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## Kindgerechte „Arbeit am Mythos“ II

Noch mehr moderne Rezeptionstrategien von der Adaptation bis zur  
Transformation

## Child-friendly “Explorations of the Myth” II

A Continuation of Modern Reception Strategies from Adaptation to  
Transformation



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## Rezensionen

## Editorial

Am Freitag, dem 13. November 2020, lud die *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung* COVID-19-bedingt zu ihrer ersten *online*-Konferenz. Einen ganzen Nachmittag lang trafen sich via *Blackboard Collaborate* auf der *Moodle*-Plattform der Universität Wien zahlreiche Forscher\*innen und Studierende aus mehreren Ländern (und von verschiedenen Kontinenten), um einen bunten Strauß an Vorträgen von internationalen Referent\*innen zu hören und mit ihnen angeregt zu diskutieren: Großer Dank für die Einrichtung des Webkonferenzraums gilt unserem EDV-Fakultätsbetreuer Christian Wagner, der einen technisch reibungslosen Ablauf sicherstellte.

Ein Tagungsbericht kann auf der Website der ÖGKJLF nachgelesen werden: [https://oegkjlf.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/p\\_oegkjlf/Tagungsbericht\\_OEGKJLF2020.pdf](https://oegkjlf.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_oegkjlf/Tagungsbericht_OEGKJLF2020.pdf).

Das virtuelle Format eröffnete die erfreulich breit genutzte Chance zu Internationalisierung und Vernetzung weit über den eigentlichen Adressat\*innenkreis der ÖGKJLF hinaus: Zahlreiche Interessierte versammelten sich vor ihren Bildschirmen, um sich über die Spielarten von Mythologie, Mythisierung und Mythentransfer (1) in kind- und jugendgerechten Adaptationen, (2) in Werken, die (nur) vordergründig als Kinder- und Jugendliteratur erscheinen, oder auch (3) in klassischer *Crossover*-Literatur wissenschaftlich und didaktisch zu informieren.

Eröffnet wurde die Tagung von Susanne Blumesberger und Susanne Reichl in deutscher und englischer Sprache, um der internationalen Ausrichtung der Veranstaltung auch sprachlich Ausdruck zu verleihen.

Leider haben uns nicht alle Vortragenden ihre Manuskripte zur Verfügung gestellt. Nur zu gerne hätten wir alle Referate als verschriftlichte Beiträge in dieses *lili*-Heft aufgenommen. Doch zwei waren bereits für andere Publikationsorte vorgesehen. Sie sollen hier trotzdem gebührend Erwähnung finden, weil sie ein wesentliches Drittel der Tagung gebildet haben: Anna Maria Mik (Universität Warschau) stellte *Classical Mythology in a Polish Bestiary. The Example of Michał Rusinek's "The Book of Monsters"* (<http://www.omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item-export/477>) vor. Dabei handelt es sich um ein wunderschön illustriertes Werk, ein mit anspruchsvollen (auch poetischen) Texten ausgestattetes Buch, das von der Konzeption entfernt an Joanne K. Rowlings *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* erinnert und mit einer vergleichbaren, und doch ganz anderen Tiefendimension aufzuwarten hat: Die sogenannten ‚Bestien‘ sind zumeist liebenswerte, freundliche Wesen mit Freuden und Sorgen, die dazu anregen sollen, hinter die Fassade des jeweiligen Gegenübers zu blicken und mit typisch menschlichen (Ur)ängsten fertig zu werden. – Markus Janka, Professor für Klassische Philologie/Fachdidaktik der

Alten Sprachen, und seine Mitarbeiter Raimund Fichtel und Berkan Sariaydin von der LMU München präsentierten ihr facettenreiches Projekt *HistorMythos. Intermediale, interkulturelle und diachrone Perspektiven der Antikenrezeption* (<http://www.cluster.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/>). Beleuchtet wurden Perspektiven auf Phänomene der Antikenrezeption vom 18. bis ins 21. Jh. unter Anwendung eines mehrdimensionalen Zugangs (stofflich/inhaltlich – formal/ästhetisch – philosophisch/politisch-ideologisch/didaktisch – medial): Wirkungslinien allein sind nämlich zu wenig; vielmehr geht es um die Bedingungen, unter und die Strategien, mit denen rezipiert wird. Der Medienverbundkultur kommt dabei eine besondere Rolle zu.

