962); Eileen Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Sheila Murnaghan, “H.D., Daughter of Helen: Mythology as Actuality,” in Gregory A. Staley, ed., *American Women and Classical Myths* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 63–84.

first published in a limited edition in 1936, was written during the late 1920s and early 1930s while H.D. was living in Switzerland with her daughter Perdita. H.D. had moved to Switzerland from London with her partner Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman, 1894–1983) after the war, during which she had been living in London and which she had experienced in a far more direct and traumatic way than many of her American compatriots—certainly not as the straightforward triumph and exciting foreign adventure summoned up by Wells. Shared hardships and losses were amplified for her by personal troubles, including the death of her brother in action and estrangement from her shell-shocked English husband. Perdita was the product of a short-lived relationship, and was born soon after the war under difficult circumstances, from which H.D. was effectively rescued by Bryher.

In a preface to a new edition of *The Hedgehog* issued in 1988, Perdita recalls hearing about the book from her mother when she was about fourteen:

She revealed—casually, over the teacups—that she had a manuscript, a story, well not exactly a story, too long, not exactly a novel, too short. A little book for children set in Switzerland, no not really for children, but about a child, about me, well sort of.

H.D., VIII–IX

This description well captures the book's unclassifiable character. It is partly, but not wholly, autobiographical, and it hovers between being a book for children and a book for adults. It offers child readers the story of a child protagonist, but it is also a vehicle for the adult author's meditation on childhood: the "hidden adult" who is present in even the most decidedly child-directed books is here in plain view.²⁹ Never intended for a wide audience, *The Hedgehog* does not aspire to the popular appeal of Wells's novel or of the myth collection introduced by Bates (which has been frequently reissued throughout the near-century since its first appearance).

The Hedgehog tells the story of a little girl named Madge, who is being raised in Switzerland by her American mother Bett. Madge's English father is out of the picture, as Perdita's was, but in this case because he died in the war. His rich relatives urge Madge and Bett to return to England but Bett, who is a thinly disguised version of H.D. herself, has chosen to remain in Switzerland out of a romantic pacifism: "Other people made wicked wars, but here people waited

29 On the inescapable presence of adult agendas in children's literature, see Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*; Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

in their hills” (H.D., 20). The story begins with a minor falling-out between Madge and Bett, which results in Madge setting off down the mountainside to obtain a hedgehog from a Dr. Blum, who lives below on the shore of a lake. After getting caught on a dangerously steep path, Madge panics, regrets her quarrel with her mother, and finds comfort in the beliefs her mother has instilled in her. She is then rescued by her friend André, the son of a woodcutter. They make their way down the hillside to the doctor’s house, where Madge has tea and returns toward evening with the hedgehog in a box. Madge’s quest leads not to greater independence or new knowledge, but to the recollection and renewed acceptance of Bett’s general outlook and of Bett’s particular vision of Madge’s identity and role in history: the story of Madge’s trials serves as a vehicle for some of H.D.’s most cherished ideas.

Bett has conveyed to Madge an understanding of the world as shaped by patterns of meaning encapsulated in mythology. She tells Madge myths, such as the story of Narcissus and Echo, and teaches her to see them as symbolic, using the metaphor of a lamp, infused with light as a mythic narrative is infused with a deeper, symbolic meaning:

Bett made Madge understand that the stories weren’t just stories, but that there was something in them like the light in the lamp that isn’t the lamp. Bett would say to Madge, when she was a very little girl, “Now what is the lamp side of the story and what is the light side of the story?” so Madge could see very easily (when she was a very little girl) that the very beautiful stories Bett told her, that were real stories, had double meanings.

H.D., 20

While Bett gives priority to Greek myths, her vision is notably syncretic; she, like many of H.D.’s contemporaries, including Bates, sees classical myths as belonging to a wider realm of world mythology. She stresses the fundamental identity of myths from multiple traditions, highlighting common elements that transcend differences of language and religion. When Madge is trapped on the mountainside, she hears something that sounds like thunder and, in her fear, she summons up her mother’s teaching:

[...] Madge tried to hold on to something that would bring her comfort. Bett said, in those lamp-and-light stories, that the thunder was the voice of Zeus, and Zeus in those lamp-and-light Greek stories was the father of everyone, so Bett said he was like the other God our Father which art in Heaven, only the Greek light-in-lamps people called him by another name.

H.D., 24

Here Bett equates Zeus with the god of Christianity, evoked through the opening words of the Lord's Prayer (in the version current among English speakers of her day): "Our Father, which art in Heaven..."

At other times, drawing on the versatility of mythical paradigms, Bett has appealed to the "father in heaven" in a different way, to explain Madge's own circumstances to her, and to enlist Madge in her own pacifist, internationalist vision: the father in heaven becomes a figure for the human father who has died, and specifically the father who has died in the recent war. Because Madge has a father in heaven in this sense, she stands in a momentous relation to other such war orphans:

There were so many, many children, Bett said, who had that kind of "Father who art in Heaven" for a father, and such children, Bett said, were (must be) just a tiny, tiny bit different from other children. Now there was a great army of children all over the world—French children and German children and Serbian children and Turkish children and American children and Armenian children and Russian children. And all, all of these children, though they might never know one another, were all sort of odd little brothers and sisters (Bett said) and they must never, never hate each other, and they must never hate each other's countries, because every one of them had a sort of "Father which art in Heaven" for a father, and they must feel differently about wars and about soldiers killing each other than other children.

H.D., 27–28

Here H.D. draws on the universality of a mythical archetype—the father in heaven, equatable with both the Greek Zeus and the Christian God—to assert a much more pointed and historically grounded commonality among the former adversaries of the recent war. She goes one step further than Bates, who sees the American lives lost in the war as redeemed by the peace (on allied terms) that followed it and as widely applicable exempla of self-sacrifice. For H.D., the lives lost on both sides are a shared privation, conceptualised within the universal structure of the human family, that could inspire a new and expressly pacifist spirit of international understanding. While her hopes are conditioned by her particular historical moment, they are also tied to a utopian view of children as uncontaminated by history, which recalls Hawthorne's characterisation of children as "now the only representatives" of a primordial golden age and Hazard's ever-renewed "universal republic of childhood." The future she envisions depends on Madge and other children like her, who have not yet formed the hostile allegiances that have shaped recent history, and

whose shared relationship to this mythic archetype might keep them from doing so.

In portraying Madge as absorbing her mother's teaching, and reconfirming it during a moment of crisis, H.D. dramatises the successful transmission of those lessons she and other adults hope will be learned when children hear myths or read books that are translated from foreign languages or that depict the lives of foreign children. Madge is endowed with qualities that support such hopes, among them a heightened attunement to myths as universal archetypes and the lack of an exclusive national identity. Despite her American and British parentage, Madge is comfortably at home in Switzerland and conversant in the various forms of French spoken in her village. In this she is contrasted to the monoglot and jingoistic English tourists who visit the region, especially her own counterparts, Girl Guides, who say "quite solemnly, that England should, and must, fight its enemies," while Madge says "England has no enemies but its own hearts" (H.D., 28).

Unlike the Girl Guides, Madge has been taught by her mother to stand apart from the conflicts and partisan stances of history: "Bett had said to Madge, 'You must be no year at all [...] but part of everything'" (H.D., 21). This teaching conditions Madge's relationship to the alpine landscape in which her adventure plays out. As she finds herself "clinging, part of sky, part of lake, part of rocks and very much part of everything, to the side of a cliff," she thinks:

All the small stones had slipped down long since, ages and ages since, before even Hannibal crossed the Alps (these Alps), before even Napoleon marched right straight through their valley (this valley) on his way to Italy. Long and long and long ago, as long ago, Madge thought, as the beginning of the first narcissus on their hills, the little stones had slipped down; Madge saw now that she was the tiniest little part of everything...

H.D., 23-24

Madge associates the terrain in which she is trapped with two historical episodes that belong to Wells's roster of privileged moments when brave defenders warded off a sinister threat: the invasion of Italy by Hannibal (which Wells does not mention, but which forms an obvious parallel to the invasion of Roman territory by Germanic tribes that occasions his plot) and the imperialist campaigns of Napoleon (which Wells explicitly cites as a parallel to the imperialist threat that was overcome in World War One). But she declines to privilege those episodes in the same way, viewing them simply as random signposts in the long unbroken span of geological time, which stretches back to a mythic "long ago," when the narcissus first grew. This point of origin is literally mythic,

since Madge has been thinking about the story of Echo and Narcissus, which Bett has told her in order to illustrate the principle of the light in the lamp.

Madge's auspicious sensibility is also displayed in her response to being rescued by the woodcutter's son André. As she clings to the mountainside, she prays to a trio of interchangeable powers, variously invoked in German, Greek, and English: among them is the *Weltgeist*, a spirit that her mother has told her is a lovely idea of the Germans for which there is no translation, but which can be compared to the Greek god Pan:

Weltgeist was a sort of Pan, a god of terror and of woods, who belonged to everybody, and that Greek word stays the same too, since the Greeks have such lovely thoughts and such different thoughts that no words were ever found to translate them afterwards. Pan in Greek means everything, or everywhere, and God who was god of everyone, of all, all the wild things, was called Pan. *Weltgeist* and Pan were very much alike, and shivering and trembling, clutching at the berry bushes, Madge cried, "O *Weltgeist*, O Pan, O our-Father-which-art, please somebody come to help me."

H.D., 31

When André then appears, Madge sees him as Pan answering her prayer, for to her André is "a smallish Pan person, someone who knew everything, who was everywhere at all times" (H.D., 38).

Madge connects André to Pan especially through his dialect, which she identifies as "the sort of French the Greek god Pan would speak if he spoke French and not Greek" (H.D., 35). By making André's demotic speech the key to his mythic identity, H.D. stresses the link between myth and the culture of ordinary people, much as Bates does when she summons up the millions of children who listen to storytelling grandmothers and identifies Orpheus with American boys who try to rescue their drowning friends. Not only does Madge befriend André across divisions of both language and class (in a place where "everyone knows [...] that everyone is as good as everyone else," H.D., 37), but she identifies him with a mythic archetype that is itself a symbol of universality. She redefines his particular version of French as the idiom of a figure who transcends language, who is named in the untranslatable proto-language of Greek myth and embodies a transcendent idea that is variously expressed in multiple languages, notably those of the recent war's antagonists, German and English. As she interprets her world through the lens of myth, Madge demonstrates the brotherly and sisterly spirit needed for a new, more peaceful world.

Later in her quest, Madge's enlightened cast of mind is acknowledged in an exchange with Dr. Blum, the Teiresias-like figure who gives her the hedgehog.

When Madge says something that strikes him as quaint, he characterises her through yet another version of the mythic father in heaven: “[...] I often wonder who really was your father. You come out with things like one of the fortunate half-children of Olympus.” Madge wonders what he means, “You mean God and men, or God and women having children—like—like...,” but then it seems “quite clear.” “You mean like all of us who have only a Father—which-art-in-Heaven for a father?” (H.D., 69). H.D. appeals to the classical paradigm of the heroic child with one divine parent, which can be used to articulate an individual child’s sense of special election, as in the currently popular Percy Jackson series, where the modern American boy hero discovers that he is the son of Poseidon and a mortal woman.³⁰ But in pursuit of her particular pacifist and internationalist goals, H.D. also assimilates this paradigm to her own vision of the orphans of World War One, that privileged “great army of children” with their mission to bring about a better world.

H.D.’s vision receives visual expression in one of the woodcuts by George Plank with which *The Hedgehog* is illustrated (see figure 15.2). Plank makes concrete the idea implicit in H.D.’s relegation of “army” to a metaphor, including



FIGURE 15.2 A woodcut by George Plank from an edition of *The Hedgehog* by H.D.
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30 See Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), and the four subsequent novels in the “Percy Jackson and the Olympians” series.

girls as well as boys and clothing them, not in the uniforms of a real army, but in varied dress that signals their diverse national identities. Through their traditional, pre-modern clothing, these children are identified with the protagonists of the many books about children in foreign lands designed to promote international understanding in young readers.³¹ Their capacity to overcome national differences is symbolised by the globe around which they hold hands, joining in a circular dance that suggests simple, inclusive, and universal forms of play. This is child's play of a different kind from the "fun" of battle drill through which Wells's boy protagonists prepare for their destiny as soldiers in a military culture that prefigures twentieth-century America; this game is designed instead to make all children who respond to the lessons of Antiquity "feel differently about wars and about soldiers killing each other."

31 A bibliography of such books is included in C.W. Hunt, *International Friendship*.

Classical Antiquity in Children's Literature in the Soviet Union¹

Elena Ermolaeva

In this article I outline the use of Classical Antiquity in Soviet children's literature,² and then I focus on one subject—books for children written by classical scholars, in particular by professor Salomo Luria (in Russian: Solomon Yakovlevich Lurie).

According to Isaiah Berlin, “[t]he October Revolution made a violent impact” on Russian culture “but did not dam the swelling tide.”³ Rigid censorship of authors and ideas was enforced not only for books written for adults but also for those written for children. Children's literature served as an important tool for creating *Homo sovieticus*. Nevertheless, a considerable number of talented writers continued to write for children. The fate of many of them was tragic: Nikolay Oleynikov, Grigory Belykh, and others were executed; Daniil Kharms, Alexander Vvedensky, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Leonid Panteleyev, Vitaly Bianki, and others were subjected to repression. Some, like Lidia Charskaya, were ostracised, could not find work, and perished of illness and hunger; others, like Andrey Platonov, continued writing without any possibility of being published; others still, like Arkady Gaidar, were killed on the battlefields of the Second World War. Those who were officially recognised by the authorities,

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- 1 My thanks go to Natalie Tchernetska and Leonid Zhmud for their corrections of this article. A note on transliteration: in transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet we chose the BGN/PCGN romanisation system, developed by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use. For purposes of simplification, we have converted *ě* to *yo*, *-iy* and *-yy* endings to *-y*, and omitted apostrophes for *ъ* and *ь*.
 - 2 Soviet children's literature is a large subject. The following two books, both in Russian, provide a helpful overview: Evgenia [Yevgeniya] Oskarovna Putilova, *Detskoye chteniye—dlya serdtsa i razuma* [Children's reading: For heart and mind] (St Petersburg: Publishing House of Herzen University, 2005); Marina Romanovna Balina, Valery Yuryevich Vyugin, eds., *“Ubit Charskuyu...”: Paradoksy sovetskoy literatury dlya detey (1920-e–1930-e)* [“To kill Charskaya...”: Paradoxes of Soviet literature for children (1920–1930)] (St Petersburg: Aleteya, 2013).
 - 3 Isaiah Berlin, “The Arts in Russia under Stalin,” *The New York Review of Books*, Oct. 19, 2000, 54–62, esp. 52.

like Samuil Marshak and Korney Chukovsky, nevertheless lived and wrote in constant fear.⁴

Even so, there were sharply critical works by Mikhail Bulgakov, Zoshchenko, and Platonov, as well as an anti-Stalin play—a tale for children and adults, *Dra-kon* [The dragon]—written by Yevgeny Shvarts (Eugene Schwartz) in 1944. As Mark Lipovetsky wrote:

[...] It was supposedly a satire on German Nazism, and even the most rigid and suspicious censor would not dare to claim that it was about the Soviet totalitarian regime. The Soviet regime pretended not to recognise itself in Shvarts's parable [...]. Soviet censors were no fools. Their tolerance of such works most likely involved some kind of unannounced etiquette: as long as the writer did not violate the conventional rules of the fairy-tale plot and placed his characters and events outside of the concrete world of Soviet life, he remained under the protection of fantasy.⁵

As for the theme of Antiquity in children's literature, it shared a similar fate with classical scholarship and education more broadly. For the classical tradition managed to survive during the Soviet period despite harsh repression, including the execution of scholars, the abolition of university chairs, “zombifying” ideology, “the dead hand of official bureaucracy,”⁶ and censorship. As Alexander Garvilov observes: “[t]his survival became possible due to the inconsistent double-faced image of a Bolshevik-Communist who aimed to destroy or, in the other case, to preserve the traditional cultural values.”⁷

4 Chukovsky and Marshak were well-known to every child in Russia as authors of amusing poems. Chukovsky, nonetheless, also left the gloomiest diaries. Marshak, as noted by contemporaries, worried that some anti-Soviet hints might be detected in his works; see Nadezhda Abramson, *Zhivoye slovo* [The living word], manuscript (1985).

5 Mark Lipovetsky, “Introduction” to part 3: “Fairy Tales in Critique of Soviet Culture,” in Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo, and Mark Lipovetsky, eds., *Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairy Tales* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 233–250 and 240–241. I am grateful to Marion Rutz (University of Trier) for information about this book.

6 An expression of Isaiah Berlin, “The Arts in Russia under Stalin,” 55.

7 Alexander Konstantinovich Gavrilov, “Klassicheskaya filologiya v SSSR (1992),” in Olga Budaragina, Alexander Verlinsky, and Denis Keyer, eds., *O filologakh i filologii* [On philologists and philology] (St Petersburg: Publishing House of Saint Petersburg State University, 2010), 290 (trans. E.E.). The Russian article was based on the English version by Gavrilov, “Russian Classical Scholarship in the XXth Century,” in Victor Bers and Gregory Nagy, eds., *The Classics in East Europe: Essays on the Survival of a Humanistic Tradition* (Worcester, Mass.: American Philological Association, 1995), 61–81.

Classical education in the traditional form of the classical grammar school existed in Russia until 1917. In the USSR, the unified Soviet secondary school system excluded any teaching of classical languages. The secondary school curriculum included only a one-year course in Ancient History, both Eastern and Western.

Soviet children knew Ancient Greek myths mostly from *Legendy i mify drevney Gretsii* [Legends and myths of Ancient Greece] by Nicholas Kuhn (1877–1940), a Moscow professor, first published in Moscow in 1922. This compilation had its origins in a course Kuhn created in 1914 for grammar school pupils. In the Soviet Union this book was translated into different national languages and was reprinted many times in large runs, albeit with passages removed by Soviet censors, and with quotations from Engels, Marx, and Lenin added to the preface. The book is still popular today, edited with rich illustrations and without any ideological prefaces.

Heroism was the main pathos of Soviet children's literature. From this perspective Classical Antiquity was a source of rich ideological material. This is why the myths of Prometheus, Hercules, and the Argonauts; heroic historical narratives and novels about Alexander the Great; and translations, such as that of *Spartacus* by Raffaello Giovagnoli (1838–1915) were in high demand.⁸ *Priklyucheniya Odissey* [Odysseus's adventures], a prose rendering of the *Odyssey* for children, written by Yelena Tudorovskaya (1904–1986), was first published in 1952 by the publishing house Detskaya Literatura [Children's Literature], whose adviser was Ivan Ivanovich Tolstoy (1880–1954), a member of the Academy of Sciences. In 1964 Tudorovskaya wrote *Troyanskaya vojna i yeyo geroi* [The Trojan War and its heroes], a narrative retelling of the stories of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. Heroic historical narratives and novels for children were also quite popular, such as *Purpur i yad* [Purple and poison] about Mithridates. This was written by Alexander Nemirovsky (1919–2007), a scholar and a poet, as well as the translator of Rainer Maria Rilke and Hermann Hesse. The narratives by children's writer Lyubov Voronkova (1906–1976) were devoted to Ancient Greek history (*Messenskiye voyny* [Messenian wars], 1969); to Alexander the Great (*Syn Zevs* [A son of Zeus], 1971 and *V glubine vekov* [In the depth of centuries], 1973); and to Themistocles (*Geroy Salamina* [The hero of Salamis],

8 One of the most popular books for youth in the USSR was *Spartacus* (1874) by Raffaello Giovagnoli. It was first published in Russia before the 1905 Revolution in an abridged version (1880–1881), as a historical adventure for young readers. After 1905 it was reissued by "leftist" publishers as an example of revolutionary literature. A complete edition came out only after 1917. A Soviet sports association founded in 1936 was called "Spartak." Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) composed a ballet with the same title which was awarded the Lenin Prize in 1954.

1975). Also very popular were novels by Ivan Yefremov (1908–1972), such as his *Tais Afinskaya* [Tais of Athens] published in 1973. He was a paleontologist and philosopher following Nicholas Roerich and Vladimir Vernadsky. There were also translations of foreign historical novels and scholarly books on subjects related to ancient culture, such as the aforementioned *Spartacus* by Raffaello Giovagnoli; two Polish books: *Gdy słońce było bogiem* [When the sun was god] by Zenon Kosidowski (1898–1978) and *Perykles i Aspazja* [Pericles and Aspasia] by Aleksander Krawczuk (b. 1922); *The Ides of March* by Thornton Wilder; *I, Claudius* by Robert Graves; *Civilisation grecque* by André Bonnard; and others.

The outstanding classicist, professor Salomo Luria (1891–1964) also wrote for children (see figure 16.1). His first children's book, entitled *Pismo grecheskogo malchika* [A letter from a Greek boy], appeared in 1930.⁹

Luria graduated from the Faculty of History and Philology of St Petersburg University in 1913, where he was taught by Sergey Zhebelev, Mikhail Rostovtsev (Michael Rostovtzeff), Tadeusz Zieliński, and Jan Baudouin de Courtenay. We know his correspondence with Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Michael Ventris, and others.¹⁰ His wide scholarly interests were reflected in almost twenty books and more than two hundred articles.¹¹ However, the main work

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- 9 See Solomon Yakovlevich Lurie, *Pismo grecheskogo malchika* [A letter from a Greek boy] (Moskva–Leningrad: GIZ [State Publishing House], 1930). The print run was big—10,000; the price was very cheap—35 kopeks.
- 10 See Alexander Konstantinovich Gavrilov, “S. Luria i U. Wilamowits” [S. Luria and U. Wilamowitz], in Budaragina, Verlinsky, and Keyer, eds., *O filologakh i filologii*, 122–143.
- 11 Luria's main works are: *Antisemitizm v drevnem mire* [Anti-Semitism in the ancient world] (Petrograd: Byloye, 1922, repr. 1923 by Izdatelstvo Grzhebina Publisher); *Antifont* [Antiphon] (Moskva: Golos Truda [The voice of labour], 1925); *Istoriya antichnoy obshchestvennoy mysli* [The history of ancient social thought] (Moskva—Leningrad: Gosizdat [The State Publishing House], 1929); *Teoriya beskonечно malyykh u drevnikh atomistov* [The infinitesimal theory of the ancient Atomists] (Moskva—Leningrad: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR [Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences USSR], 1935); *Istoriya Gretsii* [The history of Greece] (vol. 1, Leningrad: Izdatelstvo LGU [Publishing House of Leningrad State University], 1940; vol. 2 published only in 1993, St Petersburg: Izdatelstvo SPbGU [Publishing House of St Petersburg University]); *Ocherki po istorii antichnoy nauki* [The outlines of Ancient Greek history of science] (Moskva—Leningrad: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR [Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences USSR], 1947); *Arkhimed* [Archimedes] (Vienna: Phoenix-Bücherei, 1948); *Yazyk i kultura mikenskoy Gretsii* [The language and culture of Mycenaean Greece] (Moskva—Leningrad: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR [Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences USSR], 1957). Throughout his life he was interested in the history of science and mathematics—from Babylonian times up to Bonaventura Cavalieri and Leonhard Euler, whom he translated into Russian.



FIGURE 16.1

Professor Salomo Luria (1891–1964) with his son Yakov Luria in the 1920s

PRIVATE ARCHIVE, © BY LEV LURIA.

of his life—*Democritea*, the annotated fragments of Democritus—was published only after his death.¹²

In 1949 Luria was accused of cosmopolitanism for “unprincipled grovelling before West European science, the stubborn pushing through of ideas of the so-called ‘world’-science, etc.”¹³ He was expelled from the Academy of Sciences and the Department of Classical Philology of Leningrad University, where he had been working as a professor of Ancient Greek. The Soviet Labour Code did not have an article for dismissal for ideological transgressions, which is why Luria was released for unprofessionalism, an obviously ridiculous reason.¹⁴ In 1953 Luria became professor at Lviv University in Ukraine—at that time a part of the Soviet Union.

12 See Salomo Luria, *Democritea* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970).

13 Yakov Luria, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni* [The story of one life] (St Petersburg: European University at St Petersburg, 2004), 184.

14 See Y. Luria, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni*, 187. Many people were arrested then. In 1950 Luria left for Odessa. In 1953 “The Doctor’s Plot” campaign started blaming doctors of Jewish origin for causing intentional harm to patients.

During the last years of his life Luria kept in touch with his Polish colleagues: Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Stefan Srebrny, Lidia Winniczuk, and others. Benjamin Nagel wrote an obituary for Luria in the Polish classical journal *Meander* in 1965.

So why did Professor Luria start writing for children? There is an amusing story about this in his biography, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni* [The story of one life], which was written by his son Yakov Luria, also a professor and a prominent scholar in the field of mediaeval Russian history and literature. As this biography could not be published in the Soviet Union, it was published in Paris in 1987 under the name of Bogdana Koprjiva-Luria—Salomo Luria's sister, who had emigrated from the USSR. By that time she had already passed away. In Russia the book was not published until 2004.¹⁵ Yakov Luria wrote:

The magazine *Yezh* [The hedgehog] was published by the children's branch of Gosizdat [The State Publishing House] led by Samuil Marshak. It started in Leningrad in 1928. Salomo Luria together with his son, who had already learnt to read, became enthusiastic about the magazine. So Salomo Luria decided to write an article for this magazine about an unusual papyrus of Oxyrhynchus—a letter of a Greek boy to his father who had not taken him with him on a journey. Surely the young readers of *The Hedgehog* would be very interested in what happened later—whether the boy's father received the letter and what followed afterward.¹⁶

Marshak was excited by the idea and suggested that Luria write the book.¹⁷ Through his role as editor, Marshak had already asked some of Russia's finest writers, as well as experts in different scientific fields, to try their hand at writing for children. Luria studied epigraphy and papyrology and was even on the editorial council of *Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum* in the 1920s. Having read a letter from the boy Theon to his father in a papyrus of the third century AD, he decided to write a book about it. He liked Theon for his daring character. As he said:

15 See Bogdana Yakovlevna Koprjiva-Luria, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni* [The story of one life] (Paris: Atheneum, 1987). See also above, n. 13.

16 Y. Luria, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni*, 113.

17 Samuil Marshak (1887–1964) was one of the founders of Russian (Soviet) literature for children, a children's poet, and the translator of Robert Burns, William Blake, Lord Byron, John Keats, T.S. Eliot, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, A.A. Milne, and many others. From 1924 on he was the head of the children's department of the State Publishing House, a position he held for over a decade.

From this letter we see that even in those times children's life was not so bad, and of course there were children who could keep their parents in awe.¹⁸

The text of the papyrus which inspired Luria was published by Bernard Pyne Grenfell and Arthur Surridge Hunt in 1898:¹⁹

Θέων Θεωνι τῷ πατρὶ χαίρειν.
καλῶς ἐποίησες οὐκ ἀπένηχές με μετέ
σοῦ εἰς πόλιν. ἢ οὐ θέλεις ἀπενέκκειν με-
τέ σοῦ εἰς Ἀλεξανδρίαν, οὐ μὴ γράψω σε ἐ-
πιστολήν οὔτε λαλῶ σε οὔτε υἱγένω σε,
εἶτα ἂν δὲ ἔλθῃς εἰς Ἀλεξανδρίαν οὐ
μὴ λάβω χεῖραν παρὰ [σ]οῦ οὔτε πάλι χαίρω
σε λυπόν. ἄμ μὴ θέλῃς ἀπενέκκει μ[ε]
ταῦτα γε[ί]νετε. καὶ ἡ μήτηρ μου εἶπε Ἀρ-
χελάω ὅτι ἀναστατοῖ με ἄρρον αὐτόν.
καλῶς δὲ ἐποίησες δῶρά μοι ἔπεμψε[ς]
μεγάλα ἀράκια πεπλανηκανημωσεκε[.
τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ιβ' ὅτι ἔπλευσες. λύρον πέμψον εἴ[ς]
με παρακαλῶ σε. ἄμ μὴ πέμψῃς οὐ μὴ φά-
γω, οὐ μὴ πείνω· ταῦτα. ἐρώσθῃ σε εὐχ(ομαι). Τῦβι ιη'.
On the verso ἀπόδος Θεωνι [ἀ]πὸ Θεωνάτος υἱῷ.

Theon to his father Theon, greeting. It was a fine thing of you not to take me with you to the city! If you won't take me with you to Alexandria I won't write you a letter or speak to you or say goodbye to you; and if you go to Alexandria, I won't take your hand nor ever greet you again. That is what will happen, if you won't take me. Mother said to Archelaus, "It quite upsets him to be left behind [?]." It was good of you to send me presents... on the twelfth, the day you sailed. Send me a lyre, I implore you. If you don't, I won't eat, I won't drink; there now!²⁰

18 Y. Luria, *Istoriya odnoy zhizni*, 113.

19 See Bernard Pyne Grenfell and Arthur Surridge Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 1 (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898), 185–186 (POxy, document 119r, date: third century AD). Luria could have used the edition: *Selections from the Greek Papyri*, ed. with translations and notes by George Milligan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 102–103.

20 Trans. Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 185–186.

In the beginning Luria introduces the captivating story of the letter: a certain professor Knight, an expert in archaeology from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, once came to the Soviet Union to “make an acquaintance with the new-Soviet lifestyle,”²¹ and for three days Luria showed him the best places in Leningrad. Before his departure the American colleague gave him a small envelope with an unexpected present. It was not the professor’s photo, as Luria had thought, but a sheet of papyrus which he had found in *Oxyrhynchus*. He wanted Luria to read it, and asked him if he would later write a small report on it. This detail—a friendship with a mythical colleague (i.e., one invented by Luria) from America, even if at that time still possible, could hardly be imagined only a few years later.

Luria then tells his young readers about papyrus making, about ancient trash being such a treasure for archaeologists, and about the Greek alphabet, which he compares to Russian and demonstrates their similarity. Then he shows the original text of the letter line by line with a Russian transcription and translation, and his comments.

As the story develops we follow the Greek boy in his daily life. For example, we find ourselves with him in a grammar lesson at school (see figure 16.2). His teacher, Lampriskos, is forcing the pupils to write proper names according to the letters of the alphabet: Achilles, Bion, Gaios, Dion, etc. One boy cannot manage to find a name beginning with Kappa, and writes *Krokodeilos* instead. Our lively Theon is bored, he looks at the wall and suddenly sees a recent inscription in a corner: ἀναγίγνωσκε ἀνωτάτω πρὸς δεξιὰ (“read up to the right”). He looks with curiosity and reads: ὁ ἀναγινώσκων πίθηκος (“the one who reads is a monkey”). Then Lampriskos makes the boys write a long dictation, in which after each sentence they add the phrase: φιλοπόνει, ᾧ παῖ, μὴ δαρῆς (“be diligent, boy, so you won’t be whipped”).

The book was a big success and a second extended edition was published six years later with a print run of 20,000 copies. Some of Luria’s ideas found a place in this book—for example, the professor created a new character, a Jewish cosmopolitan Apollonius-Jophan, who is Theon’s paidagogos.²² Apollonius-Jophan starts an uprising against the Romans in Alexandria. The uprising fails and Apollonius perishes. So our boy witnesses a slave revolt. Later Luria rejected this version as artistically poor.

In the Soviet Union slavery was the key theme covered in ancient history at each educational level—from school to the academy—so that the slave

21 Solomon Yakovlevich Lurie, *Pismo grecheskogo malchika* [A letter from a Greek boy] (St Petersburg: EIDOS, 1994, republished with some changes from the 1930 edition, see n. 9), 7.

22 We should remember that Luria’s book *Antisemitizm v drevnem mire* [Anti-Semitism in Antiquity] was published in 1922.



FIGURE 16.2 Pages 20–21 from Salomo Luria's *Pismo grecheskogo malchika* [A letter from a Greek boy] (MOSKVA–LENINGRAD: GIZ [STATE PUBLISHING HOUSE], 1930, REEDITED MOSKVA: MK PERIODIKA, 2002), © BY LEV LURIA.



FIGURE 16.3 Pages 22–23 from Salomo Luria's *Pismo grecheskogo malchika* [A letter from a Greek boy] (MOSKVA–LENINGRAD: GIZ [STATE PUBLISHING HOUSE], 1930, REEDITED MOSKVA: MK PERIODIKA, 2002), © BY LEV LURIA.

uprising was an almost obligatory element of Antiquity featuring in children's books. For example, a Scythian revolt under the leadership of a certain slave called Saumakos took place in the Bosphorus (which later became a Russian territory) around 107 BC according to the hypothesis of the academician Sergey Zhebelev, which was based on his reconstruction of *The Edict of Diophantus*. This reconstruction gave birth to a great number of works supporting the theory that this event had been “the first revolutionary uprising within Soviet territory.”²³

23 Alexander Konstantinovich Gavrilov, “Skify Savmaka—vosstaniye ili vtorzheniye? (IPE I² 352–Syll.³ 709)” [Saumakos's Scythians: Revolt or invasion? (IPE I² 352–Syll.³ 709)], in Alexander Konstantinovich Gavrilov, ed., *Etyudy po antichnoy istorii i kulture severnogo Prichernomor'ya* [Studies in the ancient history and culture of the northern Black Sea littoral] (St Petersburg: Glagol, 1992), 53–73 (the book was dedicated to the memory of S. Luria). This article was republished in Budaragina, Verlinsky, and Keyer, eds., *O filologakh i filologii*, 293–306. For the quotation, see p. 295 in this edition. After the October Revolution: “[...] the proletarian Byronism having won in Russia, the government joyfully started to search for uprising movements in human history [...]. The October Revolution 1917 in Russia was then considered as their *telos*—the final aim and the highest point.

Here a word of explanation is needed: after Stalin's speech at the Udarnik (Shock-producing) Collective-Farmers' Congress in 1933, historians were given the task of searching for traces of slave revolutions in Antiquity. Zhebelev's reconstruction appeared at the same time. He was an old school academician suffering ideological pressure. There is an anecdote that he responded to the Communist Party's demand with the words: "If you want a revolution—you will get it."²⁴ It was during this period that the second version of *A Letter from a Greek Boy* was written, including the episode of the slave rebellion in Alexandria. Significantly, Luria later played an important role in the critical discussion of *The Edict of Diophantus*. He pointed out clearly that Saumakos was not a slave. Indeed, Luria openly said that Zhebelev's theory was "an emperor with no clothes." Luria's article, not conforming to the official point of view, was not published in the USSR, even after Stalin's death—it appeared only in 1959 in the Polish journal *Meander*.²⁵

A Letter from a Greek Boy was extremely popular and it was the only Luria's book reprinted in his lifetime, with a total of eleven editions. It seems to me that Luria's artistic method—namely, to "choose an ancient boy" and to look at the world through his eyes and in this way enable modern boys and girls to discover the ancient world for themselves—became very fruitful and popular in Soviet children's literature concerning Classical Antiquity. I have found several epigones.

Natalia Bromley's and Nadezhda Ostromentskaya's book *Priklyucheniya malchika s sobakoy* [The adventures of a boy with a dog] (Moscow, 1959), for example, tells readers about an ancient boy Cleonus, who was kidnapped by pirates, later sold into slavery, and finally liberated by the rebellious gladiators of Spartacus. This was also an imitation of an ancient novel, paying great attention to the Spartacus story.²⁶

The lower-class uprisings that all had failed in the past, legitimised the Proletarian revolution and even its cruelties. [...] Let us not discuss how the ideologically censored Soviet literature on slavery and various lower class rebellions, etc., developed, because the main result of their efforts was quite accidental—they gave rise to thorough studies of these historic events in the West, where Marxism was treated even more seriously than in the Soviet Union" (285).

24 Ibid., 296.

25 See Salomo Luria, "Jeszcze o dekrecie ku czci Diofantosa" [The edict of Diophantus again], *Meander* 14 (1959): 67–78.

26 Joanna Klos from the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw drew my attention to the similarity of plot of this book to Halina Rudnicka's *Uczniowie Spartakusa* [The disciples of Spartacus] (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1951). For Rudnicka,

Kseniya Kolobova, one of the beloved disciples of the famous poet and translator Vyacheslav Ivanov and later a professor of Ancient Greek and Roman History at Leningrad University, wrote *Kak zhili drevniye greki* [How the Ancient Greeks lived] (Leningrad, 1959) with Yelena Ozeretskaya. There are chapters called "Afinsky malchik" [An Athenian boy], "Raby v Afinakh" [The slaves in Athens], and so on.

Ozeretskaya also wrote a didactic book *Olimpiyskiye igry* [The Olympic games] (Leningrad, 1972). The main characters are Linus, an Athenian boy who goes to Olympia as a spectator, and Hephaestus, his Scythian paidagogos-slave who follows him. The parallel story of a slave is depicted especially well. After the slave has saved his life the sensitive boy suddenly realises that his paidagogos is not just a "speaking instrument." The boy insists on freeing Hephaestus. Finally the clever and educated former slave goes back home to Scythia. The theme of his love for the Motherland sounds like a refrain and is expressed as a standard Soviet ideological cliché with its typical pathos.

A number of the books probably inspired by Luria's model were written by professors of Egyptology who received their education before the Soviet era at the higher education courses for women and later worked at the Hermitage Museum. One of these was Miliza Mathieu, who wrote *Den yegipetskogo malchika* [A day in the life of an Egyptian boy] (Moscow, 1954). Another was Revekka Rubinshteyn (Rebecca Rubinstein). Her book *Glinyany konvert* [A clay envelope] (Moscow, 1962) tells of two boys living in Babylon in the time of King Hammurabi. In yet another book by Natalia Landa and Samuell Fingaret, *Iz lotosa rozhdayetsya solntse* [The sun is born from a lotus] (Leningrad, 1963), the hero is also an Egyptian boy, and there is again a rebellion of the lower classes. Luria's colleague Maria Sergeyenko (1891–1987), a scholar and translator, and pupil of professor Zieliński and professor Rostovtsev, also wrote for children. Her book was *Padeniye Ikara* [The fall of Icarus] (Moskva, 1963).

It is worth noting that this so-called "boy method" has deeper roots. Let us remember *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce dans le milieu du IVe siècle* published in 1788 by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, a French writer and member of the

see Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, and Michał Kucharski, eds., *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity. A Catalogue* (Warsaw: Faculty of "Artes Liberales," 2013), 314–315 (entry by Joanna Grzeszczuk, Michał Kucharski, and Helena Płotek). Ostromentskaya also wrote a novel *Veteran Tsezarya* [Caesar's veteran] (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Detskaya Literatura [Children's Literature Publishing], 1969) about a young Gavius who took part in Spartacus's rebellion.

French Academy. The Russian emperor Alexander I paid a Moscow professor, Petr Strakhov, 6,000 rubles to publish a Russian translation of this work.²⁷

Back to Luria. In the last years of his life (1960–1964) he returned to children's literature and wrote books about Archilochus and the deciphering of Mycenaean script. He promised himself that when he finished with serious scholarly research, he would write a children's book based on the material he had explored, in order to demonstrate in an accessible manner what he had learnt. With Mark Botvinnik (1917–1994), his former student, he also wrote a book for children: *Puteshestviye Demokrita* [Democritus's journey] (Moscow, 1964).

Botvinnik was the author and co-author of a huge number of scholarly and popular books on the history and culture of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as a brilliant interpreter and lecturer.²⁸ In 1938 he was arrested based on an unjust accusation. He later said:

The case for which I was arrested was called “The Case of an Antiquity Circle.” The interrogator accused us of a strong interest in Antiquity, thus proving our refusal to accept the happy Soviet modernity.²⁹

So was there any influence of Soviet ideology in Luria's books? He seems to have remained outwardly loyal to Soviet power, but, in secret, was inclined to risky dissent. For example, an old writing book with yellowed pages and without a cover was discovered in his archive (see figure 16.3).³⁰ Its text was partly

27 *Puteshestviye mladshego Anakharsisa po Gretsii, v polovine chetyortogo veka do Rozhdestva Khristova* [Voyage of young Anacharsis to Greece in the middle of the fourth century BC], vols. 1–9 (Moskva: Tipografiya Avgusta Semyona [Avgust Semen Publishing], 1803–1819; re-edited Revel: Gymnasia, 1890).

28 Later Botvinnik contributed to a book of amusing collected stories, *Drevnyaya Gretsíya* [Ancient Greece] (Moskva: Prosveshcheniye [Enlightenment Publishing], 1974), written by a group of philologists and historians and intended for reading in secondary school.

29 Mark Naumovich Botvinnik, “Kamera nomer 25” [Cell number 25], in Irina Suzdalskaya and Natalia Botvinnik, eds., *Pamyati Marka Naumovicha Botvinnika* [In memory of Mark Naumovich Botvinnik] (St Petersburg: Obshchestvennaya pravozashchitnaya organizatsiya “Grazhdansky Kontrol” [Human Rights NGO “Citizens Watch”], 1997), 114. Botvinnik was sentenced to five years in prison. When Yezhov was replaced by Beria in 1938 some of the cases were reviewed and resolved. “The Antiquity Circle” was among them, and Botvinnik was released.

30 See Yakov Lurie and Lev Polak, “Sudba istorika v kontekste istorii (S.Y. Lurie: zhizn i tvorchestvo)” [The fate of the historian in the context of history (S.J. Lurie: Life and work)], *Voprosy istorii yestestvoznaniya i tekhniki* [Journal for the history of science] 2 (1994): 3–17, esp. 14.

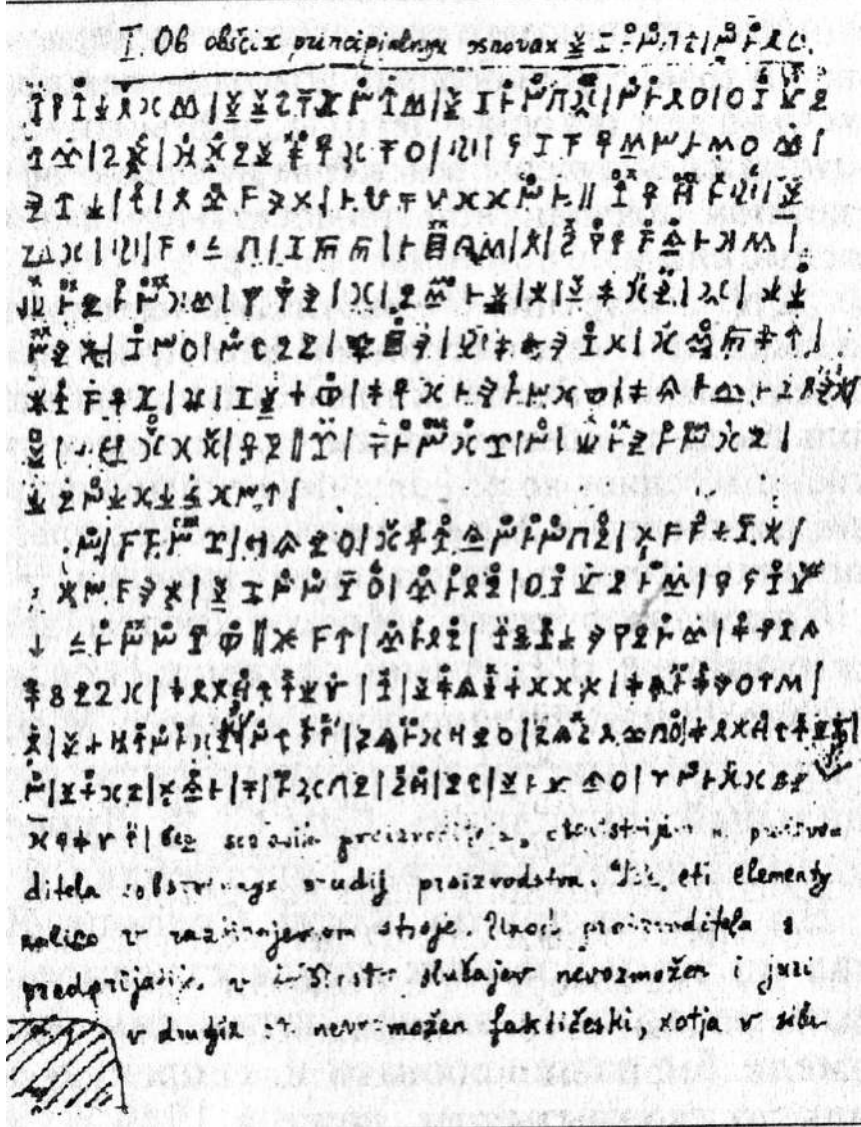


FIGURE 16.3 *A page from Salomo Luria's diary, the so-called "Cypriot Writing Book," PUBLISHED IN YAKOV LURIE AND LEV POLAK, "SUDBA ISTORIKA V KONTEKSTE ISTORII (S.J. LURIE: ZHIZN' I TVORCHESTVO)" [THE FATE OF HISTORIAN IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY (S.J. LURIE: LIFE AND WORK)], VOPROSY ISTORII YESTESTVOZNANIYA I TEKHNIKI [JOURNAL FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE] 2 (1994): 15, © BY LEV LURIA.*

written in the Latin alphabet, and partly in strange characters resembling hieroglyphics. This turned out to be his diary, encoded in the Ancient Cypriot “syllabarium.” In this, from 1947 onward, he gave a true estimation of the Soviet regime as slavery. In doing so he committed a heavy political crime according to Soviet laws and if discovered would have faced the Gulag, but he still preserved that “Cypriot writing book,” which was a real *Historia arcana*.

Luria and Botvinnik’s account of the impressions of Democritus in *Democritus’s Journey* follows Herodotus’s stories about Egypt, Babylon, and Greece. It seems to me that thoughts about a slavery-based regime and personal freedom appear in this children’s book about the “Laughing Philosopher,” albeit in code:

[Democritus:] “So don’t you really feel regret for all that has happened to you? The civil war is a disaster for both sides. You must sincerely love your country as you have dared to openly dispute the violators and now have to live in exile far away from your home?”

[A young man:] “No, I don’t regret it! Here, at least, I can speak loudly everything that I think, tell people the truth about what happened, and prepare for new battles together with my friends. The day will come and we shall return to Megara!”

“So maybe you are right,” replied Democritus, as if reflecting. “Poverty in a democratic state is better than this ‘happy life’ for fools in a state conquered by invaders. It is clear as well that freedom is better than slavery.”³¹

[...] An Egyptian who is a defender of Cheops argues against Democritus: “The Egyptians died of heavy labour but Pharaoh was a divinity for them and loyalty to him was the highest law. People understood that happiness was not in wealth or tasty food but in feeling their duty done. The present generation cannot imagine even what happiness it was to definitely believe in Pharaoh. Human consciousness becomes free from so much suffering and doubt due to the belief that the state is ruled by the living god. In Cheops’s time such a belief was compulsory.”³²

31 Solomon Lurie and Mark Botvinnik, *Puteshestviye Demokrita* [Democritus’s Journey] (Moskva: MK-Periodika, 2002; ed. pr. 1964), 75 (trans. E.E.).

32 Ibid., 82. Compare this with some lines from the “Cypriot writing book” of Luria, in Y. Lurie and Polak, “Sudba istorika v kontekste istorii (S.Y. Lurie: Zhizn i tvorchestvo),” 14: “The typical features of the Soviet system are its special ‘two realities.’ The citizens of the Soviet Union not only suffer a hard and dull life but also must play their roles through all of it—as the actors in a joyful, spectacular show of an earthly paradise not corresponding with everyday reality [...]. From the point of view of the Marxist methodology of history the Soviet regime is a slave-owning system” (trans. E.E.).

It is worth noting that the book was published about two years after Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn published his *Odin den Ivana Denisovicha* [One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich]. That was a symbolic event of “Khrushchev’s Thaw,” the period after the death of Stalin in March 1953.

In conclusion, why did Luria, Botvinnik, and other scholars write books for children?³³ One of my colleagues cynically answered: “For money.” This is hard to deny, but there must have been other reasons as well—I am convinced that they were simply open-minded people who loved Classical Antiquity and wanted to share their love and knowledge of it.³⁴

33 The books written for children by Luria, Botvinnik, Rubinshteyn, Mathieu, and other scholars were reedited in 2002 (Moskva: MK-Periodika) in the series “Uchyonye Rossii detyam” [Scholars of Russia for children], see: <https://www.livelib.ru/pubseries/10050> (accessed June 1, 2016).

34 For the newest analytical discussion on this topic in Russia, see Balina and Valery Yuryevich Vyugin, eds., *“Ubit Charskuyu...”*; especially the sections “Obshchiye problemy” [General problems], 7–19, and “Nedetskiye pisateli dlya detskoy literatury” [Non-children writers for children’s literature], 262–287.

Katabasis “Down Under” in the Novels of Margaret Mahy and Maurice Gee

Elizabeth Hale

Two writers of fiction for young adults have dominated the New Zealand literary scene in the past few decades. Margaret Mahy and Maurice Gee are well-known, both at home and abroad, for their intelligent, sensitive, and dramatic fantasy, historical, and science fiction novels, which bring exciting action to the shores of this small country in the Southern Pacific Ocean.

New Zealand consists of three islands, and is located in the very far South. Along with Australia it is affectionately known as the Antipodes, or “Down Under.” The first human inhabitants, Polynesians, are thought to have migrated to the islands in the thirteenth century, forming the seeds of what became the Maori culture. They called the islands Aotearoa, or Land of the Long White Cloud. The first Western sighting of Aotearoa was in 1642 by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman; the Dutch called the place Nova Zeelandia. The name became Anglicised after James Cook visited the islands in 1769–1770. European migration began in the nineteenth century, first by missionaries and then by settlers, in an organised scheme of land purchase and farming. The country was claimed as part of the British Empire, following the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840; it has remained in the Commonwealth, and the bulk of its population is of British origin. The population is currently around four million people. It has strong political ties to Australia, the UK, and the United States, and is a leader in the Pacific region, with links to Asia as well. New Zealand literature reflects those ties and those influences, and is particularly concerned with engaging with them by incorporating them, reforming them, confronting them, in various literary shapes and forms. And classical material is part of that engagement, providing a tie to the myths, language, and narrative structures that underlie much European culture.

New Zealand is seismically active. It is part of a submerged continent that lies over the borders of the Pacific and Australian tectonic plates, which are colliding at a rate of 40 mm a year; It is prone to earthquakes, and significant parts of the land were formed by volcanoes—the cities of Dunedin and Christchurch are located on or near extinct volcanoes. Auckland, the largest city, is built on or around seven volcanic peaks, including the dormant volcanic island, Rangitoto. Because of the seismically active nature of the land, New

Zealand is often known as the “shaky isles”. There have been two catastrophic earthquakes in the past century, one in 1931 in Napier in the North Island, and a series of earthquakes in Canterbury and Christchurch in the South Island from 2010 onward. New Zealanders are brought up to be aware of the fragility of the land—its cracks and fissures, and the instability and danger that lurk beneath the surface.

New Zealand’s geographical location “down under” and its geological formation, whereby seismic activity brings the “Underworld” closer to the surface, provide storytellers with many opportunities. One set of opportunities comes from its resonance with the classical narrative motif of “katabasis,” or the journey to the Underworld. The term comes from the Greek, meaning a trip downward—usually from the interior of a country to the coast, but in epic convention it refers to the journey to and return from (as anabasis) the Underworld. The katabasis is often part of the hero’s quest: heroes such as Achilles, Aeneas, Jesus Christ, Dante, or Gandalf make a journey into the Underworld, either to consult the ghosts of the dead and wisdom of the past, or to confront and overcome demons and death. In myth, Orpheus descends to Hades to attempt the rescue of Eurydice; Ceres is more successful in rescuing her daughter Persephone from the clutches of Hades. The term has application to literal descents, as in a hero’s quest. It is also used, literally or metaphorically, to express a number of related concerns to do with family, society, and the individual. In terms of the individual, katabasis also has psychological applications—the protagonist’s confrontation with the demons of her/his past, or of her/his own fears or weaknesses of character. As a narrative shape in the hero’s journey or stage in the protagonist’s development as an individual, katabasis has resonance in adolescent fiction, much of which is devoted to novels of coming of age and growth.

The katabases that can be seen in operation in the young adult novels of Margaret Mahy and Maurice Gee combine the geographical and the emotional: an awareness of the fissures in the New Zealand landscape, from which evil can emerge, or into which protagonists must journey, connects with the individual descents into darkness (emotional, familial, societal) of the young protagonists.

Margaret Mahy (1934–2012) was New Zealand’s most successful writer of children’s and young adult literature. From the 1960s on, she produced an enormous number of titles, including stories, poems, readers, learning media, non-fiction, and television scripts. In the 1970s, her work reached an international audience. For some time, Mahy wrote material that was deliberately unspecific in setting and theme, judging that if she was to succeed as a full-time writer of children’s literature, she needed to reach as wide an audience as possible.

This was easier to achieve in the shorter format material. However, in the 1980s, she began writing more complex work—novels for young adult readers. These novels can loosely be characterised as a blend of domestic fiction, magic realism, and fantasy. They engage with issues of adolescent identity in a family setting, and in the New Zealand landscape—particularly the landscape of Christchurch and the nearby Banks Peninsula, where Mahy lived.

Many of Mahy's novels engage with katabasis. I will focus on two: *The Tricksters* (1986) and *Dangerous Spaces* (1991).¹ Both of these novels consider the relation of an adolescent girl to her family, using motifs of magic, katabasis, and classical myth in order to depict different kinds of coming of age—of the protagonist and her family.

The Tricksters is set in a family holiday house on a peninsula formed by an extinct volcano. The house, called Carnival's Hide, has a sad past. It was built by Edward Carnival, an eccentric widower, who lived there with his son Teddy and his daughter Minerva. On Teddy's death (by drowning, the story goes, though it later emerges that Edward had struck him on the head with a trowel, killing him), Edward and Minerva leave New Zealand for England. In the novel, the family of the protagonist, Harry, owns the house, and visits it every Christmas. The novel takes place from the summer solstice until just after New Year.

At the heart of *The Tricksters* is Harry's development toward self-acceptance and the resolution of tensions in a large and fragmented family. Harry's real name is Ariadne. She is seventeen, and on the brink of womanhood. She is jealous of her beautiful and melodramatic older sister, Christobel, and sensitive to the tensions between her parents, because her father Jack has been unfaithful, with Emma, a friend of Christobel, who has had a baby. Not everyone in the family knows about this, and the secret is not fully revealed until a climactic scene toward the end of the novel—its revelation, however painful, enables a resolution of the tensions in the family and healing of a kind.

Harry is the quiet one in the family. She has secretly been writing a fantasy novel, into which she pours her desires for recognition, power, and sexuality. Early in *The Tricksters*, Harry goes down to the bay with her brother and sister. She finds a mollusc shell, eroded into the shape of a ring. Jokingly declaring her desire for power, she puts it on her finger, and says: "I'm Mrs Oceanus. Everything comes out of me" (18). She goes for a swim, and, feeling around in a small cave, formed by a volcanic worm of lava, finds a crack in the back. When she puts her hand in it, another, ghostly hand, clutches her own.

1 Margaret Mahy, *The Tricksters* (New York: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1986); and *Dangerous Spaces* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991). All quotations are from these editions.

Harry has awoken the shade of Teddy Carnival and enabled it to come through from the Underworld. When she leaves the bay, she sees a dripping man, kneeling on a rock nearby. Shortly afterward, three unexpected visitors, the Tricksters of the title, appear at Carnival's Hide. They claim that their names are Ovid, Hadfield, and Felix, and that they are descendants of the Carnivals. They have taken these names from the spines of three books in the house, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. All three are the ghost of Teddy Carnival—they bear on their foreheads the same scar from the accident with the trowel—but of a particular kind. Ovid represents the Superego, Hadfield the Id, and Felix the Ego. Together, controlled by Ovid, they manipulate and tease Harry, and through her, her family. Harry falls in love with Felix. Hadfield tries to rape her. And Ovid reveals Harry's secret novel to Christobel, the older and domineering sister, who scornfully reads it out loud to the others. The novel is a fantasy romance, and Harry is humiliated at having her writing, and her adolescent feelings, made fun of. In a rage, she reveals the secret, that Jack has fathered a baby with Christobel's friend Emma. Following a shattering scene, the brothers are finally vanquished by another visitor—Anthony from England, who turns out to be a descendant of Minerva Carnival—and the truth of how Teddy died is revealed.

At the beach, Harry burns her fantasy novel, recognising that its uncontrolled expressions of passion have partly called forth the disruptive spirits of the Carnival brothers. She finds another mollusc ring and draws on the powers of Mrs Oceanus once more—this time finding for a moment that all things do flow through her. In an orgasmic scene, she becomes one with the waters of the bay, and finds a peaceful and powerful clarity of vision. At the end of the novel, as she leaves the ocean to walk back to the house, she glances back, expecting to see that her footprints are made of light.

Instead of taking Harry or her family on a literal underground journey, *The Tricksters* shows them being drawn into a frenzy of recriminations by the Carnival brothers. Felix, Ovid, and Hadfield function as Dionysian figures of chaos and destruction, setting out to blow up the tenuous serenity of Harry's family, calling forth the malign spirit of their own unresolved family struggle. The family proceeds downward together, getting tenser and angrier and more unsettled, until a cataclysmic scene of revelation (the secret of Jack's baby). Though Harry is ashamed of being tricked into making that revelation, her action enables openness, healing, and clarity—as indeed do the Eleusinian Mysteries. (Interestingly, after Harry speaks the secret, she thinks of herself as both Pandora and the box of secrets—making the connection, of course, to the last of the secrets that is let out, which is that of Hope.)

Harry's name, Ariadne, of course, evokes another underworld traveller of a sort. It is Ariadne who gives the thread to Theseus to enable him to traverse the labyrinth of the Minotaur. But instead of a literal labyrinth, Minotaur, or classical hero, the labyrinth in this novel is the minefield of family relations and secrets; the Minotaur is the secret lurking at its heart, and the secret resentments of the family. It is also the labyrinth of the female writer's identity, as Christine Wilkie-Stibbs and Claudia Marquis have argued:² Harry's novel has called forth the tricksters, who resemble in part her fantasy hero and reveal that he is more than she can handle.