Das vorliegende *lili*-Heft 58 (2022) ist mit seinen vier Beiträgen das erste, das ausschließlich englischsprachige Abhandlungen enthält (und drei deutschsprachige Rezensionen). Für das englische Lektorat zeichnen Valerie Gföhler und Georg Wendt verantwortlich; Ihnen gilt unser Dank für solide, schnelle, hilfreiche und professionelle Arbeit. Bewährte Unterstützung bekommen haben sie von Sonja Loidl.

Eröffnet wird das vorliegende Heft von Marta Pszczolińskas Beitrag *Learning through Fun – Classical Antiquity in „Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek“, a Polish Comic Book Series*. Sie nimmt eine der langlebigsten und prägendsten Comicreihen Polens in den Blick, für die Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski (1924–2021) verantwortlich zeichnet: Der sprechende Schimpanse Tytus und seine menschlichen Freunde erleben Abenteuer in unterschiedlichsten Epochen, so auch in der Antike. Auf der stetig anwachsenden Plattform *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (<http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/about>) sind weiterführende Einträge vorhanden, die die gelehrte Arbeitsweise (und das Quellenstudium) des liebevoll „Papcio Chmiel“ genannten Künstlers anschaulich zeigen (<http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1122> & <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/414>).

Maria José Carmen Campos Runcie entführt uns mit *Metafiction and Genre Hybridity in Naoki Urasawa's Manga "The Nameless Monster" by Emil Sebe* in das weite Feld japanischer Mythenverarbeitung und -aneignung. An hochentwickelten Text- und Bildkonzepten, Sprachspielereien und Sprachwechseln lässt sie uns an einem vielfältigen Beispiel der Manga-Tradition teilhaben. Erzählt wird über die dunklen Seiten der menschlichen Natur mit Hilfe von Kinderbuchästhetik am Beispiel eines kunstvoll gestalteten Buches, das die Kraft hat, auf ‚Kinder‘ jeden Alters ideologisch einzuwirken.

Angelina Gerus stellt in *Paideia of Diogenes: Live Like a Dog to Become a Human* ein gerade durch seine Schlichtheit und klare Farbgebung kunstvoll illustriertes Bändchen aus der französischen Reihe *Les Petits Platons* (<https://www.lespetitsplatons.com/>) vor, in denen klassische Philosophie für kindliche Leser\*innen unaufgeregt und demokratisch, mit Gefühl und vielen Originalzitate(n) (in Übersetzung) aufbereitet wird und so einen gleichzeitig niedrigschwelligen und klugen Einstieg in die Gedankenwelt großer und prägender Denker ermöglicht.

Abschließend demonstriert Karolina Anna Kulpa in *Playing with Cleopatra: About the Image of the Egyptian Queen in Products for Children and Young Adults (Introduction to Research)* das enorme Marketingpotential, das die Spielzeugindustrie in der vielleicht bekanntesten Ägypterin der Antike erkannt und dementsprechend verwertet hat: Ausgehend von ‚klassischen‘ Kleopatra-Darstellungen wie derjenigen Liz Taylors, spannt sie einen weiten Bogen über das kinderkulturelle Spektrum und zeigt das damit verbundene ethnische Kolorit auf. Zentral dabei ist die Einbettung dieser Elemente der Popkultur



in der (hoch)kulturellen Landschaft und das Wecken der Akzeptanz für diese beliebte Rezeptions- und Transformationsform.

Die Evasion in das Reich der Mythen mitten in der *aetas Covidiana* war ein wohltuender ‚Ausflug‘ in so etwas wie Normalität: in wissenschaftlichen, kollegialen und freundschaftlichen Austausch über ein Thema, an dem alle Beteiligten Freude haben und in dem sie Zukunftspotential für Rezipient\*innen aller Altersstufen sehen.

Das vorliegende *lili*-Heft 58 (2022) = *Kindgerechte „Arbeit am Mythos“ II: Noch mehr moderne Rezeptionsstrategien von der Adaptation bis zur Transformation / Child-friendly “Explorations of the Myth” II: A Continuation of Modern Reception Strategies from Adaptation to Transformation* versteht sich als Fortsetzung von *lili* 54-55 (2020) = *Kindgerechte „Arbeit am Mythos“ Moderne Rezeptionsstrategien von der Adaptation bis zur Transformation / Child-friendly “Explorations of the Myth”*.

Frei nach Yoda: „Möge der Mythos mit Euch sein!“

Sonja Schreiner (für die ÖGKJLF)

# Beiträge



# Learning through Fun

## Classical Antiquity in *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek*, a Polish Comic Book Series<sup>1</sup>

MARTA PSZCZOLIŃSKA

The series *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek* is largely enjoyed by children and has been popular with generations of Polish readers since it was first printed in 1957 in the magazine *Świat Młodych*. Since 1966, the author Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski has been publishing the series in the form of independent booklets. The comics are about two boys and a chimpanzee, Tytus, whose intellect is similar to that of a human being. Their adventures feature many educational elements as the characters learn about the world, and yet they are still incredibly witty and entertaining. The focus of this analysis is to show how information about the ancient Olympic Games, Greek theatre and Roman gladiator fights can be successfully incorporated into a children's comic book.

*Keywords:* children's comic books, child protagonist, animal protagonist, antiquity, Atlantis, Olympic Games, Athens, Greek theatre, learning Latin, Colosseum, gladiator fights

### **Lernen durch Spaß. Klassische Antike in der polnischen Comic-Reihe *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek***

Die Reihe *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek* findet seit der Erstpublikation im Magazin *Świat Młodych* (1957) großen Gefallen bei Kindern und erfreut sich bei polnischen Leser\*innen seither konstanter Beliebtheit. Der Autor, Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski, hat die Bändchen der Reihe beginnend mit 1966 als separate Heftchen publiziert. Die Comics handeln von zwei Buben und einem Schimpansen namens Tytus, dessen Intellekt dem eines Menschen gleichkommt. Die gemeinsamen Abenteuer enthalten eine Fülle erzieherischer Elemente, da die Protagonisten auf stets geistreiche und unterhaltsame Art Wissen über die Welt erwerben. Der Schwerpunkt der vorliegenden Analyse liegt auf der Sichtbarmachung der Vermittlungs- und Gestaltungsstrategie, wie Informationen über die Olympischen

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1 The research results presented in this paper have been obtained within the project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw. – I would like to thank the Austrian Society for Scholarship on Children's and Young Adult Literature, and especially Dr Sonja Schreiner, for inviting me to the *Child-friendly "Explorations of the Myth" – Modern Reception Strategies from Adaptation to Transformation* conference which was an inspiring opportunity to exchange ideas about narrative strategies and conventions in incorporating the antiquity into children's literature.



Spiele, das griechische Theater und römische Gladiatorenkämpfe erfolgreich in Comicbüchern für Kinder integriert werden können.

*Schlagwörter:* Comicbücher für Kinder, Kind als Protagonist, Tier als Protagonist, Antike, Atlantis, Olympische Spiele, Athen, griechisches Theater, Latein lernen, Kolosseum, Gladiatorenkämpfe

### Education and Entertainment – Comics for Children

Since many comic books are created to resonate with audiences of children, they were commonly considered only to provide entertainment which was also their main appeal. Nevertheless, many of them also carry educational value presenting important knowledge that can be effortlessly learned along with amusing content, which can be observed early on in the history of comics.<sup>2</sup> In addition, some of them feature child characters who explore the world themselves so that the reader can enjoy the protagonists' adventures and learn about the world and its culture along the way. This can be seen, for example, in the series *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek*, where even elements of the tradition of classical antiquity considered inaccessible or too difficult for children are incorporated successfully and provide not only knowledge but entertainment as well.