I will come back to the novel's setting shortly. But before I do, I would like to discuss *Dangerous Spaces*, in which Mahy returns to the idea of katabasis and family tensions. As in *The Tricksters*, *Dangerous Spaces* is set on the Banks Peninsula in an old house filled with family secrets. The novel is less ambitious in scale and scope, focusing on two eleven-year-old cousins, Flora and Anthea, who are forced into cohabitation after Anthea's parents die. Anthea is suicidally depressed, and Flora is resentful at having to share her family with her. They find a portal to another world in a photograph taken by Flora's grandfather, who had built the house in which they live, which Flora's father is unsuccessfully trying to renovate. In a clear allegory of suicidal depression, Anthea goes in her dreams to visit an underworld space called Viridian, where she encounters a boy, Griff, who lures her to stay there by promising that she can rejoin her parents. Griff is lonely because he misses his brother, Lionel, who, it emerges, is the girls' grandfather, who built the house and whose ghost still haunts it. Ultimately, Flora persuades Lionel to go with Griff. Having done so, she is able to bring Anthea back to life and integrate her into the family. The family is further healed by the exorcism of Lionel from the house—enabling them to renovate it and live in it on their own terms.

Viridian (named after a shade of green) is explicitly classical: its entrance is a subterranean amphitheatre decked with classical statues. Griff and Lionel depart for the Underworld in a small boat across the sea to an island—recalling the boat of Charon, the ferryman of Hades. Griff's attempt to possess Anthea recalls Hades' abduction of Persephone; so too, Flora's rescue of her recalls Ceres' rescue of Persephone. And of course, their names—Anthea and Flora—remind us of Persephone's role as the deity of the spring and renewal. Indeed, Flora's actions in rescuing Anthea enable renewal of the family

2 See Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Feminine Subject in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and Claudia Marquis, "Ariadne Down Under: Margaret Mahy's *The Tricksters*," in Elizabeth Hale and Sarah Fiona Winters, eds., *Marvellous Codes: The Fiction of Margaret Mahy* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 62–83.

in several ways, not merely saving her from suicide, but saving herself from destructive jealousy of her cousin, and her fear that Anthea will usurp her role in the family.

In these two novels the archetypal descent into and return from a literal or metaphorical or allegorical Underworld is connected with the complicatedness of family relations. These katabases enable problems to be faced and worked out, and light to be shone on healed families—families that have defeated the monsters of the past. It is striking that in each of these novels, pain is inflicted through the generations. This is made clear in the setting for the action, houses built by previous generations, which need to be exorcised of their influence, one of a particularly oppressive form of conservatism, in contrast to the accepting and tolerant diversity of family advocated in the novels. Holly Blackford points to the Ceres and Persephone story as enabling reflection on adolescent girls’ individuation in the context of their relations with their mothers, and I think she is correct, especially as this connects to Mahy’s work.³

But as well as being set in old houses, *The Tricksters* and *Dangerous Spaces* are set on the Banks Peninsula, where Mahy lived. The peninsula is a collapsed and extinct volcano near the city of Christchurch, and has many beautiful inlets and harbours. The memory of the ancient volcano runs through the novels, as does a consciousness of the earth’s powers. Significantly, in *The Tricksters*, an earthquake rocks the house in the night before Harry’s disastrous revelations. A pathetic fallacy perhaps, but connected with the underwater volcanic cave in which Harry reaches through a fissure to touch the power of the Underworld when her hand is grasped by the ghostly hand. Geological moments and forces connect with the psyche, as strongly as the classical models: Harry’s mother, Naomi, reflecting on the pain Jack’s infidelity has caused the family, uses this metaphor explicitly:

“I got quite frantic,” Naomi said. “I tried to take everything over. [...] first I wanted to adopt Tibby, and then I tried to have another baby myself. We all got so terribly unhappy that all feelings changed under pressure, like metamorphic rock—remember your geology?: *rock altered after formation by heat and pressure*,” she quoted in a school-teacherish voice, looking around her at the old volcano.

“*Metamorphoses* by Ovid,” Harry couldn’t help saying. (253)

3 Holly Virginia Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls’ Fantasy Literature* (New York—Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

Harry is referring to the most powerful Carnival brother, Ovid, who has taken his name from the spine of a book in the house—the book, of course, is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. And the term “metamorphosis”—be it mythological or geological—has especial power in the novel: formation by heat and pressure is responsible for the exploded volcano in which the action takes place. The risk for the Hamiltons is that, like the Carnivals before them, the heat and pressure of family emotions will cause a similar cataclysm. The risk for Flora and Anthea is that mutual distrust and unhappiness will leave Anthea marooned in the dangerous space of Viridian. A key aspect of Mahy's work, however, is the emphasis on regeneration and healing. Metamorphosis can be for the better as well as for the worse, and though she sends her characters into perilous realms, she brings them out again, made stronger by facing danger.

The other novelist I discuss, Maurice Gee (b. 1931), has an altogether bleaker vision of humanity, at least in terms of the scale of evil afoot in the world. Mahy's novels are concentrated on the family. She is less concerned with the overthrow of evil or villainy, and more interested in the potential for human passions to spill over, harming others. Gee is more concerned with a broad, sociopolitical type of evil, particularly that which comes from imperialism, corporate greed, and the corrupting aspects of power. Gee is one of New Zealand's foremost novelists, with an *oeuvre* of some thirty novels for adults and fifteen for children. Unlike Mahy, Gee has never consciously written for an international audience: New Zealand society is his subject. His novels are deeply embedded in place. Of his novels for young readers, half are realist and historical, providing a novelistic history for New Zealand children. The other half are fantasy novels of differing kinds—some set in contemporary New Zealand, some involving portal travel from New Zealand to another world, some set in a post-apocalyptic degraded New Zealand. In all of them, children or young adults do battle against villains of various kinds, villains whose conquering requires travel to metaphorical or literal underworlds.

Gee's first novel for young readers, *Under the Mountain* (1979), is set in Auckland.⁴ It concerns the efforts of a pair of psychic redheaded twins, Rachel and Theo, to defeat “the People of the Mud Who Conquer and Multiply.” These are worm-like mud-dwelling aliens who came to earth centuries ago, and secreted themselves beneath Auckland in lairs formed from the volcanic caves that lie under the city. They have been gathering their strength to take over the Earth: to do so, they plan to link up the volcanoes of the city, causing a cataclysmic explosion that will destroy human life and enable them to reduce the planet to

4 Maurice Gee, *Under the Mountain* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1979).

the sea of mud that is their preferred habitat. It is a clear allegory of imperial expansion or corporate greed: they have invaded planet after planet, exhausting their resources, and will now do the same to Earth.

The twins develop their psychic powers under the tutelage of Mr. Jones, a Gandalf-like figure who is the last of a benign race of aliens (the People Who Understand) who have devoted their civilisation to eradicating the People of the Mud Who Conquer and Multiply. After various encounters with the worms, which involves being chased through the slimy tunnels they have carved under the city, Theo and Rachel hurl psychically charged magic stones into the craters of two of Auckland’s most spectacular volcanoes: Mt Eden and Rangitoto. Rachel’s does its job, but Theo’s stone explodes early, causing a disastrous eruption. (As a skeptic, Theo has struggled more to control his psychic abilities than has Rachel the humanist, who pities the worms as much as she fears them.) Though the worms are defeated, much of the city burns. The novel ends with the twins walking slowly through the landscape to find their family.

Under the Mountain had a significant impact on New Zealand readers—mainly because of the way that Gee brought galactic action to a local setting. And like Mahy, Gee uses recognisable archetypes, such as the hero’s journey, the wise mentor, the underworld journey, and connects them to parts of the seismic landscape. Where Mahy’s seismic landscape, however, offers a symbolic connection to the cataclysmic powers existing within the family, Gee’s landscape in *Under the Mountain* draws on a more basic fear of the threat of volcanic eruptions.

Beneath the peaceful city, then, dangers lurk—in more than one guise. On the one hand, there are the volcanic caverns and mountains, loci of terrifying and deadly power; on the other hand, these are benign until exploited by the aliens who dwell in them. Another possibility exists: that the aliens themselves are victims of their own natures—as amoral as the landscape. That is partly why Rachel pities them.

The idea of the pitiable monster lurking in a labyrinth beneath the city is something Gee returns to. In *Salt* (2007), the first of a trilogy of novels set in a post-apocalyptic New Zealand, two adolescents, Hari and Pearl, help overthrow Odo Cling, the evil overlord of a decaying city.⁵ Cling maintains his powers by harnessing the energy of an abject monster, the Gool, which lives underneath the city. Hari and Pearl penetrate a labyrinth of tunnels to confront and overcome the Gool, but when they reach it, though they are revolted by its abject monstrosity, they (especially Pearl) feel pity for it:

5 Maurice Gee, *Salt* (Auckland: Puffin, 2007). All quotations are from this edition.

The Gool had been born from an oily crack in the mountainside. It bulged from darkness into the morning light, undulating beneath its skin. The main part of its body lay on the slope down from the crack, spreading, flattening, busy at its edges with a thousand tiny mouths eating whatever they found. Except for that ant-like busyness, and the organs turning under its skin, it was like a dead jellyfish on a beach, but a thousand times larger than any jellyfish ever seen. (73)

Though the Gool is abject and frightening, Pearl, like Rachel before her in *Under the Mountain*, conquers it by pitying it. In confronting an Underworld demon, then, she is able to find redemption, to resist a traditional slaying. In this novel Gee investigates the nature of heroism—true heroism requires the ability to turn away from violence, to turn the other cheek, perhaps (to harrow hell through pity?). He shows the need for both physical strength and confidence, but also for intuition and empathy when encountering demons. Such emotional strength enables the protagonists to return to the surface, having conquered their own base emotions as much as any monster they may encounter.

Gee is continually concerned with understanding and depicting the nature of evil. He refers to his work as “mining,” and in his children’s literature, he says, he gets away from the “explorations of guilt and delving into psyches I’d been doing in my writing for adults”:

I wanted, for a time, to write horizontally rather than vertically—do open-cast mining, if I can put it another way, rather than deep-shaft mining. For that reason I decided to write what I call fantasy/adventure—put the emphasis on movement, develop narrative pace, tell a story as story pure and simple.⁶

Gee claims that his children’s literature is “surface” work. Yet in his repeated use of imagery of the Underworld, of passages to and from it, of the need to dig, or travel, beneath the surface, Gee cannot escape from katabasis as an allegorical or metaphorical alternative to the intense psychic exploration of his adult novels. *The Fat Man* (1995), his most striking realist novel for young readers, is a case in point.⁷ This novel, set on the North Island during the Depression Era, is about a man who returns to the village where he grew up in order to exact revenge on his childhood bullies. It is told through the eyes of Colin, the son

6 Maurice Gee, “Creeks and Kitchens: Margaret Mahy Lecture—Maurice Gee, 23 March 2002,” *Inside Story: Yearbook* (2002): 18.

7 Maurice Gee, *The Fat Man* (Auckland: Viking Press, 1995).

of one of the bullies. The Fat Man, Herbert Muskie, has made money as a gun-runner in the United States, and is wanted by the law. Because he has money he has power over his former tormentors, suffering in the Depression, which struck New Zealand hard. It is a frightening story of sadism and abuse. Colin is a reluctant ally of Muskie, who has caught him trespassing in his mother's creek. Muskie rises, dripping, from the creek, like an Underworld avenger coming out of the Styx, and captures Colin, and Colin is in horrified thrall to him thereafter.

Muskie's rise to the surface might be an anabasis—the opposite of katabasis, where the journey is made in reverse—a journey up from the coast to the hinterland, or up from Hades to Earth. However, Muskie plunges the village into various kinds of moral darkness, not only by his desire for revenge, but by his unredeemable bad nature. No one is able to conquer him; he is only defeated when the law discovers his whereabouts, and he is forced to run.

Even then, ultimately, Muskie conquers himself. When he goes on the run, he kidnaps Colin as security. But when they reach the edge of a crevasse, and the only way across is through a flying fox, a small cage winched across on a cable, he climbs into the contraption, and begs Colin to operate the machine. Both of them know that the cable will not bear his weight. And here, once again, a protagonist learns to feel empathy for a monster. Colin, pitying Herbert—in both his monstrosity and his pain—agrees to assist him in committing suicide. And so Herbert returns, or is returned, to the depths from whence he came.

Order is restored in *The Fat Man*, though Colin's comprehension of his parents' frailty never leaves him. Indeed, this is a key aspect of Gee's novels. To have compassion for the frailties of others, even of evil others, requires his protagonists to confront and understand them, to go into the depths where they lurk, or to accompany them when they come to the surface. Katabasis (or anabasis) in Gee's work, connected to the labyrinth or the underworld and its relation to the upper world, again connects to the hero's journey—not necessarily to restoring order, or defeating evil, but to achieving understanding and knowledge.

As any Ancient Roman could tell us, volcanoes and earthquakes are not a new invention. They are certainly not a postcolonial construction designed to overturn and challenge classical literature. But they are a distinctive feature of the New Zealand landscape, and offer interesting possibilities for writers who wish to set their novels in that landscape. Mahy and Gee, by exploiting those possibilities, find useful thematic resonances with the journeys they take their protagonists on. And in doing so, they connect the new with the ancient, placing their narratives about very young people in a young country in the continuum of long-used powerful motifs. In using katabasis Down Under, then,

both Gee and Mahy employ archetypal structures that are useful for exploring adolescent identity, in terms of individuation within the family and in terms of the broader society—the networks of feeling and common effort that join a society together, whether for good or for ill. And they do it by connecting to the seismic nature of the landscape, its ready porousness, which provides, through crevasses, creeks, bays, caves, fissures, earthquakes, and volcanoes, ready access to, and from, the world that lies beneath.

‘His Greek Materials’: Philip Pullman’s Use of Classical Mythology

Owen Hodkinson

Introduction

Philip Pullman’s popular and critically acclaimed trilogy *His Dark Materials*,¹ a reworking of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,² is naturally pervaded with allusions to Judaeo-Christian mythology and to some of the most influential texts within that tradition, from the Christian Bible to Dante and William Blake.³ Scholarship on the trilogy to date has focused primarily on its engagement with this tradition;⁴ but there is a strong undercurrent of Greek mythology and allusion

1 Consisting of *Northern Lights* (US title *The Golden Compass*), first published 1995; *The Subtle Knife*, 1997; and *The Amber Spyglass*, 2000. Nota bene, for reasons of space, this chapter will focus only on the original trilogy, not the various spin-offs: Philip Pullman, *Lyra’s Oxford* (Oxford—New York: David Fickling Books, 2003); *Once Upon a Time in the North* (Oxford—New York: David Fickling Books, 2008); and a third, *The Book of Dust*, long awaited. See Susan R. Bobby, “Persephone Ascending: Goddess Archetypes and Lyra’s Journey to Wholeness,” in Catherine Butler and Tommy Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman (New Casebooks)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), 146–163, with further references for some suggestions on Greek mythical parallels with these supplementary stories of Lyra’s universe. I shall refer henceforth to the trilogy as *HDM*, and to the individual books as *NL*, *SK*, and *AS*. Page numbers in the trilogy are those in the UK editions in the Point imprint of Scholastic Books: see Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 1998); *The Subtle Knife* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 1998); and *The Amber Spyglass* (London: Scholastic Children’s Books, 2001).

2 See below, text to n. 10.

3 In the acknowledgements to *AS* at p. 550 Pullman mentions Blake’s works along with *Paradise Lost* and von Kleist’s essay *On the Marionette Theatre* as the three most significant debts owed by his trilogy. The protagonist Lyra’s surname, Belacqua, is one of several allusions to Dante.

4 But see Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman*, for a more comprehensive approach; for an orientation in the rapidly expanding bibliography about Pullman’s work, see their “Selected Bibliography and Further Reading,” Ch. 11, 170–178; see also Catherine Butler “Modern Children’s Fantasy,” in Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 224–235, for context. For the predominance of studies examining the interplay with Christian materials and the question of religion, see, e.g., David Gooderham, “Fantasizing It as It Is: Religious Language

to classical literature, which, though undoubtedly secondary (both in terms of the sheer number of allusions to Christian materials and its primary hypotext being *Paradise Lost*), deserves a detailed exploration, which I begin with this chapter.⁵

I shall first consider the question of the intended and actual readership(s) of *HDM*, especially as it relates to the child reader and her ability to recognise the classical allusions discussed in the chapter. As we shall see, Pullman has publicly expressed views on education (especially literary) which may imply a certain type of “ideal reader” or “implied audience” for his novels. Secondly, Pullman has spoken in several interviews about his knowledge and use of Greek mythology and literature in his earlier career as a teacher; this reduces the need to rely on speculation about the author’s familiarity with materials which could be identified as possible classical hypotexts for the trilogy, making it more likely that deliberate allusion, imitation, or reworking is indeed in play. In the main body of the chapter, I shall then argue that although allusions to the literature of and about Christian myth⁶ are in some ways

in Philip Pullman’s Trilogy, *His Dark Materials*,” *Children’s Literature* 31 (2003): 155–175; Hugh Raymond-Pickard, *The Devil’s Account: Philip Pullman and Christianity* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2004); Burton Hatlen “Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman’s Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*,” in Millicent Lenz with Carole Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 75–94; K.D. Robinson, “*His Dark Materials*: A Look into Pullman’s Interpretation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*,” *Mythlore* 24 (2005): 2–16; Shelley King, “*Without Lyra We Would Understand neither the New nor the Old Testament*: Exegesis, Allegory, and Reading *The Golden Compass*,” in Lenz and Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 106–124; Andy Leet, “Rediscovering Faith through Science Fiction: Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” in Lenz and Scott, *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 174–187; Anne-Marie Bird, “Circumventing the Grand Narrative: Dust as an Alternative Theological Vision in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” in Lenz and Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 188–198; Richard Greene and Rachel Robison, eds., *The Golden Compass and Philosophy: God Bites the Dust* (Chicago: Open Court, 2009); Ulrike Susanne Scherer, “*Dream Not of Other Worlds*: C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman and the Ghost of Milton” (Otago: Ph.D. Diss., 2010); Pat Pinsent, “Philip Pullman’s ‘Religious Reaction against Religion,’” in Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman*, 19–35; Naomi Wood, “The Controversialist: Philip Pullman’s Secular Humanism and Responses to *His Dark Materials*,” in Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman*, 76–95.

5 Pullman’s engagement with Greek material has of course been noted and discussed to some extent, but this is the first investigation to focus on and draw together all of the major classical hypotexts and references.

6 In order to avoid repeating such cumbersome formulations throughout the chapter, I shall sometimes use “Christian” to designate all literary texts alluded to in *HDM* to which a Christian worldview and/or a basis in or understanding of the Christian Bible or Christianity are

indisputably more important to the fabric of the trilogy, references to ancient Greek myths and texts are also important, and stand in a complex array of interplay with the Christian allusions;⁷ indeed, in some cases the Greek mythological referents are likely to be more familiar to the trilogy's target audience; and some of them, relying on that assumed familiarity, are employed in order to set up and provide a shorthand for an alternative worldview to the Christian hypotexts.

The Child Reader and the Ideal Reader

For a trilogy targeted at the children's literature market—albeit the teen/young adult end of it⁸—*HDM* is extremely long (a total of almost 1,300 pages), complex, and rich in allusions. Recognition of this led the author to be surprised at its huge success (15 million copies sold worldwide in 40 languages, in addition to film and theatre adaptations and spin-off books). In an interview in *Intelligent Life* magazine, Pullman said:

I thought there would be a small audience—a few clever kids somewhere and a few intelligent adults who thought, “That’s all right, quite enjoyed it.”⁹

This confirms the author's aim to include children as at least a part of his readership, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity and potential difficulty of the material. The target market is also confirmed by the publisher: the books were first published in the UK by the Point imprint of Scholastic Children's Books, an imprint specialising in the teen/young adult fiction market. Fortunately, Pullman left the marketing to the publishers, since his summary of his concept for the novels does not seem likely to draw in the vast readership of adults and children he received: in an interview in *Books for Keeps* he said:

central, as distinct from the Greek myths and texts referred to; no implication about the beliefs of the authors is intended.

7 This can of course only be the beginning of a thorough investigation into the many classical references and allusions in such a long and allusive trilogy; I survey several allusions to Greek myths and texts, but there are no doubt more to be found, and there is certainly more that could be said about those discussed here.

8 See n. 12 and surrounding text, below.

9 Robert Butler, “Philip Pullman's Dark Arts” (interview with Pullman), *Intelligent Life*, Dec. 2007, at <http://www.moreintelligentlife.co.uk/story/an-interview-with-philip-pullman> (accessed Aug. 31, 2014; magazine no longer available online).

What I really wanted to do was *Paradise Lost* in 1,200 pages.¹⁰ It's the story of the Fall which is the story of how what some would call sin, but I would call consciousness, comes to us.¹¹

A similar statement in another interview also confirms the author had a specifically teen audience in mind:

Well, what I'd really like to write is *Paradise Lost* for teenagers in three volumes.¹²

That *HDM* has sold so well despite the potentially difficult subject matter and complexity is undoubtedly owing to Pullman's great gifts as a storyteller: the pace of the story carries the reader along, and while only the reader as well-read in Christian and classical literature as the author will spot all the allusions or understand their point, they are evidently incorporated in such a way that this fact does not prevent enjoyment of the story by large numbers of readers. (I assume, of course, that the alternative explanation—that *all* those readers had first read Milton, Dante, Blake, and the whole Bible, among other important hypotexts—does not need refuting.) Pullman's reference to an audience of "clever kids" and "intelligent adults" tallies with the fact that the novels reward re-reading, perhaps coming back as an adult and noticing more than one does as a teenager first time around, or being inspired to read one or more of the important hypotexts and then to come back to Pullman.¹³

10 Sic. He overshot by nearly 100.

11 Julia Eccleshare, "Northern Lights and Christmas Miracles," *Books For Keeps: The Children's Book Magazine Online* 100 (1995), available at <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/100/childrens-books/articles/awards/northern-lights-and-christmas-miracles> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

12 Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholson, "Talking to Philip Pullman: An Interview," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 23 (1999): 126.

13 In an attempt to take advantage of this potential, an edition of *Paradise Lost* has been produced with an introduction by Pullman: see John Milton, *Paradise Lost: An Illustrated Edition with an Introduction by Philip Pullman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). On the dual audience of children and adults for *HDM*, see Susan R. Bobby, "What Makes a Classic? Daemons and Dual Audience in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," *The Looking Glass* 8.1 (2004), pages not numbered, available online at <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/188/187> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015). *AS* was the first (and to date the only) work of "children's literature" to win the prestigious Whitbread Book Award (starting in 1971) outright in 2001, defeating the shortlisted works in other ("adult")

To focus on the child reader: how likely is it that she—or that Pullman would expect that she—has read *Paradise Lost* (the acknowledged model of *HDM*), let alone other important but secondary Christian hypotexts? On both counts, I would argue that it is very unlikely. Pullman worked as an English teacher in his native UK before his writing took over, and is therefore aware of the reading set on the National Curriculum, begun in 1988 and obligatory for state-funded schools (the new GCSE [General Certificate of School Education] qualification examining 16-year-olds, part of the same impetus to educational reform, began in 1986, with the first pupils examined in 1988). The National Curriculum in 1999, for example, allowed for selections from Milton and Blake to be chosen (by the school or the teacher) for study between ages 11–16 from among 28 prescribed pre-1914 poets (alongside prescriptions for post-1914 poets, Shakespeare and other drama, pre- and post-1914 fiction).¹⁴ That is, only a relatively small proportion of pupils would be obliged to study these particular poets (and then only selections from their works) at school before the age at which they are in the publisher's Teen/YA-target market; his experience as an English teacher means that Pullman's expectations of the average pupil's breadth of reading would not be unrealistically high. At best, then, the author perhaps hoped that a minority of readers might have read such texts before coming to *HDM*—and perhaps rather hoped to inspire more to read them *through* reading *HDM*.¹⁵ The Christian Bible could not be assured of detailed familiarity among child readers, in an increasingly secularised and multicultural society, beyond the most famous passages. Pullman himself implicitly acknowledges this decrease in familiarity in discussing the role certain foundational texts should play in education, speaking at the Oxford Literary Festival in 2013:

I think it's very, very important that your children should know these stories [Grimm's fairy tales]. [...] Not all of them obviously, but the great ones, the famous ones. They should also know stories from the Bible

categories, including best novel, making it and *HDM* one of the most apposite works for consideration of the perennial children's literature studies questions of dual audience and the importance or otherwise of "children's literature" as a category.

- 14 Department for Education and Employment, *English. The National Curriculum for England: Key Stages 1–4* (London: DfEE/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1999), 35–36, available at <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/1999-nc-primary-handbook.pdf> (accessed Nov. 12, 2015).
- 15 Pullman's contribution to Milton, *Paradise Lost*, indicates a desire to encourage reading of *Paradise Lost* by his readers, as well as his statement quoted above, text to nn. 11–12.

and from Greek mythology. I think it's important almost more than anything else—that's what they need most of all.¹⁶

As an atheist/secular humanist,¹⁷ Pullman naturally does not single out Christian writings, but gives them a place for their literary qualities—note the phrase “*stories from the Bible*,” as well as the company in which he places them. With such pleas for the continuation of telling great stories once considered central to Western culture,¹⁸ Pullman implicitly acknowledges that it is becoming ever less likely that most children are familiar with such classic tales, let alone with the traditions built upon them (e.g., Milton and Dante for the Bible). But in arguing for a canon of central stories to be told to children, he also constructs an ideal child reader for his novels, one who comes to the latter with a good knowledge of at least the foundational texts—some Bible stories, if not Milton, and some Greek myths. Indeed, without at least an outline knowledge of the story of Adam and Eve with its concept of the Fall and of sin, as told in the Bible (or perhaps one of the countless adaptations in collections of Bible stories for children), *HDM* would certainly lose something, even though it would still be perfectly comprehensible; and quite apart from any question of the lowest level of familiarity necessary, the more the reader is familiar with Christianity and its texts, the better she is able to understand the depth of Pullman's richly allusive novels.

I would suggest, then, that the author did not expect that he would have so many readers because he assumed (rightly) that most readers would not be familiar with *HDM*'s many Christian hypotexts and references (Milton and others in the later Christian tradition); that in his view all children's education should include at least some central texts—which would, incidentally, make his novels more accessible and rewarding (stories from the Bible itself, and some Greek myths). Pullman believed initially, however, that this might not be enough to make *HDM* accessible to many, only the “clever kids” who could appreciate more of the references than average readers, and who might

16 Hannah Furness, “Philip Pullman: Teach All Children Fairy Tales and Bible Verses,” in *The Telegraph*, March 18, 2013, available online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9936241/Philip-Pullman-teach-all-children-fairy-tales-and-Bible-verses.html> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

17 On Pullman's religious views and their manifestation in *HDM*, see Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman*, section entitled “*His Dark Materials* and polemic,” 1–18, for a brief but suitably nuanced introduction, with references to further reading (for the section referred to in this footnote, see especially pp. 7–10).

18 See the rest of the interview for the context, including on the modern decline of storytelling.

have gone on from Pullman's ideal early upbringing on Bible stories and Greek myths to read, e.g., Milton or Homer for themselves. In the event, sales of *HDM* suggest that it is widely enjoyed by those who are likely to have had less prior familiarity with its hypotexts than such an "ideal reader."

Pullman's Greek Materials¹⁹

Apart from his statement on the inclusion of Greek myths in a kind of "children's canon," Pullman has elsewhere discussed Greek myth and literature and its use in education in a way which also gives some insight into his own familiarity with them. One of his earlier publications was a children's educational book, *Ancient Civilizations*.²⁰ As a schoolteacher, he used to tell the stories of the Homeric epics and other Greek myths—not reading, but oral storytelling, and several times over.²¹ Telling the stories of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from memory a number of times, rhapsode style, means that Pullman had a very good familiarity with these texts in particular, over and above other Greek texts

19 I became aware of Randall E. Auxier "Thus Spake Philip Pullman," in Greene and Robison, eds., *The Golden Compass and Philosophy*, 3–24, only via Bobby, "Persephone Ascending," 146–163, and too late to take account of either fully in this chapter: Auxier argues for a reading of *AS* that has Lyra as Persephone, Mrs Coulter as Demeter, and Will as Hades (Hades abducts Persephone from her mother Demeter and takes her forcibly to the Underworld); as Bobby points out, however, there are several aspects of this reading which do not fit the text very well, and, as I argue below, Orpheus is a far closer parallel for Lyra's proactive, heroine's quest to the Underworld to bring back ghosts of the dead than is Persephone's passive journey to the Underworld against her volition. Bobby's chapter compares some central characters in *HDM* with figures of Greek myth *qua* archetypes in a Jungian sense rather than specific intertextual models. Another possible echo of classical myth is argued for by Karen Patricia Smith, "Tradition, Transformation, and the Bold Emergence: Fantastic Legacy and Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," in Lenz and Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 146: two hospitable couples in *AS* resemble Baucis and Philemon, but these allusions (if deliberate) are fleeting and localised.

20 Philip Pullman, *Ancient Civilizations* (Exeter: Wheaton, 1981).

21 See Pullman interviewed in Robert Butler, "Philip Pullman's Dark Arts," and his statement on using Greek myths in his teaching career—"I have a feeling this all belongs to me," in George Beahm, ed., *Discovering the Golden Compass: A Guide to Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials* (Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads, 2007), 26: "I must have told each story thirty-six times. The result is that I now have those stories entirely clear in my head, from beginning to end, and I can call them up whenever I want to." More from Pullman on the importance of specifically *oral* storytelling in Furness, "Philip Pullman: Teach All Children Fairy Tales and Bible Verses."

which he engages with in his work but did not re-tell in this way. Indeed, in answer to a question from a fan on his website about the use of classical myth in *HDM*, he writes:

If I were to give you one tip, I'd say that you might find just as many places where the book was alluding to Norse or northern myths, or to the Bible. But I was conscious of classical stories, of course: Homer, principally.²²

In the same response he also points to his use of “epic similes” in battle scenes, which are evocative of Greek and, in general, classical epic, as we shall see.

Pullman’s knowledge of at least one specific Greek text with which he is engaging is guaranteed by a direct reference (as opposed to an allusion) within the trilogy: this is the use of Plato’s myth of the Cave in the *Republic*: “Shadows on the walls of the Cave, you see, from Plato” (SK, 92). This reference is thus a different kind of engagement with Greek materials, both in the manner of the intertextuality and in the fact that it is not a myth in the primary sense but one of Plato’s invented philosophical “myths”; this intertextuality will therefore be explored in a separate section. Plato’s Cave as a metaphor for consciousness, an important theme throughout *HDM*, is of course known to many indirectly through modern philosophers and writers; and there is reason for thinking that Pullman’s engagement with the Cave is mediated through the Christian tradition.

Pullman also mentions Socrates in an interview in which he acknowledges his *daemonion* or personal deity as the inspiration for daemons, the embodied souls in animal form which all characters in the primary alternative universe of *HDM* possess.²³

These few specific pieces of Greek knowledge aside, there is little if anything which can be pinned down as an allusion to a specific Greek text, despite many features of Greek myth being present (the Underworld and the harpies in *AS*, for instance). This is because many of the allusions are precisely to Greek myths, as opposed to any specific text’s telling of those myths. However, given Pullman’s very wide reading, evident from the novels themselves (especially the Christian texts) and from the interviews he has given about them, and his

22 Pullman (no date, in an answer to a question asked Dec. 1, 2010), official website: <http://www.philip-pullman.com/questions-frequently-asked/> (accessed Aug. 31, 2014; no longer available on the updated website).

23 Quoted in Raymond-Pickard, *The Devil’s Account*, 56. Cf. Juliet Marillier, “Dear Soul,” in Scott Westerfeld, ed., *The World of the Golden Compass* ([sine loc.]: Borders, Inc., 2007), 114–115.

expressed attitudes toward reading and a “canon,” including the Greek classics, it is a fairly safe assumption that he had read, and alludes to, far more Greek and classical literature than can be definitively stated in the way it can be concerning Homer.

A final point to consider is the use of words and names derived from Greek. The main character “Lyra” is of course the Greek word for lyre, and it is impossible not to see this as deliberate given Pullman’s use of speaking names for so many of his characters, and the clear associations between Lyra and Orpheus, the greatest musician and lyre player of Greek myth, which will be discussed below. Another example is the “Alethiometer,” a device resembling a barometer and used to reveal hidden truths and guide Lyra throughout her adventures: this evidently derives from Greek *aletheia*, “truth.” Pullman does not (so far as I can establish) know ancient Greek, but of course Greek-derived terms are used copiously in English literature, philosophy, and theology; in particular, many Greek terms have come to be used in Christian theology drawing on Platonism, and then in later literary texts (such as Christianised epic), and Pullman shows in the novels and in his interviews an interest in and knowledge of this Platonism-influenced theology, or Platonism mediated through Christianity.

Greek Elements in *His Dark Materials*

a “Epic simile”

As noted above, Pullman himself describes his use of simile as “epic”; on this point what he says precisely is: “Then there are the epic similes in the description of the fight between the bears,”²⁴ in answering the fan’s question about his classical influences. These similes are indeed very striking for a reader who has read Homeric epic, introducing a very different tone and style to the fight scene compared with much of the narrative. An example:

That was when Iorek moved. Like a wave that has been building its strength over a thousand miles of ocean, and which makes little stir in the deep water, but which when it reaches the shallows rears itself up high into the sky, terrifying the shore-dwellers, before crashing down on the land with irresistible power—so Iorek Byrnison rose up against Iofur, exploding upwards from his firm footing on the dry rock and slashing with a ferocious left hand at the exposed jaw of Iofur Ragnison.

NL, 353

24 See above, n. 22.

Homeric nature similes are justly famous, and a great number and variety of them are found throughout the epics. I would not suggest that Pullman is modelling his on a specific Homeric simile, but rather imitating the style (note especially the way the comparandum is returned to at the end after “so”) and the use of a natural feature, in this case a wave, as the comparatum. His great familiarity as a storyteller with Homer means that he had very likely absorbed the style of simile, rather than necessarily looking at his copy of the *Iliad* for an example to imitate. The sea is a frequent comparatum in Homeric simile: here is a close example, also a battle scene:

[Hector attacks the Greeks] as when a wave, wind-fed to high fury under the clouds, falls on a fast ship and shrouds it wholly in foam: the fearful blast of the wind roars in the sail, and the sailors’ hearts tremble with fear, as they are carried only just out of the grip of death—so the Achaians’ spirits were troubled in their breasts.²⁵

HOMER, *Iliad* 15.624–629

As in Homer, so in Pullman, this kind of simile gives an impression of the great power of the combatants, who are forces of nature and not mere humans.

b *Lyra and Orpheus*²⁶

A more complex case of interaction with Greek myth is the central character Lyra, and her speaking name, meaning “lyre,” as noted above. Lyra’s is a speaking name in another and perhaps more overt way—she is an inveterate liar, often using untruths to get herself out of trouble (or attempt to). This aspect of her character is noted by others, including approvingly by Iorek, who nicknames her “Lyra Silvertongue” after a particularly effective piece of persuasion using untruths (*NL*, 348). The similarity of her name to “liar”—and the even greater similarity of the Greek meaning of her name, “lyre” to “liar”—is obvious, and is in fact emphasised by the text itself, when she is called “Liar, liar!” (*AS*, 308). This, and other important uses of speaking names in *HDM*,²⁷ makes it very convincing to see Lyra as in some sense associated with the lyre, too—as indeed Lauren Shohet has done, arguing that Lyra is a metaliterary figure for

25 Trans. Michael Hammond in Homer, *The Iliad* (London: Penguin, 1987).

26 Since writing earlier versions of this chapter I have seen Bobby, “Persephone Ascending,” 149, which also briefly notes the parallel of Lyra’s and Orpheus’s journeys to the Underworld.

27 Discussed by Lauren Shohet, “Reading Dark Materials,” in Lenz and Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 22–36.

the novels and is programmatic for Pullman's alignment with lyric and against canonical (Christian) authors. She compares *HDM* to C.S. Lewis's Christian allegorical Narnia series as follows:

Unlike Lewis's novels, which obediently parrot [...] their canonical sources, Pullman's narrative art lies, steals, and transforms. Lyra inveterately spins tales [...].²⁸

Shohet goes on to argue that lyric (i.e., Blake and the Romantics) can be seen as leading an "emancipating rebellion against tradition"²⁹ (i.e., the Bible and Milton). This reading is persuasive, placing Pullman as it does among other later writers to engage with Milton from a post-Enlightenment perspective. But this is not where the Lyra-lyre association ends.

Arguably a more apparent association which Lyra and the lyre share is with the figure of Orpheus. Lyra has in common with him a descent (in *AS*) to the Underworld while still alive, in order to bring back the soul of a dead loved one (albeit her childhood friend Roger rather than a lover). And the lyre is of course Orpheus's instrument, accompanying his enchanting and beguiling words—something for which Lyra is also noted. I would argue therefore that Lyra evokes not just *any* lyre, but specifically the lyre of Orpheus and thereby Orpheus himself. This parallel is seen not only in their journeys to the Underworld and their charming use of words, but in specific details connected with both of these features: details which are found in famous classical literary versions of the Orpheus myth with which Pullman was no doubt familiar.³⁰ The impression each makes on the souls of the dead in the Underworld is very similar: the ghosts are attracted to each figure and eager to listen to them, so that their verbal (and Orpheus's musical) powers are seen to hold sway over the dead as well as the living. This feature of Orpheus's katabasis is mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "[...] the bloodless spirits wept as he uttered these words and accompanied them on the lyre" ("[...] talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem exsanguis flebant animae," *Met.* 10.40–41).

28 Ibid., 25–26.

29 Ibid., 26.

30 Kiera Vaclavik, *Uncharted Depths: Descent Narratives in English and French Children's Literature* (London: Legenda, 2010), touches on Pullman only briefly in a useful study of katabasis in modern English and French children's literature. Claire Squires, *Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 62, compares Lyra's journey to the Underworld with those of Greek heroes in general, but there are several very specific parallels with Orpheus, as I show in this section.

Ovid's picturesque account of Orpheus's katabasis is probably the most famous extant ancient version, and the source for most modern collections of Greek myths, so it is hard to believe that Pullman was not aware of it in his extensive katabasis episode in *The Amber Spyglass*. Lyra is treated similarly by the ghosts:

And then Lyra reached the tree and sat down on one of the thick roots. So many figures clustered around, pressing hopefully, wide-eyed.

AS, 329

A further parallel is the rebellion of each character against god(s) in his or her world, resulting ultimately in Orpheus's death at the hands of followers of Dionysus, but also encompassing the attempt by each to subvert divinely ordained order by bringing the dead back to life.

Pullman's Lyra~Orpheus interplay is not simple imitation, however, but is rather a case both of a more complex allusion which alters significant details, and a "capping" allusion, which offers an "improved" version of its hypotext. One significant detail which is a parallel between the two stories but alters the Lyra~Orpheus relation is the point at which Lyra, on the ascent out of the Underworld leading the souls of the dead, looks behind her, falters, and slips back; Orpheus too looks back, but of course it is the ghost of Eurydice and not Orpheus who slips back, and she is lost to him. This detail, including the imagery of sliding or slipping, is again reminiscent of Ovid's version: "[...] he looked behind, and suddenly she slipped back down..." ("[...] flexit amans oculos, et protinus illa relapsa est...", *Met.* 10.57). Compare:

She looked back... But the little boy's whispering voice said, "Lyra, be *careful*—remember, you en't dead like us—" And it seemed to happen so slowly, but there was nothing she could do... helplessly she began to slide.

AS, 378

So in Pullman's story it is the Orpheus figure who slides and falls down on the ascent out of the Underworld; and here the parallels and differences in the allusion multiply and become more complex. The ghost of Eurydice slips and is lost to Orpheus forever, while Lyra slips and never sees Roger—one of the ghosts she is leading out of the Underworld, but the one she descended for—again. Lyra and Eurydice both fall, but Lyra's fall does not resemble Eurydice's, because she is rescued from it by the harpies and makes it out of the Underworld. Importantly, her mission is not a failure in the way Orpheus's is, despite

her failure with regard to Roger. She has taken on a wider mission since arriving in the Underworld to see him, that of rescuing all the souls of the dead from the Underworld, and in that, she succeeds, with the help of Will opening a window into another world through which the souls can all gradually escape, and where they dissipate into Dust, their constituent particles of consciousness.

Each (original) mission is doomed to failure, as Lyra must learn, like Orpheus, that the basic rules of life and death cannot be overturned. But for Lyra, having learned that, freeing the souls from a wretched existence in a dismal Hades-style Underworld is ultimately a triumph. In this respect, then, Lyra trumps Orpheus—she succeeds where he fails, releasing not only one ghost (he could not achieve even that much) but all ghosts, leaving a way out through which all souls can escape from now on. The falling episode in her story is only temporary and the upward journey continues, and all souls are freed from the Underworld forever. So if Lyra is an Orpheus figure, she is a more successful one. Taking in the role of Orpheus as psychopomp (guide of recently departed souls *to* the Underworld), which he acquired in the Christian tradition,³¹ adds an extra point to this image of Lyra as an improved Orpheus: she leads the souls in the opposite direction. This version of Lyra~Orpheus constitutes an allusion to the Orpheus figure filtered by his Mediaeval Christian reception, as with other uses of classical intertexts in *HDM*.

c *The Underworld and the Ghosts of the Dead*

The Underworld itself in *The Amber Spyglass* differs from most features of the alternative universe which bear close resemblance to a view of the world informed by Christian theology and literature, since it is clearly not the Christian hell but rather the Underworld of Greek mythology. That is, it is neither a place of fire and torture, nor one of two places where the souls of the dead ultimately go, but rather a more neutral, albeit miserable place, and the final destination of the souls of *all* the dead. To begin with, it is reached by crossing a river helped by a ferryman, like Charon and the river Styx of the Greek Underworld. Once arrived at, it is described in a way which is reminiscent of the Greek Underworld—full of wretched ghosts, but no devils with pitchforks or hot poker:

[...] there were no true shadows and no true light, and everything was the same dingy colour.

31 See John Block, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000; ed. pr. 1970), 36–37, 58, 79, 84.

Standing on the floor of this huge space were adults and children—ghost people—so many that Lyra couldn't guess their number... No one was moving about, or running or playing.

AS, 310

Comparisons with “Christian” (or its equivalent in Lyra’s universe) versions of the afterlife are actually made, in the voice of ghosts whose expectations are confounded or confirmed by this place:

[A ghost who had died a martyr speaks:] “They told us when we died we’d go to heaven. And they said that heaven was a place of joy and glory and we would spend eternity in the company of saints and angels praising the Almighty [...]. [But] the land of the dead isn’t a place of reward or... punishment. It’s a place of nothing.” [...]

But her ghost was thrust aside by the ghost of a man who looked like a monk [...], he crossed himself and murmured a prayer, and then he said:

“This is a bitter message, a sad and cruel joke [...]. The world we lived in was a vale of corruption and tears [...]. But the Almighty has granted us this blessed place for all eternity, this paradise [...]. *This* is heaven, truly!”

AS, 335–336

Thus it is made quite clear that this is something other than the expected “Christian” hell (or heaven), and readers even vaguely familiar with Greek myth will automatically relate it to the Greek Underworld, especially with the presence of harpies (although see further section “d” below on the latter).

Indeed, in an answer to a fan society’s letter, Pullman confirms that in creating his world of the dead he had in mind “Homer and Virgil.”³² Given this statement and the particular features of the Underworld and its inhabitants in *HDM*, Pullman was no doubt thinking specifically of the descriptions of the Underworld in *Odyssey* 11—the fullest description in Homer (see further below on Virgil). In this context, the poignant descriptions of attempts by a living and a dead character to embrace are particularly close:

32 Pullman quoted by The Dark Matter Society (fan club) website *The Bridge to the Stars*, http://www.bridgetothestars.net/index.php?d=pullman&p=pullman_letters, Pullman’s original letter scanned here: <http://www.bridgetothestars.net/images/ppletter2.jpg> (accessed Nov. 27, 2015).

I [Odysseus] wondered how I might embrace my dead mother's ghost [...], she escaped my arms like a shadow or a dream [...]. My [...] mother replied: "[...] this is the way it is with mortals after death. The sinews no longer bind flesh and bone, the fierce heat of the blazing pyre consumes them, and the spirit flees from our white bones, a ghost that flutters and goes like a dream."³³

HOMER, *Odyssey* 11.204–222

Compare:

He [Roger] rushed to embrace her [Lyra]. But he passed like cold smoke through her arms [...]. They could never truly touch again.

AS, 321–322

The initiator of the attempted embrace is in the second case the child ghost and not the living character; in contrast to the ghost of Odysseus's mother, who is so well aware of the limitations of her metaphysical state that she explains them in detail to her son, we witness the moment when Roger finds out that he cannot embrace Lyra. This is a small reconfiguration of the situation in the hypotext, but one which arguably adds a further touch of pathos to the already poignant scene it imitates.

d *The Harpies*

Another feature of the Underworld with a Greek origin is the harpies. The creatures themselves are figures of Greek mythology, but their place in the Underworld is probably not. The closest that harpies seem to get in classical literature to the Underworld is outside its entrance: in the *Aeneid*, they and "many monstrous forms besides of various beasts are stalled at the doors..." ("multaque praeterea variarum monstra ferarum: [...] in foribus stabulant...," 6.285–289, in H.R. Fairclough's translation of 1887). This is one feature which cannot come from Homer³⁴ but may owe a debt to Virgil; however, despite Pullman's response to a question about his "hell" being inspired by Dante—"not so much Dante as Homer and Virgil, in fact"³⁵—in this particular feature his Greek materials are most likely (unconsciously?) mediated through a

33 Trans. Martin Hammond in Homer, *The Odyssey* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

34 Pace Squires, *Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy*, 62, who says that Pullman's harpies come from the *Odyssey*—where, however, they have no association with the Underworld at all.

35 Pullman quoted by The Dark Matter Society (see above, n. 32).

later, Christian filter: Dante's Hell at least contains harpies (though they only feature in a very minor way: *Inf.* 13.13–15; 101–102); Milton's Hell, like Homer's and Virgil's Underworlds, contains none. The far larger role given to the harpies in Pullman's Underworld can be seen simply as a creative expansion of the kernel of an association found in the *Aeneid* and in Dante. But there do seem to be other possible associations between harpies and the souls of the dead which go back to Antiquity and may also have entered into the mix that formed Pullman's harpies. There is some confusion between what a harpy is and what a siren is when it comes to ancient visual representations, as they may resemble one another;³⁶ however that may be, there are some ancient images which seem (to readers brought up on Greek mythology) to be representations of harpies, in contexts which suggest they had a psychopompic role. For instance the Attic red-figure column-krater (see figure 18.1) depicting the death of Procris features what looks like a harpy, but is described by modern scholars as a "soul-bird,"³⁷ since no ancient texts assign harpies a soul-guiding role, nor before Virgil even an association with the Underworld. (The British Museum's catalogue entry labels the figure as "Harpy[?].") Such an association, even if these creatures in ancient art are in fact incorrectly labelled as harpies, might have suggested the idea of the harpies as soul-guides to Pullman. In that case, as with Orpheus-Lyra as psychopomp, the tradition is again reconfigured, since his harpies do not lead the souls of the dead down to the Underworld, but are won over and join with Lyra to help lead them out.

e *Pandora and Pantalaimon*

This allusion is less overt than many discussed so far: no mention by name to the Pandora myth is made in *HDM*, but an allusion to it might be activated, for the reader aware of the associations, by the long-standing association elsewhere between Pandora and the Eve of Genesis,³⁸ with whom Lyra is more clearly comparable.³⁹ Eve, Lyra, and Pandora all stand at the beginning of a

36 Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1979), 169 and figs. 13–14. I am grateful to Emma Stafford for this reference.

37 *Ibid.*, 74, 175–176, and index s.v. "soul-bird" for further discussion and references.

38 The comparison between Eve and Pandora is explicitly made in *Paradise Lost*, 4.714, 718, and has a long history; see, e.g., Samuel Tobias Lachs, "The Pandora-Eve Motif in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974): 341–345.

39 Lyra as Eve has been discussed in the many studies on *HDM* and *Paradise Lost*, cited above n. 4; specifically on this theme, see Mary Harris Russell, "Eve, Again! Mother Eve!: Pullman's Eve Variations," in Lenz and Scott, eds., *His Dark Materials Illuminated*, 212–222.



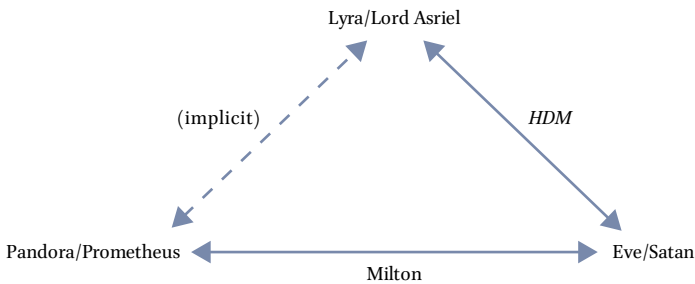
FIGURE 18.1 *Hephaistos Painter* (?), *The Death of Procris*, red-figured column-krater, ca. 460–430 BC, British Museum (BM 1772.0320.36)

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new era, which in the Christian and Greek traditions is a worse era—Eve being the catalyst for humanity’s Fall—but in Lyra’s case is the reverse. Further associations come in the form of Lyra’s father, Lord Asriel, whose role is that of Azrael the fallen angel, the Satan of *Paradise Lost*; Satan’s role in bringing about humanity’s “Fall,” or coming to consciousness, is paralleled in Greek

myth by Prometheus stealing fire from the gods for humanity, and the figures of Prometheus and Satan, like Pandora and Eve, have a long association.⁴⁰ In *HDM* the “Fall” is very much a positive event, and in this Pullman has precedent in the Romantics’ reimagining of *Paradise Lost*; as Burton Hatlen puts it, for Blake, Shelley, and Byron, Milton’s Satan is the hero, “a Promethean rebel fighting on in a cause that he [...] insists is just.”⁴¹

There is nothing to connect Lyra to Pandora and Lord Asriel to Prometheus in *HDM* directly, but I would argue that the clear parallels between them and Eve and Satan in its major hypotext *Paradise Lost* can activate for the reader aware of them these secondary associations with the figures of Greek myth. That is, there is in this intertextuality a triangulation between the Greek and the Christian hypotexts and *HDM*, as illustrated by the diagram below. Milton and other Christian texts make the connection between the Greek and the Biblical figures; and in *HDM* the parallels between Lyra and Eve and between Lord Asriel and Satan are relatively clear, both partaking in a version of the story of the Fall. The third side of the triangle, the connection between Pullman’s characters and their Greek counterparts, is in this case more implicit, being realised only through the intermediary of the Christian counterparts of each.



40 This comparison is not overtly made in *Paradise Lost* but has long been noted by critics—see especially Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky, *Lucifer and Prometheus: A Study of Milton’s Satan* (London: Routledge, 1952)—and, no doubt more importantly for the formation of Pullman’s characters, developed by the Romantic poets mediating between Milton and our author: see especially Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, with Shelley’s own preface comparing Prometheus to Satan “the hero of *Paradise Lost*”; cf. Frederick L. Jones, “Shelley and Milton,” *Studies in Philology* 49 (1952): 488–519.

41 Hatlen, “Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,” 86.

Once this is seen, the name of Lyra's daemon, Pantalaimon, reinforces the parallel. A person's daemon in Lyra's universe is her embodied soul, just as essentially her as the human form, born when she was born and destined to die with her. So in a sense Lyra *is* Pantalaimon. Pandora, the first woman, was sent by Zeus as a scourge for humanity, as retaliation for Prometheus having given them the secret of fire; her name, literally "all gifts," is heavily ironic, since she releases all sufferings and woes for humans from her jar ("Pandora's box"). Lyra, and Pantalaimon as part of Lyra, are created by her father Lord Asriel, whose role is Promethean: so the roles in the Greek myth, as well as the Christian, are reconfigured. Lyra (Eve/Pandora) and Pantalaimon are *not* created or set up by the Authority (God/Zeus) to bring punishment on humanity (respectively through bringing about the Fall/for having taken a Fall-like rebellious step toward independence from the gods, helped by Prometheus). Rather, Lyra and Pantalaimon are created by Lord Asriel (Satan/Prometheus), and their role is to come to full consciousness in defiance of the Authority: to bring about the "Fall," certainly, but this is a good thing, which the repressive Church is trying to prevent in order to send humanity back to an Edenic state of ignorance. Pantalaimon's name, literally "all-forgiving," can be linked with other aspects of the narrative (most obviously, he must forgive Lyra for the excruciating separation in the Underworld when she could not cross the river without leaving him behind); but the analogous formation with Pandora connects with the Lyra-Pandora parallels too. If Pandora brings, and *is*, a punishment for humanity from Zeus, Lyra-Pantalaimon brings and is the means of mercy instead of that punishment, born to and prepared for the role by the Prometheus-figure Lord Asriel.

f *Daemons, Daemones, and the Daimonion*

The animal-form daemons that all humans in Lyra's world have attached to them, as physical manifestations of their soul, are linked explicitly by Pullman to Socrates' *daimonion*,⁴² his so-called "personal deity." This is referred to in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, in which Socrates is made to say:

[...] something divine (δαίμόνιον) and spiritual comes to me, the very thing which Meletus ridiculed in his indictment. I have had this from my childhood; it is a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it always holds me back from what I am thinking of doing, but never urges me forward.⁴³

31d; compare 40a

42 See n. 23, above.

43 Trans. Harold North Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1, "Introduction" by W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge, Mass.—London: Harvard University Press—William Heinemann Ltd., Loeb, 1966).

This is essentially a personified conscience, and this is indeed one of the roles taken by daemons in *HDM*: where a human in our world has an internal dialogue, in Lyra's world she discusses and argues with her daemon over an intended action. Beyond this simple parallel, which Pullman identifies as an allusion to Socrates, we might infer some reference to the context in which the *daimonion* is found. Socrates is accused (*Apol.* 24b–c) of not believing in the gods of the state but introducing other, new divine beings (δαίμόνια), and for this (among other things) he is persecuted by the establishment, and put to death. Pullman may well have been thinking of this aspect of the *daimonion*, too, since the establishment in Lyra's world—the Church—wants to eradicate full human consciousness and conscience, or independence of thought, and make humans passive and obedient; to this end, it is behind an experiment (“intercision”) to separate forcibly daemons from their humans; so it is a case of the individual soul and conscience embodied—the daemon—being seen as a threat to traditional religious authority, as with Socrates' *daimonion*.

Besides the Socratic *daimonion*, daemons also recall the Gnostic idea of a human divided into the mortal, bodily part (*eidolon*) and the immortal soul, the spiritual part, called the *daimon*. This Gnostic idea derives from and agrees with in some part the Platonic ideas that the immortal soul and not the physical body is the true self, which discards (or should seek to discard) lower, mortal pleasures and goals as it strives for higher, philosophic truths, and which survives the death of the body. (There is a shift in terminology from Plato, for whom the soul is the *psyche*, to the Gnostics, for whom the soul is called *daimon*; but given the use of English “soul” for both, this slippage in the later tradition is understandable.) Here there is a difference in *HDM*: the daemons in Lyra's world do not outlast their humans but die with them. This is bound up with the author's humanist and atheist worldview: there is no higher or spiritual reality to strive for, only humanity and human consciousness, which must make the best of their one life guided by conscience (the daemon). Pullman makes this connection in an interview in *Booklist*:

The Gnostic worldview is Platonic in that it rejects the physical created universe and expresses a longing for an unknowable God who is far off. My myth is almost the reverse. It takes this physical universe as our true home. We must welcome and love and live our lives in this world to the full.⁴⁴

44 See Ilene Cooper, “Pullman on the Theology of *His Dark Materials*,” *Booklist* 97 (2000): 355.

The Platonic ideas ultimately behind this statement are primarily to be found in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, though of course it is impossible to say for sure whether the author has specific Platonic texts directly in mind or their appropriators. However that may be, in this instance, Pullman's knowledge of Platonic and the later Gnostic ideas about souls, and about various uses of the Greek word *daimon* and its cognates, shows that we have a complex reception ultimately going back at least to Plato but mediated through a cumulative tradition of later Christian (mainstream and other) theological discussions. Here, because of the ways in which Christian theologians of various bents have adopted and adapted Platonic ideas over the centuries, the classical and the Christian are for once in agreement; and so in contrast to, say, Pullman's presentation of the Underworld, a Greek hypotext is *not* used to mark an ideological difference from his primary, Christian hypotexts, but is rather aligned with them.⁴⁵ Here, then, a Greek author is called to mind only to create an antithesis between his worldview and that of the heroine of the novel and her allies—and indeed, that of the author as attested in interviews.

g *Plato's Cave and Consciousness*

A second example of this agreement between Pullman's Greek and Christian hypotexts is seen in the references to Plato's Cave, mentioned above. In Lyra's world, particles of human consciousness are referred to as Dust, and for the Church in that world they are connected with original sin and should be destroyed. The Alethiometer that helps Lyra in her quest functions by responding to these particles. It emerges in *SK*, when Lyra comes to "our" world, that these same particles, here called "Shadows," are not widely known, but are being studied by a small research team that is barely starting to understand what they are or how they function before being shut down to divert research funding elsewhere... Without understanding how it functions or what it means, they have developed a computer-based machine that reads the "Shadows," which they have called the "Cave": Dr. Malone explains the nickname thus: "Shadows on the walls of the Cave, you see, from Plato" (*SK*, 92). The Cave~Shadows relationship therefore borrows the very famous image from Plato (*Republic* 514a–520a) for the inadequacy of human consciousness: it is trapped in a cave,

45 It would be too speculative without further testimony to suggest that Pullman might be thinking directly of Aristotle's understanding of *daimon* rather than Plato's—i.e., something tied to one specific human that dies with it, rather than something immortal that becomes part of many humans—but even if not directly and specifically intended as Aristotelian, this contrast does map onto Pullman's daemons and what he has said about them in interviews, and to the quoted statement about the Platonic worldview.

able only to look toward the wall and see the shadows cast by the real objects behind it, which it can never perceive—the Platonic idea of a higher reality implicitly discounted by Pullman in the previous quotation. Once Lyra is attached to the “Cave,” it soon becomes clear to her that what the scientists have invented is an Alethiometer, through which she is able to “read” the consciousness particles in the same way as through the device from her own world; and thus that “Shadows” are identical with “Dust.”