#### Tytus de Zoo and His Series

The series *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek* was created by Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski, one of the most popular and influential creators of Polish comics, an alumnus of a humanistic gymnasium who studied Latin when it was obligatory, and acquired a thorough knowledge of classics. He was also the Knight of the Order of the Smile, an international award given by children in Poland in recognition of pro-children activities. At the time of the conference (2020), Chmielewski was 97; he did not draw much anymore but was still active on his (and Tytus') website. Unfortunately he passed away two months after the conference on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2021.<sup>3</sup>

The series is enjoyed most of all by children and has been widely popular with many generations of Polish readers since it was first published in 1957 in the magazine *Świat Młodych* [Youth's World]. The author, known to children by the diminutive Papcio Chmiel (Daddy Chmiel [Hop]), has been publishing the series in the form of independent booklets since 1966. The comic's basic plot focuses on two boys and a talking chimpanzee,<sup>4</sup> Tytus de Zoo, who is humanised through comprehensive learning. Their adventures

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2 For example learning about cultural, geographical and historical background in the series *Les Aventures de Tintin* [The Adventures of Tintin], or about cultural background of Roman (and other, like Gauls, Britons, Helvetians, Vikings etc.) societies in the *Astérix* series.

3 Born in Warsaw in 1923, a scout, a soldier of AK (conspirational Home Army) who participated in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. After WWII he worked as a graphic designer and publicist for the magazine *Świat Młodych* [Youth's World], addressed at children and teenagers. He worked there since its beginnings till his retirement. He was the author of some of the most popular Polish comics. Full bio available at his official website <https://www.tytusromekiatomek.pl/tytus-papcio-chmiel-3-42-1.html> (accessed: May 9, 2022).

4 For other animals as friends in children's literature cf. e.g. *Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne; *Stuart Little* by

feature many educational elements as the characters learn about the world and its aspects that are presented in an incredibly witty and entertaining manner.

Each booklet refers to a different theme. For example, Book VII<sup>5</sup> deals with the geography of Poland because Tytus' poor grades at school prevent him from advancing to a higher level, and the boys must teach him about different places in Poland. Book X<sup>6</sup> is about protecting the natural environment; Book XI<sup>7</sup> is about protecting historical monuments; Book XV<sup>8</sup> is about geology and XXX<sup>9</sup> about fighting obesity. The last one was published in 2019 and presents the protagonists travelling on the Silk Road.<sup>10</sup> In each book, they have another mission, use different unusual means of transport borrowed from prof. T. Alent;<sup>11</sup> they usually meet their "creator", i.e. Papiro Chmiel, himself – or rather a drawn version of the author. Particularly, the stories focused on the Olympic Games, Greek theatre and Roman games illustrate how the author successfully incorporates elements of classical antiquity into a children's comic book, allowing readers to assimilate facts effortlessly.

The classical antiquity is present in three of the books: Book VI *Tytus Becomes an Olympic Champion*,<sup>12</sup> Book XV *Tytus Becomes a Geologist*,<sup>13</sup> and Book XIX *Tytus Becomes an Actor*.<sup>14</sup> The reception of classics is expressed through short scenes within the main plot.

### The Olympic Games as Shown by Chmielewski

In the book about the boys trying to humanise Tytus by training him in different sports – first published in 1971 – they prepare Tytus for the Olympic Games in Kogutkowo Górne [Upper Cockerel Town]. During a boxing match, Tytus is accidentally drugged with sleeping pills and falls asleep. His dream is a clever narrative device, allowing him to experience Greek antiquity and meet ancient characters as if he was time travelling. He dreams

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E. B. White; talking animals in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by S. C. Lewis; *Garfield* by Jim Davies.