The same kind of misconception is operating in both worlds about the nature of the particles, in a way which again aligns an idea from a Greek text with Christian thinking rather than opposing them. In Lyra’s world the followers of the Authority deliberately attempt to counteract the force of human consciousness by destroying Dust (as too by the process of intercision discussed above) in order to retain control of a humanity rendered docile and bring the world back to its pre-Fall state of “blissful” ignorance. This fails to recognise the particles’ importance: they are essential to humanity, consciousness being what makes us human. In our world, there is no such widespread knowledge of the particles’ existence, and the few scientists who are or were investigating them (Dr. Malone being the last one still active on the project by the time Lyra encounters it) have no idea what they are dealing with. For them, labelling the Alethiometer-analogous machine the “Cave” is no more than a witty and learned allusion by one of the scientists, based on the prior naming of the particles as “Shadows,” not knowing what they are or do; the quotation continues: “That’s our archaeologist [...]. He’s an all-round intellectual” (SK, 92). But at the level of the reader, if not the characters, this creates an analogous misapprehension about the particles with that in Lyra’s world: “Shadows,” like “Dust,” are thus connected because of the original Platonic context with a lower state of consciousness and a lower reality, to be contrasted with and naturally opposed by the teachings of the Authority in Lyra’s world. In “our” world there is no such widespread opposition because there is no widespread knowledge of “Shadows”; but the parallel between the “Christian” and Platonic worldviews and their attitudes to the everyday experience of human consciousness, as expressed in the quoted *Booklist* interview, can be seen behind the naming of the “Shadows” and the “Cave.” Dr. Malone and the others began to investigate accumulations of the unknown particles around ancient artefacts made by humans and ancient skulls; they are as unaware as most in Lyra’s world that they are dealing with the fundamental components of human consciousness and thus humanity—not mere shadows cast by them, as they thought.

In both these cases, the “Cave” and the soul, a Greek hypotext can be found which derives ultimately from Plato, but has been appropriated and adapted by, and filtered through, centuries of Christian theological thinking. Because

of the alignment of some fundamental ideas between the two, Pullman here does not use a Greek text to draw a contrast with the Christian worldview of his primary hypotexts (and with the analogous worldview of the supporters of the Authority in Lyra's world), but rather marries the two and contrasts them with the reality of Lyra's and "our" worlds as perceived by his heroine and those on her side—and with his own humanist and atheist worldview as related to interviewers and elsewhere.

Conclusions

In examining many of the most significant allusions and references to Greek and classical materials in *HDM*, we have seen a complex variety: in the kinds of material alluded to, the manners in which they are referred or alluded to, and their connections and interplay with other significant hypotexts from the Christian tradition. It is clear that the classical allusions are not only "decorative"—although adding to the literary texture is of course part of their purpose. Nor is it simply that the classical and Christian allusions are combined or used at different points for variety of effect, although again, this may be part of the point. But the interplay of classical and non-classical allusions in *HDM* is in fact rather more complex: there are instances both of classical material referenced "directly," without the intervention of Christian "filters," and also of the classical coming down to Pullman complete with its mediaeval and later Christian reception history. Of course, the reception of classical myths which have become intertwined with Christian stories during their reception history cannot really be stripped entirely of those intervening layers: especially in the context of *HDM*, we are well aware what is missing when this is attempted. But this is the choice of a sophisticated author who configures his "received" texts and their relations with one another and with his text differently for different examples, and to different effects. So we notice that many Greek elements come to *HDM* indirectly, via Christian filters, but others are stripped of the intervening tradition by the author, e.g., the Underworld, which is then explicitly compared to and distanced from the Christianised version of it, from which the accretions have been stripped back. This process of returning to the classical myth without the Christianising adaptations may be seen as quite deliberate: a way of showing that a different world order from the Christian one is in effect in *HDM*. Pullman uses a classical myth (e.g., the Underworld) which is so often mixed up with its Christian equivalent (e.g., Hell in this case) from Milton through to C.S. Lewis and indeed in part elsewhere in *HDM*; but he then all the more pointedly separates the two traditions when he goes back

to the classical form. But nor is it the case throughout *HDM* that Greek versus Christian mythology are always opposed, with the classical always emerging the winner: some of the Greek elements (e.g., the Platonic) are equally argued against, and do not form part of the “true” world order of the *HDM* universe. It is true that the Platonic ideas expressed in *HDM* are mediated via Christianity too; in the case of the Cave and the conception of the soul, however, there is a core that goes right back to Plato with which Pullman’s worldview in *HDM* fundamentally disagrees.⁴⁶

46 I would like to thank: the organisers and audience at Warsaw for the discussion; Francesca M. Richards for discussion and useful references in preparing the conference paper; Cathy Butler for allowing me to see pre-publication extracts from Butler and Halsdorf, eds., *Philip Pullman*; Penelope Goodman for several helpful comments on the first draft of this chapter; and Eleanor OKell for a very useful discussion of its themes on the road from Durham to Leeds and some references in a follow-up e-mail.

Orpheus and Eurydice: Reception of a Classical Myth in International Children's Literature

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer

Don't Look Back! is the fifth book in the popular "Mad Myths" series by Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore.¹ Those readers who have some basic knowledge of ancient myths might suspect that the title refers to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. The image on the book cover supports this conjecture, since it depicts a three-headed dog-like monster that puts two children to flight. The blurb on the back cover mysteriously announces that the main protagonists Percy and Andy meet the "most famous musician in ancient Greece busking in a tube station" which leads to the boys joining him on a journey into the Underworld. Interestingly, the name of the famous musician is not mentioned until the end of Chapter 2, when he introduces himself to the boys. While this parodist story makes fun of the ancient myth, portraying Orpheus as a loser, Eurydice as a snappish lady, and Hades and Persephone² as an elderly narrow-minded couple, other children's books deal with the Orpheus and Eurydice myth more earnestly, focusing on the love story and the obstacles Orpheus has to overcome in the Underworld.

In any case, the fascination with ancient myths and subjects taken from Greek and Roman history has not decreased in international children's literature; quite the contrary, it has obviously increased since the beginning of the new millennium.³ Given the fact that the majority of young readers nowadays are not acquainted with these subjects at school, the question arises why children and adolescents still hunger for stories that focus on ancient mythology.

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- 1 See Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, *Don't Look Back* (London: Barn Owl Books, 2006).
 - 2 In the children's books under discussion, Persephone does not play a major part, whereas the Persephone myth is prevalent in modern girls' fiction, as shown in Holly Virginia Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature* (New York–Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).
 - 3 See, for instance, Sheila Murnaghan, "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children," *Classical World* 104 (2011): 339–351. An overview article on the reception in international children's literature can be found in Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Children's and Young Adult Literature," in Manfred Landfester in cooperation with Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, eds., *Classical Tradition*, vol. 16.1 of *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2006), coll. 750–754.

One might also ask which strategies the authors use to convey the background knowledge that is essential for understanding the whole story.

From a corpus of more than fifteen titles I have chosen five children's books from four countries (France, Germany, UK, and US) in order to delineate the multiple intertextual references to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, namely: Werner Heiduczek's *Orpheus und Eurydike* [Orpheus and Eurydice] (1989), Yvan Pommaux's *Orphée et la morsure du serpent* [Orpheus and the snakebite] (2009), Tony Abbott's *The Battle Begins* (2011), Katherine Marsh's *The Night Tourist* (2007), and Cornelia Funke's "Tintenwelt" [Inkworld] trilogy, consisting of the volumes *Tintenherz* [Inkheart] (2003), *Tintenblut* [Inkspell] (2005), and *Tintentod* [Inkdeath] (2007).⁴ These books not only represent an astonishing array of (mixed) genres, for instance, comic, fantasy,⁵ detective story, and young adult novel, but also reveal a broad range of multiple meanings and intertextual references which largely contribute to the books' narrative complexity. Since the authors usually cannot expect that young readers are acquainted with the Orpheus myth, they employ different strategies to prompt the child to realise that the story—although situated in a contemporary setting and time—subliminally alludes to the ancient myth. The question arises why children's literature authors have chosen this particular myth. It could be because the Orpheus myth deals with universal topics, such as the significance of friendship and true love, and the contemplation of death. These are generally valid issues, which attract young readers who are eager to reflect on the meaning of life.

In the following sections, I demonstrate how these issues are realised in five children's books, which I have arranged according to their inherent degree of difficulty in deciphering the intertextual allusions to the Orpheus myth. While Heiduczek retells the Orpheus myth in full extension, Pommaux chooses another strategy as he intermingles ancient and modern times. In contrast, Abbott and Marsh gradually prepare the reader for the connection by inserting

4 A comparative analysis of the depiction of classical mythology in modern children's literature is a promising endeavour, as shown in Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Der Sturz des Ikarus: Klassische Mythologie als Prätext in der modernen Kinderliteratur," in Martin Korenjak and Stefan Tilg, eds., *Pontes IV. Die Antike in der Alltagskultur der Gegenwart* (Innsbruck–Wien–Bozen: StudienVerlag, 2007), 49–60.

5 The majority of children's books focusing on the Orpheus myth belong to the fantasy genre. An exception to the rule is Dakota Lane's *The Orpheus Obsession* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), whose setting is situated in a story world which resembles our own and does not display any fantastic elements. Nancy Springer's *The Friendship Song* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), however, hovers between realism and fantasy. Because of the first narrator's unreliable narration, the reader cannot definitely decide whether the strange events that happened in the backyard really happened or were an offspring of the narrator's imagination.

short summaries of the Orpheus myth into the text which reveal the close relationship between the protagonists and the Orpheus story. An exception to this rule is Funke's "Inkworld" trilogy, which presupposes the reader's knowledge of the Orpheus myth, since it is not retold at all. Thus, the novels by Abbott, Marsh, and Funke demand the reader's close attention in order to discern the meaning of the allusions to the Orpheus myth.

Werner Heiduczek's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1989)⁶ belongs to the adaptations of classical myths which were published in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the middle of the 1960s. This long-term project, which lasted more than twenty years, reveals a radical turnaround in the cultural politics of the GDR. While influential persons engaged in the cultural sector regarded ancient Greek and Roman myths as decadent in the 1950s, by the 1960s they had come to evaluate the same texts as a significant part of the international cultural heritage of the labouring classes. Stories about ancient heroes, such as Prometheus, Hercules, Odysseus, and Jason, became essential components of the school curricula.⁷ Heiduczek's version of the Orpheus myth, however, appeared relatively late, just one year before German reunification.

What makes his book-length retelling so interesting is the close connection the author draws between the ancient past and the present on the one hand, and the depiction of the main character on the other. The book has a prologue and an epilogue that frame the retelling of the myth. In these framing parts, the anonymous first-person narrator travels to Greece in order to visit the places where Orpheus and Eurydice once met and lived according to the myth. A description of the Greek landscape smoothly merges into the story about Orpheus. Interestingly, the love story of Orpheus and Eurydice, with Eurydice's death, Orpheus's descent into the Underworld, and the final loss of Eurydice, covers just a small part of the whole book. Despite the book's title, which mentions both Orpheus and Eurydice, it becomes obvious that the story centres on Orpheus, because the narrator offers an extensive account of Orpheus's childhood, his three encounters with Hercules, and his travel with Jason to fetch the Golden Fleece.

6 See Werner Heiduczek, *Orpheus und Eurydike* (Berlin: Kinderbuchverlag, 1989).

7 See on this topic: Brigitte Krüger, "Adaptionen," in Rüdiger Steinlein, Heidi Strobel, and Thomas Kramer, eds., *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. SBZ/DDR von 1945 bis 1990* (Stuttgart–Weimar: Metzler, 2006), 629–686; and Sylvia Warnecke, "Neu- und Nacherzählungen antiker Mythen, Sagen und Epen für Kinder und Jugendliche in der DDR," in Malte Dahrendorf, ed., *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Materialien* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1995), 185–191. The reception of classical mythology in West German children's literature is analysed in Maria Rutenfranz, *Götter, Helden, Menschen. Rezeption und Adaption antiker Mythologie in der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004).

Other plots are intermingled with Orpheus's story: Eurydice's own story before she meets Orpheus, Proserpina's seduction by Hades, and the story of the Argonauts. This complex narrative reveals the close connection of the Orpheus myth with other related stories told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, thus disclosing a network of mutual relations between diverse ancient myths. In addition, this extended version aims to show Orpheus's ambivalent character. Despite his comprehensive education and unusual skills, Orpheus is depicted not as a mythical figure, but as a human with strengths and weaknesses. His ambivalent character is manifested on the one hand by his love and sacrifice for Eurydice and on the other by his erroneous behaviour, motivated by vanity and pride. Although Orpheus shows deep feelings for other people's concerns, he is also a liar, traitor, and even murderer. Hence, Orpheus considers Eurydice's death as punishment for his deadly sins. The inner story ends with Orpheus sitting at the river Acheron, grieving over the final loss of his beloved wife. This scene passes into the epilogue, where the first-person narrator muses about the different versions of Orpheus's death handed down since Antiquity.

Compelling in this retelling are the comments on Orpheus's behaviour and thoughts. The omniscient narrator of the inner story constantly refers to Orpheus's power to overcome all obstacles because of his devoted love for Eurydice. Although he fails in the end, the accompanying sentences invite the reader not to give in to resignation, even where hope seems to diminish. Repeatedly, Heiduczek's retelling emphasises Orpheus's fight against the powers of darkness as a model the reader should follow. In addition, Orpheus's friendship with Jason is justified with reference to Pelias's injustice and betrayal. In particular, the description of King Pelias as a modern dictator, who suppresses his people, never keeps his promises, and manipulates other people in order to augment his power, evidently indirectly criticises the political situation in the GDR in the 1980s. However, the significance of Heiduczek's work is two-fold: the author deviates from the demand to create a purely socialist version of an ancient myth by including critical remarks about the political system in the former GDR, and he does not comply with the request to present "ancient heroes of labour" in order to follow the socialist doctrine of the "democratisation of the cultural heritage." Instead, Heiduczek depicts Orpheus as an ambivalent character with contradictory human traits. The author's approach might be characterised as an attempt to grant Orpheus more depth and individuality, thus summoning the reader to seriously grapple with the main characters' individual relationships. In addition, Heiduczek apparently uses this retelling to disguise his skeptical attitude toward the totalitarian East German regime. In order to avoid censorship, he turned to children's literature, since books for children were generally not regarded as a medium for propagating

critical views. In this respect, Heiduczek's crafted adaptation of the traditional Orpheus myth is another proof of the significance of children's books in authoritarian states, because they often offered a singular opportunity to subliminally transmit critical opinions. Shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Heiduczek's book indirectly encouraged its readership to critically reflect upon gridlocked opinions and to resist opaque practices in politics and everyday life.

Twenty years later, French illustrator Yvan Pommaux's *Orpheus and the Snakebite*⁸ employs the popular medium of comic books in order to convey the Orpheus myth to a younger audience. The author-illustrator decided to transfer parts of the myth into the present, thus creating a link between the contemporary way of life and the ancient myth. The main difference consists in a happy ending, in contrast to the sad ending of the original myth. During a wedding party, a young man who is in love with the bride molests her, and when she retreats from his advances she accidentally steps on a snake and is bitten. While the bride is taken to a surgery, another woman approaches the guilty young man and tells him the story of Orpheus and Eurydice as a cautionary tale. She addresses him as Aristée (French for Aristaïos), even though the young man strongly objects. Nevertheless, he is soon drawn into her spellbinding account, which he occasionally interrupts with comments. He gradually realises that the fate of Aristée mirrors his situation. Horrified about the dreadful death of Eurydice and Orpheus, he is relieved when the bridegroom and bride return from the hospital. He decides to apologise for his misbehaviour, but before doing this, he asks the attractive woman's name, which is Atalante. Surprisingly, the young man knows the story of Princess Atalante, who hated men and in order to avoid marriage had any suitor who failed to beat her in a footrace executed. When the young man wonders whether the young woman also despises men, she gives only a vague answer.

This open ending prompts the reader to imagine the progress of the story, that is, to consider whether this burgeoning relationship mirrors the ancient myth of Atalante. Hence, this comic could potentially merge into the retelling of another myth.⁹ Pommaux's comic thus connects two ancient myths that focus on the relationship between women and men. While the Orpheus myth deals with true and devoted love, the Atalante myth addresses a hate relationship. Ironically, the young man is attracted by two women, the bride and the

8 See Yvan Pommaux, *Orphée et la morsure du serpent* (Paris: L'école des loisirs, 2009).

9 Although Pommaux has not created a comic version about the Atalante myth as of yet, his comic series about ancient myths and epics continues, encompassing individual comics about the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Theseus, and Oedipus.

female storyteller, and in both cases he is in danger of either destroying a love affair or becoming enmeshed in a possibly life-threatening situation. Through the juxtaposition of the Orpheus myth with a contemporary story about an individual and emotional conflict, which is caused by jealousy and imprudence, the comic emphasises the universality of the ancient myth.

While Heiduczek's and Pommaux's works are easily decipherable, since the book titles and the names of the protagonists refer to the ancient myth from the beginning, the subsequent children's novels demand a higher skill in detecting textual clues that call attention to the Orpheus myth. Since intertextuality usually requires the reader's knowledge of the pretexts and the apprehension of the pretext's meaning for the new text, it belongs to the category of metaliterary abilities which proficient readers have to acquire in order to make sense of intertextual references.¹⁰

Tony Abbott's "Underworlds" series (four volumes, 2011–2012) starts with the volume *The Battle Begins* (2011).¹¹ The setting is an American middle school and the stories focus on fourth-grader Owen Brown, a skilled musician, and his best friends Dana, Jon, and Sydney. Told in retrospective by Owen himself, the story begins when Dana Runson suddenly disappears through the floors of the school right in front of Owen. Before disappearing, however, Dana cautions Owen about monsters and tells him that he will find the answer in a book in her parents' house. Although frightened by this mystery and by an eerie voice that hisses: "The battle begins," Owen is determined to find Dana—before anyone realises that she is missing. With the help of Jon and Sydney, Owen breaks into the abandoned Runson house which dispells an icy cold. When they finally discover the book, *Bulfinch's Mythology*, they are attacked by a giant, fire-breathing red wolf. Paging through Bulfinch's book, they discover that the red wolf is Fenrir, a mythological figure from Norse mythology, and that Dana obviously was abducted by Argus, the beast with the hundred eyes. Perplexed about these incidents, they immediately confront another mystery: in the school's cafeteria the three lunch ladies morph into the Valkyries, women who belong to the Norse god Odin and decide who will die or survive in battles. They warn the trio that somebody is causing trouble in the Underworld and that the rulers of the Underworlds, Odin and Hades, are really worried about this. Owen and his friends are informed that beneath the earth's surface, four different Underworlds exist; one for each branch of mythology, that is, Greek,

10 See Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) on the different forms of intertextuality in literary texts.

11 See Tony Abbott, *The Battle Begins* (New York: Scholastic, 2011).

Norse, Egyptian, and Babylonian. One of the entrances to the Greek Underworld lies beneath their school.

The attraction of this book series therefore consists in its intermingling of gods, half-gods, monsters, and heroes from different mythologies who cause trouble among themselves, but also involve humans in their struggles; especially people like Dana's parents who are experts in ancient mythologies and Dana herself, who has spotted the chaos evoked by the battle of the four Underworlds.

The three Valkyries disclose that Owen might be able to rescue Dana from the Underworld with the help of Orpheus's lyre, which is usually exhibited in an Icelandic museum, but now happens to be displayed in the nearby city museum. Although the lyre is strongly guarded, Owen succeeds in stealing it. Through the school's boiler room Owen and his friends enter the Greek Underworld, cross the river Styx, and make a bargain with Hades. He promises to set Dana free if they can reach her in a faraway tower within an hour. When they arrive at the tower, the trio has to fight a monster army of innumerable Myrmidons, including Argus and Fenrir. At the battle's climax Loki emerges, the evil trickster god of the North. Owen, as the "Jimi Hendrix of the ancient lyre" (64), is able to lull all monsters to sleep. Hades keeps his promise and allows Dana to go free, acknowledging that she has been kidnapped by Argus acting under the orders of Loki. Since Loki has freed all monsters, Hades assumes that there will be more trouble in the near future. Therefore he advises the four children to keep an eye out for the Cyclopes, who most likely intend to invade the human world. With this warning the group re-enters the school grounds, remaining on the alert, since they know that they will be involved in the battle of the Underworlds.

It is quite obvious that Abbott's main inspiration is the omnipresent fantasy genre which has dominated the international book market since the end of the twentieth century. These fantasy novels follow the secondary world model, that is, the protagonists cross from their own primary world over to a secondary world populated by fantastic figures and determined by magic.¹² What distinguishes Abbott's series is the combination of different mythologies. The encounter of figures from Norse, Greek, Egyptian, and Babylonian mythology makes for an exciting story that combines suspense-packed episodes with humorous passages. The overarching topics of friendship, loyalty, and courage, and the power of imagination appeal to a broad readership,

12 For a detailed description of the representation of fictional worlds in fantasy for children, see Maria Nikolajeva, *The Magic Code: The Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

enthralled by narratives that abduct readers into a story world governed by magic and mysterious events.¹³ In this regard, the Orpheus myth plays a significant role, since it highlights the importance of friendship as well as the willingness to overcome all obstacles in order to save a beloved person's life. Although Owen and Dana are not a romantic couple like Orpheus and Eurydice, they have deep feelings for one another, which might be interpreted as a foreshadowing of their possible future love.

Indeed, the hybrid mixture of genres, mythologies, and narrative devices somewhat conceals the didactic purpose of Abbott's series. Any time the children meet new monsters and mythological figures they either consult *Bulfinch's Mythology* or remember the corresponding stories from their classes in Latin and History. Thus, readers become accustomed to looking up new information whenever they come into contact with unknown subjects. In addition, readers are also encouraged to use old-fashioned books like *Bulfinch's Mythology*, a collection of Greek and Roman mythologies, Arthurian legends, and mediaeval romances, written by Latinist Thomas Bulfinch and published in three volumes between 1855 and 1863.¹⁴ This work was a highly successful popularisation of Greek and Norse myths and was considered the standard work for classical mythology for nearly a century. Now in the public domain, *Bulfinch's Mythology* is still in print and continues to influence the image of Greek and Roman mythology for English-speaking readers to this day. Citations and short summaries of the Greek myths gathered in Bulfinch's book serve to familiarise contemporary readers with the main mythological plots and figures that appear in Abbott's novel.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the intertextual allusions to Greek and Norse mythology, a short glossary explicating the origin and meaning of the mythological figures is printed in the series' appendix. Moreover, the novel contains several illustrations of monsters, such as Fenrir, Argus, and the Myrmidons, and maps that visualise the different settings, such as the school hallway, the exhibition room in the museum, the Greek Underworld, and an overview of the four Underworlds together. Consequently, even readers who are not acquainted with Greek mythology are introduced to the relevant knowledge needed for a full comprehension of the story. Abbott thus manages to connect suspense, entertainment, and knowledge transfer. While the first two volumes involve Greek and Norse mythology, the subsequent volumes extend

13 For the concept of the story world, see Marie Laure Ryan, *Storyworlds across Media* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

14 For a more recent edition see, e.g., Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology*, 3 vols. (New York: Meridian, 1995).

this Underworld universe by introducing mythological characters from Egyptian and Babylonian mythologies. By doing so, the story gradually becomes more complex, enticing the reader to register the different mythological offspring of the heroes, gods, and monsters that populate the Underworlds, but also intrude into the “real” human world.

Children’s novels dealing with the Orpheus and Eurydice myth focus on bookish people and topics, if one considers not only Abbott’s but also Katherine Marsh’s and Cornelia Funke’s novels. In comparison to Abbott, Marsh’s *The Night Tourist* (2007)¹⁵ even goes a step further, as this novel centres on fourteen-year-old Jack Perdu, who spends most of his time alone with his nose buried in a book. He has a keen interest in Latin and Ancient Greek and is occupied reading Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in the original, as he has an afterschool job helping the head of the Classics Department at Yale University with a new translation of Ovid’s work. While Jack muses about the correct translation of a line that tells about Eurydice’s death, he does not pay attention to the traffic and has a near-fatal accident. His father sends him to see a doctor in New York, where Jack has not been since his mother died there eight years ago. In Grand Central Station, Jack meets a girl called Euri who offers to show him the station’s hidden places. Eight floors below the station, Jack discovers a mysterious Underworld populated by the ghosts of dead people. Although Jack is not dead, he has the unusual ability to perceive ghosts. With the help of Euri, who has committed suicide and longs to be alive again, Jack attempts to find his mother among the crowd, always in danger of being detected by the guardians and their dreadful dog Cerberus, who have strict orders to kill everybody who dares to enter the Underworld. However, his stay among the dead is restricted to three days. If he stayed longer, he would turn into a ghost himself, never being able to return to his father.

At night the ghosts leave the Underworld by using fountains as exits. They roam around and observe other people who generally are not able to spot them. During his quest Jack is submitted to several trials, but finally succeeds in finding his mother. He then learns that his father once fell in love with her and rescued her from the Underworld, in a manner comparable to the Orpheus myth. When Jack was six years old, his parents had an argument and his mother punished her husband by going back to the Underworld, intending to return after a couple of days. However, she did not know that this would result in her death. Since she worries about her family’s welfare and accuses herself of selfishness, she is forced to stay in the ghostly Underworld until somebody

15 See Katherine Marsh, *The Night Tourist* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2007).

forgives her imprudent behaviour. After a confident talk with Jack, she finally moves to Elysium, the island of the blessed souls.

Although Jack cannot bring back his mother, he tries to save Euri. Provided with a mysterious map of the New York underground,¹⁶ he finds that he can bring Euri back to the earth's surface under the condition that he does not look back during the journey. But when a ghost ship piles into their small dinghy, Jack is appalled and improvidently glances over his shoulder. Euri fades away, while Jack is remorseful about his thoughtlessness. Despite this he can comfort his father, who still grieves his wife's loss, telling him about the real circumstances of her flight. They move to New York where Jack tries in vain to find the entrance to the Underworld in Grand Central Station. Nevertheless, he is still able to see the floating ghosts of dead people. He sometimes worries about this fantastic skill, as he is anxious to conceal this ability from school friends and from his love interest Cora, a girl who is even better at Latin than himself. The novel ends with a final meeting of Jack and Euri at twilight. Jack tries to apologise for his failure, but Euri indicates that she already knows about his remorse and that she has accepted her destiny.

The intertextual references are scattered throughout the whole text. The first allusion to the Orpheus myth is in the first chapter when Jack is busy with the translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and meditates on a tricky linguistic structure in the passages describing Eurydice's death from a snakebite. Jack is depicted as a shy and nerdy boy who holes up in his study and does not have any friends. He is keenly devoted to his Latin studies in order to please his father, a professor at Yale, and to follow in the footsteps of his mother, who had been proficient in Latin and classical history and myths. The second intertextual allusion is the name Euri, as an abbreviation of Eurydice. As Jack realised later, the girl's actual name is Dina, but she chooses the new name to show that she identifies with the mythical figure and that she longs to be rescued like her. In the subsequent chapters, there are a lot of verbal clues that refer to the Orpheus myth, but they demand a thorough knowledge of the myth. The main strings of the plot are mentioned briefly in the beginning, but afterward readers are prompted to detect the intertextual allusions themselves.

The novel ends on a melancholy note, as Jack could not rescue Euri from the dead. Whereas his father once successfully took the part of Orpheus and saved Jack's mother, Jack's attempt is futile. *The Night Tourist* refers to the Orpheus myth on two narrative levels, since Jack's relationship to Euri mirrors

16 The map Jack Perdu uses is the famous "Viele map" (1865), which shows the original boundaries and waterways of Manhattan. It is still in use today by architects, engineers, and urban developers.

the relationship between his parents, thus conciliating two generations. The main difference consists in the depiction of Jack's and Euri's relationship as a friendship, in contrast to the love story of Jack's parents. What singles Marsh's novel out is the thoughtful focus on death as an overarching topic and the mythical subtext. Although Jack's father is initially able to rescue his wife, their happiness lasts a mere seven years, before a misunderstanding followed by a thoughtless action destroys their lives, in a real and metaphorical sense. Hence, the inevitability of death hovers like a sword of Damocles over the story and furnishes the novel with philosophical and moral reflections which amply contribute to the work's sophistication and complexity.

The question of what happens after death and what distinguishes living people from the ghostly beings in the Underworld runs through the novel like a red thread. This topic permeates the protagonists' appearances, since both Jack and his father have the unusual ability of occasionally changing into ghostly shapes when they are involved in near-fatal accidents and of perceiving and even hearing the ghosts that roam in their surroundings. Jack is even in doubt about his existence. Since the guardians claim that living people are unable to cross the border to the Underworld and that they are skilled in seeing the difference between the dead and the living, Jack is confused as they are apparently unsure about his status. After staying three days among the dead, he repeatedly tries to get to the bottom of human existence. His experience of being able to fly without holding hands with Euri even leads him to assume that he might already be dead and that the difference between being dead and being alive is not as big as one might expect. The dead he meets in the Underworld are driven by the same worries, vanities, joys, and expectations as the living, since they have not yet freed themselves from worldly pleasures and anxieties. Only those who are able to completely accept their death and leave their old life behind are allowed to enter paradise or Elysium. In any case, through these experiences Jack has grown. From now on, he is able to cope with his father's grief and to get in touch with school friends of his own age.

In contrast to the previous books, music and the aptitude to master an instrument do not play a significant part in *The Night Tourist*. Jack has no musical talent, but he is talented in scrutinising texts. This capacity is beneficial for the quest for his mother and his attempt to rescue Euri from the Underworld. For Jack happens to be in possession of a map with a detailed drawing of the New York underground, showing all subterranean channels, tunnels, crossings, and water courses. Jack soon realises that the enigmatic numbers on this map refer to lines in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. By comparing the items shown on the map with the text in his copy, he is able to discover the sole exit which leads from the Underworld back to the earth's surface and which enables his escape. Thus,

in Marsh's novel, reading between the lines, looking for hidden clues, and repeatedly checking textual information are emphasised as suitable techniques for locating significant spots and deciphering subliminal allusions to ancient myths.

Jack's transgression of the boundary between a primary and secondary world can be characterised as a rite of passage that is divided into three stages: the beginning in Yale and the trip to New York present the first stage, the second stage comprises the sojourn in the Underworld, and the third stage marks the return to the upper world and Jack's new life in New York. These three stages emphasise seminal steps in Jack's cognitive, emotional, and social development. After he succeeds in solving all riddles and passing several trials in the Underworld, Jack changes from a bashful boy into a self-confident teenager. Although he still misses Euri and feels guilty about her, he now stands on his own two feet. What is more, the talk with his mother in the Underworld and his concern for Euri's welfare cause Jack's maturation, since he is henceforth willing to undertake responsibility and to care for other people's feelings. Jack's change is characterised as an initiation into adulthood, a seminal issue that governs many adolescent novels. Drawing on Swiss scholar Peter Freese, who investigated the impact of the rite of passage on young adult novels by American authors,¹⁷ other researchers coined the notion "story of initiation" or "novel of initiation" to describe a specific form of the novel that has some commonalities with the coming-of-age novel. *The Night Tourist* derives from this subgenre as its overall plot is concerned with putting the main character through a particular sort of experience, which is described as "initiation" from a reference to initiation rites known from ancient cults and tribal societies. A prototypical issue in novels of initiation is the confrontation with a dangerous or mysterious place, such as a labyrinth, catacomb, desert, or uninhabited wood. Very often this change of place is described as a descent into an unknown and subterranean world, as is certainly the case with Marsh's *The Night Tourist*, but also with Abbott's and Funke's novels.

Cornelia Funke's "Inkworld" trilogy possesses elements of the initiation novel as well, but is above all determined by intertextual references to multiple children's classics, fairy tales, and classical myths. The main protagonists are twelve-year-old Meggie and her father Mortimer Folchart, called Mo. The story in *Inkheart* (2003)¹⁸ is told by different narrators, who change from chapter to chapter. Mo possesses a book entitled *Inkheart* that is sought by the evil

17 See Peter Freese, *Die Initiationsreise. Studien zum jugendlichen Helden im modernen amerikanischen Roman* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998).

18 See Cornelia Funke, *Tintenherz* (Hamburg: Dressler, 2003).

leader Capricorn and his gang. After Capricorn has kidnapped Meggie and Mo, Mo reveals his secret gift, namely the talent to read figures and objects out of books. However, in exchange, real people and animals must vanish into the book world. A couple of years earlier, he thus “read” Capricorn and two other figures out of the book *Inkheart*, while his wife Teresa (called Resa) and two cats disappeared into the book world.

The first book of the “Inkworld” trilogy concentrates on Capricorn’s attempts to destroy all copies of *Inkheart* besides one. He initially intends to force Mo to read a “Shadow” out of the book, an evil monster that will enhance Capricorn’s power. However, when Capricorn realises that Meggie has the same gift, he charges her to do the reading job. But Meggie convinces Fenoglio, the author of *Inkheart*, to write a new version of the respective passage. As a consequence, the Shadow kills Capricorn and his subalterns, setting Meggie, Mo, and their friends free.

The major part of the subsequent novels *Inkspell* (2005)¹⁹ and *Inkdeath* (2007)²⁰ takes place in the Inkworld. Meggie, Mo, and two other characters, Darius and Orpheus, succeed in reading themselves and other figures into the *Inkheart* book. Fenoglio loses control of his imagined Inkworld, which increasingly develops an independent existence. After several adventures and enmeshments all the characters decide to remain in the Inkworld. The third volume closes with a prolepsis: Meggie has learnt from Fenoglio that she will marry the inventor Doria (a figure from an unpublished story written by Fenoglio), whereas her little brother, who was born in the Inkworld, will later return to the “real” world.

The “Inkworld” trilogy presents three different story worlds: the “real” world of Meggie and her father, which is situated in a setting reminiscent of Northern Italy; the fantastic Inkworld, initially created by Fenoglio but developing a life of its own; and the fantastic underworld of the dead that can only be entered from the Inkworld. Funke’s trilogy triggers readership in multiple respects, as the author creates a pandemonium of figures and plots from diverse myths and famous children’s and adult books.²¹ Although the epigraphs at the

19 See Cornelia Funke, *Tintenblut* (Hamburg: Dressler, 2005).

20 See Cornelia Funke, *Tintentod* (Hamburg: Dressler, 2007).

21 It is not my aim here to carve out all aspects that demonstrate the sophisticated structure and complex topics of the “Inkworld” trilogy, for instance, the significance of the paratexts, metafiction, self-reference, the topos of the book within a book, and metalepsis. These narrative devices contribute to the creation of a meta-level. Thus, Funke’s trilogy exhibits a complexity that invites re-readings and new interpretations. For a thorough analysis, see Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012), 125–132.

beginning of each chapter allude to events presented therein (with a source index at the end of each volume), the reader has to dismantle the numerous intertextual allusions on his or her own.

The Orpheus myth plays a significant role in the trilogy. A figure called Orpheus enters the stage in the second volume. This figure not only has the skill to read out characters from books, but also functions as the second author of *Inkheart*, thus competing with Fenoglio. In addition, Mo and Resa fulfil the roles of the classical couple Orpheus and Eurydice. For instance, Resa is bitten by a snake, Mo grieves about Resa's loss, Mo asks Capricorn to let his maid-servant Resa go free, Mo's charming voice fascinates Capricorn and his subalterns, and Mo is able to appease wild animals, such as bears and wolves.²² The close connection between Mo and Orpheus is additionally denoted by the abbreviation "Mo." These letters refer on a basic level to Mortimer, but on a metaphorical level, they allude to the myth of Orpheus and the book *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. With these nuanced allusions, Funke points out that Mo (alias Mortimer) is the true Orpheus. In contrast to the adept Orpheus Mo goes into action and thus saves the Inkworld, which is threatened by evil powers. Hence, a thorough analysis reveals the intertextual connection, since the Orpheus myth and the "Inkworld" trilogy focus on the power of imagination, poetry, and love. At the same time the author stresses that it is not possible to conquer death by means of words and to rescue deceased persons from the realm of the dead. Moreover, analogies are drawn to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* through a double cast of characters; for instance, Fenoglio and Orpheus are authors of the novel *Inkheart*, and Mo and Darius, as characters from the primary world, command the capacity to read figures out of books. Furthermore, some characters have different names in order to illustrate their multiple functions. Mortimer is called "Mo" in the first volume; in the Inkworld he is initially called "Magic Tongue" because of his ability to enchant people with his amazing stories. Later he gets the name "Jaybird" when he is hooked up with the resistance group that fights the dictatorial Viper King.

As this survey has shown, the intertextual references to the Orpheus myth do not strictly follow the plot, but deviate from it in different respects. The order of events has been changed as well as the cast of characters. However, the most intriguing changes concern the double role of Orpheus, presented by Mo and the plagiarist Orpheus, and the connection of the descent into the

22 The references to the Orpheus myth have been discussed in Saskia Heber, *Das Buch im Buch. Selbstreferenz, Intertextualität und Mythenadaption in Cornelia Funkes Tinten-Trilogie* (Kiel: Verlag Ludwig, 2010).

underworld with Meggie's rite of passage. Mo and Meggie undertake the descent into the underworld to rescue the boy Farid from the dead.

Whereas Mo is characterised as the noble saviour of the Inkworld, Orpheus accompanies the Viper King and repeatedly attempts to paraphrase the Inkworld novels in order to adjust the story to his and the Viper King's ideas. In this way Funke emphasises the ambivalent role of literature and authors. Literary texts and artistic skills might be used to encourage readers to reflect upon social justice and welfare, but they might also be used to manipulate other people by communicating ideological messages that call for hate, struggle, and war. Funke's aim to foster young reader's increasing awareness of political, ideological, and social matters is stressed in Meggie's development from teenage girl to young woman. Meggie's resistance against Capricorn's persuasiveness and her courageous encounter with death in the underworld goes hand in hand with a growing self-dependence, which is shown in her critical attitude toward her parents, finally leading to her cutting the cord with her family and her decision to decline Farid's courtship in favour of Doria, who is down to earth and reliable. Meggie's initiation and the descent to the underworld also reveal a political dimension by subliminally pointing to fascism, mirrored in Capricorn's and the Viper King's clothing and dictatorial behaviour. Thus, Meggie's initiation appears as an emancipation from totalitarian structures and deliverance from eagerness for power.

Looking back at these five literary works, it is apparent that the classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice still presents an appealing topic for modern children's literature. This tendency is mirrored in modern adaptations, but also in novels that more or less intertextually refer to this crucial pretext.²³ The ambiguity of this myth, its reference to the timeless issues of love, friendship, courage, growth, and grief, encourage authors and illustrators to focus on this ageless myth about a deep love that overcomes even death, at least for a short time. This myth illustrates a narrative discourse which prevails on two levels. The Orpheus myth resumes the function of a narrative pattern that can only be deciphered when considering the subtext of the whole narrative. Heiduczek uses the ancient myth to subliminally criticise the political situation in the German Democratic Republic in the 1980s by offering an alternative model of living. Moreover, Heiduczek, Abbott, and Marsh pursue the same didactic aim: they intend to pass on the cultural heritage of classical myth to younger

23 In this respect, John Stephens and Robyn McCallum's study *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York–London: Routledge, 1998) demonstrates the strong impact of classical mythology on modern fantasy and fairy tales.

readers. They achieve this goal by retelling the respective myth or by clearly indicating the sources (Ovid; *Bulfinch's Mythology*). The love affair of Orpheus and Eurydice and the troubles it evokes dominate the works by Pommaux, Marsh, and Funke. These authors show that the Orpheus myth deals with a universal topic that still has a strong appeal for the present generation, since the issues of friendship, love, and death play an important role in young people's philosophical thinking. The psychologisation of the main characters accounts for the stories' attractiveness for contemporary readers, because they are stimulated to empathise with the characters who represent the modernised versions of Orpheus and Eurydice.²⁴ The authors achieve this by giving the characters psychological depth, which invites readers to understand these characters' emotional and cognitive development. This is particularly evident in the novels by Marsh and Funke, which refer to the main characters' rite of passage and show a close connection to a process of initiation. Finally, Abbott, Heiduczek, and Funke address the issue of imagination and its link with poetry and music, which are essential traits connected with Orpheus. They emphasise that these aspects contribute to the main characters' maturing process, which culminates in an increased self-confidence.

The interconnectedness of the Orpheus myth with modern narrative structures and topics reveals an astonishing potential for multiple meanings and intertextual references, which contributes to the complexity of modern children's books dealing with Classical Antiquity.

24 Recent narratological studies have shown that the psychological depiction of fictional characters exerts a significant impact on the reader's developing empathy. See, for instance, Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); and Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

PART 4

*New Hope: Classical References in the Mission of
Preparing Children to Strive for a Better Future*





Maja Abgarowicz, The Sirens (2012)

ILLUSTRATION CREATED AT THE WORKSHOP OF PROF. ZYGMUNT JANUSZEWSKI,
ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN WARSAW, © BY MAJA ABGAROWICZ

Greek Mythology in Israeli Children's Literature

Lisa Maurice

In this paper I consider the versions of Greek mythology in juvenile literature in the Hebrew language, both original editions of Greek myth and works in Hebrew translation. Since this is a field unfamiliar to most readers, some background must be given prior to tackling this issue. Thus, by way of providing context, I first consider Jewish attitudes toward the classical tradition, and its role in the modern state of Israel, in particular within the educational system; the place of Greek mythology, in particular, in modern Israeli literature and drama; Israeli attitudes toward fantasy, closely linked in the mind of the reader to Greek myth; and finally the development of Hebrew children's literature. After such introductory discussions, the range, style, and significance of classical mythology in children's Hebrew literature will be more readily understood.

1 Classics, Judaism, and the Classical Tradition in Israel

The relationship between the Graeco-Roman and Jewish traditions has long been a complex one. Although a detailed study of this history falls beyond the scope of this paper, and has in any case been ably outlined by other scholars,¹ it is worth mentioning in brief the central issues since they impact upon the question under debate here. On the one hand, the Greek language attained a status in Jewish tradition that was unparalleled, being regarded as the purest language there was with the exception of Hebrew. Thus, according to the Rabbinic sages, the two languages that should be spoken in the land of Israel are Hebrew or Greek,² while the only language apart from Hebrew in which it was permissible for a Sefer Torah to be written, or for the Book of Esther to be read,

1 See, e.g., Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); idem, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine; Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994); Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998); Erich Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1998).

2 Talmud Bavli, *Bava Kama* 82b–83a.

was Greek.³ In Alexandria it is possible that the reading from the Sefer Torah was done, not in Hebrew, which most Jews no longer understood, but in the more familiar Greek, and that this unfamiliarity with the holy language was the impulse behind the writing of the Septuagint.⁴ Greek was thought to be the language of poetry,⁵ and was an “adornment” for a young woman.⁶ More than this, Greek mythology itself was far from unknown to the Jews of the ancient world; they lived in that world, where the Hellenistic culture was predominant, and they constantly encountered Greek mythology in literature, art, and other aspects of their life. Jewish-Hellenistic authors engaged with Greek myth in different ways, and while they were often critical of the myths, it cannot be denied that they were an integral part of their social context at this time.⁷

On the other hand, the “Greeks,” in the form of the Hellenistic Syrian kingdom, and the Romans, as destroyers of the Second Temple and authors of the two-thousand-year exile and Diaspora, were conquerors and oppressors of the land of Israel and its people. Not only were they the physical adversaries, however; they were also the spiritual enemy of Judaism, against whose enticements and customs rabbinic tradition warned. Judaism was in many ways directly opposed to the Greek way of life. To the Hebrew religion, with its emphasis upon purity and modesty, the Greek gods and the stress upon nudity were violently distasteful and immoral. At the same time, the Greek way of life and learning were attractive and assimilation was a problem. Thus, there are references in the Mishnah and Talmud to a decree against studying “Greek wisdom,”⁸ and the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, mentioned above, came to be regarded as a tragedy and is still mourned on the fast of the Tenth of Tevet.

3 Talmud Yerushalmi, *Megilah* 1:9; Maimonides on *Mishnah Megilah* 2:1.

4 See, e.g., Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, “Sather Classical Lectures” 54 (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1990), 25; Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 100.

5 Talmud Yerushalmi, *Megilah* 1:9.

6 Talmud Yerushalmi, *Peah* 1.1, 15c; *Sotah* 9.16, 24c.

7 See René Bloch, *Moses und der Mythos: Die Auseinandersetzung mit der griechischen Mythologie bei jüdisch-hellenistischen Autoren*, “Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism” 145 (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2011); Folker Siegert, “Griechische Mythen im hellenistischen Judentum,” in Raban von Haehling, ed., *Griechische Mythologie und frühes Christentum. Die antiken Götter und der eine Gott* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 132–152; Yaacov Shavit, “The Reception of Greek Mythology in Modern Hebrew Culture,” in Asher Ovadiah, ed., *Hellenic and Jewish Arts* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1998), 432–438.

8 See *Sotah* 49b and Saul Lieberman, “The Alleged Ban on Greek Wisdom,” in his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 110–114.

There is, even today, a general suspicion of learning Greek; it is notable that David Schaps's introductory Greek textbook, written in Israel, opens with an introduction entitled "Is Learning Greek Permitted?" discussing this question from the standpoint of Orthodox Judaism.⁹

The distrust of Greek culture, when coupled with the fact that the Jewish people had their own legends and stories in the form of the Bible and of other traditional tales, meant that the ancient world was always marginal in Israel. Religious Jews, who felt no need to include the classical tradition in their education systems, emphasised only the Bible, and even secular Zionists, who rejected Rabbinic Judaism, nevertheless regarded the Bible, upon which their ideology was based, as paramount, again to the exclusion of the ancient roots of Western civilisation.¹⁰ There is none of the common heritage identification that is found in the United Kingdom for example, despite the fact that ancient Rome—and Greece in the form of the Hellenistic kingdoms—played perhaps an even more pivotal role in this geographic region than it did in the UK.

2 Classics and the Israeli Educational System: Priorities and Developments

As a result of this lack of identification with ancient Greece and Rome, classical studies plays only a marginal role in the Israeli education system. This is in spite of the dreams of some of the early founders of what would become modern Israel, who established the education system with the ideology that the new state should become a "civilised," educated place, on a par with Europe, where most of them had grown up and been educated. Thus, for instance, when the first Hebrew language high school was founded in Tel Aviv in 1905, it was modelled on the European system, and given the title of "Gymnasia." Latin was on the curriculum as a matter of course, since the stated aim of the Gymnasia was to provide an education which was the same as at "every high school in Europe and America, Bible and Talmud; past language and its literature; languages: French, German, English, and Latin; geometry and algebra, [...] physics and chemistry, zoology and botany, main geology and mineralogy;

9 David Schaps, *Yofoto Shel Yafet* [The beauty of Japheth] (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1996), v–vi.

10 See Yair Zakovitch, "Scripture and Israeli Secular Culture," in Benjamin D. Sommer, ed., *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 299–316.

history, drawing, etc.”¹¹ Similarly, when the first university, the Hebrew University, was founded in 1925, Greek and Latin were among the first subjects taught at that institution.¹²

It is interesting to note, however, that the classical languages were included in the Jewish Studies Faculty (the Faculty of Humanities was only opened in 1928) and the justification for teaching classics, and especially Greek, was that these languages were necessary for the understanding of, and participation in, Bible studies. In a letter dated May 15, 1927, Max (Moshe) Schwabe outlined the state of classics in Israel at the time, and stressed the unique nature of the subject in this place because of its position as an adjunct to Jewish studies. Latin and Greek were taught at this time to provide a basic understanding of the languages in order to read texts of interest to scholars of Judaism.¹³ Yet only a year later the Faculty of Humanities was established, and other classical works began to be taught (Euripides' *Medea*, Plato's *Theaetetus*, a range of texts within the framework of courses on the History of Greek Literature, and so on). Victor (Avigdor) Tcherikover was appointed to the position of Instructor in Greek and Roman History in that year and Hans (Yohanan) Lewy to that of Instructor in Latin Language and History in 1933.¹⁴ Schwabe, Tcherikover, and Lewy were the founding fathers of classical studies in Israel, and all were products of the high-level German scholarship of the beginning of the twentieth century, and students of the great names of that scholarship—Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Eduard Norden, and others. The influence and approach of these scholars coloured classical studies in Israel during its inception and development, and classical philology was the focus of Israeli scholarship.

From these beginnings, classical studies in Israel expanded, as these scholars were joined by others, and the founding of more universities in the 1950s and 1960s (Bar-Ilan University in 1955, Tel Aviv University in 1956, Haifa University in 1963, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1969) provided more scope for the teaching of classics.¹⁵ The Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies (ISPCS) was founded in 1971 in order “to promote the study of classics

11 At http://www.schooly2.co.il/gymnasia/page.asp?page_parent=70202 (accessed Jan. 1, 2013, but no longer active).

12 See Joseph Geiger and Ra'anana Meridor, “The Beginning of Classics in Israel: Two Documents,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 18 (1999): 159–173.

13 “Dabei wurde im Anfang darauf hingewiesen, daß die griech. und lat. Kurse nur zum (mehr oder weniger oberflächlichen) Verständnis der Septuaginta, Vulgata und einiger für jüdische Wissenschaft notwendiger Texte zu führen hätten.” Quoted in Geiger and Meridor, “The Beginning of Classics in Israel,” 166.

14 *Ibid.*, 160.

15 Although only the three oldest universities have departments of Classics, Ancient History, Philosophy, and Archaeology are taught at all five.

in Israel and to foster relations between Israeli classicists and colleagues from abroad.¹⁶ Three years later, the journal *Scripta Classica Israelica* appeared for the first time.

Despite these developments, classics remained—and remains—marginal in Israeli society. Schaps, in his *History of the Department of Classical Studies of Bar-Ilan University*,¹⁷ outlines some of the difficulties with which the promoters of the subject had to contend. Firstly, there was the need to start classical education from scratch at university level, which led, in line with changes in the rest of the world, and in particular in the United States, to the development of a degree in classical culture that did not include the study of the ancient languages. Additionally, there was the problem of small student numbers and an equally small pool of Hebrew-speaking teachers who were themselves classicists. These factors were typical of the state of classics throughout Israel as the various university departments developed.

With the economic strains on Israeli higher education that led to severe cut-backs in humanities in general, classical studies suffered still further. Indeed, the national newspaper *Haaretz* published an article in 2008 that asked: “Will Classical Studies Be Here in Ten Years?” and outlined the devastating cuts suffered by the already small university departments.¹⁸ The article also pointed out the main difficulty faced by such departments, namely low student enrollment, due to the fact that their field was unknown to most Israelis, since, unlike in Western Europe or the United States, where people look to the ancient world for “their roots, for the cultural foundation of Western civilization,” in Israel the classical world remains unknown to most.

Thus, classics has had, and still has, a negligible place in Israeli education. Despite the lofty aims of the early Gymnasias, Latin was dropped from the syllabus in the 1920s; neither Latin nor Greek are taught below university level in the modern state, and very few classical works are included in the school curriculum. As the *Haaretz* article states, “Israeli schools barely teach anything about ancient Greece and Rome, and students are not familiar with the ancient writers.” Sophocles (usually *Antigone* but sometimes *Oedipus Rex*) is the only author who regularly features in the Bagrut matriculation syllabus, although some excerpts from Homer’s *Odyssey* have recently been included in one part of the optional literature modules.¹⁹

16 At <http://www.israel-classics.org/> (accessed Oct. 6, 2015).

17 At <http://classics.biu.ac.il/node/618> (accessed Oct. 6, 2015) (Hebrew).

18 At <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/will-classical-studies-still-be-here-in-10-years-1.236899> (accessed Oct. 6, 2015).

19 At http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Tochniyot_Limudim/Safrut/Kitotio_12/Yechida4/ (accessed Nov. 19, 2015) (Hebrew).

This is all part of a general marginalisation of the humanities in Israel, which is in itself part of a worldwide trend,²⁰ but is perhaps more acute in a young, natural resource-poor country, in which scientific innovation is of key importance, both for national development (the fields of water engineering and agriculture are particularly vital²¹) and in terms of international standing and prestige. The fact that Israeli high school students choose between science and the humanities/social sciences at the age of fourteen, and that the sciences have more cachet has also weakened the other subjects even more than in many other countries. Beyond the school system, at the level of higher education, the humanities in general, and classics in particular, often struggled for survival. Contributory factors were the lack of funding and prestige, together with the dearth of jobs for which the humanities seemed a necessary preparation. In particular, the fact that Israeli youths spend two to three years in national service before starting undergraduate degrees created, and continues to create, an unwillingness to study anything that will not obviously provide a source of income.²²

Finally, in none of the different streams in Israeli education, all of which have been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by local politics, was the study of the arts that underlie Western civilisation seen as important. For the secular education track, the ideals of settling the land and socialism, as exemplified by the kibbutz system, meant that western humanities were regarded as irrelevant at best, and dangerously elitist at worst.²³ Thus the State Education Law of 1953 aimed to base the foundations of elementary education on:

[...] the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state of Israel, on work in agriculture and in the crafts, on Halutzic [pioneering] preparation, on a society based on freedom, equality and tolerance, mutual aid and love for one's fellow man.²⁴

20 See, e.g., David H. Kamens and Aaron Benavot, "A Comparative and Historical Analysis of Mathematical and Science Curricula, 1800–1986," in John W. Meyer, David H. Kamens, and Aaron Benavot, eds., *School Knowledge for the Masses* (Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1992), 101–123.

21 United States, Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, *Water-Related Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture in Arid/Semiarid Lands: Selected Foreign Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Diane Publishing, 1983), 63.

22 See <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/.premium-1.552041> (accessed Oct. 20, 2015).

23 See Hayim Gazi'el, *Politics and Policy-making in Israel's Education System* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1996), 41–42.

24 *Ibid.*, 39.

No mention of the arts or humanities features in this description. On the other hand, for the religious track, the Jewish texts and culture were central, to the exclusion of those of Western civilisation. It should also be noted that the mass immigration of Sephardic Jews (of North African and Asian origin) in the 1950s,²⁵ and Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s and 1990s, neither of which had roots in the Western classical tradition, meant that this tradition was unknown and irrelevant to a large proportion of the population.²⁶ This led to clashes of ideology between the immigrants and the Ministry of Education, whose employees hailed from Europe,²⁷ and ultimately, decades later to the founding of the Sephardic Ultra-Orthodox (Shas) school system, in which the humanities are even more insignificant.²⁸

3 Greek Mythology in the Modern State of Israel

3.1 *Greek Mythology and Hebrew Literature*

If classics in general is far from central in Israel, classical mythology is no less peripheral. That is not to say that there were no writers of Hebrew who regarded the classical sources as central. Saul Tchernichowsky (1875–1943), for example, attempted to link the worldviews of the Greeks and the Jews. Gabriel Levin says of Tchernichowsky:

The poet did not believe that Greek and Hebrew thinking had to necessarily be at odds with each other; Jews, dispersed and living under northern skies, far from the blinding Mediterranean light, had simply cut themselves off from their true sources, from their roots in Greek and Semitic mythology. The Greeks and the Hebrew shared, after all, a common heritage; they had once lived along the Eastern Mediterranean, they

25 For the mass immigrations, see Devorah Hakohen, *Immigrants in Turmoil: Mass Immigration to Israel and Its Repercussions in the 1950s and After* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 251–266.

26 Although the same cannot be said of the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union, whose numbers rivalled that of the Sephardic Jews, the different cultural traditions of the latter, who had arrived a generation previously, are far more dominant in Israel. See Sergio Della Pergola, “Sephardic and Oriental Jews in Israel and Western Countries: Migration, Social Change and Identification,” in Peter Y. Medding, ed., *Sephardic Jewry and Mizrahi Jews*, “Studies in Contemporary Jewry” 22, Institute for Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3–43.

27 See Gazi'el, *Politics and Policy-making*, 41.

28 See Omar Kamil, “The Synagogue as Civil Society, or How We Can Understand the Shas Party,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 12.3 (2001): 142.

had tilled the same soil, and they had even worshipped the same sun and moon gods out of which they had evolved an elaborate network of mythologies. And did not the two cultures, dwelling along the Fertile Crescent, share a common love of pleasure, of strength and of beauty? This, to put it in a nutshell, would be the poet's lifelong conviction.²⁹

Aharon Shabtai (b. 1939) and Harold Schimmel (b. 1926) are two more poets heavily influenced by classical texts, sprinkling their works with translations of lines from ancient Greek poetry.³⁰ Yet, overall, classical mythology was an unknown field to most Israelis.

One of the main reasons for this unfamiliarity was that, for a long time, many texts were not available in Hebrew translation, making them inaccessible to Israeli audiences. This was not only due to the general marginalisation of the humanities in the education system, but was also a result of the ideological issues surrounding translated works as opposed to those of original Hebrew literature.³¹ In the early pre-state "yishuv" period, it was regarded as crucial to develop the Hebrew language and a national culture. Thus, translation of great, classic texts of literature, which would quickly bring culturally valuable works in the Hebrew language to the fledgling nation, was regarded as a priority. By the 1930s, however, original Hebrew literature was the aim and main concern, and translation became secondary.

For many years, therefore, throughout the first decades of the state, classical texts were either untranslated, or available only in outdated Hebrew translations. Over the last fifty years, however, translations of classical texts have appeared with growing frequency. According to the database of Hebrew translations on the website of the ISPCS, while fewer than fifty texts were translated before 1960, and only sixty-one in the next two decades, the 1980s saw the publication of sixty-five texts, and the 1990s, one hundred and twenty.³²

29 Gabriel Levin, "What Different Things Link Up: Hellenism in Contemporary Hebrew Poetry," *Prooftexts* 5.3 (Sept. 1985): 223–224. See also Glenda Abramson, "Hellenism Revisited: The Uses of Greek Myth in Modern Hebrew Literature," *Prooftexts* 10.2 (May 1990): 239. On Tchernichowsky, see also the chapter by Agata Grzybowska, "Saul Tchernichowsky's Mythical Childhood: Homeric Allusions in the Idyll 'Elka's Wedding,'" in the present volume.

30 See Abramson, "Hellenism Revisited," 237–255.

31 See Zohar Shavit, "The Status of Translated Literature in the Creation of Hebrew Literature in Pre-State Israel (the Yishuv Period)," *META* 43.1 (1998): 2–8.

32 See <http://www.israel-classics.org/ispcs/CiH.html> (accessed Nov. 18, 2015) (Hebrew); and Joseph Geiger, Daniel Gershenson, Ranon Katzoff, and Israel Shatzman, "Classical Studies in Israel," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 2 (1975): 177–178.