- 5 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga VII – Tytus poprawia dwójkę z geografii*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Harcerskie „Horyzonty”, 1972.
- 6 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga X – Ochrona przyrody*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Harcerskie „Horyzonty”, 1975.
- 7 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XI – Ochrona zabytków*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Harcerskie „Horyzonty”, 1977.
- 8 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XV – Tytus geologiem*, Warsaw: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982.
- 9 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XXX – Wyprawa po owoce chichotu*, Warsaw: Księgarnia Prawnicza, 2006.
- 10 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek na jedwabnym szlaku*, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2019. The very last one – a historical album about the Christianization of Poland – was published posthumously: Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek pomagają księciu Mieszkowi ochrzcić Polskę*, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2021.
- 11 The professor is an inventor. His name in both languages – Polish and English – brings to mind an exceptional talent in creating extraordinary vehicles and other technical inventions.
- 12 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga VI – Tytus olimpijczykiem*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Harcerskie „Horyzonty”, 1971.
- 13 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XV – Tytus geologiem*, Warsaw: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982.
- 14 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XIX – Tytus aktorem*. Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 1992.

that he is in ancient Greece being carried in an open litter pulled by two donkeys on his way to participate in the Olympic Games. In the background, we can see a simple drawing of a Greek temple (*Tytus Becomes an Olympic Champion*, 34). In Olympia, in the presence of stereotypical Greeks (long-bearded, with straight noses, wearing simple white tunics), Tytus is questioned by a redhead wearing a wreath. The Greek is dressed in a white chiton and a black-trimmed violet *himation*; he stands on a platform and holds a vine. A man in a white headband plays a single flute; another one fills the vessel of the Olympic fire from an amphora. All these details build an ambiance. The man, probably a priest, asks whether Tytus was born free and if the gods had cursed him. Tytus, always witty, answers that Mr Janitor<sup>15</sup> cursed him for breaking a window in the basement with a football. The priest urges for peace and admits Tytus to the competition, even though he is a barbarian. Then, under the Greek name Tytusokles, Tytus is given what he needs to wear – a vine leaf – and is offered a massage with olive oil performed by two servants on an outdoor *klínē* with a meander motif. Although the use of slaves, the vine leaf, and the meander motif are not directly explained, this scene is enough to demonstrate to the child reader what ancient Greek Olympic contestants could have looked like and what they would have experienced, and so the scene provides elements of the Olympic lifestyle and ancient pre-game practices, which the child can later easily associate with Greek antiquity. The games begin, opened with a modern key by the redhead Greek priest. Young people are competing in the *péntathlon*. The first part is the long jump, which Tytus wins by using a modern jumping technique. He also wins the second – running – using a pair of studded boots with bristles and a low start unlike the Greek contestants who start upright. Tytus also wins the discus throw and the javelin throw. The last part – wrestling, is won again by Tytus, who uses judo-style moves. Even though ancient contestants, in reality, competed naked, Chmielewski draws them wearing a loincloth or leaves, avoiding nudity in a book for children (the book was published in 1971).<sup>16</sup> What is important is that the real spirit of peace and courtesy during the games is present. The text in this part of the book includes some (rather programmatic and timeless) statements:

“May the world be free of crime, undisturbed by the tumult of war.”<sup>17</sup> (34);

“It is an honour to fight against you.”<sup>18</sup> (37);

“What a great fight it was! – Forgive me if I’ve been too brutal.”<sup>19</sup> (38);

15 Tytus uses the form *pan dozorca*. “Pan” (sir, sieur, milord, mister, master) or “pani” (madame) is a formal and/or polite form of addressing an adult.

16 Based on the analysis by Karolina Anna Kulpa, “Entry on: Tytus, Romek and A’Tomek (Series, Book 6): Tytus Becomes an Olympic Athlete [Tytus, Romek i A’Tomek. Księga VI: Tytus olimpijczykiem] by Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski [Papcio Chmiel]”, peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/414>. Entry version as of June 06, 2021.

17 “Niech będzie świat wolny od zbrodni, nie zakłócony zgiełkiem wojny.”

18 “Zaszczytem jest walczyć z tobą.”

19 “– Przeżyłem wspaniałą walkę!  
– Przepraszam, jeśli byłem zbyt brutalny.”

“We shall fight, but we shall never be enemies.”<sup>20</sup> (38);

“In our games, we only fight for the idea’s sake.”<sup>21</sup> (38).

These sentences highlight the real spirit of a truce, noble competition, fair play and mutual respect, which we usually consider to have been the basic premise of the ancient Olympic Games. Tytus, as the winner, is rewarded with a laurel wreath and with the fame attached to his name, which makes him a little bit confused as he asks (as a child would do) about material prizes or a place on Olympus. The Greeks explain that in their games, the rewards are of a different nature. Tytus, disappointed, teaches the Greeks how to play football and a match takes place between Syracuse and Thebes.<sup>22</sup> In a historically incorrect move, the author uses Arabic numbers on the team’s *chiton* and *himation* sportswear, and in the same manner as before, he uses a random compilation of Greek letters instead of the original ancient Greek words. Both inaccuracies only have one goal: to signal something. For example, to show the difference between the Latin and Greek alphabet, which is enough for children to understand and learn the general facts about, not the details. The football match ends when the ball destroys the marble head of Zeus’ sculpture, which resembles the Zeus of Otricoli bust in the Vatican Museum. Zeus, furious at the profanation of the Olympic Games and the beheading of his statue, strikes the barbarian offender with a thunder of million volts as punishment. Thus, Zeus is shown as a dangerous god, the master of electricity of both old school thunderbolts and modern technology (a voltmeter for his thunders). When Tytus wakes up with a wreath on his head, there is a storm outside the vehicle the boys travel in, so, thinking he is still dreaming, he wants to sacrifice a lamb for Zeus.

Although the scene is not very long (9 pages) and the image of the ancient games is conventional, simplified and stereotypical, it provides important elements of Greek antiquity, which the young reader can easily learn: Zeus and his attributes, the idea and description of the games, customs and disciplines, the techniques used, prizes, garments, haircuts or even body shapes of the contestants, as well as some typical buildings or decorative motifs. The image of ancient Olympia, shown through humour associated with the character of Tytus and the seemingly absurd situation (Tytus is neither Greek, nor even human), resonates with the child reader and is easily remembered. The addition of modern elements to the depiction of the ancient Olympic Games achieves a comedic result of contrast between the past and the present and highlights the origin of the modern Olympic Games. They are shown as a legacy of the games organised in ancient Greece, palpably alive in the collective memory of the modern society. Some references to antiquity in the text can also be easily understood and retained by children, especially because they are occasionally presented as slogans to remember.

20 “Będziemy walczyć, ale nigdy nie będziemy wrogami.”

21 “W naszych igrzyskach walczy się dla idei...”

22 The same solution which was used before by Goscinny and Uderzo in *Asterix in Britain*. See: Goscinny R. and Uderzo A., “Astérix chez les Bretons,” *Pilote* 307-334 (1965); Hachette Livre, 1966.



### The City of Atlantis

Another example of classical antiquity still being alive and remembered to this day can be found in Book XV *Tytus Becomes a Geologist*, published in 1982. The book includes a short mention of the city of Atlantis when the boys in their vehicle named “Screwdriver” go underground. Romek hopes that they can find the lost land of Atlantis. They reach an underground city with signs of advanced civilisation. As they walk through the city, Romek believes that it might be the legendary Atlantis, especially as they are under the Atlantic Ocean. Tomek hopes that their discovery will shed light on the development of humanity. They meet strange crystals emitting light which is translated into the human speech by an analyser they carry with them. This way one of the crystals tells the story of the rise and fall of the Atlantean civilisation, and describes how its citizens turned into crystals to preserve their memories and consciousness. Even though the motif of Atlantis is not developed further, the story hints at ‘hidden’ elements of ancient Greek culture. For example, as the boys descend underground, a Greek Ionic column is shown amongst the rocks. While there is no direct mention that the story of Atlantis originated in antiquity, the association between Atlantis and ancient Greece is obvious. Such an approach illustrates Papcio Chmiel’s tendency to construct educational value through seemingly insignificant details not central to the story. Allusions of this kind highlight the need to ‘plant a seed’ in the child’s mind and provide a specific set of connotations, which are later crucial as a basis for learning about the ancient culture.

### The Greek Theatre and Roman Games

Book XIX *Tytus Becomes an Actor* was published in 1992; it is about the history of theatre and performances. The boys are going to the theatre, but Tytus, being not fully human, does not know how to behave there. In this comic book, the references to antiquity are introduced by two scenes; the characters use their imagination to explore the beginnings and development of theatre, first in ancient Greece and then in Rome.