3.2 *Greek Mythology and the Israeli Theatre*

A similar trend can be seen in the area of drama, where classical works were seldom performed. Although productions of Aristophanes were staged,³³ ancient tragedy was very rare in the twentieth century. This was due in great part to the difficulties of producing a play which the audience would lack the background knowledge to appreciate; the ignorance of Greek mythology is cited as one of the main problems in this area. Thus, Eli Rozik explains,

Mythology in general, and Greek mythology in particular, poses a hindrance for any Israeli audience. [...] Israeli audiences are barely equipped with the minimal information and associative background required for mythological allusions to make sense.³⁴

Despite this lack of familiarity with mythology, there were Israeli authors, such as Nissim Aloni (1926–1998), who combined themes and elements of Greek tragedy with Jewish and Israeli contemporary influences and ideologies, to create new works in which both strands were apparent.³⁵ Yet actual presentations of the dramatic versions of ancient myth remained few and far between before the turn of the second millennium.

As with literature, however, the last dozen years have seen a sharp rise in enthusiasm for staging classical plays, or new productions on classical themes. Thus the Habima Theatre produced a play called *The Heel of Achilles* in 2002, as well as a version of *The Women of Trachis*, entitled *Cruel and Merciful* in 2005. The Geshen Theatre company produced *Medea* in 2005, while 2008 saw productions of the *Bacchae* (Ben-Tzvi Theatre company) and the *Women of Troy* (Tmuna Theatre). In fact, no fewer than three classical dramas were staged in 2013: versions of *Iphigenia* (staged by the Beersheva Theatre company), *Antigone* (*Anti*, Geshen Theatre), and *Oedipus Rex* (*Oedipus: The True Story* by the Simta Theatre company). The awareness of Ancient Greece and Rome seems higher than ever before in the modern land of Israel, and the Jewish

33 This was mainly due to Aristophanes' themes of war and peace that made his works seem a suitable vehicle for exploring modern Arab—Israeli conflict. See Nurit Yaari, "Aristophanes between Israelis and Palestinians," in Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 287–300.

34 Eli Rozik, "Isaac Sacrifices Abraham in 'The American Princess,'" in Linda Ben-Zvi, ed., *Theatre in Israel* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 134.

35 See, e.g., Glenda Abramson, "Aloni's Myths: Tragedy in Hebrew," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4.3 (1997): 285–301.

world during the classical period is viewed far more in context, and with greater interest, than in earlier periods.³⁶

4 Fantasy in Modern Israel

When looking at classical mythology in modern Israel another factor comes into play, namely the attitude toward fantasy. As a recent study has discussed, fantasy is very rare indeed in original Hebrew literature, and relatively rare even in translation.³⁷ According to this research, whereas Jewish writing in the Diaspora often tended toward “the fantastic, the mystical, and the magical,” from the outset, Israeli literature was “stubbornly realistic.” Hagar Yanai stated this in 2002, in an article in *Haaretz*:

Faeries do not dance underneath our swaying palm trees, there are no fire-breathing dragons in the cave of Machpelah, and Harry Potter doesn't live in Kfar Saba. But why? Why couldn't Harry Potter have been written in Israel? Why is local fantasy literature so weak, so that it almost seems that a book like that couldn't be published in the state of the Jews?³⁸

This is particularly striking in light of the fact that Zionism and the modern state of Israel were inspired at least in part by Theodor Herzl's utopian novel, *Altneuland* (1902). While it is true that fantasy literature in translation, as well as films and video games and so on, enjoy popularity in Israel, nevertheless, fantasy as a genre seems to have been regarded as a lightweight and frivolous distraction from the solemn mission of creating new, serious works of literature. The irony of this stance was highlighted by Gail Hareven, who emphasises the incongruity of the rejection of what she calls the “unimaginable” in a country where the unbelievable really does seem to occur on a frequent basis. After citing various examples of such incredible but actual events, she states:

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- 36 The recent outstanding and very popular exhibition at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem entitled *Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey*, which places Herod in historical context, and the new Hadrian exhibition at the same venue reflect this trend.
- 37 Danielle Gurevitch, Elana Gomel, and Rani Graff, eds., *With Both Feet on the Clouds: Fantasy in Israeli Literature* (Brighton, Mass.: Academic Studies Press, 2013).
- 38 At <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.761169> (Hebrew) (accessed July 4, 2016).

Although Israeli reality gives rise to occurrences that are “preposterous” or “unimaginable,” native-born authors tend to create a reality in which such things do not happen.³⁹

Indeed, the whole existence of the State of Israel is somewhat of a fantasy made true, and this, she argues, was a major factor in the lack of interest in literary fantasy. Israelis, according to this theory, were too involved in the practical development of Herzl's utopian dream to submerge themselves in worlds of fantasy.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that fantasy literature in general was secondary in Israeli literature until recently. It is striking to note, however, a change within the last twenty years, as a number of original works have started to appear. As early as 1995, Orly Castel-Bloom's books had strong fantasy elements,⁴⁰ while Hareven produced a collection of science fiction stories in 1999.⁴¹ In May 1996 an Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy was founded in order “to promote and augment the fields of Science Fiction and Fantasy in Israel.”⁴² This society publishes a magazine called *The Tenth Dimension*, maintains an active website and holds an annual convention, which presents the Geffen Awards⁴³ for both original Hebrew and translated works of fantasy and science fiction.

The very existence of these awards attests to the existence of a genre that was previously barely known in Israel. The twenty-first century has seen a larger number of fantasy and science fiction books. Yanai herself has so far contributed two parts of a trilogy to this trend,⁴⁴ while poet Shimon Adaf has written a number of science fiction and fantasy novels for teenagers and adults.⁴⁵ Authors such as Ofir Touche Gafla (*End's World*, 2004), Guy Hasson, Nir Yaniv,

39 Gail Hareven, *What Is Unimaginable?*, in Gurevitch, Gomel, and Graff, eds., *With Both Feet on the Clouds*, 49.

40 *Ha-Minah Lizah* [The Mina Lisa] (Yerushalayim: Keter, 1995).

41 *HaDerech l'Gan Eden* [The way to Paradise] (Yerushalayim: Keter, 1999).

42 At <http://english.sf-f.org.il/> (accessed Oct. 29, 2015).

43 Named for the late Amos Geffen, one of the first editors and translators of science fiction in Israel.

44 Hagar Yanai, *Ha-livyatan mi-Bavel* [The leviathan of Babylon] (Yerushalayim: Keter, 2006), *Ha-mayim she-bein ha-olamot* [The water between the worlds] (Yerushalayim: Keter, 2008).

45 *Ha-lev ha-kavur* [The buried heart] (Tel Aviv: Ahuzat Bayit, 2006); *Panim tseruwe hamah* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2008), trans. Margalit Rodgers and Anthony Berris as *Sunburnt Faces* (Hornsea: PS Publishing, 2013); *Kefor* [Frost] (Or Yehudah: Kineret Zemorah-Bitan, 2010);

and Vered Tochterman have also produced works of this genre. Since 2002 an Israeli science fiction and fantasy magazine, *Chalomot Be'aspamia* [Dreams in Aspamia] has also been published.

On the one hand, classical mythology is not, of course, fantasy at all, and it is perhaps even further from science fiction. Yet in the mind of the reader, and especially the juvenile reader, the link between fantasy, magic, and the pagan world with its ancient gods and death-defying heroes, seems firmly established. Just as television producers and their audiences see both BBC's *Merlin* and *Atlantis* as connected by genre, so readers enthralled by Harry Potter are also drawn to tales of Percy/Perseus Jackson, and from there to Perseus and Hercules as well. Despite the status of fantasy in Israel outlined here, this seems as true in Israel as in the rest of the world. The growth of interest in Israel in fantasy and related genres would therefore be likely to lead to a rise in popularity of works of classical mythology as well.

5 The Development of Hebrew Children's Literature

Before looking at classical mythology within the genre of children's literature in Israel, it is necessary to outline some important elements of the developments of that genre. Children's literature began to develop in Israel as early as the 1880s, and the first texts for children were educational texts, followed shortly after by some books of stories and poems. With the development and spread of the Hebrew language, however, encouraged particularly by the schools, there was an urgent need for more books for children.⁴⁶

The very lack of Hebrew schoolbooks also gave impetus to the need for new material suitable for Israeli youth; in pre-state Israel, the need to create a children's culture meant that the entire literary range had to be produced from scratch, from school texts to songs and poems to stories, and that these all had to be generated as quickly as possible. One way of providing books for children quickly was to produce translations of children's classics, but more important were original Hebrew works. Even in these early days, as Zohar Shavit explains, "children were viewed as a vehicle for distributing the new Hebrew culture and their teachers as the main soldiers in an army participating in this war."⁴⁷

Mox Nox [Soon the night] (Or Yehudah: Kineret Zemorah-Bitan, 2011); *Arim shel matah* [Undercities] (Or Yehudah: Kineret Zemorah-Bitan, 2012).

46 For details on the development of Hebrew children's literature, see Zohar Shavit, "Children's Literature in Hebrew," in Fred Skolnik, ed., *Encyclopedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 2006; ed. pr. 1972), vol. 4, 619–628.

47 *Ibid.*, 619.

Because of this agenda, European Hebrew children's literature was unsuitable for Israeli children, whose lives were so different and whose culture was intended to be even more so. Guided by national considerations and the desire to create a new type of Jew, the new books tried to present a new idealised Hebrew-speaking child, at sharp odds with the children of the Diaspora. In Shavit's words:

The Hebrew child was presented as free, even naughty, self-confident and attached to the Land of Israel, engaged in new activities such as excursions to places linked to the ancient history of "the people of Israel" and singing the "songs of Zion." The textual plots usually consisted of a juxtaposition of events of ancient (biblical) history and current events in Eretz Israel.⁴⁸

This indoctrinatory writing constructed national heroes and promoted Zionist values above all else, with the emphasis on an, albeit idealised, reality, providing a model to which children could aspire.

Nor did this change in the years preceding and following the founding of the state. With the need to relate to the Holocaust and the military tensions of the early years, children's fiction remained firmly realistic; original popular children's literature of other genres, such as detective stories, was taboo unless the books promoted the standard ideology. From the 1950s, however, the situation changed, as the ideological stance weakened and children's literature in Israel came more into line with Western children's literature. The 1970s saw a boom in Hebrew children's literature as more books were published in a range of genres. From that time onwards, the range of topics covered by children's literature expanded greatly. In place of the almost complete concentration on realistic fiction about Jewish and Israeli history, other themes featured "the private sphere which had previously been shunned, such as first love, friendship, parent-child relations, children's adventures, death in war, death of family members, divorce, and family crisis in general."⁴⁹ All of these subjects, however, are still rooted firmly in the real world; as with adult fiction, what was missing, almost entirely, was fantasy. Against such an unsympathetic background, it might have been supposed that Greek mythology was unrepresented in Hebrew children's literature. Yet this was not the case, as an examination of the history and state of Greek mythology in Hebrew juvenile literature will reveal.

48 Ibid., 620.

49 Ibid., 626.

6 Classical Mythology in Hebrew Juvenile Literature

Before the 1980s there were almost no books of this genre in the Hebrew language. There were several editions directed at adults, however, and it is likely that many older children would also have read these if they came across them. Such works include I.D. Rosenstein's *Greek Legends: A Selection of Greek Mythological Stories*, published (in Warsaw) in 1909, and A. Mitlopolitanski's *Greek Legends* in 1916. Three versions of the tale of Jason and the Argonauts also appeared, one by M. Zablotzki (*The Golden Quest: A Legend Based on Mythology*, 1901), another by Yehudah Gur-Grasowski (*From the Legends of the Greeks*, 1916), and the third (1923–1924) by Mordechai Ha-Ezrachi.⁵⁰

A popular work was the translation of Charles Kingsley's *The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales for My Children*, originally published in 1856, but appearing in Hebrew translation only in 1934. In 1943 A.L. Jakobovitch published his *World of Legend*, an adaptation and compilation of myths of "Greece, Rome and the rest of the ancient peoples," based on primary sources, and which opened with an introduction that "explains the nature and value of the mythology,"⁵¹ while Jan Parandowski's *Mythology* was published in Hebrew by Ktavim press in 1952.⁵² Perhaps most popular, and indeed still in print today, has been Edith Hamilton's similarly titled *Mythology* (Modan, 1957).⁵³

6.1 Original Hebrew Collections of Greek Myths

With the exception of a version of *The Odyssey* produced by Asher Baras in 1927–1928, and two versions of the Trojan War—Olivia Coolidge's *The Trojan War* (1952), which appeared in a translation by Betzalel Gilai and was published by Shimoni in 1957, and Jane Werner Watson's volume of the same year, the lavishly colour illustrated *The Iliad and the Odyssey*, published by Amos Books in 1960—the only Hebrew version of Greek mythology aimed specifically at children that existed was Avraham Regelson's *Fountain of the Horse: Tales from Greek Mythology*, published by Dvir publishers in 1967. Basing his style on that of the Hebrew Bible, Regelson explained that he wrote this book for young people, who, as he had done as a youth, had "absorbed an amount of Bible stories and were thirsty for wonders," although he did not exclude adults

50 Referenced by Yaacov Shavit, but without title, in "The Reception of Greek Mythology," 439.

51 Cover page of *Olam Haagadah* [World of legend] (Tel Aviv: Sh Sharbrak, 21966; ed. pr. 1943–1944).

52 Originally published in Polish in 1924, translated into Hebrew by David Lazar.

53 Published in the original by Little, Brown and Company (1942).

who had “not extinguished the essential spark of childhood” from his readers either.⁵⁴ Regelson took his work very seriously and used a number of sources in creating his book, both English-language popular works on mythology,⁵⁵ and translations of the original texts into Hebrew.

For more than fifteen years after the publication of *Fountain of the Horse*, no Hebrew works of Greek mythology appeared. In 1983, however, Nina Harel published a collection for children, entitled *The Amazing Winged Horse*.⁵⁶ This work was the author's own initiative, inspired by her childhood love of mythology, which was itself the result of her reading of Parandowski's *Mythology*. Harel had a completely free hand in selecting and adapting the stories which she used in this book, and made these decisions based on Parandowski's book and her own general knowledge, having no other background in classics or in mythology.⁵⁷ Aimed at the nine- to twelve-year-old market, the ninety-four page book, illustrated with pencil drawings, has remained in print ever since.

It was a decade before other works on Greek mythology for children appeared, in the form of two volumes by Ofra Dalman, one entitled *Stories of Greek Mythology*, and the other, *The Iliad and the Odyssey*.⁵⁸ Written on commission, Dalman used a range of sources in both Hebrew and English in composing the books. They constitute a far more detailed compendia of classical mythology in a form accessible to young readers than Harel's volume, as the relative book titles reflect. In her book on Greek mythology, Dalman includes the creation of the world and the pre-Olympian gods, as well as retelling the main stories of the Olympians and a range of tales of the heroes. The volume on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* retells the Homeric epics, more or less faithfully, in prose form appropriate for a juvenile audience. These books were published as part of the publisher's children's book collection, which included story

54 Avraham Regelson, “Akdamaot katanot l'ein hasus” [Little introduction to fountain of the horse], *Hapoel Hatzair* 23.5 (1967), available at http://www.benyehuda.org/_nonpd/regelson/akdamot.html (accessed Nov. 18, 2015) (Hebrew).

55 Manuel Komroff, *Gods and Demons* (New York: Lion Library Editions, 1954); Carl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (Edinburgh: Thames and Hudson, 1951); Herman J. Wechsler, *Gods and Goddesses in Art and Legend* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1950); H.J. Rose, *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958); W.H.D. Rouse, *Gods, Heroes and Men of Ancient Greece* (New York: Signet Key Books 1957); and Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (see above, n. 53).

56 *Sus ha Pele Hameufef* (Jerusalem: Masada Books, 1983).

57 These details were conveyed in a telephone interview with Nira Harel on Aug. 7, 2013.

58 *Sipurei Mitologia Yavanit* (Alumot: Ramat Gan, 1993); *Sipurei Iliada, Odysseia u Milchemet Troia* (Alumot: Ramat Gan, 1993).

anthologies, such as Grimm's fairy tales, and animal fables, and translated classic juvenile literature; the Greek mythology volume is still in print today.

Only three years later, two more books appeared, by Sharona Guri and Bina Ofek, entitled *Tales from the Greek Theatre* and *The Book of Myths: Myths and Legends from Greek Mythology*.⁵⁹ The first, as the title suggests, is not a true myth anthology, but focuses on Athenian drama, opening with an introduction to Greek theatre and the main dramatists, and then retelling the plots of a range of plays. Somewhat surprisingly, Aeschylus is represented strongly in this book, with narrations of *Prometheus Bound*, *Agamemnon*, *The Eumenides*, and *Seven Against Thebes*, while Sophocles and Euripides fare rather less well, with the inclusion of only *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Comedy features in the form of four Aristophanic dramas, *Lysistrata*, *Plutus*, *The Clouds*, and *The Birds*. Both in its literary content and didactic style this volume is unusual, but it seems to have been aimed at a mainstream audience—the back cover states that in this book: “Ofarim Publishers presents the reader with the magical atmosphere of ancient Greek theatre through an understanding of its authors’ way of writing and thinking.” Guri and Ofek’s other volume on mythology, also published by Ofarim in the same year, 1996, is a more standard collection of Greek myths. Like the book on theatre, it opens with introductory chapters on “The Humanity in Mythology,” “The Cycles of Myth,” and “The Creators of Myth,” before presenting the chosen myths themselves. Aimed at the upper elementary grades, each story is a few pages long, and illustrated with black and white drawings.

The same year also saw the first of a number of colour illustrated picture books for children, written by Rakefet Zohar. This was a series of ten books, published over a three-year period, and covering many of the major stories of Greek mythology. Such was the popularity of the series that a collected edition of four of the books (*Great Stories from Olympus*, *Pandora’s Box*, *Hercules and Other Heroes*, and *Antics of the God of Love*) was republished in 2007 as *Greek Mythology for Children*. According to Zohar herself, the original idea for the series came from the editor of the publishing house, Saray Guttman.⁶⁰ Zohar, however, felt very comfortable with the project, having read and loved stories of Greek mythology as a child (in particular Jane Werner Watson’s book), and having studied ancient Greece as part of her history degree. She used a wide range of sources in both Hebrew and English in writing her versions, mentioning particularly

59 *Sipurim Mehateatron Hayavani* (Tel Aviv: Ofarim, 1996); *Sefer Hamitosim: Agadaot V’Mitosim Mehamitologia Hayavanit* (Tel Aviv: Ofarim, 1996).

60 Rakefet Zohar, “Greek Mythology for Children” (series) (Or Yehudah: Kineret Zemorah-Bitan, 1996–1999). In e-mail interview with Rakefet Zohar in October 2013.

Robert Graves, but adapted these sources freely, particularly with regard to dialogue and the heroes' and gods' thoughts and motivations. These changes were also intended to make the myths suitable for a juvenile audience, and this is reflected in the selection of specific stories as well. Other reasons for choosing particular tales were, according to Zohar, the centrality of a story to Greek mythology in general, and her own personal affection for the story. That the style and choice were successful is reflected in the continuing popularity of the series, and the positive feedback toward them on the part of librarians, parents, and teachers, especially those teachers of fifth and sixth graders studying ancient Greece as part of the history curriculum.

Finally, in 1997, Shlomo Abbas's *The Best of Mythological Stories for Children* was published, a collection of eleven tales from ancient Greece.⁶¹ Abbas, one of Israel's most prolific children's writers, produced more than a dozen anthologies of stories for children, such as *Wise Tales for Children*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, and *Legends of Bible Heroes for Children*, and it is in this series that his Greek mythology collection appears.⁶² As such, his love is more for storytelling in general than mythology itself, and the stories and style are in keeping with this. While the other myth anthologies feature illustrations that echo classical Greek art, or actual plates and photographs of artefacts and places from the ancient world, Abbas's book has generic pictures that could be any time or place and do not seem Greek or classical in any way, in fact being strikingly reminiscent of children's Bible story illustrations.

6.1.1 Contents of the Anthologies

While the range of anthologies of Greek myth demonstrates their popularity, a translated volume can reflect only the original author's choices and predictions, and therefore examining the subject matter of the translated anthologies reveals nothing about the state of mythology for children in Israel. A consideration of the contents of the volumes does perhaps reveal something of interest. Although the fact that there are only six such works might seem too small a group to draw conclusions, when taken in terms of the overall number of Israeli children's books produced, this is actually not such a small output. Indeed, when compared to the United States, the proportion is actually quite high. Amazon lists only around thirty-five such books in the six- to twelve-year-old categories, out of a pool of around 100,000 titles. The works in question are those by Avraham Regelson (1967), Nira Harel (1983), Ofra Dalman (1993),

61 *Meitav Sipurei Hamitologia l'Yeladim* (Hod HaSharon: Agur, 1997).

62 For a full listing of Abbas's works, see his website <http://www.abas.co.il/> (accessed Nov. 19, 2015) (Hebrew).

Rakefet Zohar (1996–1999), Sharona Guri and Bina Ofek (1996–1999), and Shlomo Abbas (1997).

Avraham Regelson's collection is very wide-ranging, and includes a number of stories about the pre-Olympians (Uranus and Gaia, Rhea and Cronus and the Titans, Prometheus and Pandora, Atlas, Atlas's seven daughters, Typhon, Atlantis, the Hyperboreans), before moving on to the main tales of the more commonly represented gods (Demeter and Persephone, Hera and Zeus, the birth of Aphrodite, Aphrodite's girdle, Aphrodite and Ares, the birth of Athena, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hermes, the birth of Apollo and Artemis, Apollo and Delphi, Athena and Poseidon). The anthology also includes a number of other myths (Midas, Midas's donkey ears, Marsyas, Teiresias, Apollo and Daphne, Cupid and Psyche, Aphrodite and Adonis, Hyacinth, the Aloadae, Europa and the Bull, Io, and finally, Cyparissus and the Stag).

The emphasis in Nira Harel's volume is far more on the tales of heroes than on those of the gods. Of the seventeen stories retold here, twelve are from the heroic cycles or tales of human endeavour;⁶³ even in most of those where the gods appear as major characters, the perspective and stress is firmly on the mortals.⁶⁴ There is only one chapter that deals centrally with a true myth story, namely that of Demeter and Persephone. In general, this book is more in the style of a fairy-tale collection, than a full blown mythological compendium, despite the Greek-looking illustrations that complement the text.

Ofra Dalman's works, on the other hand, include the tales of Hera and Zeus, Demeter and Persephone, the births of Aphrodite (albeit from the "wounding" rather than the castration of Uranus) and Athena, and of Apollo and Artemis, the myths of Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hermes, Athena and Poseidon, and the tale of Apollo and Daphne. Also included are the tale of Prometheus and Pandora, a range of the great stories of epic heroes (Perseus and Medusa, Theseus and the Minotaur, Hercules), a number of other famous tales of human heroes (Orpheus and Eurydice, Icarus and Daedalus, Hyacinth, Io, Europa and the Bull, Atalanta, Midas's donkey ears, Arachne) as well as a couple of more unusual ones (the Aloadae, Cyparissus and the Stag).

Rakefet Zohar's series was wide-ranging, comprising retellings of both the Olympians and the great heroes, as well as tales with moral messages: *Odysseus's Journeys*, *The Trojan War*, *Pandora's Box*, *Hercules and Other Heroes* (Hercules, Perseus, Theseus, and Atalanta), *Famous Lovers* (Apollo and Daphne, Cupid and Psyche, Pygmalion and Galatea, Orpheus and Eurydice), *Heavenly*

63 Perseus and Medusa, Pegasus and Bellerophon, Theseus and the Minotaur, the Trojan War, Odysseus and the Cyclops, Hercules, Midas and the golden touch, Midas's donkey ears, Narcissus, Baucis and Philemon, Pygmalion and Galatea, and Orpheus and Eurydice.

64 Apollo and Daphne, Cupid and Psyche, Helios and Phaethon, Prometheus.

Punishment (Midas, Tantalus, Sisyphus), *The Quest for the Golden Fleece*, *Hera's Revenge*, *Great Stories from Olympus* (creation of the world, the flood, the birth of Aphrodite, Hera and Hephaestus, the birth of Athena, the birth of Hermes), *Pegasus, the Flying Horse* (including the stories of Bellerophon, Daedalus and Icarus, Persephone and Demeter, and Castor and Pollux).

Sharona Guri and Bina Ofek's collection, like Harel's, favoured the heroic tales over those of the gods. This book includes retellings of Theseus and the Minotaur, the Judgment of Paris, Daedalus and Icarus, Persephone and Demeter, Perseus and Medusa, Arachne, Achilles and Hector, the Trojan Horse, Glaucus and Scylla, Jason and the Argonauts, Orpheus and Eurydice, Pandora's Box, Procrustes, Oedipus and the Sphinx, Odysseus and the Cyclops, Narcissus and Actaeon.

Finally, Shlomo Abbas's book contains the tales of Midas's golden touch, Midas's donkey ears, Oedipus and the riddle of the Sphinx, Daedalus and Icarus, Pandora's Box, Cupid and Psyche, Arachne, Narcissus, and Procrustes. He also included a version of the Clytie and Helios myth, in which he substituted Apollo for the less familiar Helios. Rather more surprisingly, he adds one of Herodotus's stories, the tale of Rhampsinitos, renaming the characters and entitling the story *King Menelaus and the Treasure*.

Clearly, the myth anthologies in Hebrew cover a wide range of the total treasury of Greek mythology. Some stories are more popular than others, however; Pandora's box is the only myth that features in every book, but three further stories appear in five out of the six volumes: Demeter and Persephone, Orpheus and Eurydice, and the tales of King Midas. All of these particularly popular stories are marked by a lack of violence, making them particularly suitable for children. Noting this fact, one website which presents the same latter three myths in English explains:

The original Greek myths were not fairy tales to entertain and amuse the masses or to lull children to sleep: They were warnings! They were horror stories! They were psycho-dramas designed to explain the inexplicable, predict the unimaginable and prepare for the unthinkable. The Greeks did not love and admire their gods; they feared them. And the myths are, for the most part, pretty horrific reads. People criticised Disney for what they did to the Greek myths in their movie, Hercules, but can you blame them?!?

I have found a few of the stories that are not as horrifying and present them to you today.⁶⁵

65 At <http://fairytalesbytempleton.blogspot.co.il/2011/11/greek-myths.html> (accessed Nov. 26, 2015).

These are, however, not the only myths suitable for children, and, while the numbers are small, and personal preferences must play a part in the story selections, there may perhaps be more that can be said about the popularity of these myths in the Israeli psyche. It may not be coincidental, for example, that the most popular story is that of Pandora, since the idea of hope as the blessing of comfort in a world of ills and misfortune strikes a chord in the heart of a nation whose national anthem, which encapsulates the longing for and foundation of the state, is entitled *The Hope*.⁶⁶ Familiarity may also play a part, since the phrase “Pandora’s box” is a figure of speech in Hebrew. It is also notable that two of the myths, Persephone and Orpheus, involve death, in the form of descent to the Underworld, from which a full return is possible in neither tale.⁶⁷ In a society where death is often less of an unknown encounter for children and youths, these stories perhaps appeal, enabling readers to come to terms with issues they face in real life. Similarly, the stories of foolish King Midas, with their moral messages of the inability of wealth to bring true happiness or of a secret ever to be kept entirely, as well as the necessity of being careful with one’s wishes, may be reflective of a socialist society, under the influence of which these authors grew up, where openness, and a lack of selfishness and materialism, are propounded as ideals.

Six further stories featured in four of the six collections. These include stories of love (Apollo and Daphne, Cupid and Psyche), fantastic monsters (Perseus and Medusa, Theseus and the Minotaur), a cautionary tale (Daedalus and Icarus), and excerpts from the most central myths of ancient Greece, namely the epic cycle (the Trojan War and Odysseus and the Cyclops). Once again, the emphasis is upon the gentler and less graphic or horrifying myths, suitable for children. It is also notable, however, that the tales of the Olympians are far less popular in these collections than stories of humankind, albeit heroic humankind. The introduction of the gods is something that Israeli writers seem less comfortable with, presumably since these stories sit uncomfortably with the Jewish tradition. It is striking, too, that the Greek flood myth, which, as a story with a parallel in the Bible, might perhaps have been expected to feature, appears only once, in Rakefet Zohar’s series. Doubtless the differences between the two versions of the flood outweighed the attraction of presenting a myth centering on a tale with which Israeli children could identify from their own tradition.

66 See Rafael Medoff and Chaim I. Waxman, *Historical Dictionary of Zionism* (New York–Oxford: Routledge, 2012), 79.

67 See Annamaria Hemingway, *Myths of the Afterlife Made Easy* (Ropley, UK: John Hunt Publishing, 2010), 17, on resurrection myths.

6.2 *Greek Myth for Children in Translation*

Since the late 1990s, translations rather than original works have dominated the world of children's mythology in Hebrew. Bina Ofek, who also edited the two 1996 books by Sharona Guri on Greek myth, produced a book in 1997 entitled *Stories of Ancient Greece*.⁶⁸ Despite its wide-ranging title, this is a retelling of only two myth cycles, those of Perseus and of Jason and the Argonauts. It is listed as a translation, but no citation of the original source is given in the book. Another translation, that of Jacqueline Morley's *Greek Myths*, lavishly illustrated by Giovanni Caselli and translated by Adar Arnon, also appeared in the same year.⁶⁹ In 2004, Efrat Avisrur's *Greek Mythology* was published by Ofarim.⁷⁰ This anthology in twenty chapters tells of the rise of the Olympians, the tales of Hermes and Apollo, Dionysus, Prometheus, Typhon, Perseus, Hercules, Admetus, Theseus, Jason, Meleager and Atalanta, and the Trojan War. According to Avisrur, this work was also a translation, although this is unacknowledged anywhere in the book, and she herself did not know who produced the original manuscript from which she worked.⁷¹ Two years later, a translation of Lucy Coats's *Atticus the Storyteller* appeared, in a translation by Amir Zuckerman.⁷² This book is a vast collection of 100 myths, covering almost all of the major tales of both the gods and heroes (Oedipus is an exception for obvious reasons), and beautifully told and illustrated. A Hebrew version of Hugh Lupton, Daniel Morden, and Christina Balit's *The Adventures of Odysseus* appeared in 2011,⁷³ while a year later J. Emmerson Hicks's *The Great Heroes of Greek Mythology* was published;⁷⁴ both books were aimed at the elementary school age.

The twenty-first century has seen the publication of books aimed at both older and younger audiences than the middle school for whom Coats's book

68 *Sipurei Yavan Ha atikah* (Tel Aviv: Ofarim, 1997). Bina Ofek is listed as the editor, but according to Sharona Guri she was very involved in the project and directed it, deciding what was to be in the book.

69 *Ha Sus Ha Troiani* (Or Yehudah: Kineret Zemorah-Bitan, 1999).

70 *Mitologia Yavanit* (Tel Aviv: Ofarim, 2004).

71 In e-mail correspondence with Efrat Avisrur on Aug. 26, 2013.

72 Lucy Coats, *Atticus the Storyteller's 100 Greek Myths* (London: Orion Children's Books, 2003), Hebrew: *Atticus Mesaper Sipurim: Ha Mitologia Ha Yavanit*, trans. Amir Zuckerman (Tel Aviv: Yediot Achronot Sifrei Chemed, 2006).

73 Hugh Lupton, Daniel Morden, and Christina Balit, *The Adventures of Odysseus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Barefoot Books, 2006), in Hebrew: *Masaot Odysseus*, trans. Marina Groselrener (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2011).

74 J. Emmerson Hicks, *The Great Heroes of Greek Mythology* (Bath, UK: North Parade Books, 2009), in Hebrew: *Giborei Ha Mitologia Hayavanit*, trans. Hagai Bareket (Kiryat Gat: Dani Sefarim, 2012).

was marketed. Thus, Heather Amery's *Greek Myths for Young Children*, for pre-schoolers, was published in Hebrew in 2011.⁷⁵ At the other extreme, and somewhat surprisingly, Gustav Schwab's *Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece: Myths and Epics of Ancient Greece*, originally published in German in three volumes in the late 1830s, appeared in 2007 in a 720-page Hebrew translation aimed at older children and adults.⁷⁶ More recently, the last two years have seen the Hebrew publication of the first two of George O'Connor's "Olympians" series of graphic novels.⁷⁷

The most spectacularly successful representations of Greek mythology in Hebrew children's literature, however, was Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series, and its subsequent sequels, which were translated into Hebrew by Yael Achmon, and appeared from 2008 onwards. According to Rani Graff, of Graff Books, which published the novels, these books were enormously popular with Israeli youth.⁷⁸ Over one hundred thousand copies have been sold in Israel since the second half of 2008, making them some of the most successful juvenile Hebrew books ever sold.⁷⁹ The subsequent movies were also released in Israel, and although they were criticised, as they were in other countries, for their divergence from the books,⁸⁰ the films undoubtedly widened the series' appeal.

75 Heather Amery, *Greek Myths for Young Children* (London: Usborne, 1999), in Hebrew: *Sipuri Ha Mitologia Hayavanit l'Yeladim Tseiirim*, trans. Shlomit Handelsman (Tel Aviv: Ofarim, 2011).

76 Gustav Schwab, *Die schönsten Sagen des klassischen Altertums* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1838–1840), in English: *Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece*, trans. A.J. De Boer (New York: Pantheon Books, 1946), in Hebrew: *Elim v'Giborim*, trans. Chana Livnat (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2007).

77 George O'Connor, *Zeus: King of the Gods* (New York–London: First Second, 2010), and idem, *Athena: Grey-Eyed Goddess* (New York–London: First Second, 2010), in Hebrew: *Zeus, Melechha Elim*, trans. Noga Shavit (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuchad, 2012); *Athena, Ha Ela Aforat Ha Ayin*, trans. Noga Shavit (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuchad, 2012).

78 In e-mail correspondence, Nov. 2013.

79 According to one newspaper article, a successful book is one that sells three thousand copies or more; ten or twenty thousand copies represents a major bestseller. The Hebrew books which have sold very large numbers are those that have been in print for several decades; these figures may reach a hundred thousand copies or more, or even up to a million and a half in the case of a series of books with multiple volumes. See <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-2670518,00.html> (accessed Dec. 1, 2015) (Hebrew).

80 See, e.g., http://www.fisheye.co.il/percy_jackson_sea_of_monsters/ (accessed Dec. 1, 2015) (Hebrew); <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3849828,00.html> (accessed Dec. 1, 2015) (Hebrew).

7 Conclusions

It is clear that the last two decades have seen an increase in the number of works of Greek mythology being published in the Hebrew language for Israeli children; while only four books were published prior to 1993, nineteen individual works or series on the theme have appeared over the last twenty years, and more than half of these have been published in the last decade. The fact that there is now a wide range of books on the subject of Greek mythology available for children was noted by one Israeli blogger on fantasy:

Books that offer children's versions of the stories of mythology in general and Greek myths in particular, are very common. From the publisher's point of view, we are often talking about a safe bet. These are well-known and beloved stories, and they do not become outdated over time.⁸¹

There are a number of reasons for this upsurge. Firstly, the influence of the Internet has exposed Israeli society in general and Israeli youth in particular to a far more global culture than was previously the case. Israeli is a country in which technology is prized and highly developed, and high-speed Internet and personal computers have become the norm for many children.⁸² A recent study indicated that a higher proportion of Israeli children aged between eleven and fifteen spend more time using the Internet than anywhere else in the world, with 28.5% of Israeli children in this age group spending at least four hours a day surfing the Internet.⁸³ They are technologically savvy and keen to partake of Western and, in particular, American culture, whether in the form of books, movies, or television.⁸⁴

Specifically, Disney's *Hercules*, released in 1997, introduced a generation of Israeli children not only to the hero himself, but also indirectly to such elements

81 At <http://www.fantastic-library.com/2013/01/17/ביקורת-היוונית-המיתולוגיה-הישראלית/> (accessed Dec. 1, 2015) (Hebrew). Translation is my own.

82 See Gustavo S. Mesch, "Social Bonds and Internet Pornographic Exposure Among Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescence* 32 (2009): 608; Gustavo S. Mesch and Ilan Talmud, *Wired Youth: The Social World of Adolescence in the Information Age* (London–New York: Routledge, 2010), 59.

83 Reported in <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4255610,00.html> (accessed Dec. 1, 2015).

84 See Maoz Azaryahu, "The Golden Arches of McDonald's: On the Americanization of Israel," *Israel Studies* 5.1 (2000): 41–64; Eli Avraham and Anat First, "I Buy American': The American Image as Reflected in Israeli Advertising," *Journal of Communication* 53.2 (2003): 282–299.

as the appearance of ancient Greek art.⁸⁵ Similarly, the Harry Potter phenomenon was as intense in Israel as in other parts of the world.⁸⁶ The books were published between 1997 and 2007 and released in Hebrew shortly afterwards; with their frequent classical allusions, they perhaps helped increase interest in both general fantasy and specifically Greek mythology in young readers, an interest which the Percy Jackson books and films would strengthen shortly thereafter. In another genre, computer games such as *Age of Empires*, and especially its spinoff, *Age of Mythology* (released respectively in 1997 and 2002), were very popular in Israel and provided a meeting point for youth with ancient civilisations and their myths.

It certainly seems to be the case then, that Greek mythology has a more central position in Israel now than it has had at any point in the country's history. While Greek mythology was never completely absent, as this survey has demonstrated, it was represented mostly by authors who themselves had fallen in love with Greek myth as children and wished to pass this on, or by publishers and parents who extolled the importance of classic literature within children's fiction and regarded the classical world as central to the Western tradition. With the apparent blooming of more child-generated interest in the subject, stimulated by popular books, computer games, and movies, a change has taken place. It remains to be seen where this trend will lead in the remainder of the twenty-first century.

85 See Stephen Rebello and Jane Healey, *The Art of Hercules: The Chaos of Creation* (New York: Disney-Hyperion, 1997), passim.

86 The Harry Potter books each sold around 120,000 copies in Hebrew translation (<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3172380,00.html>, accessed Dec. 1, 2015) (Hebrew). There are also active "Potter" websites in Hebrew, such as: www.hportal.co.il (accessed Dec. 1, 2015).

Telemachus in Jeans: Adam Bahdaj's Reception of the Myth about Odysseus's Son

Joanna Kłos

In her book on the reception of the *Odyssey*, Edith Hall claims that the reason why Homer's masterpiece is so often rewritten and reinterpreted in many cultures, is the wide range of characters appearing in the poem: gods and humans, men and women, young and old, freemen and slaves. With such a spectrum the *Odyssey* provides contemporary authors with numerous points of reference. As Hall claims in her book:

[...] the strength of the entire cast means that it has been possible to rewrite the *Odyssey* from the perspective of old men, of teenage girls, of Elpenor, of Circe's swine, and even of Polyphemus.¹

The chapter discusses two young adult novels which retell the *Odyssey*, setting it in 1970s Poland; they retell it from the point of view of Telemachus—the Homeric character that fits perfectly the purposes of literature for children and young adults.²

First, let us consider some facts about the author. Adam Bahdaj (1918–1985)³ was one of the most popular writers of young adult novels in Poland in the

1 Edith Hall, *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey* (London–New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 4. See also Geoff Miles, “Chasing Odysseus in Twenty-First Century Children's Fiction,” in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature: Heroes and Eagles* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 213–232.

2 See Maria Nikolajeva, “Children's Literature,” in Paula S. Fass, ed., *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World* (London–New York: Routledge, 2013), 321: “An actual or symbolically abandoned child is the most prominent protagonist in children's literature. [...] the function of parental figures is to be absent, physically or emotionally, allowing the protagonists to test their independence in a safe mode and the readers to have a vicarious experience of freedom.”

3 For Bahdaj's short biography, see Ilona Szewczyk, “Adam Bahdaj (1918–1985),” in Katarzyna Marciniak, Elżbieta Olechowska, Joanna Kłos, and Michał Kucharski, eds., *Polish Literature for Children & Young Adults Inspired by Classical Antiquity. A Catalogue* (Warsaw: Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” 2013), 30 (freely available here: www.al.uw.edu.pl/omc_catalogue, accessed Dec. 2, 2015).

1960s and 1970s. Many of his books, having become bestsellers, were translated into different languages and had dozens of reprintings in Poland, as well as film adaptations, which are still sometimes aired on Polish television. The plots of the most important of Bahdaj's works have many common motifs—the main character is usually a perceptive, smart adolescent (in most cases a boy), who with an ironic sense of humour and using witty language tells of an amazing adventure in which he and his friends were involved during their vacation. *Wakacje z duchami* [Holidays with ghosts],⁴ for example, is a “Scooby Doo”-style novel about a group of friends who, as a club of “young detectives,” solve the mystery of a haunted castle, finding out that it is not ghosts but a gang of thieves who are staying there. *Podróż za jeden uśmiech* [A journey for a smile]⁵ tells of the adventures of two boys who, while travelling to the seaside, lose their way and have to hitchhike across Poland to find their parents. *Kapelusz za 100 tysięcy* [A hat worth a hundred thousand]⁶ is a novel about a girl who, during her holiday at the seaside, meets a friendly pensioner and helps him find a missing hat in which he had hidden a winning lottery ticket; in the course of the novel she also foils a dangerous gang.

Thus, at first glance, one can see that for Bahdaj a typical formula for a story that could be entertaining for young readers as well as didactic included travelling, experiencing the unknown, solving mysteries, and meeting different people. The same atmosphere of adventure can be found in the two volumes that are discussed in this chapter: *Telemach w dżinsach* [Telemachus in jeans] from 1979 and its sequel, *Gdzie twój dom, Telemachu?* [Where is your home, Telemachus?], published in 1982.⁷ These novels also include a new aspect, not present in the books mentioned before, namely, reference to a myth, consisting in the identification of the main character with Telemachus.

Before analysing this reference, it is important to consider the plot.

Maciek Łańko is fifteen years old and lives in a boarding school near Warsaw. He is an orphan: his father abandoned the family years ago, and his mother died. One day Maciek is watching TV with a couple of workers from the nearby factory—and two of them recognise in a man interviewed on a news programme Maciek's father, Waldemar. The man says that he works in the city of Ełk. Maciek decides to set out on a journey and find him there. Unfortunately,

4 Adam Bahdaj, *Wakacje z duchami* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1962).

5 Adam Bahdaj, *Podróż za jeden uśmiech* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1964).

6 Adam Bahdaj, *Kapelusz za 100 tysięcy* (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1966).

7 For the first editions of both novels, see Adam Bahdaj, *Telemach w dżinsach* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1979); idem, *Gdzie twój dom, Telemachu?* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982).

chased by a ticket inspector, he jumps from the train, loses his way in the forest, and then nearly drowns when trying to cross a lake in a leaky canoe. He is saved by a taxi driver, a kind, wise, and straightforward man called Jojo. Jojo takes Maciek to Ełk, but there it turns out that—due to an unsuccessful relationship with a woman—Waldemar has already left the city. Thus, after a couple of other adventures, Maciek goes to look for him in Gdańsk, a large Polish city by the seaside, where he desperately tries to find Waldemar among thousands of workers at a huge construction site. In one of the last scenes of the first volume, Maciek finally meets Waldemar, but the man tells him that he is not his father, but his father's cousin. Both of them were given the same name and are similar, hence the confusion. It turns out that Maciek's real father left Poland years ago and no one has heard of him since.

At the beginning of the sequel we find out that Maciek's uncle has decided to settle down. He is married and has moved into his wife's house in a small town called Błażejów. He invites Maciek to live there. The boy accepts, but soon regrets it, as he constantly argues with his uncle's stepson. After a couple of months Jojo, whom Maciek met in the first volume, invites him to stay with him for a while in the Bieszczady mountains, where he now works as a lumberjack; there, experiencing different adventures with Jojo, Maciek finally feels happy, so he decides to move in and live with Jojo instead. Bahdaj thus offers us a story about an adolescent who travels across the country to search for his identity and for his place in the world. During his quest he meets a wide variety of characters, but the two most important ones, who help him answer the question of what type of lifestyle and system of values he really wants to follow in his life, are Waldemar, the uncle whom Maciek found instead of his father, and Jojo, the friend with whom he decided to stay.

In considering the similarities between the novels' plots and that of the *Odyssey*, I would like to argue that Bahdaj chose two ways of referring to the myth. The first one, i.e., Maciek's identifying himself as a modern Telemachus, is very direct and clear even for readers who have never heard of the myth. The second one consists in more indirect allusions, comprehensible only to those familiar with the details of Odysseus's story.

The direct references can be found in the allusions to Telemachus's journey, included in the first part of the cycle. The fragment cited below, for instance, comes from the very beginning of the novel, when Maciek, travelling by train to Ełk, begins to read—not for the first time—the story about Telemachus:⁸

8 This and all other quotations—translated by this chapter's author—are taken from the edition: Adam Bahdaj, *Telemach w dżinsach* (Warszawa: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985).

Somehow I managed to sneak into one of the compartments and I found a standing place [...]. I was really bored, so bored that I took Parandowski's *Trojan War* out of the bag and, standing only on one foot, started to read. The book opened by chance at the description of Telemachus's voyage to Nestor in Argos. And somehow it made me feel better. I knew this book very well, so I was just browsing it, recalling the more interesting parts.

My imagination began to work. I saw Ithaca—Telemachus's home island. The foaming sea around him and a few white sails on the sea. Vineyards and olive groves on the shore, and among the groves—Odysseus's mansion. And a young boy, who every day goes out on the shore, looking for his father's ship. The father hasn't come back for ten years. Everyone thinks that he died, and that he will never step on the rocks of his home island again. Only Telemachus and his mother believe that one day the boat will appear on the horizon, and then they will see Odysseus's weather-beaten, tanned face, and they will see him coming down from the boat on the rocky coast....

Suddenly I felt moved. I realised that I, Maciek Łańko, Waldemar's son, am waiting to meet my father just as Telemachus did. (7)

It should be emphasised that what Maciek reads is not Homer's epic, not even the Polish translation of it, but its prose adaptation by Jan Parandowski (1895–1978), one of the greatest Polish classical philologists.⁹ Parandowski's work—released for the first time in the 1930s as two separate volumes: *Wojna trojańska* [Trojan War] and *Przygody Odyseusza* [Odysseus's adventures],¹⁰ but from the 1950s to the 1970s reissued as a single volume entitled *Trojan War*¹¹—is written with a very rich, elegant, yet comprehensible language. The fact that Maciek reads this adaptation suggests that Bahdaj is trying to promote it; namely, he recommends that his young readers, who may be unfamiliar with

9 On Parandowski, see Katarzyna Marciniak, "(De)constructing Arcadia: Polish Struggles with History and Differing Colours of Childhood in the Mirror of Classical Mythology," in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature: Heroes and Eagles* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 61–67.

10 Jan Parandowski, *Wojna trojańska* (Lwów: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, [ca. 1930]); idem, *Przygody Odyseusza* (Lwów: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, [ca. 1935]).

11 See the following editions: Jan Parandowski, *Wojna trojańska* (Warszawa: various publishing houses, 1956, 1958, 1961, 1967, 1976, etc.).

the Trojan myth, read a book which will present it to them in a simple and accessible way.

What is also important is the conclusion that Maciek arrives at after reading. Although his journey has already started, he does not compare himself to Telemachus *searching* for Odysseus, but still thinks of himself as Telemachus *waiting* for him. Therefore, in this particular part of the story, Maciek does not look at his current situation, but rather sums up what his life has been like until this very moment: one spent waiting in passive expectation for his father; it was a time when he was still not mature enough to begin the quest by himself.

However, another passage, containing a vivid dialogue between Maciek and Jojo right after their first meeting, changes this perspective. When they are discussing the relationship between books and real life, Maciek admits that he loves books, but Jojo replies that books are rather distant from the problems of everyday life. Then Maciek begins to argue fervently, claiming that for him books have much in common with reality, as in books one can see the reflection of his or her situation:

[Maciek:] – You can find real life in books as well. Sometimes, when reading a book, I feel as if I wrote it myself. Once upon a time, probably even before I was born. [...]

[Jojo:] – Well, well, I see that you're an erudite. And you have your head screwed on the right way. What have you read recently?

– Parandowski's *Trojan War* and the *Odyssey*.

– What is it about, American Indians?

I sniggered, but then I felt silly, because this man didn't have to read the *Odyssey*. [...]

– The *Odyssey* is about ancient Greeks.

– Let them rest in peace – he joked. – I am more interested in what's happening around me now, what I live with.

– I'm sure you would love it, if you read it. The main character is Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, who was fighting in Troy.

– I think I've seen a movie about Troy. I remember that at the end they drove a wooden horse with soldiers hidden inside it into the city. I liked it. So, what happened to that Odysseus?

– He was fighting in Troy for ten years, and then, for another ten years, he wandered the seas and various lands, and he had many fantastic adventures. And Telemachus, his only son, was waiting for him on Ithaca.

– And he could hardly wait to see him. [...] And now it's time to go to bed. I can see that you're pretty tired.

[...] Through a half-open tent flap I could see the fire dying down and the stranger sitting next to it. He was smoking a cigarette. Absentmindedly he was sipping tea from his mess cup. Suddenly I realised why I had started to tell him about Telemachus, and why I had been reading this book recently. I realised that I was looking for my Odysseus. (18–19)

What should be emphasised here is that Maciek's musings on the *Odyssey* are presented with some crucial details of the poem's plot. It may be thus assumed that Bahdaj was aware that some of his young readers might not know the great ancient epic and wanted to encourage them to read it.

Another important thing to notice is that Maciek, while arguing why the books are so closely connected to life, refers to a specific type of story—he uses the phrase “once upon a time, [...] before I was born,” by which he may mean myths and/or fairy tales.¹² This may be interpreted as a positive valuing of myth as a narrative with a universal message. In this passage Bahdaj once again acts as the advocate of classical tradition, trying to promote reading books about myths. Thus, the passage about Maciek's identification with Telemachus promotes the reading not only of Homer or Parandowski, but of mythology in general.

Moreover, at the end of this passage Maciek is still thinking about Telemachus's story. This is another moment when he realises how similar he is to the prince of Ithaca—but what is worth emphasising is that now he says that he is Telemachus *searching* for his father. This shows how after a couple of adventures his character has evolved. He no longer thinks of himself as a young Telemachus, waiting for his father's ship at the shore, but rather as a mature young man, actively participating in events.

It is also interesting to have a look at some passages in which the author refers not to Telemachus, but to Odysseus. These are passages connected mostly to two characters: Maciek's uncle, Waldemar, and his friend and guardian, Jojo. The allusions to the myth in these fragments are much more indirect—Odysseus's name is not mentioned even once in the context of these two characters. We need to know the content of the Homeric epic rather well to notice that both men share some of Odysseus's traits.

First let us look at Waldemar. The fragment cited below comes from one of the first scenes of the novel, when Waldemar appears on TV and Maciek thinks that he is his father:

12 For illuminating accounts of the lure of bookishness, see Maria Tatar, *Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009); and Francis Spufford, *The Child that Books Built* (London: Faber, 2002).

Father took the cigarette out of his mouth and threw it carelessly behind. Then the reporter's off-screen voice said:

– Mr. Łańko, your supervisor told me that you are the best worker in your team. Could you please tell us how you achieve such great results?

Father smiled sourly, as if he scorned the reporter.

– Well, – he said facetiously – it's all about doing your job... And we are an integrated team. So it's not such a big deal. I've worked on many construction sites. If you have flair, the work just goes on. [...]

Bośkiewicz, sitting at the table, started to laugh loudly.

– Oh my, my, Waldek [i.e. Waldemar]. What a reply.

And Kosiak added cheerfully:

– He hasn't changed a bit. He's always been shrewd and he knows how to retort. (5)

We can see that the character is described as a shrewd, astute man who has a sharp tongue and “always [...] knows how to retort”—just like the mythical Odysseus.

Waldemar is not only smart, but also very good-looking and well-built. In one of the subsequent episodes, where Maciek asks a cleaning lady working in a hotel where Waldemar had lived for a short time what he was like, she tells him that he was cheerful, liked to have fun, and—more importantly—he acted like a single man:

– But why are you asking so much about him? Is he your relative or friend?

– He's my father.

She was surprised.

– Father? That's impossible! Everyone here thought that he was single.

I smiled sourly—what else could I do?—and suddenly I felt that my cheeks and ears were burning, and that I was muddle-headed again.

That was not how I had imagined my father. The cleaning lady described him briefly: hard-working—that I knew from the TV interview—keen on having fun and buying drinks and joyful. To put it briefly: a bird that had escaped his family cage, wandered carelessly around and, moreover, pretended to be single. And that was the man I was looking for. (33)

The scene where Maciek realises that he is looking for a man who “pretended to be single” offers yet another parallel between Waldemar and the mythical Odysseus, who, travelling from island to island, became involved with a number of women.

Another thing Waldemar and Odysseus have in common is reputation. In some parts of the Homeric poem Odysseus tells his adventures himself, but he is also often talked about or songs are performed about his deeds. Clearly, this is not exactly the case with Waldemar: a worker cannot be as widely recognised as a king; however, before Maciek meets Waldemar, all that he knows about him is based on other people's memories and opinions. This aspect is stressed in the fragment when Jojo tells Maciek that he should try to judge the facts by himself and separate what is true from mere gossip:

[Jojo:] – You're right, no one can replace a father. And your dad, as you say, is wandering around the world. But if I were you, I'd try to find him. Remember that people say lots of things about others, but you shouldn't always believe them. According to what the cleaning lady told you, your dad is not a Saint Francis of Assisi or an ideal knight. Just a man with weaknesses, like everybody else. [...] There is one thing that I ask of you, though, don't count on him too much, because you could easily get disappointed.

[Maciek:] – That's exactly what I thought. (46)

However, although Waldemar has some of Odysseus's traits, he fails to become a male authority figure for Maciek. We learn this from the sequel, where it turns out that Waldemar decided to settle down for a very cynical reason—he was simply short of money, so he decided to marry a rich widow. What is more, while living with his uncle, Maciek is constantly accused wrongly by Waldemar's wife of the deeds that her own son has committed; very rarely does Waldemar have enough courage to oppose his wife and defend Maciek in her presence. Also, he tells the boy that the best way to handle problems is not to face them, but to wait patiently until they somehow get solved on their own. Thus, although he has the mythical hero's appearance, sharp tongue, and reputation as a heartbreaker, Maciek's uncle is quite a coward when it comes to solving problems. That is one of the reasons why Maciek decides to leave his house and move to Bieszczady to live with Jojo.

Jojo also shares many of Odysseus's qualities, as is evidenced by numerous passages. For instance, at first sight Maciek notices that Jojo also has a cunning look (17), and he has a feeling that they have known each other for a very long time—"as if they were relatives" (in Polish: "jakby z rodziny," 21). Also, from the very beginning of their acquaintance, Jojo and Maciek, while talking, like to tease each other in a friendly way, using witty epithets, lots of idioms, smart retorts, and the like. In a few such situations Jojo addresses Maciek as "your highness" or "prince," and Maciek calls him "your majesty" (see for

example p. 39); these are of course jokes, but they may be a hidden allusion to the relation between Odysseus and Telemachus, i.e., the king and the prince of Ithaca. Moreover—although one could argue whether this is an allusion to the *Odyssey*—before they get to know each other's names Jojo introduces himself as a "stranger." Maciek replies to him in the same way (22). One might associate this situation with the episode from the *Odyssey* where Polyphemus asks who made him suffer so much—and Odysseus hides his real name, introducing himself as "no one." However, it must be stressed once again that in this case, the context from the novel differs greatly from that of the poem, so this parallel is not certain.

The allusions presented above may seem jocular and not very insightful; however, the following passages, quotations from Jojo's longer monologues, suggest clearly that Jojo's similarity to Odysseus is not only apparent, as was Waldemar's, but that the ethos of Odysseus is a crucial part of his life philosophy. For instance, when Maciek asks him what he does for a living, Jojo explains that he is "a positive tramp," a vagabond who wanders from one place to another not because he has nowhere to stay, but because he wants to gain experience and is looking forward to amazing adventures. He also explains the reason for his wanderings: he wants to find "the fifth cardinal direction of the world" (in Polish: "piąta strona świata," 47)—which may stand for some abstract goal, something which does not exist, but is definitely worth looking for. Why? Because, according to Jojo, that is what happiness consists in—travelling, exploring, and searching. As he puts it in one of his monologues: "[...] the greatest happiness consists in looking for happiness" (in Polish: "[...] największe szczęście to dążenie do niego," 37).

For the mythical Odysseus, neverending wandering was a part of his destiny; for Jojo this is a lifestyle that he has chosen himself:

[Jojo:] – Man, I've been on all the largest construction sites in Poland. I've worked in Turosszów and Nowa Huta, at the Włocławek dam and the "Odra" cement mill, I have built [a nitrogen fertiliser factory] "Azoty" in Puławy, and [a petrochemical factory] "Petrochemia" in Płock, and once, after I had read in the newspaper that they were looking for lumberjacks in the Bieszczady mountains, I went there as well, so as not to let our beeches and firs decay. [...]

[Maciek:] – And haven't you gotten bored with this endless wandering?

[Jojo:] – I've told you, I can't stay in one place for too long, I like to explore the country, meet people. How can you get bored with it? Those who get bored are sissies whose only worry is to have a full stomach and to buy a "Syrenka" car. They start collecting clothes, furniture, pots and they

become enslaved by their possessions. And me... I am a free man and I like to breathe in those places where something interesting is going on. Nobody's going to make me settle down. Oh, no, my friend. I will never let them tame me. (39)

Carrying out his plan, Jojo works in different professions and in different parts of the country; this enables him to feel like a free man. For Jojo people who are passive and stay in one place throughout their lives—he disapprovingly calls them “sissies”—cannot be fully free as they are too closely tied to material possessions. Among the goods that can enslave Jojo mentions pots, clothes, furniture, but also Syrenka—a “Siren” car. The Syrenka was a very popular Polish car produced between the 1950s and 1970s in Warsaw. Interestingly, though, in 1979, when Bahdaj's novel was published, Syrenkas had not been produced in Poland for seven years, as they had been replaced by Fiats. So why does Jojo refer to a “Siren” car instead of a Fiat? Most likely this is yet another witty reference to the myth. Jojo is freer than most of his contemporaries, as he avoids the temptation of settling down, a temptation symbolised by a “Siren.” This is exactly what Odysseus did, when he found a method to escape the Sirens, who were tempting him to stay forever on their island. Thus, it seems clear that for Jojo becoming a modern Odysseus is not confined to appearance and charm; on the contrary, for him it is the meaning of his life. Once again Jojo turns out to be better than Waldemar, who—as mentioned before—decides to settle down for financial reasons.