When Greek antiquity is introduced, the protagonists, dressed in their contemporary outfits, “arrive” in Athens in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century or later (the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, built in 161 AD, is mentioned). A Mediterranean house with grapevines planted around is drawn as a background scenario. A local bearded man dressed in ancient garments shows the boys the way to the theatre of Dionysus. He considers them to be “foreigners” as they are not paying enough tribute to Dionysus. At the theatre, Tytus learns when and how the Athenian Dionysian theatre developed, who used to perform there, and who the Muses connected with the theatre arts are: Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, and Thalia. In the descriptions of the Muses, Chmielewski uses types of letters resembling the “Greek” alphabet – for example, uppercase Sigma instead of capital “E”. The boys want to re-enact a scene from the *Iliad* to consolidate the new knowledge. They change into stage costumes, masks and buskins and begin to play, while Tytus looks for less serious and dramatic entertainment. His wish is to go to a disco, which in Polish is *dyskoteka*, but a misunderstanding leads him to a pinacotheca. Such a funny situation facilitates learning and remembering new, difficult and sophisticated vocabulary, de-

rived from Greek. In the pinacotheca, Tytus views a painting and sculpture exhibition displaying the Greek gods and heroes as boring, and he makes jokes standing next to a painting of Zeus. The guards wearing Corinthian helmets consider this an offence and an insult to the god. They seize the chimpanzee and drag him across the city's streets to the guard of the goddess Athena. Then his friends convince the guards that he is their slave and rescue Tytus by bribing the guards with a few drachmas.<sup>23</sup>

The next imaginary journey takes the three of them to ancient Rome. First, Tytus should learn some Latin – the boys give him a pocket dictionary by Kazimierz Kumaniecki,<sup>24</sup> one of the most popular among students at the time, with a recognisable cover. Learning Latin seems to be quite easy, as the examples given for Latin words are spelled and sound just like the Polish equivalents (for instance: *horror*, *chirurgia* [surgery], *senator* or *temperatura* [temperature]). But the studying ends in a fight when they reach the word *idiota* (idiot), which Tytus considers an insult. The three friends then “arrive” at the Flavian amphitheatre during the games in its times of glory, although its later name – Colosseum – is used. A'Tomek wears armour with a Roman eagle and has a laurel wreath on his head; Romek wears a wreath – *corona muralis*. They sit in a luxury box as the Emperor and his consul. Tytus, however, is to fight in the arena like a regular slave gladiator in order to learn about the Roman games from an insider perspective. Tytus and his robust opponent are only wearing waist-cloths; they carry Roman swords (*gladius*) and small, round shields. Before the confrontation, the gladiators yell the well-known phrase *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*.<sup>25</sup> Tytus prevails in the fight using his flatulence; based on a pun, as in Polish “death” *śmierć* sounds similar to “stink” *śmierdź*. In the next part of the games, Tytus must face a wild beast, which is a reference to *venationes*, but the lion kept in a cage goes on strike, so an elephant is let out instead. Clever Tytus makes the animal snatch Romek from the tribunes, which brings an end to the Roman adventure.<sup>26</sup>

Chmielewski effortlessly incorporated quite a few important aspects of spectacles and theatre in the Greek and Roman world in those two short scenes. Combining elements of the modern and ancient world results in situational humour (finding *pinacotheca* instead of a disco, a lion on strike) which makes the factual information in the comic book very enjoyable, accessible and amusing. This is exactly how Chmielewski

23 Based on the analysis by Marta Pszczolińska, “Entry on: Tytus, Romek and A'Tomek (Series, Book 19): Tytus Becomes an Actor [Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek. Księga XIX: Tytus aktorem] by Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski [Papcio Chmiel]”, peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1122>. Entry version as of June 06, 2021.

24 Kumaniecki Kazimierz, ed., *Słownik łacińsko-polski: według słownika Hermana Mengego i Henryka Kopii*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1957. Revisions in: 1964, 1965, 1967, 1970, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

25 The same motif had been used before by Goscinny and Uderzo in *Asterix the Gladiator*. See: Goscinny R. and Uderzo A., “Astérix Gladiateur,” *Pilote* 126-168 (1962); Editions Hachette, 1964.

26 Based on the analysis by Marta Pszczolińska, “Entry on: Tytus, Romek and A'Tomek (Series, Book 19): Tytus Becomes an Actor [Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek. Księga XIX: Tytus aktorem] by Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski [Papcio Chmiel]”, peer-reviewed by Katarzyna Marciniak and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1122>. Entry version as of June 06, 2021.

designed nearly all of the other Tytus comics: he transformed the knowledge taught boringly at school into a fun experience for the young reader.

## Conclusion

Chmielewski perfected a great tool to teach children: they first notice the humour of the design and the wittiness of the plot without realising that they may be learning something. That is probably why the Tytus series remained so popular for over 60 years.<sup>27</sup> To this day, the Tytus' website<sup>28</sup> receives letters from adult fans who read the comics in their childhood, while many children send in their drawings of Tytus, for example, wearing a face mask,<sup>29</sup> demonstrating the effectiveness of the concept of learning through laughter, and showing how it can be done.

Although Chmielewski was a comic creator whose works were extraordinarily popular in Poland for over half a century, he remains virtually unknown beyond the Polish borders. The times when the first booklets were created were not conducive to free cultural exchange due to the Iron Curtain. After the political transformation and first free elections since WWII in 1991, when Poland could open up to the world more widely, Tytus had already been in publication for 34 years and 18 booklets with his adventures had been written. Unfortunately, many elements embedded in the Polish reality of when the comics were written (since 1957) became outdated, and even incomprehensible to non-Polish readers, which could be the reason why neither the author nor the publisher decided to follow with publications in other countries. While the cartoon humour is limitless, certain background elements and some indirect references from the bygone years would become impossible to translate for an international readership. It is perhaps why Tytus remained strictly popular with Polish readers, helping new generations of children to learn the delusive effects of taking *bzikotyki* (loony-drugs<sup>30</sup>),<sup>31</sup> learn how to surf the Internet,<sup>32</sup> how to fight obesity,<sup>33</sup> or learn about the most important events in Polish history.<sup>34</sup>

27 The educational value of Chmielewski's comics has also been discussed by Tomasz Marcinak in his articles: T. Marcinak, "Metakomiks dydaktyczny. Jubileusz H.J. Chmielewskiego i międzypokoleniowy przekaz *Tytusa, Romka i A'Tomka*" in *Guliwer. Dwumiesięcznik o książce dla dziecka* 2 (2004): 35–42; T. Marcinak, "O Tytusie polimedialnym" in *Guliwer. Dwumiesięcznik o książce dla dziecka* 3 (2011): 28–33.

28 See *Tytus Romek i A'Tomek* website: <https://www.tytusromekiatomek.pl/index.html> (accessed: May 09, 2022).

29 See *Tytus Romek i A'Tomek* website: <https://www.tytusromekiatomek.pl/?aktualnosc=580> (accessed: May 09, 2022).

30 From the Polish words: *bzik* – "loony", and *narkotyki* – "drugs".

31 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XXIII – Tytus i bzikotyki*, Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 1997.

32 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XXVIII – Tytus internautą*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Egmont Polska, 2014.

33 Chmielewski, H. J., *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek: Księga XXX – Wyprawa po owoce chichotu*, Warsaw: Księgarnia Prawnicza, 2006.

34 Besides regular, numerated Books (I–XXXI) Chmielewski also wrote some independent booklets with Tytus, Romek and A'Tomek concerning historical events, such as: *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek jako warszawscy powstańcy 1944* (2009), *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek w bitwie warszawskiej 1920* (2010), *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek w bitwie grunwaldzkiej* (2011), *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek w odsieczy wiedeńskiej 1683* (2012), *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek jako rycerze Bolesława Krzywoustego* (2014), *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek pomagają księciu Mieszcowi ochrzcić Polskę* (2021).

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