It is also interesting to set the fragment in which Jojo briefly defines his life philosophy against the social and economic background of the 1970s in Poland. The materialist attitude, so despised by Jojo, was the result of the communist authorities' characteristic policy of that period. The previous decade, marked by poverty and budget deficits, had seen a growing discontent, which led to workers' strikes in 1970. Thus, the ruling socialist party—the Polish United Workers Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*—PZPR), led by the first secretary Edward Gierek (1913–2001)—decided to introduce a new policy, the aim of which was to ease public concern by improving citizens' living conditions. Therefore, one of Gierek's priorities was to make big investments which would create new workplaces (in particular in the heavy industry sector, which is reflected in Jojo's story), to provide many new flats, and to raise salaries as well as to freeze prices.¹³ If one also takes into consideration the growth of

13 For a concise synthesis of the social and economic politics of that time in Poland, see Andrzej Friszke, *Polska Gierka* [Gierek's Poland] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995), 5–24, 30–49.

production and relatively improved provisions, it seems clear why the adults living at that time were so focused on work and consumption. One could earn more than before and then spend the money, for example, on a car or furniture for the newly allotted flat. On the other hand, although more goods were available on the market, to get furniture, electric equipment, or imported food products one often had to spend hours queuing or use his or her acquaintances (as people used to build the kind of social networks that enabled them to obtain goods by pulling strings).¹⁴ Thus, both earning money and buying goods took a lot of time, in particular for those who had children to provide for.

Clearly, this was a problem for the young. On the one hand, the adults did their best to provide them with the best possible life conditions. On the other hand, however—as Hanna Świda-Ziemba, a famous Polish sociologist researching the lives of youths in the communist era, claimed—family life at times was characterised by an “underlying anxiety triggered by attempts to fulfil economic needs as well as by complaints about one’s prestige and economic situation.”¹⁵ Parents concerned mainly with their family’s welfare were “hardly aware of the adolescents’ psychological and emotional needs.”¹⁶ This, according to Świda-Ziemba, made many young people detest a lifestyle focused on material goods and competition for those goods. Opposing it, they chose their own ways of living based on values such as individualism and internal independence (in Polish: “podmiotowość”) as well as on authentic, unselfish social relations. Świda-Ziemba quotes many teenagers and students from that time, expressed in interviews and sociological surveys, who made statements such as: “I hate money, everyone else is trying to get it,” “money has become an idol in our society,” or “one should have his or her own identity and live according to it.”¹⁷ As Świda-Ziemba points out, these surveys let one observe how sometimes in the 1970s Poland’s young people had a very critical attitude to the system, which for them stood not only for the ideology imposed by the government or institutions, but also for the acceptance of material property as the cornerstone of society.¹⁸ We can observe, then, that Jojo’s priorities and his search for independence have much in common with Bahdaj’s young readers’

14 To find out more about the realities of the so-called “queue society,” see, e.g., Małgorzata Mazurek, *Spółczesność kolejki. O doświadczeniach niedoboru 1945–1989* [The queuing society: Experiencing shortages 1945–1989] (Warszawa: TRIO, 2010), 33–70.

15 Hanna Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL. Portrety pokoleń w kontekście historii* [The young in the Polish People’s Republic: The portraits of generations in the historical context] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010), 488.

16 *Ibid.*, 487.

17 *Ibid.*, 505, 507.

18 *Ibid.*, 506–509.

probable way of thinking. The author, although already quite old when he wrote the novel, knew very well what the generation growing up in the 1970s thought, and he perfectly understood their needs. That is why he decided to include a figure of authority who knew very well how to find inner freedom, and who—thanks to his wisdom—could easily escape the temptations of the modern “Sirens,” i.e., material goods.

Jojo can also be regarded as an authority figure because, unlike Waldemar, he is not a coward—he always faces his problems. He believes that sincere speech is the best solution, and that one should not avoid difficult situations. That is why, at a certain point, he is not afraid to face two smugglers who want to attack him. Hence, for Maciek—but also for young readers of the novel—he is the best exemplar of courageous, manly behaviour; an exemplar that Odysseus could provide Telemachus with.

From the many mythical motifs in the plot, we can conclude that Bahdaj's books deal not only with how to be a modern Telemachus, but also how to be a good Odysseus—a wise male authority, a caring father, and a good moral example for a young man. This leads to the question: are we really dealing with a young adult novel only, or does it also contain a message addressed to adults?¹⁹ The answer seems clearer if one briefly sums up the differences between the explicit and the “hidden” allusions to the myth. The Telemachus-related aspects, corresponding to the adolescent life, are explained very explicitly and are easy to understand even for someone who is a beginner in the world of myths. At the same time, the Odysseus-related, more “adult-like” questions of how to be a good father/male guardian can be fully interpreted and appreciated only by someone who knows the content of Homeric epic. Thus, further reading, so promoted by Bahdaj, is crucial for understanding the other mythical motifs in the novel. In my opinion, the message that Bahdaj wants to convey is: you are reading my book now, and you probably cannot understand all of it, but please, read the *Odyssey*, read Parandowski's adaptation, and then, maybe some years later, you can come back to my story and find out what problems one can encounter not only when being a son, but also when being a father.²⁰

One of the most important conclusions of the debates following the conference *Our Mythical Childhood* was that the aim of children's literature is to

19 On the narrative concept of the implied reader in children's literature, see Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

20 See, *inter alia*, Zohar Shavit, “The Ambivalent Status of Texts. The Case of Children's Literature,” *Poetics Today* 1.3 (1980): 75–86, on the phenomenon of literature written for children in such a way that adults would find it attractive as well.

address the readers' level, while at the same time inspiring them to reach a higher level. That is exactly what Bahdaj does. Using a complex scheme of mythical references, he encourages his readers to learn, and to become more competent in the field of classical culture, which may prepare them to handle some more serious issues.²¹ In short, he encourages them to become mature—just like the mythical Telemachus and Maciek from the novel had to do.

As we find out from Wilfried Stroh's chapter in this volume, Homer, according to some sources, was the first author of children's literature.²² I share this belief—not because I am convinced that he really wrote poems for (his own) children, but rather because I believe that by creating this excellent motif of Telemachus and Odysseus, i.e., a father–son relation, as well as that of Telemachus's journey, which allows him to pass from adolescence to manhood, Homer provided an extremely important source of inspiration for children's literature. Bahdaj's novels are an example of how this inspiration can be employed to create a clever and creative narrative, which appealed to teenagers dealing with the harsh reality of 1970s Poland, but which also may seem convincing to today's adolescents.

21 See Holly Anderson and Morag Styles, *Teaching through Texts: Promoting Literacy through Popular and Literary Texts in the Primary Classroom* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Peter Hollindale, *The Hidden Teacher: Ideology and Children's Reading* (Woodchester: Thimble Press, 2011) for considerations of aspects of education in children's reading.

22 See Stroh, "From Aesop to *Asterix Latinus*: A Survey of Latin Books for Children."

An Attempt on Theseus by Kir Bulychev: Travelling to Virtual Antiquity

Hanna Paulouskaya

Maybe it was the cause of the current crisis of science fiction: our reality has always been more fantastic than fiction!¹

KIR BULYCHEV, *Kak stat fantastom*²

Introduction

An Attempt on Theseus was written by the Soviet science fiction writer Kir Bulychev.³ This author wrote a great number of novels and stories in this genre and was especially famous for his children's literature. The plot of most of Bulychev's works takes place in a distant future and an intergalactic reality. The surprise is that the person hidden behind this pen name, Igor Mozheyko, was a specialist in the history of Southeast Asia.

Although a historian and an expert on Burma (Myanmar) and other Asian territories, he placed his literary heroes in the future and only rarely used historical or ancient motifs in his science fiction works. One exception was the book *7 iz 37 chudes* [The 7 of 37 wonders]⁴ written for children, which is about thirty-seven ancient wonders from different continents, including the seven wonders of the ancient world. However, these stories were not fictional. By contrast, *Pokusheniye na Teseya* [An attempt on Theseus]⁵ is a novel with a plot

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- 1 Hereinafter translation from Russian into English is made by me [H.P.], unless otherwise stated. A note on transliteration: in transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet we chose the BGN/PCGN romanisation system, developed by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use. For purposes of simplification, we have converted *ě* to *yo*, *-iy* and *-yy* endings to *-y*, and omitted apostrophes for *ъ* and *ь*.
 - 2 Kir Bulychev, "Kak stat fantastom" [How to become a science fiction writer], *Yesli* [If] 11/81 (1999): 274.
 - 3 A more proper transliteration of the name "Булычев" would be "Bulychyov," but the form "Bulychev" is commonly accepted in British and American bibliography, so this spelling of the name will be used.
 - 4 Kir Bulychev, *7 iz 37 chudes* [The 7 of 37 wonders] (Moskva: Nauka, 1980).
 - 5 Kir Bulychev, *Pokusheniye na Teseya* [An attempt on Theseus], in the series "Galakticheskaya politsiya" [Galactic police] (Moskva: Izdatelstvo AST, 2003; ed. pr. 1994).

centering on Classical Antiquity, as its very title indicates. Although, in fact, Antiquity here is only a virtual world created inside the world of the future.⁶

This surprising fact drew my attention and I therefore decided to explore the works of Kir Bulychev, especially *An Attempt on Theseus*, in order to find out why Antiquity is present (or absent) in his works. Such an analysis, as a case study of an important Russian writer, promises to shed light on the wider phenomenon of Soviet (and post-Soviet) children's literature from the 1960s to the 2000s with regard to the reception of ancient culture.

Kir Bulychev versus Igor Mozheyko

Kir Bulychev was one of the most popular Soviet science fiction writers for children.⁷ His real name was Igor Vsevolodovich Mozheyko (1934–2003). He was born and lived in Moscow. His father's family belonged to the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, although this was not made public during the Soviet period.

Igor Mozheyko was a philologist and a historian. In 1965 he earned his Ph.D. and in 1981 his professorial degree ("habilitation") on the history of Burma. He worked for the magazines *Vokrug Sveta* [Around the world] and *Aziya i Afrika Segodnia* [Asia and Africa today] and from 1963 for the Institute of Oriental Studies in the USSR Academy of Sciences. As a historian Mozheyko wrote articles and books about the history of Burma, the history of Southeast Asia, and Buddhism.⁸ He was also fond of phaleristics and published catalogues of Russian medals and orders and articles about them.⁹

Mozheyko wrote his first fiction works in 1965. These were tales about Alice, "the little girl nothing ever happens to," one of his main protagonists until the end of his life.¹⁰ There is a story that the first time Mozheyko wrote

6 For the use of fairy tales and mythology in science fiction see: Tatyana Chernyshova, "Potrebnost v udivitelnom i priroda fantastiki" [The need for the miraculous and the nature of science fiction], *Voprosy literatury* 5 (1979): 211–232.

7 About Kir Bulychev in the context of Soviet children's literature see: Irina Arzamastseva and Sofya Nikolayeva, *Detskaya literatura* [Children's literature] (Moskva: Akademiya, 3rd 2005; ed. pr. 2000). About Kir Bulychev's theoretical views on science fiction see: Konstantin Frumkin, *Filosofiya i psikhologiya fantastiki* [Philosophy and psychology of science fiction] (Moskva: Editorial URSS, 2004).

8 Bibliography of non-fiction and scientific works of Igor Mozheyko is available at http://www.rusf.ru/kb/books/index_n.htm (accessed July 30, 2016).

9 Ibid.

10 Kir Bulychev, "Devochka, s kotoroy nichego ne sluchitsya: Rasskazy o zhizni malenkey devochki v XXI veke, zapisannye yeyo ottsom" [The girl nothing ever happens to: Stories

science fiction (“Kogda vyermerli dinozavry” [When dinosaurs died]) for *Iskatel* [The finder], was because the magazine could not print its intended piece due to censorship.¹¹ However, Mozheyko later denied that this was the first short novel he had written, arguing that the first one was about Alice.¹² In any case, it was during this time that his transformation from historian into science fiction writer took place.

Mozheyko always used pen names for his literary activity. One of his first was “a prose writer from Burma Maun Sein Ji.” However, his most frequent pen name, which caught on more than the others, was “Kir Bulychev.” Actually, Mozheyko never wrote fiction under his real name, so it is more accurate to use the form “Kir Bulychev” when talking about his literary activity.

Kir Bulychev wrote a large number of novels and stories, both for children and adults.¹³ Most of them could be described as science fiction, with elements of detective and adventure stories. They are organised in multiple series. Here I will consider only two of them—the most important series written for children. The first one is the aforementioned series about Alisa Seleznyova called “Alisa” [Alice] or “Prikllyucheniya Alisy” [The adventures of Alice].¹⁴ The second

about the life of a little girl in the twenty-first century written by her father], *Mir prikllyucheniy* [The world of adventure] 11 (1965): 636–659. The story had several translations into English: Kirill Bulychev, “Life is So Dull for Little Girls,” trans. Helen Saltz Jacobson, in Robert Magidoff, ed., *Russian Science Fiction* (New York–London: New York University Press–University of London Press, 1968), 107–123; Kirill Bulychev, “The Girl Nothing Happens To,” in Alexandr Abramov and Georgi Gurevich, et al., eds., *Journey Across Three Worlds: Science-Fiction Stories*, trans. Gladys Evans, with a foreword by Georgi Gurevich (Moscow: Mir, 1973), 303–342; Kirill Bulychev, *Alice*, trans. and adapt. by Mirra Ginsburg (New York–London: Macmillan, 1977); Kir Bulychev, “The Girl Who Triumphs Over Everything,” trans. S.A. Wakefield, *Soviet Literature* 8 (1983): 172–181; Kir Bulychev, “The Little Girl Nothing Ever Happens To,” in eiusdem, *Alice the Girl from Earth*, trans. John H. Costello, ill. Evgeny Migunov (Peabody: Fossicker Press, 2001), 9–50.

11 Kir Bulychev, “Kak ya stal pisatelem” [How I became a writer], interview by S. Yeleseyev, *Nasha zhizn* [Our life] (Pestovo), Jan. 18, 1992, <http://rusf.ru/kb/int/index.htm> (accessed Sept. 13, 2015); Kir Bulychev, “Kak vy stali fantastom” [How you became a science fiction writer], *Leninsky put* (Saratov State University) 12/1612 (Apr. 11, 1983): 4, http://www.fandom.ru/about_fan/bulychev_01.htm (accessed Sept. 13, 2013).

12 Bulychev, “Kak stat fantastom,” *Yesli* 10/80 (1999): 275.

13 See: Mikhail Manakov, *Bibliografiya Kira Bulycheva. Khudozhestvennyye proizvedeniya na russkom yazyke. Otdelnye izdaniya* [Bibliography of Kir Bulychev. Fiction in Russian. Books] (Chelyabinsk: Reikh A.P., 1999); Vladimir Kolyadin, Aleksei Lyakhov, Mikhail Manakov, and Andrei Popov, *Kir Bulychev v xx veke: Bibliografichesky spravochnik* [Kir Bulychev in the 20th century: Bibliography] (Chelyabinsk: Okolitsa, 2001).

14 Kir Bulychev, *Prikllyucheniya Alisy: Fantasticheskiye povesti* [The adventures of Alice: Science fiction stories] (Moskva: AST, Astrel, 2000).

one is a later series, written in the 1990s, called “Galakticheskaya Politsiya” [Galactic police], or “InterGPol”, or “Kora” [Kore],¹⁵ which focuses on a woman named Kore, who is supposed to be an adult Alice. Kore is an agent of the InterGalactic Police—InterGPol.

Bulychev’s literary activity can be divided into a few periods relating to the political transformations in the country where he lived: 1965–1991, 1991–1997, 1997–2003. The atmosphere in his novels changes according to these transformations. The writer continued publishing some of his series throughout his life, e.g., “Alice.” Some appeared in later periods; “Kore” was written from 1994–1997, and he continued writing “Reka Khronos” [The Chronos River]—an unfinished series, until the end of his life.

Alice, the Girl from the Earth

Alice Seleznyova derived her name from the writer’s daughter Alisa, who was four years old when the first story appeared. The literary Alice is six years old in the first stories but grows up over time (to twelve years old in the final novel). She is a pupil, “a normal schoolgirl from the future.” She lives during the second half of the twenty-first century. She is a young scientist, whose main interest is exobiology, although she also has a profound knowledge of other disciplines as well:

Alice... Alice, Kolya thought. The name seemed to be familiar to him. Maybe she was that Alice the boys waited for on Gogol Boulevard?
 “Has she been into outer space?” he asked.
 “Yes. Many times. She is quite a well-known exobiologist.”
 “Do tell!” Kolya could not believe it. “She’s only a child.”
 “It’s you, who are a child! It doesn’t matter how old someone is, if he knows his business well, does it?”¹⁶

Alice is very kind, empathic, honest, and courageous. She is an example for every young reader, although she is always getting into trouble, which is, however, the reason for all her adventures. Alice knows a lot of languages. She is, for example, fluent in English, which was an exception for a pupil from the

15 Kir Bulychev, “Galakticheskaya Politsiya” [Galactic police], in 4 books: *Na polputi s obryva* [At halfway into a ravine]; *Pokusheniye na Teseya* [An attempt on Theseus]; *Predskazatel proshlogo* [Forteller of the past]; *Zerkalo zla* [Evil mirror] (Moskva: Lokid, 1994–1996).

16 Kir Bulychev, *Sto let tomu vperyod* [One hundred years ahead], in eiusdem, *Vsyo o devochke s Zemli: Povesti* [All about the girl from Earth: Novels] (St Petersburg: Azbuka, 2012), 397.

Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s, when contacts with the English-speaking world were highly restricted. When asked if she knows any other languages, Alice answers:

“I’m not very capable,” Alice said. “I know only eight languages.”

“What?” Alla [the teacher of English] said.

There was deathly silence in the class. Everybody, even pupils who were poor in English, understood the meaning of this conversation.

“German, Finnish, Czech, French, Hindi, Chinese... Japanese and... and one other [some galactic language].”

“Wow!” Fima Korolyov said. “Tell us something in Japanese.”¹⁷

The World of Alice

The future world Alice lives in differs a lot from any historical reality. It is an ideal world, where most of the people (or even all of them) live according to high ethical standards. There is general prosperity and peace there. Some of the stories even mention the absence of money in this society. In some stories there are no bad characters whatsoever. The society thus reminds one of an ideal communist world.

Michael Hardt discusses the need for internal change to happen in order to motivate any social change:

The key to rethinking revolution is to recognise that revolution is not just about a transformation for democracy. Revolution really requires a transformation of human nature, so that people are capable of democracy.¹⁸

It looks like such a transformation has taken place in the world Bulychev created. Not only the external world, but also the souls (or rather minds) of the people have been transformed.

Such a depiction of the future was, of course, recommended strongly by the Soviet authorities.¹⁹ Isaac Asimov, in his introduction to one of the first collections of Soviet science fiction published in the United States, expresses his

17 Ibid., 487.

18 Michael Hardt, interview by Astra Taylor, in the documentary *Examined Life*, directed by Astra Taylor (DVD: Zeitgeist Films, 2008), 00:50.

19 Vsevolod Revich, “Na zemle i v kosmose. Zаметki o sovetskoy fantastike 1980 goda” [On the land and in space. Notes on the Soviet science fiction in 1980], in *Mir priklycheny*

surprise at the ideal picture of future society that they present.²⁰ He even says some sceptics “might suppose these stories were written strictly for American consumption and are published only in order to confuse us and weaken our will.”²¹ However, these stories were not propaganda for foreigners, but represented a popular way in the USSR of describing the future. The creation of such visions served the popularisation of communist ideas and for this reason was allowed in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, if science fiction had been only written for entertainment, it would most probably have been strictly forbidden.

Mozheyko denied that he created politically loaded fiction. In his memoirs he emphasises that he never belonged to the Soviet Union of Writers or to the Communist Party, and that he therefore was not obliged to follow their instructions. Using a pen name also gave him some space. The writer affirms that his real reason for creating such an ideal world was the genre and the addressee of his stories:

[...] At the same time, when I wrote and write for children I suppose that the written must carry some educational function. Children’s things must be composed by the laws of the fairy tale. Good must win!²²

Literature for children should be gentle. The problem was that literature of other kinds was difficult to publish:

I have never been a PINK writer. But it was not always possible to publish what I wanted. [...] Since I first began to write I had to write for the drawer.²³

Thus, had Bulychev created pessimistic visions of the future they would not have seen the light of day in Soviet times. Another problem for Bulychev was

(Moskva: Detskaya literatura, 1983), available online at: http://books.rusf.ru/unzip/add-on/xussr_mr/revicv23.htm?1/3 (accessed July 20, 2016).

20 Isaac Asimov, “Introduction,” in eiusdem, ed., *More Soviet Science Fiction* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 13.

21 Ibid.

22 Kir Bulychev, *Off-Line Interview. Question 21*, trans. Kir Bulychev, <http://www.rusf.ru/kb/english/int.htm> (accessed Sept. 20, 2013).

23 Ibid. “Pink writer”—an author who writes positive, sugar-sweet narratives, representing everything through rose-colored glasses. “Rozovaya literatura” [Pink literature] was a term used in the 1990s in reference to popular romantic fiction. “Writing for the drawer” was a term, originated in the USSR, meaning to continue writing in hope that there would be time when the political situation would change and publishing would be possible.

his reputation as a “children’s SF writer” in the context of the Soviet Union of the 1970s:

Little by little I gained the reputation of a “kind storyteller.” It was a tedious reputation, because in those days I could only be published by Children’s Literature [Publishing House] and if I asked to add a book of adult fiction to the schedule, Maya Brusilovskaya, the head of the editorial staff, sadly sighed: “Igor, you should understand, there are dozens of worthy science fiction writers in the queue for publication, and all write for adults. But here, in the children’s SF, we have a gap, we have only [Vladislav] Krapivin and you. Write another book about Alice, and we will publish it next year.” So I gave up, because I preferred to publish an optimistic children’s book than not to publish anything.²⁴

In any event, Bulychev wrote a great number of Soviet children’s science fiction works and created optimistic visions of future worlds.

Future versus Past

The future was the main topic for Soviet science fiction throughout this era, to quote Anatoly Britikov (1926–1996), a Russian scholar and critic:

The future for Soviet science fiction is not just a criterion. It is a central object of representation (even if the action takes place in the present or in the past, the story still often tells about ideas, inventions, and—most importantly—the people of the future).²⁵

Nevertheless, even stories about the future may contain some echoes of the past and the ancient world. For example, in his stories describing the future Bulychev tells about a time machine, which is located at the Moscow Time Institute. *Million priklyucheny* [A million adventures], written in 1976, contains important time-travel motifs. Alice and her friends are guests at the Moscow Time Institute, where they are told about the work of different departments. Employees of the historical department go back to the past (travelling to the future is impossible) in order to gain knowledge about unresolved historical

24 Bulychev, “Kak stat fantastom,” *Yesli* 11/81 (1999): 280.

25 Anatoly Britikov, *Russky Sovetsky Nauchno-Fantastichesky Roman* [The Russian Soviet science fiction novel] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970), 13.

questions or to save important artefacts. For example, scientists save manuscripts from the Alexandrian Library before the fire of 48–47 BC or they go to the time and place when “Java man” became a man, in order to witness the process.

These stories sometimes contain allusions to the ancient past, although they do not speak about Classical Antiquity as an object of representation. For example, a part of the novel *A Million Adventures* is called “Novye podvigi Gerakla” [The new adventures of Hercules].²⁶ The story concerns the adventures of a friendly Java man—not a Greek hero—but the first adventure is called “Avgiyeva laboratoriya” [The Augean laboratory], and the Java Hercules uses the same method as his ancient precursor to clean up a laboratory. In “Dzhinn v korable” [A genie in a ship] there is a story about an expedition that was sent to raise the fleet of the legendary “Athenian tyrant Diostur”²⁷ from the bottom of the sea. Diostur’s ship appeared to be a spaceship. Objects and persons in this story often have ancient names: Zeus’s Rocks, the dolphin Medea (Mashka, in earlier stories). Characters in “Zagranichnaya princessa” [An overseas princess] use ancient allusions in their speech: Masha advises Pashka to go into the past to fight with Julius Caesar;²⁸ a newly discovered planet is called Penelope, because the discoverers were planning to return to it and wanted it to wait for them like Ulysses’s wife;²⁹ Svetlana compares Alice holding a snake on her arm with Laocoon;³⁰ and so on.

It is clear that the people of the future represented in the stories (mostly children) have quite a broad knowledge of Classical Antiquity and ancient mythology, as well as of other disciplines. For example, the first appearance of Pashka (Peter) Geraskin in “The Augean Laboratory” occurs in the following manner:

Pasha Geraskin was slowly walking to the station through the coconut alley and reading a book on the way. On the cover was written in large letters: *Myths of Ancient Greece*.

“Please note,” said Mashenka Belaya snidely. “This young man wants to learn how to clean the Augean stables.”

26 Kir Bulychev, *Million priklyucheny* [A million adventures], in eiusdem, *Vsyo o devochke s Zemli: Povesti*, 591–890.

27 Ibid., 623.

28 Ibid., 634.

29 Ibid., 635.

30 Ibid., 805–806.

Pasha heard that, stopped, held the page open with a finger, and said: "I should say that 'Hercules' means 'to perform feats because of the persecution of Hera.' By the way, Hera was the wife of Zeus."³¹

Bulychev's characters, who are placed in the distant future, know ancient history, use mythological metaphors in their everyday life, read mythologies to deepen their knowledge, and share this knowledge with each other, even though their first interest is actually biology. These characters reflect Bulychev's understanding of his readers, or rather the ideal types he wanted his readers to become.

Agent Kore

The "Kore" series was written between 1994 and 1999. Kore was conceived of as a kind of older Alice. She is seventeen years old when we first meet her and has reached the age of twenty-five by the later stories. This character is also a very positive role model. She is a kind and clever person, strong, and sporty, although perhaps not quite as educated as Alice.

Kore is a very beautiful girl. In *An Attempt on Theseus* it is often said that she looks like a goddess, although she is a little bit too tall. So she is often mistaken for a goddess—Kore, of course.

Kore's level of education is alluded to in the first novel of the series—"Detsky ostrov" [Children's island]:

"The first reason," continued Milodar, "is that I distrust you. You are a *tabula rasa* for me, I mean *terra incognita*. Do you understand?"

"Is it in Chinese?" asked Ko [Kore]. They were well-fed at the orphanage, but taught only moderately well.

"It's not important in what language it was said. The meaning is what is important."³²

However, in *An Attempt on Theseus*, Kore knows classical languages quite well:

³¹ Ibid., 594–595.

³² Kir Bulychev, "Detsky ostrov" [Children's island], in eiusdem, *Na polputi s obryva*, "Galakticheskaya politsiya," 84.

Kore remembered suddenly that she wanted to re-read the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and refresh her Latin [*sic!*], rusty because of disuse. She went into the living room to find the book.³³

It is worth observing that Marcus Aurelius wrote in Greek, which emphasises that Bulychev's description of Kore's knowledge or ignorance of Latin is his literary joke (if not his mistake). However, usually Kore is presented as clever and able to learn. Before the trip to Ancient Greece she studies fragments of the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch, the mythologies of Nicholas Kuhn and Alexandra Neikhardt (the most popular children's mythologies in the Soviet Union and today³⁴), and *The Greek Myths* of Robert Graves:

Kore, being a disciplined agent, devoted herself to studies of Ancient Greek, the language Zeus and his family spoke among themselves. She also studied the biography of Theseus, which was interpreted in different ways by various sources.³⁵

However, before she begins her studies she has only a partial knowledge of the Theseus myth:

To be honest, until then she knew only one myth about Theseus. It was Theseus who entered the famous Labyrinth, found a wild-bull Minotaur there and killed him, and thus became the world's first bullfighter. Has Prince Gustav decided to go on a VR-cruise [Virtual Reality-cruise] only to stab the poor bull once again?³⁶

Likewise, after her studies she only knows well the various stories about Theseus and has not checked the meaning of her own name:

"Would you be so kind as to tell us your honourable name?"

"Kore," the girl answered honestly. And as soon as she said the name, she cursed herself. She should have bitten her tongue. Her accidental companions tensed and became sad, so Kore knew she had made a terrible

33 Bulychev, *Pokusheniye na Teseya*, 5 (edition as in n. 5).

34 On Nicholas Kuhn, see the chapter by Elena Ermolaeva, "Classical Antiquity in Children's Literature in the Soviet Union," in the present volume.

35 Bulychev, *Pokusheniye na Teseya*, 43.

36 Ibid.

mistake. She did not know what her mistake was, because she had had so little time, that she had not checked the meaning of her name in a dictionary. Maybe there was some famous or little-known Kore in Greek mythology. What if some whore was known under this name? Or a jewelery thief?³⁷

An Attempt on Theseus: The Plot

The action takes place in the far future, when humanity lives on different planets in our galaxy, which is ruled by the Galactic Centre. Prince Gustav, a prince of the Ragosa kingdom, which is located on a distant planet, has to make a trip into Virtual Reality (VR) and perform certain feats in order to gain the crown. Some people on Ragosa do not want him to achieve this goal and therefore organise a coup against Gustav. Those forces include his aunt, Lady Ragosa; the oracle Proval; Prince Clarence from the Dormirs clan; and Clarissa, who is loved by both Gustav and Clarence. The Galactic Centre is concerned for Prince Gustav's safety due to its desire to prevent future Galactic wars, which could be sparked because of the kingdom's mineral wealth.

Gustav chose the fate of Theseus and a trip to virtual Ancient Greece. Usually, trips to Virtual Reality are absolutely safe, but there can be exceptions. The InterGalactic Police (InterGPol) therefore sends its agent Kore Orvat to help Gustav-Theseus. After entering Virtual Reality, Gustav, like others, forgets his real identity and thinks that he is Theseus. Kore, as an exception to this rule, remembers her true identity.

In the virtual Ancient Greece, Gustav meets all the heroes of the Theseus myth. The centaur Chiron and the nymph Chariclo help him and Kore. At some point Lady Ragosa (as Ariadne) and Clarence (as Pirithous) come to virtual Greece themselves to try to harm Theseus. They also remember their true identities. Gustav experiences all that Theseus had in the myth and finishes his quest victoriously.

After returning home the evil powers continue to fight with Gustav, but he achieves total victory.

The World of Kore

The main difference between these two series is that the world has drastically changed. It is no longer a gentle and peaceful world. Evil, violence, poverty,

37 Ibid., 134.

and corruption are emphasised in every story. Unlike the “Alice” series, you can hardly find any good person among the characters of the books. Reality is full of lies and danger is presented at every turn.

One cannot avoid the impression that Bulychev was depicting the transformed reality around him. Russia (and especially Moscow) in the early 1990s was a very dangerous place to live. The criminal element, successfully suppressed in Soviet times, had risen again from the underworld.

Bulychev confirmed that the external reality of the 1990s considerably influenced the character of his books and of the reality he presented in them:

There were two factors, completely unexpected and critical to future events. First of all, the actual events in the country were so fantastic that they surpassed even that dystopia in which we had previously lived. Secondly, the doors opened and a mighty stream of American popular literature poured into the country, the American mass cinema also. And in an instant this stream swept from the face of the Earth our plywood cabins.³⁸

So once again reality was more fantastic and more impossible than that presented in science fiction. This “new crazy world” concerned not only the real world, but also the cinematographic and literary world that crowded all around. Pulp fiction and blockbusters were present on screens, in books, and on the streets.

This was the time when *An Attempt on Theseus* was written. Most of the characters of the novel are perfidious and evil. Even Kore’s boss Milodar, the commissar of the InterGalactic Police, is a suspicious person, who usually appears only in his hologram, since he cares excessively about his own security. One example of this newly represented world can be found in the description of a football match attended by Kore and Milodar:

If, for the Argentinians, loss in this match would be only a national tragedy—the president would lose his position, bloody generals would begin their reign of terror, the players would go into exile, and the working masses would become more impoverished—for us, for Russia, the defeat would mean the collapse of national prestige. We Russians do not need the second place they continually offer us. We take everything or nothing. Ivan the Terrible said so on entering occupied Kazan, riding a white

38 Bulychev, “Kak stat fantastom,” *Yesli* 11/81 (1999): 281.

horse, and Marshal Zhukov repeated these words entering Berlin through the Brandenburg Gate. In other words, “We don’t want Trinidad!”³⁹

Plenty of jokes in this passage and, indeed, in the whole story make the text similar to an absurdist text.

The attitude toward the reader changes a lot in these stories, too. If the heroes and readers of the “Alice” series were intelligent and kind, now many of the heroes become perverse and the readers a little stupid, needing everything to be explained to them. The author ceases to use ancient allusions; he explains in detail every picture that he paints:

We thought that our Soviet reader was the smartest, the most sensible, and intelligent in the world. It turned out that the post-Soviet man was a being just a little bit more developed than a Neanderthal, and that he wanted to read only “cool” thrillers.⁴⁰

The only peaceful and safe place presented in the novel is the village of Kore’s grandmother Nastya. At the beginning of this novel the village is depicted as a tranquil, rural idyll, where the inhabitants sip fresh milk and knit mittens.⁴¹ This Arcadian picture not only references standard, bucolic visions of rural life but also the past—the time of Kore’s grandmother. This time corresponds to the time of Igor Mozheyko’s youth (an elderly person when writing this) in the real world, or to Alice Seleznyova’s childhood in the represented reality.

Absurd over Absurd, or How to Read *An Attempt on Theseus*

The world represented in the “Kore” series and the Theseus story is so different from that in Bulychev’s other children’s stories that I personally had problems understanding why he wrote it in such a way. The only explanation for such use of caricature upon caricature I could find was that Bulychev purposely exaggerated in order to deny the possibility of the existence of such an absurd world.

The reality Mozheyko experienced in the 1990s was even more illogical than during Soviet times. There could be at least some explanation of the former. The new reality was far beyond any explanation. As Mozheyko himself said, it

39 Bulychev, *Pokusheniye na Teseya*, 13.

40 Bulychev, “Kak stat fantastom,” *Yesli* 11/81 (1999): 281.

41 Bulychev, *Pokusheniye na Teseya*, 5.

was “so fantastic that it surpassed even that dystopia in which we had previously lived.”⁴²

Perhaps the trip into Virtual Reality was also chosen on purpose. Virtual Reality is not real. Everything is just a game. Kore is acting there as a goddess. She can perform “miracles” and save her hero. She is a theatrical *deus ex machina* in this new reality. So perhaps the Virtual Reality is like a theatre. The characters depicted are simple, static, even boring, like terracotta masks in the ancient Greek comedies. Visible from a distance they present heroes as stereotypical characters from the first moments of the play.

This is in fact also true for Kore and Milodar’s reality. This world is very strange as well. Death exists there, but it can be postponed. One can die many times and return to life in a new body that one chooses, providing one can find the dead bodies quickly enough. That is why Kore is so beautiful, she uses the body that she likes the most. Milodar usually appears in a holographic body in order to escape death totally. So this world also reminds one of Virtual Reality or of a computer game. Kore says in “Children’s Island”: “I hate history, because probably it never happened.”⁴³

So perhaps nothing has happened. Perhaps it was just another dream. Perhaps all the evil around us is not true. It is just a theatre, an illusion, a delusion.

Deploying such an abundance of absurdities allowed Mozheyko to deny the reality that he himself lived in. Making a simulacrum allows the possibility of rejecting the object of the reference.

Returning to the Past

From the 1990s to the 2000s Bulychev used past motifs more and more. He began a series of alternate or shadow history novels for adults—the already mentioned “Chronos River.”⁴⁴ The main plot of the series takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century; some of the novels are set in the 1930s, another in the 1990s. In this series, travelling to the future is possible, as the author creates alternative historical sequences that the hero can traverse, although it is the author’s own epoch that is the future.

In the 2000s Mozheyko returned to writing popular historical books for children. As in *The 7 of 37 Wonders* written in 1980 he reveals the secrets of ancient

42 See n. 38.

43 Bulychev, “Detsky ostrov,” 90.

44 The series was not finished; the completed novels were published from 1993 till the author’s death in 2003 (and republished later).

and modern history, 2001 marked the beginning of the publication of a new series "Sekrety istorii" [The secrets of history]. Two of the first volumes refer to ancient history.⁴⁵ Others recount the history of Europe and Russia up until the nineteenth century.

It is significant that these popular stories, written in the last years of Mozheyko's life, were addressed to children. The attitude of the author to his audience changed again in this period. He returns to perceiving his young readers as thoughtful and bright persons, even perhaps "the smartest, the most sensible, and intelligent in the world,"⁴⁶ as in his youth. Once again these readers are worthy to be told stories about the past, about wonders, about Antiquity, because there is a hope that they will understand and will create an honest and logical world in the future.

In the last period of his literary activity Bulychev returned to a respectful attitude to his readers. He started to believe again that the new generation of children must be educated and he put great emphasis on it. It is also significant that these series are not fantastic or fictional. So the grotesque and absurd world changes once again into a kind and peaceful world, able to possess the future.

*

The example of Kir Bulychev is indicative of the entire literary process of the Soviet Union during the last decades of its existence. Soviet culture in this period was in a mature, familiarised state and was to undergo transformation and decline. This transition period appeared to be the hardest for the writer, who had to face chaos in the social and cultural life in which he lived. An additional difficulty was that for the first time there was a void in the cultural and ideological space of the Soviet society, which had to be overcome on an individual and social level.

Analysing the works of Bulychev we should remember that science fiction and literature for children were always thought of as the most independent spheres of literature in the Soviet Union. Thus we should consider his texts as a product of Soviet culture, written according to the Soviet system of values, not as a result of ideological repression.

45 Kir Bulychev, *Tayny drevnego mira* [The secrets of the ancient world] (Moskva: Armada-press, 2001); idem, *Tayny antichnogo mira* [The secrets of the Greek and Roman ancient world] (Moskva: Armada-press, 2001).

46 Bulychev, "Kak stat fantastom," *Yesli* 11/81 (1999): 281.

Bulychev's fiction for children is educational. He uses his books to introduce some additional knowledge and behavioural patterns. One of the recurring motifs in his books is Classical Antiquity. We may assume that Bulychev perceived this topic as valuable and wanted to inculcate it in his readers along with knowledge of sciences, languages, and strong ethical values. In some measure he assumes the reader's acquaintance with classical realities; however, his model addressee and his expectations of the reader change with time.

It is noteworthy that at the moment of greatest despair of the world around him, Kir Bulychev used Antiquity as the main theme of one of his novels (*An Attempt on Theseus*). Antiquity is used here to build an absurd narration about an inane world. Classical mythology is bound in the text with an interplanetary space reality. Oversimplified characters resemble ancient comedy masks. Bulychev makes allusion to Antiquity on different levels of narration, looking for models of overcoming the current crisis in Russian society and culture. Science fiction and Antiquity do not contradict each other, rather, they merge to help Bulychev and his readers face despair with hope.

Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Its Productive Appropriation: The Example of Harry Potter

Christine Walde

It is a long way from Rome to Hogwarts, so it seems. But if we take a closer look, we see that the road from Hogwarts, like all roads, leads back again to Rome. Studying a product of popular culture with a global reception, like J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter heptalogy, is a good way to map the cultural zone in which the transmission and acquisition of classical languages, and especially Latin, are taking place today, and in doing so to highlight some less obvious areas of reception and transformation of the classics.

In these times of globalisation and technologisation, all the assumptions we once took for granted have collapsed, and previous modes of behaviour no longer seem appropriate. There is consequently an acute need to position ourselves in a new, sustainable way, but in order to do so we have to take into account the world we live in today. It may often seem that the study of classical culture is no longer justified, but in reality there are still a great many links to it even in our modern age.

I would like to sketch this idea using the example of Harry Potter, where details, representation strategies, broad structures, and aspects of text reception quite clearly adopt and transform intellectual content that originates in Graeco-Roman Antiquity.¹ Thanks to the broad dissemination of Harry Potter,

1 The following chapter is a *parergon* of my studies on the reception of Classical Antiquity and gave me the pleasure of viewing Harry Potter from a scholarly perspective. My general reflections are intended as a sketch for possible future scholarship, and will hopefully be taken up by someone who has the time and interest for a project of this kind. As far as I know, there has been no attempt to situate the Harry Potter heptalogy in the wider context of the great narratives of Classical Antiquity, with the possible exception of a study about allusions by Richard A. Spencer, *Harry Potter and the Classical World: Greek and Roman Allusions in J.K. Rowling's Modern Epic* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2015). On the appropriation and transformation of single motifs and mythological figures, see also Dagmar Hofmann, "The Phoenix, the Werewolf and the Centaur: The Reception of Mythical Beasts in the Harry Potter Novels and their Film Adaptations," in Filippo Carlà and Irene Berti, eds., *Imagines 3—Magic and the Supernatural from the Ancient World* (London–New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 163–176. On the reuse of myths of different times and cultures in Harry Potter generally, see Hans

forms of thought characteristic of Western civilisation have been spread virtually worldwide.

Informing my remarks is, of course, the question of how these reflections on our contemporary culture could be applied, directly or indirectly, in university and school teaching.²

Harry Potter and His 'Glocal' Reception

Why Harry Potter—aside from the fact that I myself am a confessed Harry Potter reader? Because at present we can assume a familiarity with the Harry Potter heptalogy among a very large number of people, young and old, university educated and less highly educated, and in all regions of the world.

Harry Potter speaks to broad strata of an international public not limited to children and young people. Certainly, the heptalogy is part of the great tradition of British children's books such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) or J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955). These, too, were never read solely by children, in part because of the habit of parents reading aloud to their children. Setting Harry Potter in this tradition did, to a degree, prepare the way for it in terms of both reading attitudes and expectations, but that does not explain its global success. In the course of my contribution I will formulate some ideas about just what it is that facilitated or enabled the series' 'glocal' reception.

Harry Potter can be a link enabling conversation between generations. This is all the more important given that the gap between generations—or, better, age groups, which are succeeding each other at ever shorter intervals—is constantly growing; this is the result of accelerating changes in human habits that we have experienced in the last few decades, due to the ceaseless improvement and advance in technologies and the commercialisation of every area of life. Ways of life and our everyday worlds are changing at immense speed and we are losing the common ground on which different generations could understand each other. The most critical dividing line at present is probably around

Jürgen Verweyen, "Tod—Liebe—Eros. Archetypische Symbole bei J.K. Rowling," *Theologie und Glaube* 92 (2002): 315–324.

2 See, for instance, Valerie Estelle Frankel, ed., *Teaching with Harry Potter: Essays on Classroom Wizardry from Elementary School to College* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2013); and Agustín Reyes-Torres, Luis S. Villacañas-de-Castro, and Betlem Soler-Pardo, eds., *Thinking through Children's Literature in the Classroom* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

the age of thirty: anyone older than that has not grown up with all the current technologies and media, and their education and socialisation has probably followed a strikingly different path. It is hard even to gauge the changes in the structure of our society; as a result the formation and existence of many parallel societies and subcultures can be observed.³

Harry Potter has fascinated and repelled a large cross-section of the population, for various reasons, and the phenomenon has prompted a nearly unmanageable flood of scholarly studies. There is no question that this fascination cannot be reduced simply to the series' very successful marketing, although this factor does need to be taken into account as well.

The principal way of encountering Harry Potter is by reading: there may be some people who have discovered Harry Potter solely through the movies, but the typical Harry Potter addict is the reader, who, as an additional element, notes, or even uses, the series' transformations in other media. The success of Harry Potter is thus proof that reading (and writing) has not in fact been completely marginalised; rather, they continue to be the basis of every educational process and of media competence.

That statement needs more precision: the Harry Potter heptalogy does not just consist of books but is—to use the language of media studies—a “cross-platform product.”⁴ Within this cross-platform product we can distinguish a primary area based on the reproduction of the text, i.e., books, movies, radio plays, and audio recordings. The secondary area's connection to the text is then of varying degrees of closeness: it includes fan sites, paratexts such as interviews, biographies, scholarly literature, encyclopaedias, fashions, and the proliferating genre of continuations to the text (fan fiction).⁵ It is not yet clear to me where exactly we should place the translations, some of which have been substantially adapted to the cultural background of their language (perhaps between the primary and secondary areas).⁶

In media studies, cross-platform products are categorised according to their lead medium: for Harry Potter that medium is the book. In contrast to films like *Gladiator* (2000), which had no distinct literary model, Harry Potter's

3 A pressing question is which position schools and universities take in this frame.

4 On this aspect of Harry Potter, see Hans-Heino Ewers, “Die Heldensagen der Gegenwart. Die Medienverbundprodukte sind die großen Narrationen unserer Zeit,” in Christine Garbe and Maik Philipp, eds., *Harry Potter. Ein Literatur- und Medienereignis im Blickpunkt interdisziplinärer Forschung*, “Literatur—Medien—Rezeption” 1 (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2006), 297–311.

5 For issues related to fan fiction, see a recent study by Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, eds., *fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 2013).

6 See a recent collection of studies by Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl, eds., *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014), 329–344.

book-based medium brings it close to our own objects of study in school and university and the modes in which we approach them.

A basic condition of our contemporary culture is that, in general, we no longer engage only with literature or aural or visual products in music and the fine arts but also, right from the start, with a combination of media and their matching target groups, or even subcultures.

By reflecting on the role and potential of media today, I would argue, we can also throw light on how we judge and position our own objects of study, viz. classical texts. These too—for example, the great epics and tragedies of Graeco-Roman Antiquity—are themselves cross-platform products created in *successive* stages: in addition to the text, which also has an aural reception, there are commentaries, illustrations, musical settings, interpretations, continuations, and—according to the state of technological progress—also film versions, audio recordings, re-translations, fan sites, and fan fiction. As Stephen Hinds has shown recently, in an illuminating article on aspects of reception of the classics and of scholarship in the subculture of pulp fiction, the structures adopted by fan groups and specialists in popular culture (e.g., comics, pulp fiction, fantasy literature) often imitate—consciously or not—the genres and practices of the scholarly community in their approach to the objects of their interest.⁷ So here our own culture has made model procedures available. By this I mean a particular way of asking questions of objects, and of organising material, i.e., methods rather than key competences in a wider sense. We need to increase awareness of this.

In a very short time Harry Potter has received the same interpretive attention as earlier works of the classical canon. As Harry Potter is a contemporary phenomenon that has quickly become a classic that is complementary to our own objects of study in classical philology, examining it is a good way to raise awareness of and the ability to reflect upon not just the *conditio humana* today, but also the millennia-long role and influence of education. Being concerned with ancient texts, we are already accustomed to observe adaptations into other cultures and languages across a very long period of time.

Culture and Cross-Platform Products

What precisely do popular products, especially cross-platform products, tell us about? And in what respect does this concern the reception of Classical Antiquity or the state of education? Popular products with great breadth of appeal,

⁷ Stephen Hinds, “Defamiliarizing Latin Literature, from Petrarch to Pulp Fiction,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 135 (2005): 49–81.

i.e., appeal that is international and cross-generational, can tell us about the cultural, social, and political *status quo* of our times, and they also create ‘realities’ that are themselves a medium of communication; this is because they provide a basis for consensus among large sections of the population and, in a sense, make visible the substrate of our culture. The French anthropologist and philosopher Michel Foucault counts “entertainment” as one of the “archives” of a society, which provide a rich and heterogeneous “reservoir” of social competences, forms, symbols, techniques, and so on, through which we as agents are able to communicate with one another. These archives reveal the dominant norms, ideas, and identities in a state, society, or region.⁸

Popular culture, in particular, is instructive in this context, because it reflects widespread cultural themes and assumptions more than elite discourse does, as the latter, in principle, does not need to aim for consensus.⁹ A special case is, in my opinion, cultural content that derives from Graeco-Roman culture, especially when it is not necessarily identical to what is taught at school and university. If we want to draw a realistic picture of the reception and transformation of the classics, we need to extend our view to these areas.¹⁰

It may therefore be illuminating to ask, in relation to a work like Harry Potter with an international reception, first, whether classical material is present at all and, second, what its function and effect may be. If we expand our horizons in this way, we will see that, in numerous transformations and re-compositions, the classics still have a major presence—whether explicitly or implicitly—and that, specifically in Harry Potter, we can observe a transfer of Western culture into other cultures, at various levels. To study a process of this kind, we will need to inquire into the points of view both of the public and of the producers.

Romano-Greek Literature as a Laboratory

My thesis is that the literature and culture of classical Rome (and indirectly Greece) presents itself as a great ‘laboratory’ of ideas, motifs, stories, and

8 Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002; ed. pr. 1969); cf. Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann, eds., *Harry Potter and International Relations* (Oxford–Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), see the “Introduction,” 1–23.

9 Nexon and Neumann, “Introduction” to *Harry Potter and International Relations*, 15.

10 Christine Walde, “Vorbemerkungen,” in eisdem, ed., *Die Rezeption der griechisch-römischen Literatur. Ein kulturhistorisches Werklexikon. Der Neue Pauly—Supplemente*, Bd. 7 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), vii–xvii (English version: Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2012, ix–xix).

narrative structures, which, after the collapse of the Imperium Romanum as a political unit, has continued to function up to the present day through continuous focus on myth and through the appropriation and hence transformation of its literary-hermeneutic legacy. Rome's favourable societal and cultural conditions allowed the development of a complex of cultural activity that paralleled human creativity itself in its ability to create meaningful new connections out of heterogeneous materials. This gave impulses for a production of fantasy and thought which has not yet come to an end. Roman culture was characterised by constant hybridisations and by the appropriation of intellectual and cultural goods across linguistic boundaries; within Roman society, too, there was no hard line between high culture and popular culture.¹¹

Both myth (that is, the experience of generating new myths) and the ethnic and cultural diversity and breadth of the Empire enabled further productive additions and expansions. The parameter shifts of the *interpretatio Romana* made it possible to appropriate content from other cultures; at a local level, we can also see movements in the opposite direction, which are less obvious for us today but which must nonetheless have occurred.

These mechanisms and approaches were sustained in the subsequent national literatures and they continue to form a core part of our culture today. Harry Potter, a modern myth, whose formation and final definition we ourselves were able to follow in the years 1997–2007, is an especially good example of the ongoing work in the cultural laboratory, precisely because the series owes a great deal to successful strategies of thought and narration found in Western culture, and especially in classical Rome. The fact that these strategies relied, in their original setting, on consensus or acceptance across very different readerships is thus one of the elements that explains the success of the Harry Potter series.

Cross-Platform Products and the Need to Make Up Stories

Successful cross-platform products based on a story take their bearings, with a high degree of inevitability, from the great narratives of our Western culture, especially ancient epic.¹² These narratives, together with other areas, offer a reservoir of topics and motifs that reappear in ever new combinations and

11 Cf. Christine Walde, "Roman Dreamworks," in Wim Verbaal, Yanick Maes, and Jan Papy, eds., *Latinitas perennis*, vol. 11: *Appropriation and Latin Literature* (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2009), 13–40.

12 Cf. Ewers, "Die Heldensagen der Gegenwart," 297–311.

extensions. Once you know a certain number of stories, if you are blessed with the necessary imagination, you will be able to invent new stories from this base. For the stock of stories and narrative structures is in the end extremely limited, as has been demonstrated by folktale research. Present-day popular culture's increasingly heavy reliance on this tried-and-tested stock of narratives is due to the fact that the invention of new material falls far short of the quantity needed for commercial and other reasons. This need for variation, for pseudo-originality, ultimately leads to the continuation of classical, and especially Roman, literature in a manner and quantity that few would guess.

The so-called popular products vary and fine-tune stories and structures and other aspects of our literary-hermeneutic inheritance, and they do so in a more obvious way than do the works of so-called high culture, whose authors work in a more experimental and oppositional way, even at the cost of reaching only a *recherché* readership.

Characteristics of a Successful Narrative

So let us ask: what are the characteristics of a successful narrative or group of narratives that offer—indeed, must offer—a range of points that will allow people to interpret and connect with them? The interplay of these factors, a selection of which is cited here, makes their laboratory-like nature especially noticeable, because all epics, if taken together, are serial in character:

1. A remarkable story with a hero with whom we can identify. This story is generally marked by dichotomies, that is, the 'good' hero is opposed to a 'bad' character (in all possible degrees).
2. A world is designed which is complete in itself and infinitely extensible.
3. Lacunae, the potential for continuation, and a serial character are made possible by myth (content) and structural forms (literary realisation).
4. Generic hybridisation and a diverse range of characters.
5. Certain major themes—death, grief, violence, love, friendship—which make direct identification possible.
6. Specific ingredients that give the narrative its unique character.

The *Aeneid* as a Successful Narrative or Super-Epic

Harry Potter's structure and 'mechanics' become clear when we compare it with a classical epic that, like Harry Potter, has been able to appeal in quite

a unique way to a public located in different periods and cultures: I mean of course Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid*, too, which inserts itself as the keystone of the epic cycle in a centuries-old literary tradition, is a literary work of art, carefully composed from the first to the last syllable with a goal-directed plot; it combines inherited narrative forms and representation strategies with great virtuosity and transports them into a new dimension.

The *Aeneid* exhibits a mixture of genres: it is a hybridisation of different forms of epic, tragedy, aetiological poetry, elegy, encyclopaedic learning, and history writing, to name only a few of its points of reference. It combines fantastic elements with aspects of the real world of its public. Its meaning unfolds between two levels of action or worlds—the world of gods and the world of humans—which are in part permeable, primarily from the divine side. There is also a poetic geography which adds other worlds to those of the gods and the figures of the plot, some of which are literary-mythological, like the Cyclops, or linked to constants of human life and given a literary coding, such as the Underworld, or—just as important—the virtual realm of memories and prophecies. As well as the real, human cast of characters in the various levels, there is also a cast drawn from mythology and folklore—gods, nymphs, personified winds, Amazons, Faunus, and so on—who are integrated into the human world. In addition, groups of figures that are generated genealogically play a major role, giving the events a biographical depth.

Though the humans in the story understand each other without difficulty, they nonetheless represent different ethnic and linguistic groups. Further, they connect in a subliminal-direct way with the real world, or at least that of the poem's first public.

An important point for the poem's uninterrupted reception is the special nature of the hero Aeneas, a second-rank Homeric hero¹³ who in the *Aeneid* becomes responsible for a mission on behalf of a larger group of people. Virgil equips him with a series of characteristics of earlier literary heroes and anti-heroes, such as Achilles, Hector, Jason, and Odysseus, but he is not merely the sum of these parts; rather, as refiguration of an ideal Roman he represents a model of a distinctive stamp. Aeneas, through the irrevocable loss of his home city Troy, has suffered a grave personal trauma, which he shares with others. Part of his mission is to productively work through memories and the painful experiences of love, death, and grief through which he has lived. This search

13 I know that this statement is a provocation to some scholars, but the Homeric Aeneas [Aineas] is definitely not on the same level as Hector and Achilles. Yet, being second-rank in this case still denotes a very high rank.

for his own destiny is made easier by a series of prophecies, which, together with the journey motif, make the events dynamic and goal-directed.

The totality of the worlds invented here and the numerous interpretations permitted by the epic's reference to the Imperium Romanum, allowed it to appeal continuously—for more than two thousand years—to heterogeneous publics and, as it were, to develop in stages into a cross-platform product. Scholarship, a special kind of fan group, is one of its subcultures.

Harry Potter as a Tradition-based Narrative¹⁴

Armed with this sketch of a classical narrative, let us now return to the Harry Potter heptalogy. Of course, this, too, is animated by a remarkable story and a hero with whom we can identify. This story, as obvious as it is ingenious, may at first seem to have little to do with the inherited narratives.

A young boy who is growing up with unsympathetic relatives, his aunt, uncle, and their awful son, on his eleventh birthday discovers that the 'narrative' he had hitherto been told about the early death of his parents, comes nowhere near the truth. They were in fact magicians, 'a witch and a wizard' who lost their lives in the struggle against an evil magician, Lord Voldemort. But Voldemort was unable to kill his intended victim, the baby Harry, and so lost his power and human form. As a memorial of this rather unexpected course of events, Harry has a scar on his forehead in the shape of a lightning bolt, which immediately reveals his identity to all witches and wizards and which also imposes duties on him. Long before he discovered his true origins, he had already noticed that he had unusual abilities, although he could not explain them. Now he learns that these are 'natural' magical powers, which in the following years are to be trained in a controlled way at Hogwarts, one of the three world-famous schools for witches and wizards.

In each successive volume, the readers experience along with Harry and his close friends Ron and Hermione a time-limited, but goal-directed and dynamic plot unit, namely a school year; each unit also features an episode that relates to the growing power of Lord Voldemort. There are both indirect duels and real single combats between Harry and the Dark Lord, through which he

14 See the discussion by Emelle Fife, "Reading J.K. Rowling Magically: Creating C.S. Lewis's 'Good Reader,'" in Cynthia Whitney Hallett and Debbie Mynott, eds., *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 137–158.

progresses, not without challenges, until he succeeds in killing Voldemort in a spectacular single combat in the final volume.

The Time Structure and Poetic Geography of Harry Potter

The coordinates in time and space of the Harry Potter series are marked by dichotomies. They exhibit transpositions of the fantasy world into our own time, which are not dissimilar to the mixture of temporal levels in the *Aeneid*. Their distinctive charm is that this boarding-school story takes place in our own era, although parameters are shifted in the direction of the world of the wizards. Harry Potter was born in 1980 and he starts boarding school at Hogwarts in 1991. We can deduce this from the “Deathday Party” of Nearly Headless Nick, a ghost who celebrates the 500th anniversary of his death in the second volume. He states that the year of his death was 1492 (presumably not by chance the year of the discovery of America).¹⁵ The heptalogy ends in 1998. The first, dramatic appearance of Voldemort as a Dark Wizard was in 1942 (50 years before 1992). Dumbledore beat the Dark Wizard Grindelwald in 1945.¹⁶ In essence, our own historical periodisation is adopted by the world of the wizards, but it is then also relativised or set into a different continuum: Ollivander’s business of manufacturing magic wands has been in operation since 382 BC.¹⁷ The famous alchemist Nicolas Flamel is 665 years old.¹⁸ Elements appear from all eras of our culture, not least because magic is presented as a millennia-old science of experience. The names point to all periods and cultures, with no preference for a particular period, though fantasy literature usually favours the Middle Ages as a frame of reference, as seen, for example, in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*.

This framework in time and space is filled in by the fine structures of the narrative: we are presented with a chronological narrative with pro- and retrospective views, prophecies, and memories. The dimension of the journey, with a goal set by destiny—Italy in the case of the *Aeneid*—finds its equivalent in Harry Potter in two parallel developments: the growing power of Voldemort and the changes in Harry himself as he grows up.

Like the classical narratives, Harry Potter presents us with a poetic world that is complete in itself but infinitely extensible: it is divided into the world of

15 J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 146.

16 As we also learn from the first volume, J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000; ed. pr. 1997), 114.

17 *Ibid.*, 92.

18 *Ibid.*, 238.

the Muggles, i.e., our world (so a reference to reality is present), and the world of the wizards, each of which is complete in itself but permeable by the other; that is, individual characters form an overlapping factor, but the worlds exist each for themselves and do not in principle have to perceive each other. The two worlds have remarkable similarities (the calendar has the same holidays, e.g., Christmas, and most things are done by shifting parameters of our contemporary world), but there is the difference that the world of the magicians is populated by a mythological cast of astonishingly broad cultural composition (nymphs, trolls, unicorns, centaurs, giants, gnomes, dragons, and so on).

Already in the first volume, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the wizard street Diagon Alley, a kind of magical enclave in the middle of real-life London but invisible to Muggles, dramatises spatially the division between the worlds. The core area of the poetic geography is thus Britain, but here it stands for Western culture as a whole.¹⁹ Within the wizards' world, there are also areas to which entry is barred, such as the Forbidden Forest, which itself has different zones. The major dichotomy between the wizards' world and the world of the Muggles is then supplemented by a third world, namely the realm of the giants, which stands in opposition to both worlds.²⁰

There are similar designs of poetic worlds in classical epic, as we have shown with the example of the *Aeneid*, where the real world is set opposite the Underworld. Of highest importance are the poetico-allegorical landscapes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* such as the mythical forests and groves or the realm of Invidia and the House of Sleep. In Harry Potter similar counter-worlds are crossed with the Middle Ages and mystery. Nonetheless, the nearest structural equivalent is the parallel world of gods and humans in classical epic.

The Plot and Hero of Harry Potter

The appeal of the story thus created lies in various constellations. Harry Potter is a young hero, indeed a child hero, who stands up for himself at this young

19 Readers of different countries and cultures may perceive this in very different ways. For the European audience the reference to modern Great Britain is obvious enough and will even contribute to the readers' pleasure. (Who does not love British television series or movies?) Non-European readers might see the Muggles as proponents of Western civilisation in general.

20 Harry is a wanderer between different worlds, his own world and several fantastical worlds, the Underworld, the magic forest, the virtual realm of memories. Again, we do not deal with simple dichotomies. Cf. Gundel Mattenklott, "Harry Potter—phantastische Kinderliteratur. Auf den Spuren eines globalen Erfolgs," *Stimmen der Zeit* 221 (2003): 46.

age and—with the help of others—succeeds against a far more powerful enemy. His striking final victory brings his career as a hero to an end. The concept of the child hero/divine child as we know it from classical literature, especially that from the Hellenistic period,²¹ is here being varied: there we find literary texts in which heroes or gods who prove themselves ‘later’ as adults are depicted as children; they address the question of whether the heroes’ later greatness was already evident in their childhood. It is Harry’s myth that Voldemort could not kill him, that the lightning bolt ricocheted back onto the attacker and left the boy with only a scar on his forehead. Through this destiny, Harry joins the ranks of divine children who survived a lightning bolt²² that killed their mother, such as Asclepius/Aesculapius and Dionysus/Bacchus, but also those who themselves thwarted a murder attempt when they were children. From classical mythology we also know the motif of ‘growing up in conditions that run contrary to one’s own nature, or conceal one’s origin’: I mention, e.g., Achilles, who grew up as a girl; or Romulus and Remus, who, although they grew up among shepherds, reveal their aristocratic descent. All these heroes exhibit unusual qualities even before they discover their true origins. Through the motif of the scar as a sign by which he is recognised, Harry is linked to Odysseus. He is also a reworking of the many young heroes of epic, like Patroclus in the *Iliad* or Pallas and Lausus in the *Aeneid*, who challenge older, battle-hardened heroes to a fight, but get killed by them.²³ The intertextuality with these texts becomes especially forceful whenever Harry and Voldemort come into direct or indirect confrontation. Especially Voldemort, who himself stands for the model reader of the inherited narratives, expects the usual outcome, namely his own victory. To this extent Harry—viewed structurally—fills a gap in the schema of heroic figures. However, such ‘new formations’

21 On the Hellenistic tradition, cf. Annemarie Ambühl, *Kinder und junge Helden. Innovative Aspekte des Umgangs mit der literarischen Tradition bei Kallimachos*, “Hellenistica Groningana” 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005 = Diss. Basel, 2004). Articles comparing Harry Potter to mythical and fairy-tale children abound, cf. e.g., Mattenklott, “Harry Potter—phantastische Kinderliteratur,” 39–51, who sees Harry Potter as the divine child (archetype *sensu* C.G. Jung) and compares him to the biblical Moses; Mary Pharr, “*In medias res*: Harry Potter as Hero-in-Progress,” in Lana A. Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia–London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 53–66; and M. Katherine Grimes, “Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero,” in Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, 89–122.

22 According to ancient tradition, human beings hit by lightning are marked as special. Cf. for an astute overview, Wolfgang Speyer, “Gewitter,” *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 10 (1978), 1123–1128.

23 Cf. also the young heroes Euryalus and Nisus in *Aeneid* 9, who are brave but bound to fail.

only work if the model is recalled by citation and then varied. Naturally, Harry has fewer similarities with the great warrior heroes than with those who must accomplish tasks or single feats. There are obvious similarities to Heracles/Hercules (the motif of *athloi* in the seventh volume, where Harry has to hunt down the Horcruxes), with Perseus (he saves Ginny Weasley/Andromeda from the basilisk/Medusa in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*), and Theseus (confrontation with a labyrinth in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*).

Like Hercules, Harry, despite his outstanding role, is a subordinate hero who does not have much freedom in his actions. Like Hercules he gains little—apart from survival—from his accomplishment of individual *athloi*; indeed, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, he is even marginalised on account of these achievements. Harry is also given a trait that was linked to magical powers in the classical world: the ability to communicate with snakes.²⁴

This collection of characteristics shapes the character of Harry, though it cannot be reduced to them; it is given more specific features by shifting internal parameters. Not only is the cast multiplied genealogically and ‘socially,’²⁵ Rowling has also expanded the work’s identification spectrum for its public by giving the main hero important but ultimately secondary heroes at his side, on the pattern of Alexandre Dumas’s *The Three Musketeers* (1844), or the companions of the classical heroes, or, like the Argonauts, a group of heroes. Consequently Harry, in contrast to Ron and Hermione, who are described in full detail, in fact remains relatively unspecific, even though the narrative is undoubtedly focused on him.

Like the cast of characters in the great narratives, Harry Potter is marked by dichotomies, and at all levels: Harry’s friends and classmates, the teachers, the women. Thus, for example, in the same age group Harry is opposed to Draco Malfoy, but inter-generationally to Lord Voldemort, with these two characters even sharing many of the same characteristics (origin and abilities).²⁶ In the dichotomy of good wizards versus bad wizards, however, Dumbledore and Voldemort also form a pair of opponents. Repeatedly, we find single combats and various *clementia* scenes, and finally the great duel between Harry and Voldemort, just as the *Aeneid* ends with the decisive fight between Turnus

24 Cf. on serpents and magicians, Michael Martin, *Magie et magiciens dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris: Editions Errance, 2005), 157–158.

25 Because the overall context is a boarding school this multiplication of characters is very easy and convincing (teachers, students, exchange students, etc.).

26 As we find out in the sequence of volumes, Severus Snape and Harry on the one hand, and Dumbledore and Voldemort on the other, have a lot in common and form special pairs, too.

and Aeneas. However, the opponents do not present a complete polarisation of 'good' or 'evil': there are grey areas and overlaps, as the evaluation of what is 'good' and what is 'evil' is at times merely a matter of narrative focus or interpretation.

Like Aeneas (to whom Rowling's hero is structurally the most similar), Harry Potter is a relatively dull hero,²⁷ that is, though he is the focus of interest, he is not outstanding in all spheres of life—indeed he often falls short. This representation strategy makes his potential as an identification figure quite independent of a given culture and period. The figure of Harry could therefore not be 'overloaded' with individual traits, because he bears a destiny and a mission that is related to his family, but which also has an exemplary importance for the whole wizard community. Not least, Harry's story is that of revenge on the murderers of his parents (and other good wizards), revealing tragic motifs, which, as is well-known, have an especially strong effect on the public. Not without reason does the gloomy seventh volume have the motto from Aeschylus's *Libation Bearers* (vv. 466–478), telling how revenge and rescue lie in the hands of children whose own life is in danger.

Harry accepts this revenge mission, of which he at first knew nothing, although it had been prophesied long before his birth. He must by his own choice act on the destiny that has been allotted to him, because the message of Harry Potter as a whole is that it is human decisions that form a person's essence and character.²⁸ The young hero has his friends and other 'good' wizards at his side, so his revenge also becomes an action by a larger group. To that extent Harry's family history acquires a social dimension, in which civil courage, friendship, solidarity, and education are celebrated as the highest virtues. Here, it at first appears that the moral presented is independent of any given culture, a kind of transcultural value substrate that indicates an ideal of human behaviour and the difficulties associated with it. If we look more closely we see that, with an apparent elimination of obvious Christian intellectual content, it is in fact the Western canon of values, as fixed above all by the Romano-Greek tradition.²⁹ This presentation of an apparently neutral world view, achieved by drawing on the classical tradition, has facilitated the international reception of the work.

27 In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas's outer appearance is never specified apart from very general remarks about his outstanding male beauty.

28 Cf. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 125 (and in almost every subsequent volume): the Sorting Hat as an equivalent of an oracle consultation.

29 On the political implications of Harry Potter in the context of contemporary British society, cf. Andrew Blake, *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter* (London: Verso, 2002).

Lacunae and the Potential for Continuation: A Literary and Mythological Laboratory

As all seven volumes (even the final one) strictly follow the course of a school year, the same scenes recur repeatedly, such as the departure from Platform 9³/₄, the arrival at Hogwarts, banquets/meal scenes, sporting competitions (keyword: 'quidditch'), and so on. Each volume also contains a task/*athlon* for Harry and a fight/duel.

Critics have regarded these repetitions (or, as I would put it, parallel structures) in the series as a fault, even as revealing a lack of literary artistry, claiming that they prompt intense boredom and emphatically demonstrate that Rowling's imagination does have its limits after all. These criticisms overlook the fact that this is a reuse of epic structural forms, the repetition of type scenes, found in the whole of classical epic and in other, even postclassical genres. This seriality and repetition constitute what I call the 'laboratory character' of ancient epic.³⁰ Walter Arend, in his dissertation on the type scenes in Homer,³¹ listed the following scenes as typical in Homeric epic: arrival, departure, messenger scenes, dreams, decision scenes (i.e., ones in which someone makes a decision), banquets, *aristeiai*/duels, which are also both repetitive and varied at the level of language. In the course of the literary tradition other type scenes were of course added. This repetition on the one hand guarantees that the stories are optimised, while on the other hand it makes different heroes and story plots comparable with each other. It also prompts both satisfaction and expectation on the part of the public. This recognition effect is ultimately what moves emotions and reactions: the reader is gripped by the interplay between recognition of the familiar and perception of differences to other stories and heroes. All the original structural forms, expanded to include other more contemporary and individual scenes, are present in Harry Potter, making direct comparisons with other heroes possible. Beyond the mere description of such structures, we can also easily see their connection to the ways classical texts function:³² in contrast to the modern aesthetic, they are not committed to the ideals of original genius and innovation.

30 Cf. my use of laboratory for literary production, see the bibliography in notes 10 and 11.

31 *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933 = Diss. Marburg, 1930).

32 Cf. my suggestions in the Appendix, concerning passages and aspects of classical literature and Harry Potter which could be compared.

Ingredients: Divination and Magic

This rough structure, formed from time scheme, poetic geography, and a constellation of heroes, is made more fluid by memories and prophecies that give the action a goal-directed dynamic. This kind of dynamic is a structure special to myth, for myths are always constructed from the end backward; in a sense, they are circular, as the end of a myth refers back to its beginning. The end of the last, the seventh, volume of Harry Potter sends the reader back to the beginning to discover on a second reading the harmonious completeness of the narrative, in which everything is prepared and meaningful, down to the last detail. This form of narrative was made possible, i.a., because in Classical Antiquity, and here again especially in Rome, a literary system of reference was formed that matched the contemporary practices of divination (of reading signs) and foretelling, all founded upon a deep belief in determinism. Of course the belief that it is possible to see into the future or even control the world through magical practices has today been by and large discredited, but it perhaps remains present as a wish paradigm, apart from the omnipresent and mainly silly 'prognosis' (e.g., of outcome of elections, calculation of life expectancy, weather forecasts, etc.). If we look beyond literature to try to find what Rowling's frame of reference may have been, we encounter things that display a high level of reception and transformation of the classical tradition, but which at the same time belong to spheres that (in high culture or the discourse of rationality) may be regarded with a certain disdain: techniques of divination, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, and, not least, magic. Interestingly, these are spheres that in the classical world belonged in a self-evident way to the culture's *imaginaire*, especially in Rome, where there was a state-sanctioned system of divination: I need only refer to Cicero's (admittedly critical) work *De divinatione*, or other reference works. In literature, foretelling, prophetic dreams, and the like play a crucial role as a literary system of reference.³³

Even a brief glance at contemporary esoteric writing throws up some surprises. Especially in the United States, there has been a rise in neopaganism, a faith that seeks to go back beyond Christianity to draw on the classical religions and techniques of living. By chance I came across *Llewellyn's 2008 Magical Almanac: Practical Magic for Everyday Living* (2007)—and in a very proper

33 As an example of articles related to the role of prophecy, see Gregory Bassham, "The Prophecy-Driven Life: Fate and Freedom at Hogwarts," in David Baggett and Shawn E. Klein, eds., *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts* (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 2004), 213–226.

British bookshop in Rome, which nevertheless must have had customers who ordered it. It is hard to classify this book: 'popular' does not apply to the content, because it requires a higher level of understanding than, for example, a newspaper horoscope. Whether this kind of product is intended for a serious and/or amused public/subculture with some higher level of magical/intellectual knowledge, is hard to tell. A glance at the table of contents and list of contributors³⁴ shows the same hybridisation of cultural relics of sundry cultures and ages as does Harry Potter:

[...]
Labyrinth by Emily Flak.....79 [...]
The Myth and Meaning of Pegasus by Ember Grant.....154
Mystery Cults by Bryony Dwale.....158 [...]
The Gifts of Pandora by Gail Wood.....282 [...]
Gods of Sleep by Janina Renée.....369.

There is also a calendar section (pp. 176–234) indicating the holidays for witches and wizards: among them the Carmentalia (January 11), the Parentalia (February), and other Roman feasts, as well as Celtic feasts, Christian holidays, Carnival, Yuletide, and the birthdays of famous people such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln. Certainly, to the rational academic this might seem a curious, and to a certain degree amusing, mixture of lifestyle advice and ill-understood cultural studies, but one would miss the wider implications of such products. More likely than not the *Magical Almanac* is written by academics providing us with a secondary use of their knowledge as does Rowling with Harry Potter. Even if the dividing line between (serious) magic and fantasy is thin, we become aware of the non-academic use of classical thoughts and motifs, far from our experience with high culture, which seems to be present not only in children's books. Nonetheless, magic-inspired products are still based on the traditional principles of magic, which are reckoned universal laws, and therefore are tradition transmitters.³⁵

1. Connection between cause and effect.
2. Responsibility for all our actions (the ethics of magic).

34 *Llewellyn's 2008 Magical Almanac: Practical Magic for Everyday Living*, [ed. Ed Day], (Woodbury, Minn.: Llewellyn Worldwide Ltd., 2007), 3–14.

35 Cf. *Llewellyn's 2008 Magical Almanac*, 246–251.

3. The law of the power of attraction and of the manipulation of energy fields.
4. The law of unlimited resources, present in the cosmos and accessible to all.

These magical writings mix and superimpose the magical practices of many cultures, but they privilege Graeco-Roman—and especially Roman—Antiquity and the Renaissance. Much of this seems to be the result of wide acceptance of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Pomona, Vertumnus, and Morpheus). Roman feast days, prayer *formulae*, herbalism, astrology, alchemy, divination, *peri diaites* are adapted to present-day life and combined with Ayurveda and modern technology. These are hybridisation phenomena of a kind already manifested in Roman culture itself.

It is precisely in this rather exotic sphere, which most readers might well assign to fantasy, that our cultural inheritance becomes visible in Harry Potter, for example in names and practices. To take a simple example: the “Witches and Wizards” trump cards³⁶ that Harry and his friends collect and swap include not only Dumbledore and other “contemporary” wizards, but also Agrippa (sc. of Nettelsheim), Ptolemy, Paracelsus, Circe, Merlin, and Morgana. The whole Western tradition of magic is invoked, especially that of the Renaissance, which in turn had tried to reconstruct the magic of Classical Antiquity. I shall merely name Giordano Bruno's *De vinculis in genere* (1586–1591) and various works of Marsilio Ficino (*In Convivium Platonis de amore commentarius*, 1469), Latin texts that give magic a central place in the canon of the sciences, in the context of rhetoric's influence on the emotions.³⁷

Rowling uses a concept of magic that is oriented toward Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance, as she acknowledges no link between magic and Satanism; she adopts the concept of white and black magic (i.e., good and evil, according to the intention of the magician); she assumes both ‘natural’ and trained magic powers. Classical magic involved a high degree of *techne*, of craft. Verbal performance, i.e., rhetoric, is given a decisive role. In her school of wizards, Rowling takes the concept of magic as a learnable art to its logical conclusion. This reference back to Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance makes it no surprise that, precisely in this sphere, the use of Latin is prominent,

36 Cf., e.g., Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, 113, 115.

37 On magic in the Renaissance in general, see Ioan P. Culianu, *Eros und Magie in der Renaissance*, trans. Ferdinand Leopold (Frankfurt am Main–Leipzig: Insel, 2001; ed. pr. in French 1984).

functioning as, so to speak, a dominant archaism. Latin as a sacred language³⁸ is the group code that distinguishes the wizards from the Muggles, sketching an 'elitist' idea of getting an education. This is all the more remarkable as the knowledge of Latin is somehow just assumed, for every wizard uses or understands the Latin incantations, though they are not taught Latin anywhere in the book.

Rebus sic stantibus it would not be entirely wrong to class Harry Potter as neopagan, but the overall effect is not a call to take up the magical-esoteric arts.³⁹ Instead, if the German press reports⁴⁰ are to be believed, Harry Potter makes children want to learn Latin. Because Rowling has suppressed the Christian elements, at least at the surface level of the text, and has returned to a classical notion of magic, her creation works without difficulty in other cultural settings too.

Concluding Observations

The provocative thesis can be made that, beyond the humanistic-canonical tradition of reception of the classics, in Harry Potter we find links to classical material, some explicit, some communicated subliminally. In fact, the products of mass culture, with their tradition-based strategies of telling stories and capturing attention, are probably transmitting more of 'the classics' than the whole of contemporary high culture. So there is a displacement/shift in the transmission of the classics, which are no longer tied to educational institutions. The question arises of how we, as committed readers or scholars of the classics, can engage with this transmission of knowledge, by which I of course do not mean we should all take up magic and divination. But we should still ask ourselves: what kind of classics do we regard as legitimate classics?

We live in a post-canonical era, if there ever was a canonical one; our perspective may be skewed by our work in school and scholarship. The

38 Magic incantations often use archaic vocabulary or words taken from foreign languages. On this phenomenon, cf. Fritz Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenszauber. Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (München: Beck, 1996), 44–45.

39 On Harry Potter's religious influence in America, see Peter W. Williams, "Popular Religion and Pluralism, or, Will Harry Potter Be Left Behind?," in Charles L. Cohen and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 266–282.

40 Cf., e.g., "Potter erweckt Latein zum Leben," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Aug. 17, 2012, and all the feeble attempts (infinite number of Internet sources) to save school Latin with Harry Potter.

canonisation of our texts, which was definitively set in place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was never an appropriate way to approach Roman literature, and was anyway at odds with a holistic view of ancient culture, such as that promoted by German *Altertumswissenschaft* at almost the same time. In that research paradigm, literature was just one field of *testimonia* among many. Canonisations evaluate and limit the history of enthusiasms, but there have also been subcultures outside the schools and universities in which classical material has played a direct or indirect role, though these are hard for us to gauge now.

My concern is, first, to correct an imbalance caused by blind spots in our perceptions: we will produce false findings if we only search (so-called) high culture for traces of the classical world, insofar as the term 'high culture' is apt at all. For example, contextualising Harry Potter leads us to (from the academic standpoint) the marginal sphere of magic and various neopagan phenomena.

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that, through its dissemination in various media, classical material today has a wider distribution than ever before, but at the cost that very few members of its public are aware of this. For example, in Harry Potter whenever the fantastic is deployed, elements of classical and mediaeval mythology or Renaissance learning appear in greater quantity. What the public perceives as something richly imaginative is in fact—and I do not mean this pejoratively—a store of learning, a recollection of one's own cultural heritage. It is not always possible to decide whether this is a matter of cultural sediments or a conscious use, but in Rowling's case it is perhaps explicable by the fact that she graduated in Classics at the University of Exeter and is obviously very well-read. The intertextuality (the conscious-unconscious calling up of discourses) and the educational richness are here at work largely on the production side, where an individual's education is given a secondary use.

This secondary use of educational content guarantees high quality and excitement, which grips the public but only rarely prompts true 'recognition,' for the series also relies on shifting the parameters of modern text groups like fantasy or the boarding-school novel.⁴¹ In fact, there is no need to recognise the lavish presence of educational content to enjoy Harry Potter. Ultimately,

41 Certainly, Rowling's use of intertextuality is obvious, but its recognition does not send us back to rereading or reassessing the books/pictures, etc., evoked. Nonetheless, this recognition enhances the readers' delight, but also reminds us that Rowling reuses cultures and artefacts as an (admittedly well-exploited) quarry of images and motifs. This is possible because these images and motifs do not have a *Sitz im Leben* proper in our culture, but are only cultural relics reusable in any given context (a similar procedure is to be observed in

the series evokes culturally coded modes of perception that do not need to be consciously noted. Through Harry Potter these are now being transported into other cultures.

Today, the classical world has in many respects achieved the status of fantasy. This is a potential starting point for us. The Harry Potter heptalogy offers an opportunity to actively take possession of one's own cultural inheritance through a retrospective search for clues. Particular aspects of a popular product allow us to regain past realities, without spoiling the fun of Harry Potter.⁴²

Appendix to Note 32:

Links between Harry Potter and the classics taught in schools and universities (a small selection):

1. Divination and critiques of divination; divinatory systems of reference in classical literature.
 - 1a. Magic (allows the use of texts from all *Latinitates*).
2. Epic structural forms and optimised story structures.
3. Culturally specific translations or illustrations (an introduction to the issue of equivalent phenomena concerning the *Aeneid*).
4. Reflection on 'cross-platform products' and their 'subcultures.'
5. 'Rhetoric' (figures and tropes).
6. Analysis of Latin passages / the question of how these are dealt with within the Latin translation.
7. The Underworld and the finale of *The Goblet of Fire* or *The Order of the Phoenix* in comparison to classical texts (*Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, etc.).
8. Mirrors and images of the self. Aeneas sees himself on the temple images of the Juno temple (*Aen.* 1); Ovid's Narcissus (*Met.* 3); Harry and the Mirror of Erised (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 210 ff., see also Dumbledore's explanation, p. 231); and texts on mirrors (e.g., Sen. *Nat. Quaest.*, Mediaeval *vanitas*-texts).
9. 'Metamorphoses': the *animagi* in contrast to the shapeshifters or simple metamorphoses in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.
10. Werewolf stories (Petronius, Pliny, and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*).

the literature of Late Antiquity after the knowledge of Greek was restricted to a minority only).

42 The present chapter was translated from German into English by Orla Mulholland, Berlin.

11. Psyche in the house of Amor (invisible household ghosts).
12. *Aristeiai*.
13. Mythological characters (sibyls, centaurs, basilisks, sirens, Cerberus, Phoenix, etc.).
14. Poetic worlds and allotopia.

J.K. Rowling Exposes the World to Classical Antiquity

Elżbieta Olechowska

A classicist, especially one interested in the reception of Antiquity, views the Harry Potter novels as an incredibly promising means to increase popular awareness of the classical themes lurking behind every corner of this enchanting narrative. I will attempt first to document this belief by analysing the wider context provided by all concerned publics, from reviewers, critics, scholars, and translators to rank-and-file readers of all ages, as well as movie viewers, Internet surfers, users of all secondary products such as video games, and marketers who orchestrate this symphony of willing players. Promotion of Antiquity appears to be a by-product riding on Harry Potter's popularity. Still, the unprecedented, wide appeal generated by the novels ensures not only that readers, viewers, gamers, fanfic writers and the like learn something (more) about Graeco-Roman Antiquity but also that they view it as part of their historic cultural past and a way to understand the world today. In the Potter universe, classical mythology is not a collection of fairy tales: it is as real and powerful as magic but, like magic, accessible only to the initiated. My second goal is to discuss and reflect on the classical elements in the novels viewed as school stories and according to the particular role each element is designed to play; I will also attempt to explore how they function, if at all, in the audiovisual sphere of today's popular culture and whether the influence of Rowling's classical fascination can be detected there.

Scholars and Readers

The Harry Potter phenomenon, now late in its second decade, has produced a record amount of secondary literature,¹ of uneven quality and nature; most of

1 See the massively impressive online bibliography compiled in 2004 and regularly updated by Cornelia Rémi at <http://www.eulenfeder.de/hpliteratur.html> (accessed May 31, 2016). Divided into *Symposia* (with predominantly obsolete links), *Sources* (J.K. Rowling's novels), and *Scholarship* (an alphabetical list of supposedly everything published to-date on the subject),

it has been written either from the perspective of enthusiastic fans or people cashing in on the wave of cross-generational frenzy (or some combination of both), rather than from the point of view of serious research. Even publications with justified claims to scholarship have usually taken the form of collected essays by multiple authors, bringing together a variety of minor and fairly disparate contributions, some of which were based on incomplete evidence as they were written before all seven novels appeared.² Harry Potter still awaits his academic *opus magnum*, if not as an adult literary masterpiece, then as a magnificent example of literature for children, and the point of origin of a cultural explosion. The grounds for such an *opus* have already been laid out

it is a monument to Harry Potter's popularity rather than a research instrument, as it contains a mix of scholarship, MA and BA theses, and university and even secondary school students' papers. It has not been updated since February 2015 and the only book entirely devoted to connections of the novels to Classical Antiquity published in June 2015, Richard Spencer, *Harry Potter and the Classical World: Greek and Roman Allusions in J.K. Rowling's Modern Epic* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2015), is not listed. It is curious, and to a classicist incomprehensible, that Harry Potter literature published in German, French, Italian, or Spanish is largely ignored by scholars from English-speaking countries. On the other hand, the sheer volume of Potteriana in languages other than English and the diversity of these languages tends, if not to defeat, at least to discourage a serious scholar.

- 2 To my knowledge, only one such early collection of papers (2003) has been updated and a second edition published since the whole series came out: Elizabeth E. Heilman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2009). The editor of another 2003 collection, Giselle Liza Anatol, *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays*, "Contributions to the Study of Popular Culture" 78 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger), published a second volume in 2009, and called it *Reading Harry Potter Again: New Critical Essays* (Santa Barbara, Ca.: ABC-Clio). See also a recent, illuminating discussion of the existing scholarship devoted to literature for children by Pat Pinsent, *Children's Literature*, in the series "Readers' Guides to Essential Criticism" (London: Palgrave, 2016), 73–74. Some other collections of essays include Cynthia Whitney Hallett and Debbie Mynott, eds., *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005); Valerie Estelle Frankel, ed., *Harry Potter, Still Recruiting: An Inner Look at Harry Potter Fandom* (Hamden, Conn.: Zossima Press, 2012); Lori M. Campbell, ed., *A Quest of Her Own: Essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2014); Weronika Kostecka and Maciej Skowera, eds., *Harry Potter: Fenomen społeczny—zjawisko literackie—ikona popkultury* [Harry Potter. Social and literary phenomenon—pop culture icon] (Warszawa: SBP, 2014); Corbin Fowler, ed., *The Ravenclaw Chronicles: Reflections from Edinboro* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); Tobias Kurwinkel, Philipp Schmerheim, and Annika Kurwinkel, eds., *Harry Potter Intermedial. Untersuchungen zu den (Film-)Welten und Joanne K. Rowling, "Kinder- und Jugendliteratur Intermedial"* 2 (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2014).

in important studies of genre and target readers, which highlight the novels' distinctive blend of epic fantasy, *Bildungsroman*, and school story, as well as its powerful charm for crossover publics.³

The Harry Potter generation, from the outset, composed itself of three different age groups: children, their parents, and some grandparents thrown in for good measure. This will create an echo-effect a generation later, when the offspring of the children learn to read. This echo will be only a scant reflection of the initial extraordinary experience and will not recreate the same sense of belonging to a global reading and viewing community, or launch the same revolving cycles of anticipation, euphoria, and lassitude. Yet, even a fraction of the original readership will still translate into millions of new fans who will keep the delight alive. On the other hand, J.K. Rowling has not yet had her last word; she achieved things that would have been considered impossible twenty years ago and there is no reason why she should not surprise the world again. When we look at Harry Potter events scheduled for 2016, we get a glimpse of marvels: without going into the intricacies of the eighty teams competing in the World Quidditch Cup 8 in Rock Hill, North Carolina, in April⁴—I really cannot wrap my mind around that—the opening of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* at the Palace Theatre in London's West End⁵ in July, and on November 18 the premiere of the new movie *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* written for the screen by Rowling and directed by David Yates.⁶ More on the movie below. The twenty-first century knows massively popular books, films, television series and their authors who cannot let go of their creations, and their fans who want more. The phenomenon of readers' pressure is also not entirely new in popular literature: we all know of Conan Doyle vainly trying to kill off Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie having to resurrect Poirot.⁷

3 See Karin E. Westman's excellent analysis, "Blending Genres and Crossing Audiences: *Harry Potter* and the Future of Literary Fiction," in Julia Mickenberg and Lynne Vallone, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; paperback 2013), 93–112.

4 See <https://www.usquidditch.org/events/special/world-cup/> (accessed June 16, 2016).

5 See <http://www.harrypottertheplay.com/> (accessed June 16, 2016).

6 See <http://www.warnerbros.com/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them> (accessed June 16, 2016).

7 See David Sims, "In Constantly Tweaking Harry Potter Universe, J.K. Rowling Risks Falling into George Lucas' Trap," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 3, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/09/jk-rowling-harry-potter-fanfiction-george-lucas-star-wars/403669/version=meter+at+2&module> (accessed June 16, 2016); and Sarah Lyall, "Potter Everlasting," *New York Times*, June 5, 2016, AR1.

Incensed Critics: Harold Bloom and A.S. Byatt

The importance of J.K. Rowling's novels for children and their massive popularity goes well beyond the scope of traditional literary criticism and is difficult to pin down and dissect for both the academic and the literary world. The notorious,⁸ vitriolic reviews and comments by, among others, Harold Bloom (2000, 2003, and 2007),⁹ a celebrated Yale professor, and A.S. Byatt (2003),¹⁰ an outstanding British short-story writer and novelist, provide a good example of these frustrations. Both critics speculate on the reasons why millions upon millions of people buy Harry Potter novels in spite of their perceived lack of literary value,¹¹ a largely rhetorical exercise, as there is no point in crediting market forces with artistic discernment.

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- 8 See, for instance, Mary Pharr, "In medias res: Harry Potter as Hero-in-Progress," in Lana A. Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia-London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 53; and J. Steve Lee, "There and Back Again: The Chiasmic Structure of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series," in Travis Prinzi, ed., *Harry Potter for Nerds: Essays for Fans, Academics, and Lit Geeks* ([sine loc.]: Unlocking Press, 2012), Kindle edition, 760. The best review of the early criticism is provided by Westman, "Blending Genres and Crossing Audiences," 105–108.
- 9 Harold Bloom, "Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 7, 2000, a late review of *The Sorcerer's Stone*; idem, "Dumbing Down American Readers," *Boston Globe*, Sept. 24, 2003, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2003/09/24/dumbing_down_american_readers (accessed Dec. 10, 2015), where he expresses outrage at Stephen King being awarded a literary prize and having praised Rowling; Harold Bloom, "A Life in Books," *Newsweek*, March 12, 2007, www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-160179731.html (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).
- 10 A.S. Byatt, "Harry Potter and the Childish Adult," *New York Times*, July 7, 2003, a review of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. See also Charles Taylor's scathing response the following day, "A.S. Byatt and the Goblet of Bile," *Salon.com*, July 8, 2003, www.salon.com/2003/07/08/byatt_rowling (accessed Dec. 10, 2015). See also Steven Barfield, "Of Young Magicians and Growing Up: J.K. Rowling, Her Critics, and the 'Cultural Infantilism' Debate," in Cynthia Whitney Hallett and Debbie Mynott, eds., *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 175–197.
- 11 The issue of the Harry Potter books' literary merit and indeed the literary merit of any commercially successful book was discussed among many others by Lana A. Whited in the introduction to *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, 6–8. See also Jack Zipes, "The Phenomenon of Harry Potter, or Why All the Talk?" in his *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 170–189, who explains Rowling's success (with only four books published) in terms of "an induced experience calculated to conform to a cultural convention of amusement and distraction," 172.

Professor Bloom, who wrote his review in the *Wall Street Journal*, does not like bestseller lists: for him the *New York Times* “leads and exemplifies the dumbing-down”¹² of American society; he predicts and regrets the fact that Harry Potter will find its way into universities. Seven years later, asked by *Newsweek* about his favourite books, Bloom made a comment on the continuing unprecedented sales of the Harry Potter books, calling it proof of “the world’s descent into sub-literacy.”¹³

Philip Hensher, a well-known British novelist and literary critic, wrote in the *Independent*, a month or so before the Byatt review in the *New York Times*, that the numbers of copies sold at the time and the numbers of readers were unimportant; what mattered was how they would score in a hundred years. He attacked the publishers, deploring their irresponsible and mercenary predilection for instant bestsellers, as opposed to solid earners, books bringing a smaller but steady income over twenty or thirty years.¹⁴ Well, it is not yet a hundred but it is roughly twenty years since *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was published. On December 27, 2015, the series placed second on the *New York Times’* bestseller list in the category of children’s literature (created in 2000 when Rowling’s fourth book was again expected to push all adult titles down or off the list).¹⁵ Once all the books were published, there were even weeks like that of May 11, 2008, when Harry Potter disappeared from the list entirely, but come Christmas, he was back again, year after year, naturally with a smaller impact, but quite inexorably.¹⁶ The book reviewers and literary critics, usually authors themselves, feel frustrated and threatened by bestseller lists, although they are well aware that the lists are a marketing tool for the revenue-oriented

12 Unbeknownst to Bloom, who probably does not read the *New York Times* he despises, William Safire almost a year earlier quipped on Harry Potter’s adult readership: “[...] this is not just dumbing down; it is growing down”; see his “Besotted with Potter,” *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 2000.

13 Bloom, “A Life in Books.”

14 Philip Hensher, “Harry Potter and the Art of Making Money,” *Independent*, June 19, 2003.

15 Dinitia Smith, “The Times Plans a Children’s Best-Seller List,” *New York Times*, June 24, 2000. On the issue of bestseller lists, see the discussion by Rebekah Fitzsimmons, “Testing the Tastemakers: Children’s Literature, Bestseller List, and the ‘Harry Potter Effect,’” *Children’s Literature* 40 (2012): 78–107.

16 See Dwight Garner, “Ten Years Later, Harry Potter Vanishes from the Best-Seller List,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2008, online: http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/01/ten-years-later-harry-potter-vanishes-from-the-best-seller-list/?_r=0&pagewanted=print; on Dec. 21, 2008 it is # 2; Dec. 19, 2010 # 3; Dec. 18, 2011 # 5, cf. <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/2013-11-17/series-books/list.html> (both links accessed Sept. 3, 2014).

publishing industry. Their multiplication and attempted manipulation are not designed to reward artistic merit, but rather to increase sales based on a “bandwagon effect.” They measure commercial success and target the buying public, whether in adult or children’s literature lists.

Byatt, almost three years after Bloom’s review and after millions more Harry Potter copies had been sold, evidently did not spurn or blame the *New York Times* but rather quoted examples of children’s authors who were, in her opinion, much more original than J.K. Rowling, deploring the modern “substitution of celebrity for heroism.” She joined Bloom in lamenting the “levelling effect of cultural studies, which are as interested in hype and popularity as they are in literary merit, which they don’t really believe exists.” This highly rhetorical lament reduces the issue *ad absurdum*: if cultural studies do not believe in the existence of literary merit, how can they be interested in it as much as in hype and popularity, which unquestionably do exist? The critic goes on to include Harry Potter among Roland Barthes’s “consumable books” and complains that they have “little to do with the shiver of awe” created by John Keats’s *Ode to a Nightingale*¹⁷—a sublime reflection on imagination and mortality—dismissing out of hand the millions of children for whose consumption these books were written and who, having shivered in awe and delight reading Harry Potter, may later in life shiver some more reading Keats, or... Stephen King, who, as an unashamedly bestselling writer, has no qualms admitting to having read and hugely enjoyed the books, and whose article helps put things in a rational perspective.¹⁸ The same is true of John Leonard’s witty and critical, but also fair and sympathetic review of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, which gave short shrift to Rowling bashers, whom he called “nitpickers,” “furballs,” “world-weary and wart-afflicted,”¹⁹ without actually citing Bloom, Hensher, and Byatt. Faced with the Harry Potter phenomenon, they all felt compelled to follow the classic defensive move of preaching to the choir.

17 Vv. 69–70: “Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

18 Stephen King, “Wild About Harry: The Fourth Novel in J.K. Rowling’s Fantastically Successful Series about a Young Wizard,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/07/23/reviews/000723.23kinglt.html> (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

19 John Leonard, “Nobody Expects the Inquisition,” *New York Times*, July 13, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/13/books/nobody-expects-the-inquisition.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

Mass Readership and Transmedia Convergence Network

It is not the first time a book for children has attracted significant numbers of adult readers. The nineteenth century witnessed the phenomenon of unapologetic crossover reading,²⁰ among others, in the case of Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, and the authors of school stories—for both genders.²¹ Adult readers of Harry Potter novels are mostly parents but also other grown-ups who read for their own pleasure.²² Yet, never before has an author connected with children on such a scale. By using her exceptional charisma and authentic grasp of children's psyche, combined with a variety of marketing mechanisms, Rowling kept up readers' interest between the successive volumes through communication of news from her website on the progress of writing, and giving away selected plot twists and information on the destiny of the characters. The *New York Times* online archives list 299 articles about Harry Potter to date (Dec. 27, 2015) and when all the publishing and cinematic frenzy is over, there is always something new to keep the fans happy and excited: long-delayed and anticipated electronic editions, theme parks, numerous related interviews, the Pottermore website, Rowling's long-standing commitment to helping children in need, and the already mentioned Harry Potter play in London's West End, initially scheduled to open in 2014, but then divided into two parts and moved to July 2016 at the Palace Theatre, under the title *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.²³

20 See David Rudd, "The Development of Children's Literature," in eiusdem, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 2010), 10, where he mentions critics who view dual audiences as occurring to the detriment of children readers, e.g., Julia Eccleshare, "The Differences between Adult and Child Fiction," in Pat Pinsent, ed., *Books and Boundaries: Writers and Their Audiences* (Lichfield, UK: Pied Piper Publishing, 2004), 213. For a full discussion of crossover reading, see two studies by Rachel Falconer: *The Crossover Novel: The Contemporary Children's Literature and Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and "Young Adult Fiction and the Crossover Phenomenon," in Rudd, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*, 87–99.

21 See Kimberley Reynolds, *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–18.

22 Ron Charles, a *Washington Post* book critic scandalised over shrinking readership figures somehow implied that they were to be blamed on Harry Potter and adult readers suffering from "a bad case of cultural infantilism," see his "Harry Potter and the Death of Reading," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/13/AR2007071301730_pf.html (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

23 See <http://www.harrypottertheplay.com> (accessed Dec. 27, 2015). Amazon made the script of the play available for pre-order more than a year before the theatrical premiere.

On May 13, 2014, Warner Bros. announced a November 2016 release of a first movie in the planned trilogy about the adventures of Newt Scamander, the alleged “author” of *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them*,²⁴ written by Rowling and eagerly discussed in the press since March of the same year.²⁵ The movie is supposed to follow the pattern of Peter Jackson’s three-part *Hobbit* and will be produced by David Heyman, a veteran of the Harry Potter movies. The story begins in New York in 1920 and continues until 1927, the date Scamander’s book was “published.”

Rowling created a propitious, nurturing ground for the birth of a transmedia convergence network,²⁶ where traditional books, audio-books, e-books, movies, computer games, companion websites, fan fiction, author’s interviews, and public appearances intermingle for the good of those who not only love the story but have now become part of it. A convergence network works in many directions. From the perspective of the creative process, it can be argued that once movie production was underway, it must have influenced the writing of the remaining novels. The 1999 sale of film rights to Warner Bros. for the first four books happened before the publication of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the first book to exceed six hundred pages, doubling the length of each of the three previous books.²⁷ The number of pages is not the only noticeable change in the *Goblet of Fire*. While, as with any *Bildungsroman*, the evolution of the hero’s character and the growing-up process dictate a change of tone, the difference in the atmosphere, especially in the *Order of the Phoenix*, may be due to Rowling’s involvement in the movie production. Experiencing the first two movies during the book publication hiatus (2001–2002) presumably influenced the writing of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). For that matter, reading along the way even a small fraction of the novels’ reviews—even barely skimming only those that count—must have impacted the writing, too. And this is another unique aspect of Rowling’s position: she continued producing book after book against the background of a constant chorus of critics, some chanting praises, others weeping and gnashing their teeth. Her writing certainly improved with every

24 One of the alleged Hogwarts textbooks published in 2001.

25 See, e.g., Brooks Barnes, “Warner’s C.E.O. Is Bullish on the Big Screen,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/30/business/media/warners-ceo-is-bullish-on-the-big-screen.html?_r=0 (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

26 Reynolds, *Children’s Literature*, 66–70.

27 *The Order of the Phoenix*, *The Half-Blood Prince*, and *The Deathly Hallows* all maintain the same length of around 600 pages.

novel but it is unclear whether this was due to scolding critics or to growing experience and her own, natural creative development.

The reach of the transmedia convergence network also goes significantly beyond distribution and readership commanded by the books that are at its origin. It is a powerful machine for global propagation of the novels' message. Part of this reflects Rowling's repeatedly declared fascination with Classical Antiquity, which feeds her use of language, narrative, and structural ideas, and contributes to the scope of the novel and the development of the characters.

Combined marketing and dissemination timelines²⁸ for Harry Potter books, electronic versions, movies, DVDs, video games, news from Pottermore, and the author's public appearances demonstrate that no single narrative platform may be discussed in isolation as they intensify each other's influence. Certain motifs also achieve greater exposure on different platforms, e.g., spells and charms function as action drivers in videogames and gain prominence through repeated usage. The scheduling of events has been relentless in a constant barrage of exciting moments and reminders keeping the recipients' attention focused: the anticipation almost as pleasurable as the actual fulfillment.

Harry Potter Novels as a School Story

Harry Potter is obviously a school story, that most English of literary genres.²⁹ Hogwarts, with its millenary history, appears to be a deeply traditional boarding

28 For a discussion of the novels' bestseller status from the point of view of marketing strategy, see Susan Gunelius, *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

29 See a discussion of the novels' affinity to school stories by David K. Steege, "Harry Potter, Tom Brown, and the British School Story," Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, 156, as well as a comparison with other stories about schools of magic (especially Jill Murphy's *Adventures of the Worst Witch*, 1974–1982, and Anthony Horowitz's *Groosham Grange*, 1988) by Pat Pinsent, "The Education of a Wizard" in the same collection, 27–50; Karen Manners Smith, in her paper "Harry Potter's Schooldays: J.K. Rowling and the British Boarding School Novel," in Anatol, ed., *Reading Harry Potter*, Kindle edition, 6, provides an overview of the concept of the public school and of the genre. The school story's narrow interpretation by Eric L. Tribunella, "Tom Brown and the Schoolboy Crush: Boyhood Desire, Hero Worship, and the Boys' School Story," in Mickenberg and Vallone, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, 455–473, begs for a more comprehensive treatment of the genre expected in this type of publication. Christopher Hitchens, in "The Boy Who Lived," *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/12/books/review/Hitchens-t.html?_r=1& (accessed Dec. 10, 2015), sees in the snobbism and escapism of the school story genre, the reason for Rowling's huge popularity; he quotes

school but with a modernised feel: its coeducational and highly diverse student body come from all walks of life but are still all wizards and witches. In Hogwarts nobody seems to know much about cell phones, computers, or any of the electronics highly praised in the Muggle world by Harry's cousin Dudley; instead, there is an Owlery with a most efficient mail service provided by hundreds of Athena's birds.

The traditional motifs of an English school story are present in the Harry Potter novels: students break school rules and try to get away with it; students are divided into friends and foes; students interact with each other as well as with their teachers in stereotypical ways; there are traditional types of teachers and customary subjects (Latin teachers and Latin as a subject are part of these traditional motifs, but not at Hogwarts, where nobody studies Latin while everyone uses it in spells, passwords, mottos, etc.); there are other authority figures, in particular, student-run systems of government (head boys and head girls, prefects, etc.); there is an all-knowing and benign head of school; sports and games (including matches with other schools) play an important role, as does division into houses and the rivalry between them and the house points as punishments and rewards; time is divided according to the division of the school year (the beginning of the year, the holidays, exams, the departure for home, etc.); finally, the school building and grounds (and their secret places) are the primary setting for the story, but allusions are also made to the local community and to higher educational authorities—the school board, the Ministry, outside inspectors, and examiners.

Karin E. Westman, in her contribution to Lana A. Whited's collection *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*, wrapped up the discussion on identifying the real world that the Harry Potter novels reflect,³⁰ concluding that it was the United Kingdom of the early 1990s onward, and that the world of wizards mirrored the British reality of that period, often in a comical manner. The comprehension and reception of this message read

George Orwell's essay "Boys' Weeklies," *Horizon*, March 1940, as evidence (without mentioning Frank Richards's "Replies George Orwell" in *Horizon*, April 1940). See also Pat Pinsent's entry, "School Story," in Rudd, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*, 238–241; Pinsent mentions a Dutch and a German example of a school story but seems unaware of any occurrences of the genre in other languages. *The Routledge Companion*, like most such publications (in contradiction with their titles), deals almost exclusively with children's literature written in English. Pinsent also briefly mentions school story criticism when discussing genres in her *Children's Literature* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 19–20.

30 See her "Specters of Thatcherism: Contemporary British Culture in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series," in Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, 305–328.

in English outside of the UK³¹ and in translation by people from different cultures may vary considerably from region to region.

A good example of such diversity of reception is provided, for instance, by the huge popularity of Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* in Poland shortly before and after WWII. Education in patriotic and community ideals, combined with an antagonistic and critical attitude toward teachers whom students had to outsmart, was a significant part of the school ethos in Poland during the period of the country's partition between Russia, Prussia, and Austria (1772–1918), when some teachers and the school administration were imposed upon by foreign rule.³² Kipling's ideals, which would soon become outdated in the UK and viewed as imperialistic and paternalistic,³³ resonated quite differently in Poland before WWII, strongly appealing to people who had recently regained their independence and were striving to unite in a heroic effort to recover from a century and a half of occupation. The same patriotic ideals helped the country to endure WWII, becoming again, once the war ended, even more cherished and important for people faced with another loss of sovereignty, this time in the form of fake autonomy under a Soviet regime.

Roman virtues (republican rather than imperial) are models for patriotic ideals in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*, in which the Latin teacher, Mr. King, figures prominently. Similarly, a popular Polish school story *Wspomnienia niebieskiego mundurka* [Recollections of a blue school uniform], written by Wiktor Gomułicki (1848–1919) and published in 1909, when Poland was still partitioned, also features a Latin teacher, who although undistinguished and even sadistic, fortunately improves under the guidance of a wise headmaster. Gomułicki's stories gained considerable popularity in Poland; regrettably, he was no Kipling and his sentimental, moralising, and predictable narratives cannot compete with the charm and wit of *Stalky & Co.*

31 The US publisher Arthur Levine decided that young readers might not understand Rowling's vocabulary and not only changed the title of the first book but Americanised approximately eighty British expressions and changed punctuation. See Diana Patterson, *The Nameless World of Harry Potter* (June 1, 2005, Accio website), 3, now at <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/38913457/the-nameless-world-of-harry-potter-accio-2005> (accessed Aug. 27, 2016).

32 The Ministry of Magic's takeover at Hogwarts under Dolores Umbridge in *The Order of the Phoenix* resonates differently for Polish readers and for all those whose cultural and historical experience includes similar oppression.

33 See M. Daphne Kutzer, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), Ch. 2: "Kipling's Rules of the Game," 14–36.

The trio of Rowling's main characters, Harry, Hermione, and Ron, could easily be compared to Kipling's Stalky, Beetle, and McTurk. Harry is a leader, like Stalky, Hermione is a well-read intellectual type like Beetle, and Ron, like McTurk, comes from an old family and knows a lot about their world. While the Hogwarts trio are not in an army class preparing to serve the Empire, later circumstances require that they form their own fighting force, Dumbledore's Army, take up resistance against the Ministry, and finally fight and prevail in the war with Voldemort and his supporters.

In the tradition of the English school story, the Harry Potter novels contain important echoes of Classical Antiquity. It is a school story enlivened with magic, reminiscent of Edith Nesbit, even in its classical references and motifs. Nesbit is the author whom Rowling most admires and to whom she would like to be compared.³⁴ Children in Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*, in Nesbit's novels, and in the Harry Potter saga have in common a predilection for mischief, admiration for "stalkiness,"³⁵ disregard for rules, rivalry between houses, and relentless warfare against teachers they dislike.

References to Classical Antiquity in school stories mirror the importance of classical languages in British education and add authority, credibility, and lineage to the hidden magical side of the universe revealed in the Harry Potter novels. The first, obvious, and immediately visible level at which classical references occur is language. The second level, that of theme, varies from self-evident, as in the case of mythological creatures, to something that needs to be revealed and uncovered by older, well-read, and attentive readers. This level includes symbols, values, patterns, characters, and structure.

The Language³⁶

Let's begin with the language as it greets the reader, whether it is in the original English or in translation. Even before the actual story unfolds, the Hogwarts

34 See her interview for *The Guardian*, with Decca Aitkenhead on Sept. 22, 2012, after the publication of *Casual Vacancy*. Video online: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/sep/22/jk-rowling-book-casual-vacancy>; see also David Rafer, *Mythic Symbols in Harry Potter* (June 1, 2005, Accio website), 1, now at <http://tranb300.ulb.ac.be/2012-2013/groupe232/archive/files/ddocce051edf98928acf90fb78bd9d9.pdf> (accessed Aug. 27, 2016) and on similarities of opinion between Kipling and Nesbit, see Kutzer, op. cit., 63–76.

35 Strategic skills, cleverness, resourcefulness, foresight—all these features combined are the source of the nickname of the leader in *Stalky & Co.*

36 See a comprehensive, imaginative, and sympathetic discussion by Isabelle-Rachel Casta, "PETRIFICUS TOTALUS! Langue du sacré, langue du secret. L'usage des langues anciennes—ou de leur fac-similé—dans Harry Potter et la «bit lit» en général," in Mélanie

coat of arms drawn on the title page of all seven novels, in both print and electronic editions, warns (in Latin) of the danger of tickling sleeping dragons.³⁷ The current seventy-eight³⁸ language versions display one original element which has not been interfered with by translators and is identical for all: Latin spells, curses, and slogans. All of the half-a-billion odd copies sold since the publication of the first volume, each usually read by multiple readers, carry an indisputably powerful message across diverse world cultures: Latin is a magical language. In one of her interviews, Rowling added a nuance to this claim when she answered the question: “Do you speak Latin?”

Yes. At home, we converse in Latin. Mainly. For light relief, we do a little Greek. My Latin is patchy, to say the least, but that doesn't really matter because old spells are often in cod Latin—a funny mixture of weird languages creeps into spells. That is how I use it. Occasionally you will stumble across something in my Latin that is, almost accidentally, grammatically correct, but that is a rarity. In my defence, the Latin is deliberately odd. Perfect Latin is not a magical medium, is it?³⁹

A classical scholar for whom “perfect Latin” is as magical as any language can get, if not more, may shudder at this last outrageous sentence and may be reluctant to forgive the arrogance of a self-professed “patchy” Latinist. That being said, Rowling clearly is not making a serious statement here about the language as such, but rather about her purely instrumental use of it, within the degree of her individual competence and with a young reader in mind. She also obviously appreciates how adult readers, a number of whom will have acquired a smattering of Latin at school or university,⁴⁰ may have fun recognising

Bost-Fievet et Sandra Provini, eds., *L'Antiquité dans l'imaginaire contemporain. Fantasy, science-fiction, fantastique* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), 359–374.

37 “Draco dormiens nunquam titillandus.”

38 As of Dec. 27, 2015, see at: http://www.jkrowling.com/en_GB/#/works/the-books.

39 Speaking to Lindsey Fraser at the Edinburgh Book Festival, on Aug. 15, 2004, <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2004/0804-ebf.htm> (accessed Aug. 31, 2016).

40 Learning Latin, while now sadly elitist all over the world, appears to be regaining popularity in English-speaking countries; in the United States, Latin is currently the third most popular currently taught foreign language, see Judith Hallett, “Raising the Iron Curtain, Crossing the Pond: Transformative Interactions among North American and Eastern European Classicists since 1945,” in David Movrin and Elżbieta Olechowska, eds., *Classics & Class: Greek and Latin Classics and Communism at School* (Ljubljana–Warsaw: Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana–Faculty of “Artes Liberales,” University of Warsaw–Wydawnictwo DiG, 2016), 308.

the oddness and trying to explore it. Rowling herself studied Classics at university (instead of the German classes she was supposed to take within her degree of Modern Languages), or, as she says, “scuttled off the classics corridor,”⁴¹ where her main interest seems to have been focused on mythology rather than languages. In her 2008 commencement speech at Harvard University, Rowling not only talked about studying Classics against the practical approach advocated by her parents and without their knowledge, but quoted first Plutarch (“[...] what we achieve inwardly, will change outer reality”) and then, at the end of her speech, Seneca (“As is a tale, so is life: not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters.”⁴²), judging classical wisdom relevant for the twenty-first-century alumni.

Even if the frequent and no doubt intentional resemblance to English makes Rowling’s Latin easy to grasp or decode for English speakers, readers want to know what the Latin words mean exactly. In response to this need, dozens of websites listing and explaining incantations and the significance of the names they use sprouted online.⁴³ In addition, numerous, largely unauthorised, companion books are devoting separate sections to Latin words and the classical roots of themes and characters. Translators into other languages have been faced with the significant challenge of rendering the sense not only of the fantastic plot but also of its cultural background and classical references. In Europe and the Western world, these may be easier to grasp, but in other regions they present problems. While there is no *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to regulate translations of Rowling’s text, Warner Bros.’ 1999 purchase of marketing rights to the Harry Potter franchise allowed the conglomerate to impose certain restrictive measures,⁴⁴ such as a prohibition against translating the “meaning” of names or changing any names, a practice followed by some translators of the first three volumes and judged unfortunate from the marketing perspective.

41 See Rowling’s commencement speech at Harvard University, June 5, 2008. Video online: http://www.ted.com/talks/jk_rowling_the_fringe_benefits_of_failure (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

42 Sen. *Luc.* 77.20: “Quomodo fabula, sic vita: non quam diu, sed quam bene acta sit, refert.” *Fabula* translates better as *play* and not *tale*, but there is no need to be difficult, it is the spirit that counts here.

43 See a list of Harry Potter websites at http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_Harry_Potter_fan_websites (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

44 The formula: “Harry Potter characters, names and related indicia are trademarks of and © of Warner Bros. Ent.” appears on the copyright pages of all post-2009 editions. Gili Bar-Hillel, the Hebrew translator of Rowling’s novels, complains bitterly of Warners Bros.’ cavalier treatment of translators; see Gili Bar-Hillel, *Harry Potter and the 800 lb Gorilla*, at <https://gilibarhillel.wordpress.com/2012/03/28/hpwb/> (accessed June 16, 2016).

Two millennia of using Latin as the language of the Roman Catholic Church and its historical role in Christian cultures naturally create, especially among older adult Catholic readers, a feeling of affinity with the books, since they have been exposed in some measure to the traditional liturgical language, whether they belong to the elite who understand it or to the multitudes who do not. The latter, in particular, readily agree with the slogan “quidquid Latine dictum sit, altum videtur”—whatever is said in Latin seems profound. As good a reason as any to reach for Latin when wishing to highlight important and magical moments, or stress superior intellectual sophistication.⁴⁵ For a significant proportion of the hundreds of millions of Harry Potter’s young readers, wherever they live, this may have been their first direct contact with the language of the Romans.

A recent news story documents the degree of familiarity with the novels’ characters as far away as China and Japan, and at the same time illustrates the enduring cultural differences between Europe and the Far East. The Chinese ambassador to the UK wrote to *The Daily Telegraph* on January 1, 2014, criticising the Japanese prime minister for visiting the Yasakuni Shrine where Japanese soldiers who died in WWII are honoured. He accused the prime minister of offending his Asian neighbours and raising “the spectre of militarism,” he also called the shrine a *horcrux* and militarism Japan’s Voldemort. The Japanese ambassador to the UK responded in the *Telegraph*, calling China a Volde-mort of the region, to which a spokesman for the Chinese embassy reacted, stating: “Like Voldemort, militarism in Japan has revived from time to time. It is now leading Japan on to a perilous path [...]”⁴⁶ Both diplomats clearly knew their Rowling but still failed to grasp why such remarks might have shocked British readers as inappropriate or simply ridiculous. The master villain gained a foothold in the imagination of Chinese and Japanese adult readers who seem to have accepted the character as a universal symbol of evil. While the ambassadors did not demonstrate an actual familiarity with classical motifs and Latin spells, they could hardly have avoided being exposed to them as well.

45 Many examples in the press show that people whose Latin is even patchier than Rowling’s use Latin expressions and—contrary to journalistic principles—do not bother to verify their usage. See an article in *The Guardian* about the dismissal of the first *New York Times* female executive editor (“Jill Abramson Forced Out as New York Times Executive Editor,” *The Guardian*, May 15, 2014), where we read the expression “ad feminem” (*sic!*). It is encouraging, on the other hand, that already a third of the 442 readers’ comments posted online caught the mistake.

46 See, e.g., “Latest China–Japan Spat: Who’s Voldemort?” *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 2014.

Sound Effects and Funny Names

Any of Rowling's readers—at least in the original English—must immediately notice her sound effects, especially when she uses uncomplicated rhetorical devices, such as alliteration, as symbolised in the famous quotation from Ennius's *Annales*: “O Tite tute Tati tibi tanta tyranne tulisti,”⁴⁷ known to all students of Classics. It is also a device used for centuries in English, among many other languages, and one often occurring in nursery rhymes and other texts for children, easily recognised and appreciated even by younger children, as a source of humour. There are numerous examples of alliteration in the Harry Potter novels. It is particularly conspicuous in names⁴⁸ and nicknames for people and things, starting with the names of the founders of Hogwarts and heads of its houses—Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Salazar Slytherin, and Rowena Ravenclaw—where it is combined with consonance, alliteration's first cousin in the family of rhetorical devices, the repetition of letters producing the same or a similar sound. There are also onomatopoeic elements, discernible especially in the name of the snake-whisperer Slytherin but also in that of Hufflepuff, the founder of the house prizing effort and hard work among its core values. The names of characters produce a satisfying sound and often suggest their personality. Such “speaking” names were used in ancient Greek comedy for quick identification of comic types and for humorous effect.⁴⁹ Other suggestive names, often alliterated, include Moaning Myrtle (a tearful ghost), Filius Flitwick (the charms professor), Severus Snape (the stern potion master), Lucius Malfoy (an opportunistic Voldemort supporter), Remus Lupin (a werewolf and Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher).

47 The passage preserved in *Rhet. Her.* 4.18, as an example of excessive alliteration.

48 For a discussion of Rowling's names and language, see Elena Anastasaki, “Harry Potter Through the Looking-Glass: Wordplay and Language in the Works of Lewis Carroll and J.K. Rowling”, *The Carrollian. The Lewis Carroll Journal* 19 (Spring 2007): 19–31; Jessie Randall, “Wizard Words: The Literary, Latin, and Lexical Origins of Harry Potter's Vocabulary,” *Verbatim: The Language Quarterly* 26.2 (2001): 1–7; Carole Mulliez, *The Intricacies of Onomastics in Harry Potter and Its French Translation* (Lyon: La Clé des Langues, 2009), <http://cle.ens-lyon.fr/anglais/the-intricacies-of-onomastics-in-harry-potter-and-its-french-translation-78684.kjsp?STNAV=&RUBNAV=> (accessed Dec. 10, 2015); for names as a source of humour, see also Carmen Valero Garcés and Laurence Bogoslaw, “Humorous (Un)Translated Names in the Harry Potter Series Across Languages,” *Babel* 10 (2003): 209–226.

49 See, e.g., Nikoletta Kanavou, *Aristophanes' Comedy of Names: A Study of Speaking Names in Aristophanes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

Rowling makes her names a source of humour by using a device of her own: she pairs old Anglo-Saxon or Norman family names with Latin first names.⁵⁰ The striking combinations include: Filius Flitwick (see above, n. 50); Minerva McGonagall (Scottish); Alastor Moody; Horace Slughorn; Pompona Sprout; Sybill and Cassandra Trelawney (Cornish); Remus Lupin (Latin); Severus Snape; Quirinus Quirrell; Lucius Malfoy; Rubeus Hagrid; Augustus Rookwood; Augusta Longbottom; Cornelius Fudge; Pius Thicknesse; Rufus Scrimgeour; the three brothers Antioch, Cadmus, and Ignotus Peverell; Xenophilius and Luna Lovegood; Alecto and Amycus Carrow; and Argus Filch. Professor Dumbledore has no fewer than four first names, including a Latin one, one belonging to an Arthurian knight, one belonging to a twelfth-century anchorite and miracle worker, and a Celtic one: Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore.

Latin names in some cases are given according to a special key. For instance, old wizarding families, like the Blacks (fascinated by black magic) favour first names borrowed from astronomy: Andromeda, Bellatrix, Cygnus, Draco, Arcturus, Orion, Sirius, Luna, and Merope. Such families may also give their children first names beginning with the same initial: the Dumbledore siblings were called Albus, Aberforth, and Ariana; the children of Marvolo Gaunt were named Merope and Morfin.

Next to such jewels as Balderdash, Baubles, Catweazle, Dilligrout, Fizzing Whizbees, Flibbertigibbet, Oddsbodikins, Scurvy Cur, Tapeworm, Wattlebird, Wanglewort, and Wolf's Bane, there are also Latin passwords for entering the common rooms of Gryffindor and Slytherin: *Caput draconis*, *Fortuna Major*, *Mimbulus mimbletonia* (a magic plant invented by Rowling and given a Latin sounding alliterative name), *Alea iacta est*, *Dissendium*, *Facta, non verba*—all (excluding the plant) in correct Latin.⁵¹

The Spells

The Latin of the spells is easy for English speakers to understand, because with only a few exceptions they can guess the meaning through association with similar English words. Those less obvious are explained and become clear due

50 All Latin (and some Greek) first names in alphabetical order: Albus, Alastor, Alecto, Amycus, Andromeda, Antioch, Arcturus, Argus, Augusta, Augustus, Bellatrix, Cadmus, Cassandra, Cornelius, Draco, Filius, Hermione, Horace, Ignotus, Lucius, Luna, Merope, Minerva, Narcissa, Nigellus, Nymphadora, Olympe, Penelope, Pius, Pompona, Quirinus, Regulus, Remus, Rubeus, Rufus, Septima, Severus, Sirius, Sybill, Xenophilius.

51 See also Garcés and Bogoslaw, *op. cit.*, 209–226.

to the context. Latin spells also help them, along with readers with less knowledge of English than native speakers, to realise that Latin is the source of many English words. In translation the spells are left in their original form and while they do not really work any magic, they have exponentially increased global awareness of the Latin language.

In the book, in order for the spells to work, the words must be pronounced properly and the gestures executed correctly. Hogwarts students learn this rule at the first Charms class with Professor Filius Flitwick. The white feather launches into the air only when the wizard properly enunciates: *Wingardium leviosa!*, and the wand moves gracefully with “swish and flick”! This need to be exact and to observe old formulas was present in Antiquity, for example, in various traditional Roman rituals.

There are “practical” spells that can be used in a variety of everyday needs: *Accio!*, *Lumos!*, *Nox!*, *Tergeo!*, *Aguamenti!*, *Aparecium!*, *Locomotor!*, *Colloportus!*, *Levicorpus!*, *Mobiliarbus!*, *Mobilicorpus!*, *Portus!*, *Wingardium leviosa!*, *Reparo!*, *Episkey!* (Greek), *Impervius!*, *Defodio!*, *Engorgio!*, *Erecto!*, *Deletrius!*, *Densaugeo!*, *Deprimo!*, *Descendo!*, *Diffindo!*, *Duro!*, *Obscuro!*, *Reducio!*, *Reducto!*, *Relashio!*, *Anapneo!*, *Rennervate!*, *Geminio!*, *Silencio!*, *Sonus!*, *Quietus!*, *Meteolojinx recanto!* Spells of concealment: *Repello Muggletum!*, *Obliviate!*, *Muffliato!*, are useful in hiding magic from Muggles. Defensive and disarming spells allow the elimination of existing threats: *Protego!*, *Protego horribilis!*, *Protego totalum!*, *Expelliarmus!*, *Impedimenta!*, *Cavimicus!*, *Expecto patronum!*, *Finite incantatem!*, *Hominem revelio!*, *Legilimens!*, *Liberacorpus!*, *Priori incantatem!*, *Riddikulus!*, *Specialis revelio!* And their more aggressive cousins, fighting spells are used when combat becomes necessary: *Incendio!*, *Flagrate!*, *Confringo!*, *Confundo!*, *Incarcerous!*, *Sectumsempra!*, *Evanesco!*, *Expulso!*, *Petrificus totalus!*, *Rictusempra!*, *Oppugno!*, *Serpensortia!*⁵²

And finally, those that may land the user in Azkaban prison, the Unforgivable Curses: *Imperio!*, *Crucio!*, *Avada Kedavra!* The first puts the cursed under the *imperium*—total control—of the curser, the second causes excruciating pain, and the third kills; it is the worst of the three and belongs to an older, even darker, magic. Rowling did not use Latin as the source of the curse presumably to differentiate it from the rest. She explained its origin in her 2004 interview at the Edinburgh Book Festival:

52 For a discussion of spells, see M.G. DuPree, “Severus Snape and the Standard Book of Spells: Ancient Tongues in the Wizarding World,” in Nancy R. Reagin, ed., *Harry Potter and History* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 39–54.

It is an ancient spell in Aramaic, and it is the original of *abracadabra*, which means “let the thing be destroyed.” Originally, it was used to cure illness and the “thing” was the illness, but I decided to make it the “thing” as in the person standing in front of me. I take a lot of liberties with things like that. I twist them round and make them mine.⁵³

Apart from the names of characters, spells, curses, passwords, and slogans, Latin occasionally (although most potions have English names) assisted Rowling in inventing names for magical potions: *Felix felicis*, *Amortentia*, *Veritaserum*, *Chelidonium minuscula*, *Oculus*, and *Volubilis*. In addition, a few Latin names may be found in potion ingredients: *Acromantula*, *Agrippa*, *Mercury*, and *Mars*.

Classical Motifs

Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw developed a different system than Slytherin and Gryffindor for guarding their common rooms. The former opens when one of the barrels at the door is tapped in the rhythm of the founder’s name, the latter requires those who wish to enter to solve a riddle. The motif of the riddle occurs also at the encounter with the Sphinx in the Triwizard Tournament in the *Goblet of Fire*. It is of ancient Greek origin but at the same time is often used in fairy tales and fantasy literature⁵⁴ as one of the trials the characters must go through.

Each Hogwarts house has specific core values/virtues and is associated with one of the four elements. Gryffindor’s element is fire, its core virtue is bravery; Ravenclaw’s element is air, its core value is wisdom; Slytherin is associated with water, it values ambition; and Hufflepuff’s element is earth, its core value is diligence.⁵⁵ The concept of the virtues and that of the elements, along with most of the other philosophical concepts, were described and interpreted by Greek philosophers whose ideas underlie systems of values and moral development. Indeed, the four elements were at the basis of their understanding of the universe, or cosmogony.

53 Speaking to Lindsey Fraser on Aug. 15, 2004, <http://harrypotter.bloomsbury.com/author/interviews/individual1> (see n. 39).

54 Riddles—as everyone who has read Tolkien and/or seen the movies based on his books knows—are a favourite pastime for hobbits.

55 J.K. Rowling discussed the elements and values in an interview with MuggleNet and The Leaky Cauldron on July 16, 2005: <http://pottermoreanalysis.tumblr.com/post/57121156499/the-four-houses-and-elements-of-hogwarts> (access Jan. 20, 2016).

Prophecies

Destiny, prophecy, and divination are all ancient concepts present in the Harry Potter novels. The Divination teacher, Sybill, the great-great granddaughter of Cassandra Trelawney, is generally considered a fraud. In fact, however, she occasionally becomes a true seer without realising it, functioning only as a vessel for the communication of prophecies, in a semi-conscious trance, somewhat like the Oracle at Delphi. Sybill (Sibyl) is a name for Greek women with prophetic talents. A Sibyl sold to King Tarquinius Superbus a book of prophecies in Greek hexameters called *Libri Sibyllini*; Aeneas's guide in Virgil's *Aeneid*, book 6, is the Sibyl of Cumae who made her predictions also in a trance. The original Cassandra, the Trojan princess, went back on the promise of accepting Apollo's advances in exchange for a prophetic gift and he punished her by making the gift a curse: her predictions would be true but nobody would believe her.

Sybill Trelawney's prophecies, not the ones she fabricates but the true ones she is unaware of, are "sibylline," unclear and open to interpretation. People who seek to outsmart her prophecies, even wizards as accomplished as Voldemort, unwittingly ensure the outcome they were trying to avoid. Rowling's version of the ancient Greek concept of a Destiny impossible to outrun and of ambiguous oracles prompting people to act misguidedly, is presented through the repeated advice of Dumbledore to Harry. This stresses the lack of inescapability of prophecies but also the primary role of individual choice, or rather of a series of choices. Rowling injects a dose of optimism into her treatment of human fate: life requires a lot of courage, determination, and sacrifice, but you can do the right thing and survive the trials. There is little respect for Divination at Hogwarts, either as a school subject or as an art, mainly because of the highly uncertain nature of predictions. Even people who believe in prophecies—like Voldemort—are convinced that a superior mind can use them for its own purposes with impunity.

In a number of publications, various scholars have discussed the issue of prophecy vs. free will in the Harry Potter novels. Patricia Donaher and James M. Okapal have presented the most convincing and thorough argument.⁵⁶ They contested Gregory Bassham's⁵⁷ rather superficial treatment and suggested allowing a "limited freedom within the larger deterministic framework through

56 Patricia Donaher and James M. Okapal, "Causation, Prophetic Visions, and the Free Will Question in Harry Potter," in Anatol, ed., *Reading Harry Potter Again*, Kindle edition, 4.

57 Gregory Bassham, "The Prophecy-Driven Life: Fate and Freedom at Hogwarts," in David Baggett and Shawn E. Klein, eds., *Harry Potter and Philosophy*, 213–226; see also Edmund M. Kenn, *The Wisdom of Harry Potter: What Our Favorite Hero Teaches Us about Moral*

the creation of 'new first causes,' that is, events that do not have antecedent actions as their impetus."⁵⁸

Mythical Creatures

Mythical beings of classical origin—centaurs, mermaids, phoenixes, three-headed dogs, hippogriffs, unicorns known only in Late Antiquity, and even owls, the birds of Athena—belong to Rowling's wizarding world. They live on the Hogwarts grounds, in the lake, and in the Forbidden Forest. Readers of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* are already familiar with a number of such talking animals and noble creatures, including centaurs who are wise and brave and friendly to humans.⁵⁹ Juliette Harrison calls Lewis's centaurs "an entire race of Chirons."⁶⁰ By contrast, the centaurs in the Forbidden Forest, with the possible exception of Firenze, a Hogwarts teacher who replaced Sybill Trelawney, are dangerous and hostile to wizards. The Mer-people, on the other hand, may revere Dumbledore but they have little contact with students; in contrast with classical mermaids, they do not seek to drown people.⁶¹

Fawkes the Phoenix, Dumbledore's devoted and loyal firebird, brings magical aid to Harry. The Phoenix is possibly of ancient Egyptian origin, but is attested already in Mycenaean Greek. Rowling equipped the bird with two new abilities: the capacity to carry great loads and to heal poisoned wounds with its tears. Nesbit's fantasy novel *The Phoenix and the Carpet*⁶² begins just before Guy Fawkes Night in November. In this story an old carpet is accidentally burned by children trying out fireworks they acquired for the occasion. Their parents replace the ruined carpet with another one. In the new carpet the children find a Phoenix egg. The hatched bird and the carpet start granting the children magical wishes. As already mentioned, Rowling, who has several

Choices (New York: Prometheus Books, 2008); and Lisa Hopkins, "Harry Potter and the Narrative of Destiny," in Anatol, ed., *Reading Harry Potter Again*, Kindle edition, 5.

58 Donaher and Okopal, "Causation, Prophetic Visions," 47.

59 See Juliette Harrison's study entitled "The Domestication of Classical Mythology in the *Chronicles of Narnia*," *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* 5 (2010): 1–9.

60 *Ibid.*, 9.

61 See Lisa Maurice, "From Chiron to Foaly: The Centaur in Classical Mythology and Children's Literature," in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature: Heroes and Eagles* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 140–168.

62 Edith Nesbit, *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (London: Newness, 1904). It is the second volume of her trilogy, after *Five Children and It*, and before *The Story of the Amulet*.

times confessed her admiration for Edith Nesbit, was very likely inspired by her to create Dumbledore's Fawkes.

Buckbeak, the hippogriff, belongs to a species mentioned in Virgil's 8th *Eclogue* (vv. 27–28) as resulting from a griffin mating with a mare. Classical authors did not leave any other information concerning hippogriffs. Buckbeak owes his personality, and his proud and friendly disposition, entirely to Rowling. The three-headed guard dog Fluffy, fierce and deadly but sensitive to music, is the Hogwarts equivalent of the mythical Cerberus. Finally, birds ensure communication in the wizarding world. They always find the addressee, even when nobody else can. They work for the Hogwarts Owlery, or for individual owners, and like to be paid in small coin (although it is unclear what they do with the money). Rowling's choice of owls for the postal services seems due to their status as the clever and competent birds of Athena.

Magical Objects and Quotations

A classical origin may also be attributed to an important magical object, Harry's cloak of invisibility, which is one of the Deathly Hallows. Plato, in his *Republic*, 2.359a–2.360d, speaks of the temptation provided by invisibility and tells the story of Gyges, King of Lydia, and his magical ring, which gave invisibility to its wearer. Tolkien's ring of Sauron comes to mind immediately although that ring also had sinister powers to corrupt, not only the relatively benign power to make invisible. Harry uses the cloak only when he has to hide and the cloak itself does not have any other properties. However, Gyges used his ring to seduce the queen, kill the king, and take the throne for himself. The potential for malice was present also in the case of the cloak, but it never occurred to Harry to use it for an evil purpose.

The Deathly Hallows begins with two quotations: one from Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers* and the other from William Penn's *More Fruits of Solitude*.⁶³ The first one—not in the original Greek—is from the second part of the *Oresteia*. The choruses pray to the gods of the Underworld and finish the prayer saying:

Now hear, you blissful powers underground—
answer the call, send help. Bless the children,
give them triumph now.

AESCH. *CHOE.* 476–478⁶⁴

63 William Penn's quotation extols friendship as being impervious to death.

64 Trans. Robert Fagles, in Aeschylus, *The Oresteia* (New York: Viking Press, 1975).

The quotation applies to the situation of final conflict with the Dark Lord and the way it will be resolved. It serves to demonstrate at the outset of the last volume that the school story has now reached the status of classical tragedy. The quotation is very appropriate, divine assistance is necessary in this extreme trial, for the hero will sacrifice his life to vanquish evil and he will then be reborn. The story of course does not bear any resemblance to the tragedy of Orestes, who must kill his mother who is guilty of her husband's murder in order to avenge the death of his father. However, the words are fitting, which is why Rowling selected them.⁶⁵ One excellent side effect is the dissemination of Aeschylus's verses to hundreds of millions of readers in seventy-eight plus languages and an invitation to read more of that magical poetry.

Rowling's Latin Influence on Later Audiovisual Magic

If we consider Rowling's influence on audiovisual productions of fantasy made at the same time as Harry Potter or afterward, then we not only find obvious examples of allusions and quotes but also the use of Latin for spells and enchantments as well as a very specific pattern of reception and inspiration. In other words, whatever rings a bell, and attracts an audience, goes. The result is that we end up with a strange but somewhat familiar concoction. Television audiences witnessed it for the first time on a larger scale in *The 10th Kingdom*, a miniseries aired on NBC in 2000, which narrated the story of what happened in classic fairy tales after "the happily ever after." This series displays a connection between contemporary reality and the fantasy world, which is also a common element in more recent productions.

The ABC fantasy drama series, in which all imaginable tales from *One Thousand and One Nights* to the Brothers Grimm, to Lewis Carroll, L. Frank Baum, J.M. Barrie, and even Carlo Collodi, young Hercules (called Herc), and the evil god of the Underworld Hades, are sprinkled with Walt Disney and mixed together in one story, is called *Once Upon a Time*.⁶⁶ Its one-season-long 2013–2014 spin-off is entitled *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland*. It features Jafar,⁶⁷ a

65 See Alice Mills's analysis of the quotation in her unconvincing paper "Harry Potter and the Horrors of the *Oresteia*," in Elizabeth Hellman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2009; ed. pr. 2003), Kindle edition, 13.

66 The series, which started in 2011, is currently in its sixth season. Its executive producers and creators are Eddy Kitsis and Adam Horowitz. One of their scriptwriters is Jane Espenson, who also co-created and wrote for *Warehouse 13*.

67 The name of the Royal Vizier of Agrabah from Walt Disney's Aladdin movies (1992, 1994) and one of the Disney villains.

sorcerer who attempts a spell to change the laws of magic and is thwarted by Alice, despite the fact that his command of Latin seems to be outstanding (at least in the use of spells).

The recently concluded⁶⁸ Syfy network's five-season series *Warehouse 13* is based on the idea that exceptional events and people imbue objects with various kinds of power. If not properly neutralised such artifacts can wreak havoc and potentially cause disaster. They must therefore be safely stored in a warehouse whose first version was built by Alexander the Great for certain unusual spoils of war. Indeed, the warehouse is depicted as being at the origin of the Library of Alexandria.⁶⁹ Along with artifacts, some "historic" master criminals were even put into stasis (bronzed) in the warehouse. In the first episode of season 5, one such individual from the sixteenth century (Paracelsus) escapes and molds the present and the future according to his sinister designs. The warehouse custodian and his agents manage to overcome the villain and restore the original timeline. In his laboratory Paracelsus posted two (seriously flawed) Latin mottos: "Scientia sit omne" and "Media ad finem justificat."⁷⁰ However, the warehouse agents have no difficulty in translating these "Latinated" curiosities back into English.

The characters in another recent (2013–2014) fantasy series, the *Witches of East End*,⁷¹ constantly use Latin spells. While they are not from Persia, like Jafar, they have lived for hundreds of years in the Western world or Midgard (where they were banished to from Asgard, the Norse realm of the gods). Nothing in the series suggests an answer to the question why Norse witches would use Latin for their obviously Asgardian witchcraft. The witches practically chatter in that language, there are dozens of spells, some of them long and complex. They are described in their family *Grimoire*, or ancient book of magic (written in Latin), which they regularly consult in the series. Here are some striking examples of spells from season 1: *Vade, daemonia, animas vestras ad infernum remittitur. Dimitam..., dimitam. Dimitam, dimitam, sana glacies, sana glacies, sana glacies, sana glacies*⁷²—the spell banishes demons to hell and heals the

68 The series was launched in 2009; the last episode aired May 19, 2014.

69 See the series website at http://www.syfy.com/warehouse13/history/warehouse_1 (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

70 The corresponding Latin phrase is found, e.g., in Ovid (*Her.* 2.85): "exitus acta probat."

71 A Lifetime TV series; it began airing in 2013 and is based on a book by the same title by Melissa de la Cruz published in 2011, the first volume of a longer "Beauchamp Family" saga that now includes *Diary of the White Witch* (a 2012 prequel), *Serpent's Kiss* (2012), and *Winds of Salem* (2013); see also *Triple Moon: Summer on East End* (2015). For Melissa de la Cruz's use of Latin in her series on vampires, see Casta, op. cit., 369–371.

72 *Witches of East End*, dir. Fred Gerber, SiE3: "Today I Am a Witch," written by Turi Meyer and Al Septien (2013, mp4).

ice (?)—and *Flore... pulchre. Flore... veneficus*⁷³ makes a bouquet of flowers poisonous. Even though there is much more Latin in the series than in the Harry Potter novels, it is correct also only by accident.

There is no direct evidence that the use of Latin in the television series *Once Upon a Time* (and *Once Upon a Time in Wonderland*), *Warehouse 13*, and *Witches of East End* was prompted by Rowling's spells, whose style is now universally known and accepted, but it would be very surprising if it were not. Even if it is historically correct for Paracelsus to speak Latin—he would of course have done so correctly—the Persian Jafar and the Norse Freya can have no convincing justification for possessing such anachronistic and displaced knowledge, other than the fact that the shows' writers and audiences in the post-Harry Potter world consider Latin the normal language of magic.

One of the longest continuously running science fiction shows, *Stargate SG-1*, makes no allusions to Rowling and was launched the same year as the first Harry Potter novel (it ran from 1997 to 2007). However, it seems likely, especially in the later seasons, that the status of Latin as an ancient and powerful language may have been influenced by the wide familiarity of the audience and the series' creators with Harry Potter. The 16th episode of *SG-1* season 2 features a highly advanced race, the Ancients, who are the builders of the Stargates (*Astris Porta*), devices that allow interplanetary travel. The Ancients lived millions of years ago in several galaxies and on many planets, among them the planet Earth, which they called *Terra*, but have since ascended to a higher, incorporeal plane of existence. The Ancients spoke a language related to Latin, in fact a proto-Latin language left to the terrestrials as the Ancients' legacy. The episode in which this language appears and its origins are explained was produced in 1998. It was entitled *The Fifth Race*. There are no magical spells⁷⁴ in the series, just incredibly sophisticated alien technology and attempts at rational explanations of myths (Ancient Egyptian, Norse, and the Arthurian cycle) as being due to the appearance on Earth of advanced aliens. These include evil ones, who pretended to be gods and enforced obedience and worship, but also benevolent ones, who with the passage of time became less interested in aiding human progress.

One of the series' main characters, Dr. Daniel Jackson—a phenomenal linguist and archaeologist—is able to decipher the language due to its alleged similarity to Mediaeval (!) Latin. There are three complete phrases spoken in

73 *Witches of East End*, dir. David Solomon, S1E8: "Snake Eyes," written by Josh Reims (2013, mp4).

74 The only supernatural element is ascension to a higher plane of existence, which technically is not a spell but part of the sci-fi reality.

the ancient language, the first one written on an inscription and also spoken, the two others only spoken: “nou ani Anquietas”⁷⁵—“we are the Ancients”; “ego indeo navo locas”—“I need new locations”; “ego deserdi asordo, comdo asordo”—“I seek help, please help.” The language is also featured in the 21st episode of the 7th season (2004), “Lost City.” There, we hear a few words, such as *cruvus*—“wrong,” *euge*—“good,” *fron*—“forehead” or “mind,” *dormata*—“sleep,” *suboglaciuss*—“under ice,” and *aveo amacus*—“farewell friends.”

There is one branch of the ascended Ancients called Ori who thrive on energy provided by human worship. By using a false promise of ascension combined with a threat of annihilation, they force countless human worlds to accept their noble gospel of Origin, which they manipulate according to need. After the birth of Adria, the Orici—a human-Ori child—an Ori Prior prophesises about her in Ancient: “Calium videre eessit, et eraos ad sidera tollere vultus.” He seems to be reciting, with a somewhat outlandish accent, Ovid’s vision of how humanity was created in the first book of *Metamorphoses*—“os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre / iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus”—a passage which comes just before the best known passage about the Golden Age—“Aurea prima sata est aetas.”⁷⁶ Intertextuality for the initiated... especially those for whom Anglo-Saxon pronunciation of Latin is not a source of confusion.

Conclusion

J.K. Rowling’s popularity created a virtual communication network—cross-platform and cross-generational—covering the entire globe and exposing all its members to ideas, motifs, and themes inspired by Classical Antiquity.⁷⁷ Latin spells (whether linguistically correct or not) are a literally *original*, i.e.,

75 The spelling is according to tables at http://stargate.wikia.com/wiki/Ancient_language (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

76 Quoted from *SG1*, S10E01, 2006; see Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1.85–86): “[m]an was given a lofty countenance and was commanded to behold the skies; and with an upright face may view the stars,” trans. Brookes More (Boston: Cornhill Publishing Co., 1922), <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=LatinAugust2012&getid=1&query=Ov.%20Met.%201.5> (accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

77 Spencer, *Harry Potter and the Classical World*, Kindle edition, location 5057 of 5959, summarises his findings in a rather predictably traditional manner: “Her narrative formula and her presentation are classic, from the overall story form (the quest folktale) to her method of framing scenes, episodes, motifs, individual books and the widest-ranging plots (with the ancient and timeless device of ring composition).”

untranslated, element common to the novels as written by Rowling and to the seventy-odd translations now in print.⁷⁸ Her talents for reaching and enchanting readers of all ages through a variety of literary, psychological, and marketing devices allowed her to come across not only as an inventive and imaginative writer but as a truly caring and respectful person, an achievement infrequently sought in the literary community, which generally favours a separation between the creator's *persona* and the flesh-and-blood individual. Rowling also achieved another rare feat in literature for children: because she genuinely shared her fascinations, her love for the created universe and its characters, all the time remaining devoted and available to her readers, she bridged, or at least significantly shrunk the gap between the adult author and the child reader.⁷⁹ Therein lies probably the secret of her success.

78 On issues related to translations of the Harry Potter novels and translation of children's literature in general, see the recent discussion in Pinsent, *Children's Literature*, 144–145.

79 The gap discussed first by Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London–Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984) and then by many other scholars, reviewed by, e.g., David Rudd in *The Routledge Companion to Children's Literature*, 8–9, 203–204; Mickenberg and Vallone in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, 3–4; Hunt in the same *Handbook*, 45. For the most recent review of the discussion see Pinsent, *op. cit.*, 2–5.

East, West, and Finding Yourself in Caroline Lawrence’s “Roman Mysteries”

Helen Lovatt

Introduction

Caroline Lawrence’s “Roman Mysteries” series uses an ancient Roman setting to explore themes of identity for her four young detective characters. While they do not visit Eastern Europe, ideas of East and West, centre and periphery, are important in making sense of their journeys, both literal and emotional. This popular series of detective novels for children aged eight and above was written in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2009 by an American living in London, and has also become a well-received BBC television series.¹

The theme of “finding yourself”—going away in order to grow up and gain self-knowledge—has a particular importance in children’s literature.² While one can argue that it lies at the heart of much literature, children are seen as not-yet-complete humans, who need to develop more than adults. So E.L. Konigsburg, in *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967) sends Claudia Kincaid to live in New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in order to better understand herself, to find the something different inside her which allows her to continue living her life. So Lucy goes through the wardrobe to Narnia, and Bilbo goes on a journey in *The Hobbit*. Arguably, this theme is already

1 The BBC series consisted of 10 episodes, released in 2007–2008, directed by Paul Marcus (5 episodes, 2007), Jill Robertson (3 episodes, 2008), and Marcus D.F. White (2 episodes, 2008). This article focuses on the books; the television adaptations are interesting, but they do not follow the full trajectory of the narrative in the books, and stop after ten episodes rather than seventeen, at *The Slave-girl of Jerusalem*. This suggests that the decentred final sequence of the series is more challenging than the earlier episodes and harder to sell.

2 On the past and cultural identity, see Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Margeret Meek, ed., *Children’s Literature and National Identity* (Stoke on Trent–Sterling, Va.: Trentham Books, 2001); Jenny Plastow and Margot Hillel, eds., *The Sands of Time: Children’s Literature: Culture, Politics and Identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010). Mary Harlow, “Roman Children and Childhood and the Perception of Heritage,” in Kate Darian-Smith and Carla Pascoe, eds., *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage* (Abingdon–New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2013), 144–158, mentions Lawrence briefly.

present in classical epic: Odysseus's adventures lead to a deeper understanding of what it means to come home, and Aeneas must journey until he can find and define a new home. In modern adult fiction, too, the idea of finding yourself remains a key theme: romantic plot lines focus on finding yourself by finding your true other half; while for children, finding a secure family functions in a similar way.

In Roman thought, ideas of East and West were a potent part of the rhetoric of belonging. Rome is both the centre of the world and the locus of Western identity.³ Aeneas moves from East to West, from Trojan and Phrygian (and Phoenician) femininity, and oriental mystique, to down-to-earth Italian and Roman masculinity.⁴ Similarly, but in reverse, Lucan's Pompey moves from Rome to the East where he is weakened, feminised, and finally destroyed.⁵ This is, of course, to oversimplify: were the Greeks still counted as East for Rome?⁶ Probably: Asia Minor certainly was. The Greeks themselves could associate the

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- 3 On orientalism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1978). On Greece and the East, see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Margaret Christina Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Unthinking the Greek Polis: Ancient Greek History beyond Eurocentrism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For other models of thinking about identity and Roman Empire, see Greg Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 40 (1994): 116–143; Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2005). On orientalism and reception, see Lorna Hardwick, "Reception as Simile: The Poetics of Reversal in Homer and Derek Walcott," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3 (1997): 326–338; various articles in Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); and Mark Bradley, ed., *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 4 On Roman literature and orientalism in Virgil, see Yasmin Syed, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2005); on gender, nationality, and desire in Virgil, see J.D. Reed, *Virgil's Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); on Silius, gender, and the Other, see Antony Augoustakis, *Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Alison M. Keith, "Engendering Orientalism in Silius' *Punica*," in Antony Augoustakis, ed., *Brill's Companion to Silius Italicus* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 355–373.
- 5 Andreola Rossi, "The *Aeneid* Revisited: The Journey of Pompey in Lucan's *Pharsalia*," *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000): 571–591.
- 6 On perceptions of Greek ethnicity both among Greeks themselves and outsiders, including Romans, see Irad Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, "Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia" 5 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

East both with Persian urbanity and lack of freedom, and with Colchian barbarism. How does the North fit into this? What about Africa?⁷ A surprisingly large part of the Roman world could be defined as "Eastern" when the rhetoric fit the situation. In some ways, ideas of East and West can be mapped onto ideas of periphery and centre, except for the prevalence of the topos of "noble barbarian" applied to Northern/Germanic tribes.⁸

One of the defining features of the Roman Empire is its incorporation of multiple ethnicities and its cosmopolitanism.⁹ How do these complex negotiations between ideas of East and West play out in receptions of Rome for children? Does the child's concern with identity allow for deep exploration? Or must the children's author simplify in order to comfort? How in particular does Caroline Lawrence represent Roman rhetorics of identity in her series for children?

The "Roman Mysteries" consist of seventeen volumes, covering the period of Roman history from the accession of Titus and the eruption of Vesuvius to the death of Titus and the accession of Domitian. The overarching story line follows a quest to return free-born children, who have been kidnapped by slavers, to their families, and ranges widely across the Roman Empire, starting in Ostia, moving to Rome itself, and then on to Greece, North Africa, Egypt, and Asia Minor. The four protagonists each have their own quest for identity: Flavia Gemina must come to terms with her role as a woman, as well as reconciling that role with her (obviously anachronistic) desire to be a detective (to have public agency and help people). Although her mother is dead, she does not search for a mother figure; instead she must come to terms with what is expected of women, with the restrictions of marriage and the dangers of death in childbirth. Jonathan, her neighbour, begins by searching for his mother (lost in the sack of Jerusalem) and ends by searching for his nephew (apparently kidnapped), while dealing with the effects of the destruction of the Jewish nation on his family and himself. Nubia, Flavia's slave girl, searches for her home and remaining family after she was captured by slavers in North Africa, and for a sense of meaning and security in her life. Lupus, a beggar boy whom the three others adopt, searches for his mother and his home, and a place in society for

7 On Greece and Africa, see Daniel Orrells, Gurminder K. Bhambra, and Tessa Roynon, eds., *African Athena: New Agendas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); on Roman attitudes, see Paolo Asso, *Ideas of Africa in the Roman Literary Imagination* (forthcoming).

8 For a recent take on Greeks and barbarians, see Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

9 On Rome as world city, see Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, eds., *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

someone with a disability, after his tongue is cut out by his vengeful uncle, a slaver and the murderer of his father. The inclusion of four different heroes, boys and girls, members of excluded minorities and the moneyed elite, able-bodied, mentally unstable, and disabled, was a deliberate move by Lawrence to give as many young readers as possible a character with whom to identify. It also allows for a multicultural and postcolonial take on Roman imperialism, even if the violent and disturbing nature of many of the story lines is offset by the comforts of clearly good and bad characters, definite solutions to the mysteries, and an emphasis on the softer side of Roman society.

For Lawrence's writing mentor, John Truby, a convincing plot must be built around the development of the main character.¹⁰ Following Joseph Campbell's ideas in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*,¹¹ an engaging story requires an often flawed protagonist who grows by taking on a challenge and confronting an opponent. Lawrence, of course, is not just writing literature for children, she is also writing detective fiction. For Lawrence, being a writer (and a reader) and being a detective are closely linked: in the companion travelogue to the "Roman Mysteries," *From Ostia to Alexandria with Flavia Gemina* (2008), which draws extensively on her blog, she frequently exhorts her readers to take on the role of detective, finding things, finding out things, and finding out about themselves—using their travel to reflect on home, society, and their relationship to it.¹² She encourages readers to identify with her four young protagonists, who each have their own quests for identity and who each desire to learn about the world for different reasons. In this way, Lawrence artfully merges detection and didacticism: children have to find out about the exotic Roman world of 79–81 AD in order to find the clues to solve the mystery. Taking on the

10 Lawrence often mentions Truby when discussing her writing: for example in an interview with *The Zone* (Devon County Council, http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/cultureheritage/libraries/library_services/children/thezone/max-books/max-meettheauthor/max_previous_authors/max_caroline-lawrence09.htm, accessed Dec. 10, 2015) she is quoted as saying: "The person who has had the most effect on my writing is a Hollywood script doctor called John Truby. (<http://www.truby.com>) I learned how to write plot from his tapes on story structure."

11 Ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968 (ed. pr. 1949).

12 Lawrence's blog is full of rich material about her writing process, and supplies a didactic framework for teachers using the books: <http://flavias.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/themes-topics.html>. In particular she documents her own travels and how they contributed to the process of writing the books, helping to flesh out her engagement with the Roman Empire and the Other. For interesting material on Ephesus, see <http://flavias.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/big-epheusus-day.html>; on Volubilis: <http://flavias.blogspot.co.uk/2006/01/volubilis.html> (all these sites accessed Dec. 10, 2015).

role of the characters is also taking on the role of the author: readers are encouraged (as in so much children's literature) to think of themselves as writers in the making and to engage actively with what they are reading.¹³

The series starts in Ostia and Rome, but moves progressively further from Rome. First, the characters venture to the Bay of Naples, to experience the eruption of Vesuvius; then in volume 9, *The Colossus of Rhodes* (2005), the overarching narrative leads them to go in pursuit of kidnapped children as far as Rhodes itself. Volumes 10, *The Fugitive from Corinth* (2005), and 12, *The Charioteer of Delphi* (2006), are set in Greece, with an interlude back in the Bay of Naples, and volume 14, *The Beggar of Volubilis* (2007), begins their final journey: to Africa at the behest of the emperor, to Alexandria and deep into the interior as Nubia searches for her family, and finally to Asia Minor, where they eventually settle in Ephesus. The end of the series is crucial for an interpretation of what comes before. Most important, Lawrence is a consciously Christian writer, and conversions to Christianity, drawing on the traditions of nineteenth-century conversion literature, form key nodes in the development of the series. For instance, Lupus's evil uncle is converted before he dies, and leaves him his ship, the former slaver *Vespa*, thus enabling their subsequent journeys (at the end of *The Dolphins of Laurentum*, 2003). These conversions come to a climax in volume 16, *The Prophet from Ephesus* (2009), with the conversion of most of the main characters and the primary antagonist. However, the exclusion of Flavia from this conversion narrative, who is arguably the main protagonist, and a member of the privileged social elite of Rome, is highly significant for creating openness and avoiding an unpalatable nineteenth-century moral certainty.

This chapter examines the journeys of Lawrence's young heroes from the centre (Rome/Ostia) to the East/other, including Greece, North Africa, and Asia Minor, as well as their journeys of the mind, through flashback and cultural encounters, involving Judaea and Judaism. It will look briefly at each of the four main characters and how their journeys contribute to their developing identities: the first section will explore the character of Lupus and the concept of the family romance; the section on Nubia will examine her negotiation of

13 The *Künstlerroman* (novel about growing to artistic maturity) is an important genre of children's literature. Examples include Jo in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1869); and *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) by L.M. Montgomery; *Pollyanna Grows Up* (1915) by Eleanor H. Porter; and *Jo Returns to the Chalet School* (1936) by Elinor Brent-Dyer. Montgomery also wrote a trilogy even more focused on becoming an author: *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily Climbs* (1925), and *Emily's Quest* (1927). The continuing popularity of this topos can be seen in the "Inkworld" trilogy by Cornelia Funke: *Inkheart* (2003), *Inkspell* (2005), and *Inkdeath* (2007); see the chapter in this volume by Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "Orpheus and Eurydice: Reception of a Classical Myth in International Children's Literature."

multiple identities; Jonathan will allow us to investigate Lawrence's representation of Judaism; finally, the chapter will finish with Flavia, conversions to Christianity, and closure in Ephesus. The focus will be mainly on the later volumes in the series (specifically 4, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17).

Lupus and the Family Romance

Much children's literature strives to involve readers as deeply as possible through strong focalisation and emotional identification.¹⁴ The emotional side of Lupus's homecoming is heightened by the use of similar structures of desire and deferral to those used in romantic plot lines. The Freudian term "family romance" describes the process by which children of normal families fantasise about having an idealised family, imagining, for example, that they are really the adopted child of a royal family.¹⁵ This is thought to be part of the process of detachment from the child's strong love of and identification with their parents, but it also tends to validate normative family structures: there is an expectation that all children will have a mother and a father, and that anyone not in that position will consider their life incomplete. In a society in which the family is conceived quite differently as a larger and more complex entity, would children feel differently?¹⁶ But the erotics of narrative require a driving desire, and in the absence of a romantic object of desire, the idealised father or mother figure comes to dominate literature for prepubescent children.¹⁷ It is the case that many Roman children would have lost parents, in childbirth, illness, shipwreck, and the inevitably much higher mortality than we experience today. It is also convenient for a writer of historical detective fiction for

14 On strong focalisation as a characteristic of children's literature, particularly through child (or childlike) protagonists, see Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 8–17.

15 For an interesting exploration of the family romance in *Little Women*, see Elizabeth Lennox Keyser, *Little Women: A Family Romance* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2000; ed. pr. 1999).

16 Harlow, "Roman Children and Childhood," 155, comments that the "diverse cultural and social backgrounds" of Lawrence's four heroes "would not have been unknown in a Roman port town of the first century AD," but that their social interactions are less convincingly historicised.

17 On the erotics of narrative, see Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984). Desire for idealised (dead) parents also drives the Harry Potter novels, in which the Mirror of Erised reveals his heart's desire: to be with his parents.

children that the children be largely unsupervised. The absent parents then become the objects of desire and of investigation.

We can see how this works with Lupus, whose desire to return home to his mother, to go back to the time before all the terrible things happened to him, is expressed very much as the desire for a functioning nuclear family:

His mother would be there. He was sure of it. And he knew he would recognise her as soon as she opened the door. Then he would have a family again.

COLOSSUS, 102

This desire for the nuclear family is complicated by Lawrence's emphasis on the fact that Roman ideas of the family were more capacious and flexible than modern preconceptions about family structures might encourage us to think. The *familia* could include slaves, adopted children and adults, freed slaves, extended family, and anyone else living in the same establishment.¹⁸ Although all four children long for a mother–father–child triad of security, they also acknowledge and appreciate different and more flexible models of belonging to a family; we will explore this aspect of identity and travel further below. When Lupus arrives on his home island of Symi, he is both full of desire for home and mother, and traumatised by his past experiences on the island, shown in his mixed emotional reactions as he disembarks at Symi:

Greek voices calling up: laughter, questions, welcome, the arrival of the harbourmaster, roused from his bed but cheerful, and finally the thud of the heavy wooden gangplank. Tigris was the first one down it, his tail wagging and his nose low, questing for new smells. Lupus followed him with trembling knees and blurred vision. At the bottom he nearly put a foot wrong and fell between the ship and the land, but calloused hands caught him and laughing men set him firmly on solid ground.

He was home.

COLOSSUS, 103

However, his mother has left the island mysteriously, and his great-grandmother does not offer the security and homecoming that he craves. Instead, she seems to want to trap him:

18 On the Roman family, fundamental is Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Then he visited his great-grandmother. But she was old and tearful and illiterate. She could not read what he wrote, and she kept clutching at him with her claw-like hands.

COLOSSUS, 108–109

The process of desire and deferral continues with his journey. When he looks for his mother at the Temple of Apollo in Rhodes, he still does not fully find her. He feels her holding him in his sleep, but is not sure whether or not her singing is a dream:

Lupus nodded. Yes, he understood. But that didn't make it hurt any less, and he felt the tears come in a hot flood. [...] [He falls asleep.] And now he could feel soft arms around him and he smelled honey and he heard a sweet familiar voice singing the words of a half-remembered lullaby: *When you come home, when you come home to me.*

He wanted to see her—just to remind himself of what she looked like—and so he tried to open his eyes. But his eyelids were far too heavy and perhaps it was only a dream after all.

Lupus settled himself into his mother's arms, and presently he slept.

COLOSSUS, 189

Here the reader is let in on the hidden text, which is concealed from the character. Lupus is not sure whether or not it really is his mother, but the narrator forecloses with “into his mother's arms,” so that readers will achieve a sort of closure for this book, while Lawrence can maintain tension for the character of Lupus. When he finally does find his mother, in the next volume, *The Fugitive from Corinth*, she is now the Pythia and still unable to live with him as his mother, even if he can talk to her and be held by her. Deferral allows for continued searching and for the transfer of the search from a quest for *nostos*, return, into a quest for a new home and a secure place in society. Lupus has gone East to Greece from Rome, in a search for his own roots, only to find that there is little left for him of his home, and his mother is inaccessible. This family romance requires that children leave behind fantasies of parental rescue, and instead rely on their own self-sufficiency. Lupus never needs to come to terms with the human frailties of his mother, because she has been assimilated to the divine, and made unavailable by events. Lupus finds a place eventually as a Christian and as an acrobat with a travelling troupe of entertainers. His own beliefs and abilities have taken the place of his yearning to be protected.

Nubia and Multiple Identity

Nubia's quest begins when the four are lured to North Africa, apparently on Titus's orders, but become outlaws and have to try and clear their names. Nubia disappears up the Nile, apparently kidnapped but actually searching for her home and family. Nubia's homecoming, too, is deferred and incomplete: the theme of exile runs through Lawrence's work—perhaps not unrelated to the fact that she was born in London, grew up in the United States, and now lives in London. When Nubia finally reaches the small Nubian village far down the Nile where her relatives now live, she feels uneasy and out of place. She finds the cousin to whom she had been betrothed, Kashta, who initially fails to recognise her:

Kashta stepped forward as Nubia and Chryses approached. "Who are you?" he said in heavily accented Greek. "Don't you recognise me, Kashta?" said Nubia in their language. She pulled off her turban and waited for his reaction.

He studied her face for a long moment. Then his long-lashed brown eyes grew wide. "Shepenwepet!" he cried, using her clan name. "Can it really be you?" his face broke into a smile, then clouded over as he looked her up and down. "But why do you wear such clothes? Like a man?"

SCRIBES, 214

His reaction to her disguise in men's clothing is predictably disapproving. Nubia, like Flavia, runs up against the expectations of respectable womanhood. Strong female characters are an essential part of writing for children, but create problems for stories set in historical periods in which women would have had very little freedom of movement. As long as Nubia is a slave, she can avoid the constrictions of female life, but when she transcends slave status and starts to attain a degree of respectability (or to have a chance of attaining it) she must lose much of her freedom. The fantasy of social acceptance is set in conflict with the fantasy of adventure and exploration, the desire for knowledge.

When Nubia returns home, Kashta fulfils the fantasy of homecoming: he does recognise her; not only that, he still wants to marry her:

"Marry me, Shepenwepet," he said softly. "You will cook for me and raise my sons. I will protect you and breed many fine goats. It will not be an easy life, but we have one another and our people. You will be free. Truly free."

Nubia gazed up at his handsome smiling face. Then she looked towards the others in the village: the young mothers, the men preparing her celebration goat, the grubby toddlers playing in the dust. She should have been happy but she felt only dismay. Why? She had travelled nearly seven hundred miles to reach her own people and she had succeeded. Why did she not feel joy?

SCRIBES, 220

Nubia finds that she no longer thinks of Africa as home:

As he pronounced the word “home,” an image appeared in Nubia’s mind: the inner garden of Flavia’s house with its bubbling fountain and the birds singing in the fig tree. Of Alma, humming in the kitchen. [...] Of her beloved Aristo playing his lyre with his eyes closed. And of Nipur, her faithful dog.

Nubia felt a strange bittersweet longing [...], she realised Ostia was the place she now thought of as home. “Oh Kashta!” she whispered. “I came all this way to find my home. But I have seen Rome and Athens and Alexandria. I can read stories in Latin and Greek. How can a goatherd’s tent be home to me now?”

SCRIBES, 221

Her Roman identity is stronger; her role in Flavia’s life and family has changed her so irretrievably that she can no longer imagine living the limited life of her former self. The knowledge and understanding that she has gained from association with Flavia have given her new values, in which education and knowledge of the world are more important than tradition and security. Her idealisation of her African home is shattered, and home instead becomes a site of entrapment from which she must escape, as Kashta refuses to let her go. Her friends intervene, and Kashta puts one of the most difficult questions for anyone writing about ancient Rome for children: what about the slaves?

“Rome is evil. Romans are evil!”

“No, Kashta. Romans are not evil. They are like us. Some are good. Some are bad. Most are a mixture of good and bad. But their world is a wonderful one.”

“What about slavery?”

Nubia nodded slowly. “Yes, they have slaves. But I know a slave called Alma who is happier than any of the free women here. [...] And she is loved.”

"You have become one of them," he said.

"Yes!" Nubia looked at him in wonder. "I have become Roman. I am Nubian, but I am also a Roman. Thank you for showing me that."

SCRIBES, 222

This is a key issue of the "Roman Mysteries," which hinge around a search for free-born children who have been enslaved. Lawrence does not reject slavery outright, but points out that all situations and freedoms are relative. Is it better to be a slave and have food and shelter than to be free but starve? In the process she draws the equation between slavery and femininity, and questions absolute divisions between slave and free societies. Nubia's response reveals a pragmatic awareness that Roman culture is imperfect, even as she proclaims her own Romanness. Here, Lawrence is acknowledging to a certain extent her softening and romanticising of Roman culture, although the description of Flavia's house continues it. Nubia goes on the longest and most onerous quest of the series to find that while she is Nubian, she is Roman, too, accepting the complexities of cultural hybridity.¹⁹

Jonathan and Judaism

Jonathan's journey is a journey of the heart and mind, more than the body. His search for his mother leads him to Rome, where he finds that she is now the companion of Titus, under attack from an angry, rejected Queen Berenice of Judaea. He must come to terms with his mother's unfaithfulness to his father, the impossibility of reconciling his parents, and the terrible destruction that was brought down on his people in Judaea by the otherwise (mostly) friendly emperor. Madelyn Travis argues that Lawrence's representations of Judaism

19 In the process, Nubia seems to have read key works of Roman history, exploring provincial identity, such as Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 116–143: this is an extreme example of Nodelman's "hidden text." The words sound perfectly natural in the voice of the character and the situation of the conversation, and would only stand out as a knowing nod to the academic literature to those who have read it. The division between readers is not necessarily that between children and adults, but between more and less knowledgeable readers (much as for the allusive texts of Hellenistic and Latin literature). In fact, all literature can be read on different levels: perhaps the difference between children's literature and adult literature in this respect is that the less knowledgeable readers are officially valorised as "the readers" while the more knowledgeable ones are addressed slyly, unofficially, thus reversing the normal attitude in which authors emphasise their learning and that of their readers.

are fatally tainted by her Christian agenda, to the extent that “the dominant representations of Jews in children’s historical fiction of twenty-first-century Britain resemble anti-Semitic images of the Victorian era and earlier.”²⁰ Her argument is flawed by the fact that she is working only with the first three books of the series; there is some truth in the claim that Lawrence presents Christianity as a positive step forward: but not just in comparison to Judaism, rather in comparison to all religions in the Roman world. In fact, she is as much interested in Judaism as Christianity; after her degree in Classics (at Berkeley and Newnham College, Cambridge), she obtained an MA in Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College, London.²¹ The attraction of this period for Lawrence is surely as much about the aftermath of the Flavian campaign in Judaea as it is about the eruption of Vesuvius or the rivalry between Titus and Domitian. Jonathan and his family form the counterpoint to the middle-class Roman family of Flavia Gemina. Although they are Christians, they are also Jews and subject to the same anti-Semitism as other Jews. Jonathan’s mother appears not to be a Christian, and neither is the eponymous *Slave-girl from Jerusalem* (2007)—Hephzibah—whom they rescue in volume 13. At her trial, Mordecai, Jonathan’s father, experiences this anti-Semitism, since the trial speeches are used as an opportunity to present hugely exaggerated caricatures of Roman attitudes (*Slave-girl*, 137, 139). He himself emphasises his dual identity as Roman citizen and Jew (*Slave-girl*, 41). Ultimately, the villain in this story is a Roman; all the Jews are vindicated. Further, the emotional heart of the book is the death in childbirth of Miriam, Jonathan’s sister. Travis might argue that the existence of Zealot assassins in volume 4, and Agathus, who sets fire to Rome as vengeance for the slaughter of the Jews in volume 7, tend to portray Jews as immoral. However, Lawrence works hard to distance these characters from the class of Jews as a whole, just as she distances Nonius Celer, the murderer, of whose crime Hephzibah is accused, from Romans as a whole:

20 Madelyn Travis, “‘Heritage Anti-Semitism’ in Modern Times? Representations of Jews and Judaism in Twenty-first-Century British Historical Fiction for Children,” *European Judaism* 43 (2010): 89. She is particularly vitriolic about the “Roman Mysteries”: “The relationship between the observance of Judaism and immoral behaviour, absent in texts from the 1960s through the 1990s, reappears in ‘Roman Mysteries’ [...] [which] presents Jews as misguidedly clinging to an outmoded religion.” (89).

21 Details of Lawrence’s academic career, and movements between the US and UK, are available on the “Roman Mysteries” website at <http://www.romanmysteries.com/author> (accessed Dec. 10., 2015).

[Judge at trial:] "[...] Let no person say that Roman Justice is not blind to race or background: you may claim your legacy."

SLAVE-GIRL, 189–190

Simeon the Zealot, Jonathan's uncle, turns out in fact to be not an assassin, but a messenger attempting to protect Jonathan's mother from an assassination ordered by Berenice. Berenice herself is represented not as evil, but rather crossed in love. Susannah's father, who rejects Mordecai for not standing up to the Romans because of his Christianity, also rejects her lover, Jonathan the Zealot for his extremism (*Assassins*, 81–83). Agathus is portrayed less as Jewish, and more as a terrorist; his attempt to radicalise Jonathan fails at the last, when Jonathan fights him and inadvertently sets off the fire himself. When Agathus claims that the fire will be a burnt offering to atone for the deaths of so many Jews, he uses the word "holocaust," which shows Lawrence's complex engagement with Judaism. Here, the holocaust is not the destruction of millions of Jews (and others), but rather the vengeance taken in response: a Jew is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Romans, a sacrifice taken in return for the Roman brutalities and excesses of conquest in Judaea.

This is not to belittle the suffering of the Jews during the Judaeen campaign. Lawrence gives not only Susannah's story, but also that of Hephzibah (*Slave-girl*, 73–76, 77–81), which moves from survival of the sack of Jerusalem in a heap of dead bodies, to survival as one of the only seven at Masada not to commit suicide. This is tough material for a children's book and her decision to tackle it demonstrates her engagement with Judaism. Admittedly, she does talk about Jewish dissension as contributing to the fall of Jerusalem, but this is almost certainly drawn from Josephus. As a Jew who becomes thoroughly Roman, he is not only a key source, but also a character, appearing as a figure of scholarly authority in *The Assassins of Rome* (2002, 111), *The Enemies of Jupiter* (2003, 54 and 117–118), and *The Slave-girl from Jerusalem* (84–85), and thematising, along with Pliny the Younger, Lawrence's own keen engagement with the ancient sources.²²

Further, Lawrence puts considerable emphasis on the continuities between Judaism and Christianity, not just in their cultural roots, but also in their shared

22 On Josephus, see Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives, eds., *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). On Greek and Roman attitudes to Jews and Judaism, see Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); and Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

practices. At this point in the early Church, Christianity is part of Judaism, an unusual Jewish sect. Forgiveness and repentance are emphasised as Jewish ideas (*Assassins*, 186). Jonathan talks of himself as a Jew, when arguing with Agathus: "That's not what we Jews believe. Only God can take life, because he gives it" (*Enemies*, 169). Jonathan and Mordecai celebrate Yom Kippur (*Assassins*, 32).²³

Jonathan's relationship with his family is even more characterised by desire and deferral than those of the others we have already looked at: first he thinks his mother is dead, then he wants to find her, but when he succeeds, she cannot come home with him (*Assassins*, 175); when he meets his mother at the beginning of *The Enemies of Jupiter*, the relationship is awkward, and he feels embarrassed by her poor Latin (*Enemies*, 39 and 124). Later in the same volume his plans to bring his parents back together fall apart (*Enemies*, 143) and put everyone in danger, causing Titus to be extremely angry. This leads to Jonathan's radicalisation, and his accidental burning of Rome. After he survives the fire, his parents are reunited, but without him there to see it (*Enemies*, 196–198). When they finally do live together, and Jonathan is reintegrated into the family, the death of Miriam overshadows it all. Jonathan and his father both seem to suffer from depression; his mother becomes a pale shadow of her former self, and no longer has the same significance in his life. Instead, he finishes the books still looking unsuccessfully for his kidnapped nephew. Jonathan never really finds himself, neither in the East nor the West, but represents the ongoing battle for acceptance of those who struggle to live with themselves.²⁴

Flavia, Detectives, Christians, and Closure in Ephesus

When the four main characters reach the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, Nubia experiences it as coming home:

For the rest of her life, Nubia would remember the first time she saw Ephesus. They had crested a mountain and the city lay below them, two

23 There are also various straightforwardly positive Jewish characters, such as Seth and Nathan in *The Scribes of Alexandria* and *The Prophet of Ephesus*.

24 Jonathan's father and Flavia's uncle Gaius are both represented as suffering from mental health problems, caused by trauma and bereavement. Both disappear for long periods and reject the responsibilities of family life. Is Jonathan's story a study more of mental health than Judaism?

or three miles distant. From here it looked like a scattering of coloured tesserae at the foot of golden hills. [...] There was a presence here: a sadness mixed with joy, a poignant hopefulness. Unaccountably, Nubia's eyes brimmed with tears.

"Do you feel that?" she said. [...]

"I feel it," said Aristo [...]. "It feels like... coming home."

THE PROPHET FROM EPHEBUS, 85

Later, the organiser of the child slave ring becomes a Christian and leaves his property to the children he has enslaved, to be managed by the four detectives. They can choose which of his villas to live in: they choose between Ostia, Halicarnassus, and Ephesus. Nubia straight away votes for Ephesus, but Lupus would only live in Ephesus if he cannot go back to Ostia. Nubia, characterised throughout by her "intuition," has an uncanny emotional foresight to the end of the series, while the others are not so in tune with the plot. The final book shows them trying to clear their names in order to return home, and at the same time attempting to figure out who killed Titus: was it really Domitian? Jonathan thinks his father may be about to kill Titus and is trying to stop him, or to protect him. The others are trying to find and protect Jonathan. Flavia, Lupus, and Nubia succeed in claiming amnesty from Domitian, until it becomes clear that they thought he had tried to kill Titus. At the end of the book Domitian allows them to go free, but exiles them from Italy. They have no choice but to live in Ephesus. The edge of Empire becomes home, and their joy at having a mission (reuniting lost children with their families), a community (the Ephesian Christians), and a beautiful home is significantly compromised by the fact that they are unable to go back to their real home. Valerius Flaccus, Flavia's love interest, must even stage his own death, give up poetry, and reinvent himself as a human-rights lawyer called Jason. This movement from the centre to the edge of the Roman world undermines the closure that is achieved by other means, particularly the conversions to Christianity, and, for the girls, marriage. My son, for one, did not think it was a happy ending. Nubia marries Aristo, and Flavia marries Valerius Flaccus: Flavia's wedding forms the epilogue. However, Flavia is excluded from the conversion to Christianity. In one particularly telling incident, she waits to feel God, but simply does not, and instead joins in the procession of Ephesian Artemis:

Flavia imitated the posture of the others, with her face turned to the sky, her eyes closed tight and her hands lifted up. She was waiting for something to happen. [...] But she felt nothing. Just a vague tingling in the palms of her hands.

Flavia opened one eye and looked around. Everyone seemed lost in worship. [...] Flavia closed her eyes again and waited.

Nothing.

She opened her eyes again, sighed loudly and glanced around.

THE PROPHET FROM EPHEBUS, 176–177

Closure is also compromised by the fact that her powers of detection are brought into question, when her solution to the death of Titus is denied by the doctor, Ben Aruva, who has conducted an autopsy (*The Man from Pomegranate Street*, 2009). Not only did Titus not die from the prick of a stylus treated with sea urchin poison, but he was not even murdered: he died from a brain tumour:

Jonathan felt sick as he realised what Ben Aruva was saying. “Are you telling us that Titus wasn’t murdered?”

“That is exactly what I am telling you.”

Flavia and Jonathan looked at each other.

“I don’t believe it,” said Flavia. “We had proof.”

MAN, 214

The imperial brothers have not after all been fighting to the death; the four must accept that, despite his evident unsavouriness, Domitian is not a murderer (or at least not yet, or not the murderer of his brother):

“I was Titus’s doctor,” continued Ben Aruva. “And I do not know Domitian well. But I believe he loved his brother. Yes, he was bitter and jealous. Yes, he occasionally conspired against him. But I do not believe that he would ever have had him killed.”

MAN, 216

Jonathan’s prophecies, their manic rush through Italy, Flavia’s detective work: all are undone by this chapter. Instead of clearing their names, they have forced themselves into permanent exile. The neat closure of the genre of detective novels is compromised by their collision with imperial power, which Lawrence manages to make both benign and disturbing. The romantic arc that ends with the marriages of Flavia and Nubia is compromised by the complete lack of closure in Jonathan’s story. In their attempts to find themselves, they have ended up losing their homes and bringing their families and friends into danger.

Some of this anxiety is partially resolved in the epilogue, when a letter from Jonathan’s father reveals that he did intend to kill Titus, but at the last minute saw a boy who resembled Jonathan and changed his mind; at the same time,

Flavia admits that she has not wholly given up solving mysteries, or resigned herself fully to life as a Roman matron. Finally, the last scene emphasises the way that the four friends have become extended family for each other.²⁵

Conclusions

This chapter has shown some of the complex ways that Caroline Lawrence draws on ancient sources and scholarship about Roman culture in creating a multilayered and sophisticated representation of Roman Empire and society. In particular, the chapter has explored issues of slavery, imperial power, religion, and gender. There is a great deal more to be said about these rich and subtle books, for instance about disability and sexuality. Throughout, there is a tension between the desire to soften, romanticise, and make familiar Roman society, and the desire to be true to its difficulties, alien features, and barbarity. This is perhaps reflected in the compromised homecomings that thread through the books, the continuing importance of desire and deferral, and the ultimate partial closure.

Rome is particularly good for thinking about identity because of the play of sameness and otherness it activates. As well as being part of our identity, our heritage, our joint ways of thinking about ourselves as Europeans, and Westerners, it is also a way to put into relief what is specific and distinctive about our cultures in comparison to Roman culture. The multicultural nature of Roman society allows for a dialogue between centre and periphery in which neither is wholly right or wholly wrong. Roman society equally offers opportunities for social fluidity, for extreme changes of fortune from rich merchant to shipwrecked pauper, from free to slave and slave to free. The complex nature of the Roman family allows for families to meld and change, just as ours do nowadays. Perhaps most importantly, Roman religion is multiple and varied, allowing us to see it as fundamentally different or fundamentally the same as religion today. It is always possible, and indeed attractive, to try to find ourselves by making a journey into Roman territory: but Lawrence warns us that we will never truly find ourselves at home in Rome.

25 On the four as an extended family: Nubia in Africa: "My family are all dead," she said, softly. "Only Taharqo remains and he is in Rome." Her golden eyes were brimming as she looked from Flavia to Jonathan to Lupus. "Chryses was right. You are my family. And I am so glad I have found you." (*Scribes*, 225); "No!" cried Nubia. "We must not be divided. We are family. We must stay together." (*Prophet*, 3); "Thank you, Flavia," said Diana. "Thank you for accepting me into your family." (*Man*, 223).

Create Your Own Mythology: Youngsters for Youngsters (and Oldsters) in Mythological Fan Fiction

Katarzyna Marciniak

Disclaimer: I do not own the mythological characters. They belong to the Greeks. I only borrow them, as the Romans did, for a little amusement.

Eris had not been invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. No one liked the goddess of strife. Yes, we know this from our various mythological reading experiences, whether from ancient sources or modern elaborations. But in the twenty-first century the reason for the omission of Eris on the guest list shall be searched for on the Internet. Angry with Hermes for one of his pranks, the goddess had blocked his Facebook account, so the announcement about the wedding skipped her. Though she had brought this on herself, Eris decided to take revenge. At the day of the wedding party, she “leapt out from behind the hedge and threw something. [...] It was golden. It was a golden apple... a golden apple iPhone 4s” with the inscription: “To the hottest!” The honour to choose the happy owner of the golden Apple iPhone of the then newest generation fell to the bored Paris, who gladly exchanged the cell phone for Helen. “Hera and Athena scowled and disappeared in sparks, while Aphrodite plucked in the silver earphones and started bobbing to Beyonce.”

We have been used to many variants of ancient myths, though this version of the Judgment of Paris is rather odd, even in the opinion of its author, a fourteen-year-old¹ from England named Jack who adds to the story a personal comment: “I know, it was weird...”² However, his story, entitled “The Apple of Strife,” has every right to be weird. It is a piece of fan fiction, published on the biggest such Internet platform—FanFiction.net, gathering ca. 2.2 million

1 At the date of its publication: Aug. 5, 2012. Throughout this paper I keep the original spelling and grammar found in the fanfics here quoted.

2 The full story, from which I have quoted above, may be read at <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8396049/1/The-Apple-of-Strife> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

users³ from all over the world⁴ under a banner encouraging unlimited creativity: “Unleash Your Imagination.”

Fan fiction is a recent phenomenon—one of the most dynamically developing realms of social media. It involves fans creating texts inspired by a pre-existing work of culture.⁵ The birth of fan fiction is associated with American pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s and Star Trek fanzines of the 1960s, in which science fiction lovers could write, publish, and read stories set in their favourite imaginary world.⁶ However, some people trace the origins of this phenomenon

3 As of April 18, 2013, information source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FanFiction.Net> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

4 Interestingly enough, the platform FanFiction.net was initially available only in the West, and subsequently expanded globally (cf. *ibid.*).

5 Fan fiction has been a research subject since the 1990s, however, in the early stages legal issues were the most pressing (see also below, nn. 6 and 8). Soon its broader potential was noticed by experienced scholars of popular culture and, especially, by young faculty members—the first generation to grow up with the Internet (hence the many MA and Ph.D. theses that constitute the core bibliography of this topic). The most important studies from the perspective of my research will be cited in the course of the present chapter (most of them are available online, too). For further reading see also: William Lewis Bolt, *The Hidden Authors: A Study and Survey of Fan Fiction Writers* (Senior Honors Project Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Melissa J. Herzing, *The Internet World of Fan Fiction* (MA thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2005), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, eds., *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006); Rebecca W. Black, *Adolescents and Online Fan Fiction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); Alice R. Bell, “The Anachronistic Fantastic: Science, Progress and the Child in ‘Post-nostalgic’ Culture,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.2 (2009): 5–22; Peter Güldenpfeffnig, *Fandom, Fan Fiction and the Creative Mind* (MA thesis, Tilburg University, 2011), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Ageliki Nicolopoulou, “Children’s Storytelling: Toward an Interpretive and Sociocultural Approach,” *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2011): 25–48; Daniel Punday, “Narration, Intrigue, and Reader Positioning in Electronic Narratives,” *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 4 (2012): 25–47; Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley, eds., *fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2013); Mark Duffet, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

6 See, e.g., Angela Thomas, “Blurring and Breaking through the Boundaries of Narrative, Literacy, and Identity in Adolescent Fan Fiction,” in Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear, eds., *A New Literacies Sampler* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 137. For the definition of fan fiction see, e.g.: Jessica Freya Kem, *Cataloging the Whedonverse: Potential Roles for Librarians in Online Fan Fiction* (MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014), 2–3; Alison Evans, *The Global Playground: Fan Fiction in Cyberspace* (MA thesis, Roehampton University, 2006), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014), 6–15; Christina Z. Ranon, “Honor Among Thieves: Copyright Infringement in Internet Fandom,” *Vanderbilt Journal*

many centuries back, to the tradition of writing parodies, continuations, or alternative endings to famous literary works, as was the case with the authorised and unauthorised sequels to *Don Quixote* or, closer to our time, *Gone with the Wind*.⁷ And if we think of the *nostoi* and the cyclic poets—not to mention the whole Athenian drama built from the crumbs from Homer's table—we will easily, though half-jokingly, derive fan fiction directly from Antiquity.⁸ One witty Internet user from Italy even set up a profile on the FanFiction.net platform on behalf of Virgil himself, pasting Book One of the *Aeneid* in Latin there,

of Entertainment and Technology Law 8.2 (2006): 421–452; Steven A. Hetcher, “Using Social Norms to Regulate Fan Fiction and Remix Culture,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 157 (2008): 1869–1935; Meredith Cherland, “Harry’s Girls: Harry Potter and the Discourse of Gender,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52.4 (2008–2009): 279–280; Elizabeth Burns and Carlie Webber, “When Harry Met Bella: Fanfiction Is All the Rage. But Is It Plagiarism? Or the Perfect Thing to Encourage Young Writers?,” *School Library Journal* 55.8 (Aug. 2009), online (accessed May 15, 2013); Bronwen Thomas, “What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?,” *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2011): 1–24. See also various Internet discussions traceable on Wikipedia, etc. It is necessary to follow them, as the electronic media react in the most dynamic way, much faster than traditional scholarship, to the transformation within the fan-fiction community.

- 7 Burns and Webber, “When Harry Met Bella”; Newsweek Staff, “Star Trek: Spock, Kirk and Slash Fiction,” *Newsweek*, May 5, 2009, online at: <http://www.newsweek.com/star-trek-spock-kirk-and-slash-fiction-79807> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015); Elizabeth F. Judge, “Kidnapped and Counterfeit Characters: Eighteenth-Century Fan Fiction, Copyright Law, and the Custody of Fictional Characters,” in Reginald McGinnis, ed., *Originality and Intellectual Property in the French and English Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 27, 46–48, 67, online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Michael Choe, “The Problem of the Parody-Satire Distinction: Fair Use in Machinima and Other Fan Created Works,” *Rutgers Computer & Technology Law Journal* 37 (2011), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014).
- 8 See Erica Christine Haugtvedt, *Harry Potter and Fanfiction: Filling in the Gaps* (Senior Honors Thesis, The Ohio State University, 2009), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014), 5: “Any parody can be considered fanfiction. Any story that draws upon history or oral tradition can be considered fanfiction. Even Virgil’s *The Aeneid* can be considered fanfiction based on Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. What’s the difference that makes fanfiction, then? One difference that makes fanfiction special may be the way in which fanfiction relies upon the source narrative.” See also Ernest Chua, “Fan Fiction and Copyright; Mutually Exclusive, Coexistent or Something Else? Considering Fan Fiction in Relation to the Economic/Utilitarian Theory of Copyright,” *eLaw Journal* 14.2 (2007): 216, with a quotation from Rebecca Tushnet, “Legal Fictions: Copyright, Fan Fiction, and a New Common Law,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Journal* 17 (1997): 651 and 655: “Fan fiction has been described as ‘any kind of written creativity that is based on an identifiable segment of popular culture, such as a television show, and not produced as «professional» writing.’” By the way, the term “professional” in the Internet era probably needs to be redefined.

as if it were a piece of fan fiction, currently under construction.⁹ The piece attracted the attention of barely three readers (*o tempora, o mores!*), one of whom felt disappointed with the language choice (“Hmm, if only this wasn’t Latin”), but the remaining two were delighted and left for “P. Vergili Maronis [*sic!*]” the following comments: “A great start (check your word count though). You should think of publishing this when you finish” and “OMG, this is so good fanfiction. Already in the first chapter I can see the clever crossreferences to the Odysee. I love your work now already, I bet it’ll be really popular in 2000 years! Keep up the good work :D.”¹⁰

Virgil, indeed, has passed the test for a classic, being widely read for over two millennia. For a long time, however, the circulation of amateur fanfics was limited to narrow groups of recipients of culture, and for a very prosaic reason: the difficulty in accessing these works, available as they were in but a few copies. For only masterpieces like the *Aeneid* were worthy of the incredible effort that the transmission process required even after Gutenberg’s revolution. Indeed, as late as the twentieth century the demanding professional cooperation between authors, editors, and publishers made writing an elitist activity, reserved for a small circle within society. The Internet changed everything. It has been gathering fans of all kinds, inspiring the creation of fan works of boundless scope, and providing the space to make them globally accessible. Besides FanFiction.net, set up in 1998, there are countless similar, though smaller platforms, ones based on a simple premise: you can read or write, or both, for free. There is no geographical, national, gender, or religiously motivated exclusion. Every fanfic author, whether a child or an adult—each having equal rights—may potentially count on millions of readers.¹¹ And the statistics fail to grasp

9 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8631155/1/Aeneid-book-1-Carthage> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

10 Ibid. By the way, it is worth observing that this reader not only placed “P. Vergili Maronis” among his (or her) “favorite authors,” but he (or she) also returned to the *Aeneid* fanfic after three long (for Internet phenomena) years (Nov. 16, 2015!) and expressed his (or her) disappointment in the fact that “P. Vergili Maronis” had not published more chapters of his work since 2012: “Man, I was so stoked to read more of this thrilling story! It’s a shame you never posted another chapter. Now I’ll never get to know what happened to Aeneas:(” Abbreviations and emoticons are very common among fanfic authors. Here we can also see how readers in their feedback support authors and suggest improvements to them—in this particular case, correction of the word number declared or encouragement to continue literary activity.

11 One of the most popular platforms is archiveofourown.org. Of course, those who write in English stand a better chance of gaining a wide public. And we should not forget that there are still countries that censor access to the Internet and thus to fan fiction.

the scale of this phenomenon. They are out-of-date at the very minute of their announcement, because every day, even now, at this moment, there are new fanfics appearing. It has been estimated that they are “equivalent to 8,200 novels, each of 50,000 words, being produced globally per annum.”¹²

Nonetheless, this phenomenon is still disregarded outside the fan-fiction community. One of the scholars even asks—provocatively, for in fact she studies fan fiction in-depth—“Why on earth would anyone want to waste their time writing stories about a book that was already written and about characters they did not create?”¹³ Well, let the one among us who is without this sin raise their hand. When we reflect deeply on the essence of fan fiction, we may venture the hypothesis that it all begins with childhood. I remember a school assignment to describe the adventures of one of the heroes of Polish literature—*The Knights of the Cross* by the Nobel laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916)—a mediaeval knight called Zbyszko transported through time straight to a school party. It was an obligatory composition,¹⁴ and today, browsing the FanFiction.net base, we may find a welter of texts of similar origin, made public by their young authors from the “digital” generation. As one of them remarks: “I love it when your English essay turns out to be writing a fanfiction. Just makes my day.”¹⁵ However, such *juvenilia* were and also are cropping up outside school, after hours. And some people continue their fanfic adventure into adulthood. The Internet fan-fiction platforms preserve such experiences and make it possible to share them across the boundaries of time, space, and generations. Furthermore, the authors can count on—an experience of revolutionary consequences for this phenomenon—the

12 Evans, *The Global Playground*, 27. On Harry Potter fan fiction, see Leila Green and Carmen Guinery, “Harry Potter and the Fan Fiction Phenomenon,” *Journal of Media and Culture* 7.5 (2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); and the much-anticipated study by Jane Glabman, *Reconstructing Harry: “Harry Potter” Fan Fiction on the World Wide Web* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

13 Diane Lewis, “Understanding the Power of Fan Fiction for Young Authors,” *Kliatt* 38 (March 2004), <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Understanding+the+power+of+fan+fiction+for+young+authors.-a0114326743>, 2004 (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

14 This particular assignment was not only a “speciality” of my school, as Jan Kwapisz attests in his review of Margaret Atwood’s *The Penelopiad*—“Kiedy feministka spotyka muzę” [When a feminist meets a muse], *Meander* 60 (2005): 254.

15 See the story “Chimeria” by Padfoot7567 (by the way, this nickname reveals a fascination with the Harry Potter heptalogy, which is also an attractive background for mythological fanfics—see further sections of the present chapter) at <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8015320/1/Chimeria> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

so-called “living audience,”¹⁶ that is, an unlimited¹⁷ response on the part of readers. This is a promising field of research for educators, psychologists, and sociologists, but also for classical scholars, as a good deal of fanfics refer to Graeco-Roman Antiquity, this being one of the most original cases of the newest reception of ancient culture.¹⁸

Particularly interesting is the fanfic reception of myths. While fan stories based on the most recent works of culture still raise controversies in regard to the potential of copyright infringement (which is why many authors precede their creations with appropriate disclaimers, like the one I imitated at the beginning of this chapter¹⁹), Graeco-Roman mythology, in turn, has been the object of various receptive processes and techniques since its birth somewhere

16 For more on this phenomenon see further sections of the present chapter.

17 At least in theory, and the feedback is quite impressive in practice, too, though there are cases like that of poor “P. Vergili Maronis” who has gained only three reader’s comments (blame it on Latin if you wish).

18 As for the Classics and Classical Reception, the role of fan fiction is a new research field. When I was submitting my chapter to the publisher I came across (thanks to the Liverpool Classics Mailing List managed by Nick Lowe) a call for papers announced by Ika Willis for a special issue of the journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* dedicated to the phenomenon of fan fiction in regard to the Classics: *The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work*. I have yet to study the results of this interesting call, but I am pleased to be able to indicate the website of this issue in my last update of the relevant bibliography: <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/issue/view/23> (accessed July 20, 2016). See also Willis’s thesis, presented on Oct. 22, 2010, *Fanfiction Gets a Good Reception*, “Public Engagement Stories,” University of Bristol, at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/publicengagementstories/stories/2010/115.html> (accessed Jan. 23, 2015).

19 In fact, the copyright issue (much discussed in the 1990s) is no longer a serious problem as long as fanfic authors do not write for commercial use; see, e.g., Ranon, “Honor Among Thieves,” 421–452; Meredith McCardle, “Fan Fiction, Fandom, and Fanfare: What’s All the Fuss?,” *Boston University Journal of Science and Technology Law*, online, 9.2 (2003): 434–468; Rachel L. Stroude, “Complimentary Creation: Protecting Fan Fiction as Fair Use,” *Marquette Intellectual Property Law Review* 14.1 (2010): 191–213; Catherine Tosenberger, “Mature Poets Steal: Children’s Literature and the Unpublishability of Fanfiction,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 39.1 (2014): 4–27. On the famous case of the Harry Potter Lexicon blocked by J.K. Rowling (who has otherwise exhibited a friendly attitude toward fan fiction), see Aaron Schwabach, “The Harry Potter Lexicon and the World of Fandom: Fan Fiction, Outsider Works, and Copyright,” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 70 (2009): 387–434, online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014). The famous Marion Zimmer Bradley case is also discussed there. A piece of fan fiction embedded in one of her literary worlds blocked the publication of her own book, as the fanfic author claimed the ownership of certain motifs she was planning to use—independently, as she claimed. However, the court took the side of the fanfic author.

at the dawn of our millennia-old civilisation. Thus, the retelling of mythical tales is purely natural and they constitute a generous base of inspiration, also because they have been circulating around us for what seems—and indeed, *is*—an eternity, in a variety of reinterpretations: whether in literature, painting, sculpture, music, movies, and the growing body of popular culture works, including computer games, etc. Even if school curricula no longer give priority to the Graeco-Roman tradition, myths are still present there, as “school” fanfics prove, and in our life as well, to a much greater extent than we might be aware. Moreover, their unique trait—i.e., their fixed fundamental structure yet universal flexibility in adapting to individual needs—permits authors to transmit peculiar cultural or personal issues via myths with the hope of being widely understood. Thus, a community is coming into being between fanfic authors and readers: they exchange their knowledge about ancient myths and simultaneously assimilate new experiences. This is a community in a state of constant metamorphosis, in a “process of becoming,” as is typical for popular culture,²⁰ but nonetheless it strives for a solid identity to rely on.

Because the process of constructing an identity is especially important for young people, I propose we now take a quick glance at the universe of mythological Internet fan fiction created by children and young adults to see how mythological fanfics are structured. While browsing and reviewing them, we will also try to discover if there is a canon of works about mythology referred to by fan-fiction authors. Finally, taking into consideration also the phenomenon of the living audience, we will try to face the crucial question from the perspective of classical reception studies: what are the functions that mythological fan fiction fulfils for youngsters?

Research into fan fiction entails, however, numerous methodological challenges. First of all, the number of works circulating on the Internet makes it difficult to carry out a comprehensive analysis. To keep a coherent picture of the phenomenon, I will focus on the materials gathered on the leading platform—the earlier mentioned FanFiction.net. Furthermore, while giving preferential attention to the most numerous group of texts, i.e., those written in English (also by non-native speakers), I will nevertheless take into consideration other languages and regional circles, as well, between East and West. The most thorny issue regards the age of the authors and readers. As the leading authority in studies into fan fiction, Henry Jenkins, states (and he has been observing it for more than two decades), the role of children is to be taken seriously:

20 See John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1 (on culture as a constant succession of social practices).

Ten years ago, published fan fiction came mostly from women in their twenties, thirties. Today, these older writers have been joined by a generation of new contributors—kids who found fan fiction surfing the Internet and decided to see what they could produce.²¹

Some of the writers reveal their age, like the Jack of “the iPhone of Strife,” but the majority of them—with absolutely laudable caution—protect their personal data. And of course, even if certain profiles offer a handful of information, there is no possibility to ascertain the authenticity of the provided details without intimacy-affecting questionnaires. To solve this problem (at least to a certain degree) with respect for the users’ privacy, I decided to base my conclusions both on the profiles and on all other available hints, such as mentions that the fanfic in question was homework. Meanwhile, as far as the age of the readers is concerned, we are not able to assess it, unless they are registered users with developed profiles or leave some hints in their comments to the stories (and as registration or leaving a comment is not an obligatory procedure, the material for in-depth analyses is strongly limited). The moderators of the FanFiction.net platform treat seriously the fact that all texts might be read by minor users—since 2002 it has been prohibited to publish stories there of a mature content.²² Moreover, all the stories are rated to protect youngsters (K for kids; K+ corresponding to PG—Parental Guidance—in the movie industry; T for teens). The authors often use the rating system with hypercautiousness (cf., the common formula: “T for I am paranoid”), adding also so-called “trigger warnings,” i.e., mentions of themes with the potential to disturb the public’s sensitivities (sexual motifs, self-harming, suicide, violence, etc.). Of course, such precautions apply not only to youth—older readers may be vulnerable, too. Thus, we can underline with full force that equality reigns in the universum of fan fiction.²³ One might even posit the hypothesis that this phenomenon realises to the highest degree in the whole of popular culture the postulates of childist criticism (children writing and expressing their views),²⁴

21 Henry Jenkins, “Why Heather Can Write,” *MIT Technology Review*, Feb. 6, 2004, online (accessed July 24, 2016); see also idem, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 186 (in the context of the Harry Potter fanfics). See also Evans, *The Global Playground*, 17.

22 See, e.g., Chad Eric Littleton, *The Role of Feedback in Two Fanfiction Writing Groups* (Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, August 2011), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014), 33.

23 See also Sheenagh Pugh, “The Democratic Genre: Fan Fiction in a Literary Context,” *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media* 5 (2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014).

24 See Peter Hunt, “Childist Criticism: The Subculture of the Child, the Book and the Critic,” *Signal* 43 (1984): 42–59.

the practice of double address (when authors speak to various age groups of readers), and the dual audience experience (when the texts find recipients at different generational levels).²⁵ There are no borders,²⁶ only the Word matters—as if to repudiate all the pessimists who prophesied its end. Indeed, one thing you immediately notice when entering a fanfic platform, is its maximal simplicity: no illustrations, no pictures (the small ones are solely present in the authors' avatars), no sophisticated fonts. A striking experience, especially in our times, which are dominated by visual culture. There are only storytellers and their audience(s), as in Homer's time. So let's check how Graeco-Roman mythology is entwined in the fabric of tales on the World Wide Web.

On the platform FanFiction.net, in the group "Misc"—that is, among texts inspired by miscellany—we can find ca. 2,600 stories (as of December 2015) based on Greek myths, and in various languages. English, of course, dominates, but there are also fanfics in German, Dutch, French, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish, and one even in Indonesian. They all fit into the essential categories as determined by Jenkins in his fundamental study on fan fiction, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992).²⁷ Of course, it should be noted that there are no strict boundaries between them—constant change, category-crossing, and remixing are the main characteristics of fan fiction, which fact reflects the essence of the "community in process"²⁸ and is generally a characteristic of contemporary youth culture. Donna E. Alvermann remarks:

Young people are tirelessly editing and remixing multimodal content they find online to share with others, using new tools to show and tell,

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- 25 Emer O'Sullivan, *Comparative Children's Literature* (New York–Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 15–19 (accessed via Google Books). See also the cross-writing and crossover phenomena, e.g., Sandra L. Beckett, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York–Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 271: "Children, teenagers, and adults become part of a community where age doesn't matter."
- 26 Helen Merrick, "'We Was Cross-dressing 'Afore You Were Born!' Or, How SF Fans Invented Virtual Community," *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media* 6 (2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014), 1 (on "a virtual community, formed of people who were geographically dispersed, brought together by a common interest").
- 27 Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
- 28 See John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989) and *Reading the Popular*, esp. 3.

and rewriting their social identities in an effort to become who they say they are.²⁹

Fan fiction perfectly answers to this kind of demand. Thus, we have, for example, recontextualisations—stories with new (“missing”) scenes added to the basic narration, such as an additional adventure of Odysseus and his craft facing a fire-blazing chimera in the story “Chimeria,” originally a school assignment by an American student.³⁰ We also have the so-called expanded timelines—sequels or prequels to well-known works, as in the fanfic “The Lost Book 13”—a continuation of the *Aeneid*. The author wrote it “for Extra credit for [her] Latin class,” apparently feeling the need to release some of the pressure from studying such a serious text. As a result, we get a story of a spelling mistake while reading the scrolls of destiny: after all the hardships endured, Aeneas comes to know that not he, but a certain Ieneas is to marry Lavinia, and she is only too willing for this change:

He [Ieneas] presented her with a large, diamond ring. “Lavinia, don’t marry him, marry me. I’m the one you want, marry me.” “Ieneas, of course I’ll marry you.” She placed the ring on her finger and kissed Ieneas on the cheek, “Aeneas never gave me a ring.” She added bitterly, before walking off with Ieneas, holding hands.³¹

Next, we have refocalisations, where minor figures, such as Clytemnestra from the UK fanfic “Heavenly Deluge,” become the protagonists (such fanfics are often written from their points of view).³² Another popular category is that of character dislocation (also possible in the variant of Alternate Universe).

29 Donna E. Alvermann, “Why Bother Theorizing Adolescents’ Online Literacies for Classroom Practice and Research?,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52.1 (2008): 10. See also Wan Shun Eva Lam, “Culture and Learning in the Context of Globalization: Research Directions,” *Review of Research in Education* 30 (2006) (Special Issue: *Rethinking Learning: What Counts as Learning and What Learning Counts*): 219: “[...] this kind of collective identity is centered around shared practices of various sorts, there is a tendency to cross traditional lines of ‘race’/ethnicity, class, gender, ability, and other institutional classifications.”

30 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8015320/1/Chimeria> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015), see also above, n. 15.

31 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/6761443/1/The-Lost-Book-13> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

32 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/912187/1/Heavenly-Deluge> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015), a story, rated T, with the following summary: “Centering on Clytemnestra and her bitter,

Here stories about well-known heroes are placed in new settings or circumstances. They often contain the motif of a new ending to the known story or of time-travelling: the ancient gods may for example incarnate themselves as high school students.³³ These stories are prone to be mixed with the category of personalisation, which involves a fanfic author inserting her/his own person into the narration, for example—on the wave of fascination with Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*—as a character a Greek god falls in love with. Such stories, usually mocked, if the author presents a far too idealised and romanticised version of herself/himself (so-called Mary Sue/Gary Stu³⁴), are nonetheless an important testimony for classical reception studies, as they reflect the strong desire to live ancient myths in the twenty-first century.³⁵

A similar practice of blending and remixing also applies to the “genres” typical for fan fiction: crime, fantasy, adventure, horror, humour, family, romance, etc.³⁶ While the aforementioned “The Lost Book 13” belongs to “Humor/Parody,” a fifteen-year-old girl, in the story “Brotherly Bonding,” applies family and humour genres in a tale of Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades going off for

vengeful thoughts as Agamemnon returns after the Trojan War, unknowingly to meet with his own death...”

- 33 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8580118/1/Oh-My-Gods-High-School> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015); in this case, the author is a young(?) adult (she declares herself as “I am old enough to be here... Okay if you must know I'm legal but that's as far as I'll go”).
- 34 On the Mary Sue phenomenon, see, e.g., Anupam Chander and Madhavi Sunder, “Everyone's a Superhero: A Cultural Theory of Mary Sue Fan Fiction as Fair Use,” *California Law Review* 95.2 (2007): 597–626. See also Burns and Webber, “When Harry Met Bella...” (see above, n. 6); Kristi Lee, “Under the Waterfall: A Fanfiction Community's Analysis of Their Self-Representation and Peer Review,” *Refractory: Journal of Entertainment Media* 5 (2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Judge, “Kidnapped and Counterfeit Characters,” 7, online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014).
- 35 The remaining categories proposed by Jenkins are—quoted after Judge, “Kidnapped and Counterfeit Characters,” 8: “[...] moral realignment (inverting or questioning the moral universe in the original text, for example by portraying villains as sympathetic protagonists), genre shifting (often shifting toward relationship-centered narratives), crossovers with other texts (displacing generic and textual boundaries so characters from different series interact or characters are placed in a different environment), [...] emotional intensification (emphasizing narrative crises, especially one character's response to another character's crisis, called “hurt-comfort” stories), and eroticization (transforming the merely suggestive to the explicitly sexual, which can include changing characters' sexual identities and “slash” homoerotic fiction).”
- 36 The terminology applied in the fan-fiction universe is unique and does not necessarily correspond to traditional literary studies (e.g., see below on the use of the term “canon”).

a weekend to Los Angeles.³⁷ It is worth observing that in the practice of remixing, some young writers display an impressive knowledge of mythology, as is the case of the author of “The Enigma of the Victory Bringer” (again a school assignment), who blends the genres of fantasy and adventure in an Alternate Universe, proposing a new ending to Perseus’s myth on the basis of its lesser-known version, according to which Medusa was a victim of the gods.³⁸

But what is at the base of such stories? Those who think there is no canon in the twenty-first century are mistaken. The canon in the fan-fiction universe is safe and sound, though it has a slightly different meaning from its use in relation to high culture. It is “the body of information considered to be officially correct”³⁹ about a given cultural text. Hence, for example, for the mythological stories embedded in the Percy Jackson world, the canon will be constituted not by a specific collection of Greek myths (and of course not by ancient sources!), but precisely by Rick Riordan’s series—thus the fanfics about the growing pains of Athena’s teenage daughter are purely “canonical.”

However, Graeco-Roman myths belong to the common heritage of the civilisation rooted in Mediterranean tradition, which—because of various historical trajectories strengthened recently by globalisation—has penetrated the most remote parts of the world. So the question arises about the sources of young authors’ knowledge of ancient mythology in general—a very important question, as it leads us to discovering the transmission channels of the classical tradition among youngsters.

The mythical canon in the fan-fiction community should be looked for not only where we—the BIE (Before the Internet Era) generation—would expect to find it. The first reflex is to associate the canon of knowledge of classical mythology with ancient sources or later collections of myths. In fact, on the platform FanFiction.net, in the group “Books,” we find 179 stories based on the *Odyssey*,⁴⁰ such as the fanfic “Just a Simple Love Story” on the warm relationship between Odysseus and Penelope, called Penny. This story was written—as its author reveals—“for Mrs. Nelson’s English class.” It is so charming, or—to use a frequent fanfic term—*fluffy*, that we can easily understand

37 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/6613007/1/Brotherly-Bonding> (accessed Oct. 15, 2014; no longer available).

38 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/7925183/1/The-Enigma-of-the-Victory-Bringer> (accessed Oct. 15, 2014; no longer available), and indeed, the author manages to surprise the readers.

39 See, e.g., Phyllis M. Japp, Mark Meister, and Debra K. Japp, eds., *Communication Ethics, Media & Popular Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 162–163 (accessed via Google Books). To define the reference base for a given set of fanfics, the terms: “mythology” (*sic!*) and “fanon” are also in use, see, e.g., Rebecca W. Black, “Online Fan Fiction and Critical Media Literacy,” *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education* 26.2 (2009–2010): 77.

40 As of December 2015.

the comment by the author's friend that the boys in their class "weren't mature enough to take it."⁴¹ However, the appeal of the *Iliad* is about three times smaller. There are 76 fanfics based on this epic,⁴² among which we find mainly poetry, such as the poem *Off To Troy*, defined by its author as "one of the best works created for a class that I failed. Draw your own conclusions from that."⁴³ The author labels the poem as cynical, and indeed, it offers a dark picture of war. Let's have a look at the final stanzas:

We sail on, both valiant and bold
 Heroes of many stories told
 .
 A thousand ships for one girl's face
 Ten thousand men die in disgrace
 .
 .
 .
 Is it worth it?

As we can see, the author evokes not only the *Iliad*, but also the famous description of Helen by Christopher Marlowe as "the face that launched a thousand ships." However, that line is so popular in the English-speaking world, that we should not draw the conclusion that the one who evokes it knows *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. Similarly, knowledge of the *Iliad* does not have to be firsthand among fanfic writers, as is shown in the case of a fifteen-year-old Brit who indicates that the "headcanon" for one of her stories—"A Flame that Never Dies"—is the highly appreciated novel *Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller published in 2011.⁴⁴ A similar situation occurs with the

41 The story in question was written by an American girl in her sophomore year, see <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/9007939/1/Just-a-Simple-Love-Story> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

42 As of December 2015.

43 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/7398576/1/Off-To-Troy> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

44 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/9093631/1/A-Flame-That-Never-Dies> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015). The author places her story in the category "Books," in regard to the *Iliad*, but with the following note: "Although this is under The Iliad, I am actually using The Song of Achilles for my headcanon, (by Madeline Miller) which is technically based on the Iliad, so..." See also the author's half-joking disclaimer: "I am neither old nor dead, so I cannot be Virgil. Nor am I totally and amazingly brilliant like Madeline Miller, so I can't be her either. Anyway, none of the canon characters belong to me, but Charis does, and if you steal her I will be angry! :)." See also two more recent stories, of November 2015 (it is impossible to determine the age of their authors): <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11636461/1/>

Aeneid in regard to the equally appreciated novel *Lavinia* by Ursula K. Le Guin, of 2008, which is becoming a new canon for the fanfic stories taking place in the realms of Aeneas' world.⁴⁵ It is not difficult to understand the cause of such a shift: both books are written in compellingly vivid style, and are surely more accessible and appealing to young readers than many an old-fashioned translation of the ancient epics. Thus, on the one hand, this makes us aware of the necessity to provide youngsters with a version of the classics that can speak to them. On the other hand, the fanfics referring to Classical Antiquity may result in encouraging young readers to reach for the works of ancient writers directly (in good translations, for the originals are, of course, beyond general reach today)—both to come to know them and to look for new inspirations therein. By the way, Le Guin's novel also happens to be jokingly classified among fanfics.⁴⁶

What seems odd here is the lack in English fanfics of explicit references to the collections of myths formative for English culture, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*.⁴⁷ However, these books may be so "inborn" for fanfic authors that they do not feel the necessity to mention them as their sources. It seems sufficient to indicate simply, as was the case of the fanfic about the golden Apple-iPhone, the common title of the adapted myth. Curiously enough, among Polish fanfics we find a story based on *Mitologia. Wierzenia i podania Greków i Rzymian* [Mythology. Beliefs and legends of the Greeks and Romans] by Jan Parandowski (1895–1978), a great promoter of Classical Antiquity, whose collection of myths has been shaping generations of Poles since its publication in 1924.⁴⁸ The fanfic in question, also dedicated to the quarrel over the famous

Polaris, summary: "USING CHARACTERS FROM MADELEINE MILLER'S 'THE SONG OF ACHILLES': Achilles doesn't often take the time to reflect on what he has in Patroclus, but when he does, it both thrills and unnerves him," and <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11591416/1/What-Has-Hector-Ever-Done-To-Me>, summary: "Patroclus' death from Achilles' point of view. (The Song of Achilles, I don't think it has a category on this site so I'll post this here, I guess?)" (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

45 By the author of "A Flame that Never Dies," <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8569044/1/The-Princess> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

46 See the comment by Orcuspay ("Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia* is basically one of the best fanfic pieces I've ever read.") at the blog <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2011/07/fan-fiction> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

47 However, there are many fanfics based on his *Scarlet Letter*, even one with Ginny Weasley (*sic!*) as the protagonist, see <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/675385/1/The-Chartreuse-Letter> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

48 On Parandowski, see my chapter "(De)constructing Arcadia: Polish Struggles with History and Differing Colours of Childhood in the Mirror of Classical Mythology," in Lisa Maurice, ed., *The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature: Heroes and Eagles* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 56–82, esp. 61–67. Parandowski's *Mythology* turned out to be

apple, is a parody written from the point of view of Athena, who decides to compete with Aphrodite and Hera for fun. The author quotes the promises of the goddesses to Paris directly from Parandowski's book, mocking Hera's overwrought style. The whole judgment is compared to a horse market and Athena is sure that Paris will not choose her, because, as she states philosophically, what young man would be interested in wisdom?⁴⁹

If we dare to be as open-minded as Athena and leave our illusions aside along with classical books, we will discover fascinating groups of "Movies," "TV Shows," or "Games," from which a new canon is emerging for mythological fanfics. This category reflects most clearly constant change as the essence of the fan-fiction community⁵⁰—for here are gathered remixes of ancient myths with different works of culture. Some of these works are rather obvious because of their potential for triggering references to mythology, like the TV show *Xena: Warrior Princess* (ca. 2,300 stories)⁵¹ or the computer game *God of War* (205 stories⁵²). Some fanfics, however, take us by surprise, like the story by a fifteen-year-old Spaniard who made the Little Mermaid fall in love with Achilles, or by a girl using the pen name Modern Cassandra, who adapted a song from Disney's *Pocahontas* to the romance of Achilles and Briseis, as presented by Wolfgang Petersen in the movie *Troy*.⁵³

an important source for Israeli children also: see Lisa Maurice's chapter, "Greek Mythology in Israeli Children's Literature," in the present volume

49 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8428424/1/Jab%C5%82ko-niezgody> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

50 See Fiske, *Reading the Popular*. See also B. Thomas, "What Is Fanfiction," 6; Karen E. Wohlwend, "A Is for Avatar: Young Children in Literacy 2.0 Worlds and Literacy 1.0 Schools," *Language Arts* 88.2 (2010): 150.

51 See H.C.J.M. Spierings, *Rewriting Xena: Warrior Princess. Resistance to Representations of Gender, Ethnicity, Class and Sexuality in Fanfiction* (Utrecht University, 2007); and Nikki Stafford, ed., *How Xena Changed Our Lives: True Stories By Fans For Fans* (Ontario: ECW Press, 2002).

52 As of December 2015. By the way, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that this game of mature content is out of the reach of underage audiences, for fanfics prove otherwise.

53 The story, entitled "Little Marmaid" (*sic!*), was published on FanFiction.net on May 26, 2012. I read it in May 2013, but it is no longer available. As for Modern Cassandra—a Disney fan (age impossible to determine)—see her story (in the category "Movies" in regard to *Troy*) at <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8945641/1/If-I-Never-Knew-You> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015), with the following summary: "Hi my fans :) This fic is set during the sacking of Troy where Achilles falls. It's kind of a crossover in that it has a song from the Walt Disney movie *Pocahontas*. The song is called *If I Never Knew You* and can be found on Youtube,

As the BIE generation, we will be happy to browse the category “crossovers.” Among a variety of sources we find many books there as well. They inspire authors to create fanfics set in their canonical (in the fan-fiction meaning of the term) realms, mixed with Greek mythology, for which no specific source is declared. The books in question are mostly parts of the Harry Potter series⁵⁴ and they unleash the imagination both of young and adult fans. As the author of the fanfic “Harry Potter Meets Greek Mythology” remarks, the idea of mixing these two realms is very appealing: “I’m sorry but to me the books are just asking for it.”⁵⁵ If we add to this canon the Percy Jackson series, we will discover that wizards and witches are “descendants of demigods” who transmit their gifts upon them.⁵⁶ For example, Neville Longbottom, as a descendent of Demeter, is gifted with Herbology. All Hogwarts students learn Latin and Greek, and the gods, present at the Sorting Ceremony, seem quite at place there: Apollo in jeans, looking like a supermodel; Poseidon in a Hawaiian beach shirt; or Dionysus—a hippy in Ozzy Osbourne glasses.⁵⁷

But is fan fiction a mere oddity or does it fulfil certain important functions? Well, one is evident at first sight, on the basis of the aforementioned examples. Many of them were school assignments and they helped the authors improve their writing skills. As a girl from Australia remarks:

I have matured greatly within the duration of the two years that I have passed as a member of this website. Evidently, my usage of grammar has also significantly improved, much to my relief.⁵⁸

and I know it might seem out of character for Achilles and Briseis but this song is so them. Please review, and be brutally honest!”

54 Just as a curiosity, there are ca. 730,000 stories set in the Harry Potter world against, as we remember, 76 based on the *Iliad*; 218,000 based on the *Twilight* trilogy; and 4,000 based on the Bible (as of Dec. 11, 2015).

55 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/6406331/1/Harry-Potter-meets-Greek-Mythology> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015). The author is probably an adult (s/he does not reveal her/his exact age; however, s/he mentions having studied mythology during her/his “Freshmen English class”).

56 Ibid. (the author’s note): “This story is basically with the same characters/place but not the same plot at all so I’m basically rewriting it Percy Jackson style. So just read and I hope you like it. If you have any questions or suggestions I’m always open.” It is worth adding that the author begins the existing two chapters with invocations to the Muse.

57 Ibid.

58 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/u/928759/artanisofavalon> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015, at the time of publishing her stories, the author was a young adult preparing for Tertiary Education). On fan fiction in the context of literacy, see Margaret Mackey, “Researching New Forms of Literacy,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 38.3 (2003): 403–407; Henry Jenkins, “Why Heather Can Write”; Fiona Carruthers, “Fanfic is Good for Two Things—Greasing Engines

Of particular interest is the fact that education via fanfics takes place without or even against school authority, which in the eyes of some authors kills the imagination: “[...] since it was for school, i didn’t feel i could take that many creative liberties”—observes an author of a fanfic about Perseus and Andromeda.⁵⁹ The fanfic writers, even posting their school compositions on the web, do not await the help of teachers. They use the support of the so-called “beta-readers”—the community members who, non-profit, take upon themselves the role of editor to improve the stories—and they gain new skills, too. On the FanFiction.net platform it is possible to ask for such help even prior to publication, thanks to a database of volunteer “betas.”⁶⁰ And it is good manners to thank the beta-reader who has worked on your story and to acknowledge her/his effort—it is worth observing that such a practice develops young people’s social skills and their awareness of interpersonal collaboration.

Furthermore, there is also the opportunity to receive feedback any time after posting a fanfic, not only from betas, but also from ordinary readers who

and Killing Brain Cells,” *Particip@tions* 1.2 (May 2004), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear, eds., *A New Literacies Sampler* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Rebecca W. Black, “English-Language Learners, Fan Communities, and 21st-Century Skills,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52.8 (2009): 688–697; Diane Carver Sekeres, “The Market Child and Branded Fiction: A Synergism of Children’s Literature, Consumer Culture, and New Literacies,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 44.4 (2009): 399–414; Kerri L. Mathew and Devon Christopher Adams, “I Love Your Book, but I Love My Version More: Fanfiction in the English Language Arts Classroom,” *The ALAN Review* 36.3 (2009), online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014); Kathy A. Mills, “Shrek Meets Vygotsky: Rethinking Adolescents’ Multimodal Literacy Practices in Schools,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 54.1 (2010): 35–45.

59 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/1004097/1/Perseus-and-Andromeda> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

60 See Littleton, *The Role of Feedback*, 35: “Another addition was added in February 2008 that allowed writers to post in a beta-reader section of the Fanfiction.net site, which allows for critical feedback prior to posting on the main area of the site. This feature is intended to help writers improve their stories through constructive feedback prior to publication, instead of after it has been disseminated to a wider audience [...].” See also Angela Thomas, “Children Online: Learning in a Virtual Community of Practice,” *E-learning* 2.1 (2005): 27–38; and Evans, *The Global Playground*, 7: “[...] because it exists outside the world of commerce and education, Internet fan fiction can be seen as a democratic field of experiment and play that is, on the face of it, exempt from outsider regulation and authority,” and 8: “Beta readers’ are often strongly recommended. These are readers who act as editors, checking the work before it is posted for errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation, and even sometimes advising on characterisation and plot development”; Spierings, *Rewriting Xenia*, 32.

have the “Review & Reply” option to leave a comment.⁶¹ Thus does the living audience manifest itself—one of the most important and characteristic traits of the fan-fiction community, which is much more personal than that which usually arises between “traditional” authors and their readers. Everybody may get in direct and immediate contact with the chosen writer,⁶² whether to praise her/him or even to ask her/him for specific threads to be used in further chapters of a given fanfic. For example, the twelve-year-old American author of the story “What the Olympians Think of Christmas,” in which we meet the frustrated Hermes who is forced to deliver gifts instead of Santa (he does not exist, of course!), is asked by one of the readers to continue with a story about Ares as a god of war unhappy with the idea of a peaceful Christmas.⁶³ In this community even the insufficient knowledge of languages is no barrier—one of the readers ends her comment with disarming sincerity:

I most likely made thousand of mistakes while writing this review. Sorry I'm french and not ashamed to use that as an excuse...⁶⁴

Positive feedback on the part of reviewers motivates the authors and makes them strive to fulfil the desires of the living audience, though that is not always easy, especially when one writes a longer fanfic and the readers are impatiently awaiting further chapters. A Californian teen author of a story in which ancient myths are mixed with Arthurian legends in the version taken from the recent BBC series *Merlin* (2008–2012⁶⁵), openly describes her writing problems, promising to overcome them:

[...] Chapter six is being difficult, but I'll try to get that out soon. School shouldn't interfere with my updating schedule too much but we'll see about that. If it gets to that point, I'll probably start writing chapters in the middle of geometry and hope that no one notices because that could be a little embarrassing.⁶⁶

61 See, e.g., Spierings, *Rewriting Xena*, 32.

62 Some authors also permit personal contact via private message.

63 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/4736876/1/What-the-Olympians-Think-of-Christmas> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

64 In a review of “The Lost Book 13”: <https://www.fanfiction.net/r/6761443/> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015, see also above, n. 31).

65 And the end of a TV series does not mean the end of its fanfiction: on the contrary, the number of fanfics often increases in such circumstances.

66 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/8838323/5/To-Speak-of-Grace> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

Subsequently, the dialogue with the public continues. The story is being followed by many readers who keep encouraging the author:

Oh, this'll be great! Please update—I want to know more about what Arthur is thinking and how Typhon's children (nesty [*sic!*] creatures, huh?) will factor in. Please update!⁶⁷

The most striking thing, however, is the fact that the fan-fiction community is based on shifting roles. This means that each member can be a reader, an author, or a beta-reader, and this hybrid identity makes them deeply understand other members.⁶⁸ The importance of this becomes evident in the fanfics which touch on more serious themes. If we take a look at the favourite and the most popular stories, we find that the myth of Hades and Persephone is leading in the rankings. As one of the authors—nicknamed “persephone-goddess”—remarks: “As a child I most closely identified with Persephone. I'm not sure why. There are probably issues there that will be delved into more deeply in therapy at some point.”⁶⁹ The point, however, is that this myth appeals to young

67 Ibid., in the “Reviews” section. Indeed, the realm of fan fiction is a unique platform, as the authors and their readers are in steady contact as a premise, not selectively, as in the case of other social media.

68 See Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*. On the notion of “hybrid identities” and mutual understanding see, e.g., Rebecca W. Black, “Access and Affiliation: The Literacy and Composition Practices of English-language Learners in an Online Fanfiction Community,” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 49.2 (2005): 118–128, spec. 123: “Fan authors often construct hybridised identities that are enacted through their texts. It is not uncommon for authors to insert themselves into their fictions as characters that possess a mixture of idealised and authentic personality traits”; 124: “Through these hybrid characters, fanfiction authors are able to use literacy skills to articulate and to publicly enact concerns from their daily lives”; and 128: “In the new perspective, language, literacy, and text are seen as integral components of how adolescents construct and maintain their sense of place, identity, and value in the social and academic worlds.” See also Lam, “Culture and Learning,” 222: “First, these studies show that in the global transit of youth cultures, young people are developing affiliative identities and shared practices that cut across national, ethnic, and linguistic lines and simultaneously involve them in multiple attachments at the global and local levels. These identities and practices disrupt a one-to-one correspondence of culture and ethnicity and thrive on hybrid innovation to create new forms of competence and knowledge and to reach a wider audience.” See also Derek Foster, “Community and Identity in the Electronic Village,” in David Porter, ed., *Internet Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 23–37.

69 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/u/470160/persephone-goddess> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015). By the way, the author refers to Ingrid and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire's *Book of Greek Myths* (1962)

female authors as a story about initiation—the passage from a girl's world into womanhood.⁷⁰ Thus, it does not take us by surprise that the fanfic of a thirteen-year-old author about “Persephone’s 21st century incarnation” and “the problems that come with being a teenage goddess,” triggered some vivid reactions and one particularly elaborated comment on the part of the readers.⁷¹ And many fanfics deal with even more serious problems, like abuse, alcoholism, and violence in the family.⁷² In such cases the number of comments increases. The living audience offers support and comfort to the victimised protagonists of the stories, and this permeates from the virtual to the real world. We become aware of the importance of this feedback once we notice how many fanfics speak about loneliness, such as the poem *To Muse*, by a thirteen-year-old author, based on the *Odyssey*:

This is what the intro for an odyssey based on my life would have looked like. I wrote this when I was thirteen, so any critic would be appreciated.

O Muse of my heart, weave a song through me of the young woman of
many places,
The girl who brought to the advanced world dreams of another land.
Guilty only of memories of a better time was she.
In Claremont in the New World she stared freshman year in the face,
Scared of seeing former friends bygone, of classmates in whose minds
have forgot.

as her first source of inspiration.

70 On this issue see, e.g., the study by Holly Virginia Blackford, *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature* (New York–Oxon: Routledge, 2012). For the popcultural context see also Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania, 1992); Sarah K. Day, *Reading Like a Girl: Narrative Intimacy in Contemporary American Young Adult Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013).

71 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/6771972/1/Redemption> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

72 See Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 283 (quoted also by Spierings, *Rewriting Xena*, 8): “Fandom’s very existence represents a critique of conventional forms of consumer culture. Yet fandom also provides a space within which fans may articulate their specific concerns about sexuality, gender, racism, colonialism, militarism, and forced conformity.” See also Black, “Access and Affiliation,” 124: “It is also significant to note that when authors publicly perform distress through their fictions, such as intimating suicide, they often receive an outpouring of community support (through reviews, e-mail, and instant messenger services). These hybrid texts represent communicative events, situated in specific contexts, that are intended for an audience of peer readers who have similar interests and may share many of the same concerns.”

fanfics is, however, even more complex. As we have learnt in the course of the present survey, no strict copyrights exist for myths, so the disclaimer I put at the opening of my paper has in fact no *raison d'être* here. We all do own them and the link to the ancient sense of community is stronger in “mythical” fanfics than in stories with other cultural texts as background. At the same time, however, such mentions as “Odyssey (c) by Homer”⁷⁶ testify to both the young authors’ knowledge of and respect for the ancient classics (and their sense of humour, too). All that in times when we incessantly hear about the crisis of education and the lack of authorities!

At this point, what becomes particularly interesting in fan fiction from the perspective of classicists is to observe the remarkable inversion in the process of initiation of today’s children and young adults into the realm of ancient myths. While mythology helped our ancestors and still helps those generations that grew up in the twentieth century to cope with and mentally tame new technologies (see, for example, the name Zeus for a robot used in heart surgery, Pegasus for a game-console, or the spacecraft Apollo), for young people the newest technologies and the references to popular culture help tame and make them familiar with ancient myths which are often exotic because of the changes in the educational system. Thanks to Internet fan fiction, Dionysus in Ozzy Osbourne glasses or Aphrodite immersed in Beyoncé’s song on her iPhone become surprisingly close to the modern audience that strives for more and grows up aware of the presence of mythology all around. As a fanfic author from Sweden remarks:

“The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work” and her paper “Amateur Mythographies,” and Tony Keen’s “Are Fan Fiction and Mythology Really the Same?,” at: <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/issue/view/23>, accessed July 20, 2016). See also Cornel Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge, UK–Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005), 64–66 (on the sense of belonging, a “Heimat”); Kem, *Cataloging the Whedonverse*, 45; Spierings, *Rewriting Xena*, 25: “Due to the aspect of community building, and the subordinate position of fans and fan culture, fan culture shares quite some similarities with oral and folk culture. The link with oral culture lies in the overlap between the medium of orality and the medium of television”; and 7: “‘Fanfiction’ is something to be taken seriously: a modern and relatively new form of resistance against undesired representations in cultural products.” See also Sonia K. Katyal, “Performance, Property, and the Slashing of Gender in Fan Fiction,” *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 14.3 (2006): 482, online (accessed Oct. 15, 2014).

76 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8015320/1/Chimeria> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015), see also above, n. 15.

I see it here as well as in every art museum, in the movies, computer games, on the stages and the catwalks. The gods are still alive and vibrant around us in their own way.⁷⁷

At the same time it is striking how perfectly the ancient myths adapt to modern media and maintain their function of offering support and contributing to reciprocal understanding between ever-new generations. And we—the oldsters from Before the Internet Era—may profit from mythological fanfics, as well. We have a rare opportunity to know what interests and what is important for today's youngsters, to be able to communicate with them and to draw them deeper into ancient culture. We do not have to prove its worth. It is enough to be open to the new to be able to share what is timeless. And the idea of sharing is one of the fundamental virtues of the fan-fiction community—a unique community, where strangers share stories,⁷⁸ and thus create the identity of a group for which age, origins, and other differences are of no importance, where all can access the magic of the Word without the necessity to logging in, and where the cyber-aidoi and their audiences are gathered by a common passion: “[...] I love the story and I thought it was worth sharing”⁷⁹—the teenage author of the fanfic “Perseus and Andromeda” states simply. With this opportunity we can discover thrilling stories embedded in the mythical frame, like the Harry Potter heptalogy, Susan Collins's the “Hunger Games” trilogy, or the Percy Jackson series—those ever-new proofs that the classics pass the test of eternity.

The iPhone 4s is already an obsolete device, supplanted by newer models. And I am not sure whether in one thousand years our descendants will remember much of Beyoncé and her impressive voice. However, I am pretty certain they will still know the face that launched a thousand ships and her blind bard Homer. What is more, if I am allowed to hazard a guess, I suspect they will continue the dialogue with Graeco-Roman myths much as we do, reshaping the ancient tales to cope with their present challenges of initiation into adulthood, keeping the door open to our common mythical childhood.

77 See <http://www.fanfiction.net/u/911222/Smiling-Eyes> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

78 Littleton, *The Role of Feedback*, 1, 70, 100.

79 See <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/1004097/1/Perseus-and-Andromeda> (accessed Dec. 11, 2015), see also above, n. 59. See also Littleton, *The Role of Feedback* (with a reference to Jean Lave's and Etienne Wenger's term “communities of practice,” of 1998), 8: “In communities in practice individuals with a common interest participate in the activities of a community and continuously create a shared identity through contributing to the activities and practices of the group.”

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